Comparison Of Parental Involvement In Charter And Traditional Public Schools

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COMPARISON OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHARTER AND
TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

By

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education
Seton Hall University

2000
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This doctoral dissertation is an affirmation of the efforts of my parents, and a family commitment to lifelong learning. To my parents, William and Mary George, whose tireless efforts did not go unnoticed. To my grandfather, Harvey D. Leuin, and my uncle, Walter George, whose academic accomplishments not only inspired me but also served as a blueprint. To my siblings and their spouses, as together we elevate the bar for success and work diligently to help each other reach it. To my wife and children, for their sacrifice paralleled my own.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to:

My wife, Helen Anne,

My sons William, IV and Jacob Collin,

My daughters, Sarah Rose and Mary Katherine,

All my colleagues and friends.
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PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Chapter I

Introduction

As the Information Age enters the 21st century, educators will be faced with their biggest challenge ever. The perceived confidence in public education is low based on media speculation and a review of the literature. The expectations of the public continue to increase with the advent of core curriculum content standards and the increased accountability accompanying standardized tests, not to mention escalating pressure for school change based on whole school reform. The challenge facing educators includes their need to provide the children not only with an academic education, but a moral education as well.

There has been a breakdown of the American nuclear family; with an increase in single parent homes and an increasing number of two parent households where both parents work there is little time for the teaching of family values. All these societal trends have led to mounting pressure on public schools. Educational leaders, teachers and administrators alike, are going to have to employ every possible resource if public education is to prosper.
Involving parents in the educational process encompasses a myriad of methods. The parents can be involved at home, at school, or within the community. Engaging with their children in schoolwork is a simple yet vital strategy for parents to invest in as a part of the educational process.

Any involvement, passive or active, will have a positive impact on student performance in the classroom. "The research shows that the more intensively parents are involved in their children's learning, the more beneficial are the achievement effects" (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989, p.3). In addition, the more active the involvement the greater the achievement benefits.

Educators must reflect on what we ask parents to do. The involvement should appeal to the parents' interests. "Schools often offer parent involvement activities that appeal to the school or meet the school's needs, but fail to engage parents because these activities are not of interest to the families" (Haxby, Lasaga-Flister, Slavin, & Dolan, 1998, p.150). Parental involvement must be planned for, just as a strong curriculum or innovative teaching strategies are.
The National Household Education Survey (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1996) identifies six types of parental involvement:

1. Basic obligations of families, such as providing for health and nutrition of children;
2. Basic obligations of schools to communicate with families;
3. Parent involvement at school, such as volunteering and attending school events;
4. Parent involvement at home, such as providing learning activities at home;
5. Parent participation in school decision making;

These six types of involvement were identified to create a mutually beneficial relationship between parents and schools. The role of parents in this partnership is extensive. They are responsible for providing the basic necessities of food, shelter, and clothing. They are also responsible for academic support both at school and at home, which can be time consuming, while working to financially provide for the family. Additionally, parents are expected to be a part of community involvement and
participate in the governing of the school system (Nord, Brimhall, & West, 1997).

For too many years we have assumed that as parents we have a responsibility only to our own children, not seeing ourselves as members of the community. Even more distressing is the lack of consideration of our actions as members of society. “Holding fast to the democratic promise of public education requires something hard but simple: a steadfast belief in the process of democracy, warts and all. It requires rejecting both the dictatorship of the marketplace and the dictatorship of the expert” (Meier, 1995, p.79). We must create an educational system that can meet the needs of the individual as well as produce the greatest good.

A large number of parents would participate in their children's school life if they were empowered to do so. The Strong Families, Strong Schools Report (1994) identified that:

40% of parents across the United States believe they are not devoting enough time to their children’s education; teachers ranked strengthening parents’ roles in their children’s learning as the issue that should receive the highest priority in public education policy in the 1990’s; among students aged 10
to 13, 72% said they would like to talk to their parents about schoolwork, 48% of older adolescents agreed; and 89% of business executives identified lack of parent involvement as the biggest obstacle to school reform (Christenson, 1998, p.2).

The Strong Families, Strong Schools Report (Ballen & Moles, 1994) identifies acknowledgement from parents, teachers, community members, and students that parental involvement is a crucial issue in student achievement.

The first goal of parental involvement is maximizing parental interest. Communication is fundamental to this goal. Dodd (1999) addresses potential problems when parents are not informed of or involved in the decision making process. "Parents and teachers both want students to be successful in school. Yet too often when schools make changes they think will support that goal, implementing a new program or practice leads to community conflict" (p. 18).

Some of that anxiety can be avoided by explaining the decision making process to the parents. This will give them insight by helping them understand the educator’s point of view. To further lessen the conflict with parents, involve them in the decision making process itself. When parents and educators work collaboratively
there is less opportunity for miscommunication. Dodd (1999) highlights that parents evaluate what is happening based on a traditional model of school formulated by their own educational experiences. We must help parents understand the ever-changing evolution process that all professionals, especially in education, experience.

Statement of the Problem

There is a lack of parental involvement in the traditional public school system. Charter public schools are addressing this concern. Legislation and policy make it possible for parents and the community to take a more active role in the educational process via this alternate form of education. Are disenchanted parents who feel helpless in the educational process turning to charter public schools because of the autonomy that these schools provide with the realization that they will be held more accountable in their child’s education?

Americans' confidence in their educational system is low. Traditional public schools are alienating not only the students and the parents, but also the resources of the community as well. There is a lack of authentic application of the classroom lessons and minimal emphasis on training the children toward technology workplace readiness skills. Children can turn on their computers at
home and receive an interactive educational experience through software packages. For fun they can turn to video games such as Play Station, and not just play the game. They are given the autonomy to choose equipment, uniforms, and run their own plays. Yet when they go to school they must still sit in the lecture-based Frederick Taylor model of teaching developed at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. No wonder education has alienated children.

Parents have been complaining of this disassociation that they have witnessed their children experience for years. Educators have dismissed parental concern as a biased view. We assume that these parents are coddling their youngsters, being overprotective, and not taking an objective look at what their children’s needs are. What is so ironic is that many educators are also parents, and assume they can see their child’s needs more clearly because of their professional expertise. Parents know their children better than anyone else. Educators can tap into that knowledge, and along with their expertise can develop the most effective plan.

Educators, parents, and students do not have the resources to face today’s challenges without the support of the community. The community is nothing more than a collective body of children, parents, relatives and other
invested parties who all have their own areas of expertise and interests which contribute to the needs of society. This collection of people working together gives our public educational system the best opportunity for success (Finn, 1998).

It is essential to connect parents with the day to day school experience by opening our doors to them for school activities. "Parents can continue to be in-school participants by visiting the school; attending school events, performances, and athletics; and initiating contact with teachers and administrators" (Finn, 1998, p.23). Parental involvement both at home and in the school will reinforce the educational experience and, in turn, motivate students to a higher level of educational achievement.

**Background of the Problem**

In 1983, the National Commission on Education published "A Nation at Risk", a study that concluded our once dominant super-power nation was no longer a forerunner in commerce, industry, and technological innovation. The country that was first with the automobile, electricity, telephone, television, airplane, and walking on the moon was being surpassed by competition throughout the world. The report cited the state of our country's educational system as being the corrosive agent eroding the stronghold
the United States had as an international leader (Jenkins & Dow, 1996).

In his *Savage Inequalities* (1992), Jonathan Kozol reminds us that Brown vs. Board of Education (1954), the landmark decision regarding desegregation, served to increase the expectations of the disadvantaged. Yet, forty-five years later we are still depriving the students most in need the educational opportunities afforded children of affluent communities who are much less in need. “The cumulative effect of our private choices, especially on those least able to exercise choice in powerful ways, is thus blurred over until it appears to be another law of nature - some have better luck than others” (Meier, 1995, p.79).

Cotton & Wiklund (1989) allude to the 1980’s as the beginning of the availability of the research pertaining to the impact of parental involvement. In this decade parental involvement became a major educational issue due to the concern about the quality of education in the country. The 1980’s showed an increase of academic standards as well as a community outcry for monitoring tax dollar usage while maintaining this commitment to standards.
Research suggests that "teachers pay more attention to students whose parents are involved in the school" (Finn, 1998, p.23). In his book, Inventing Better Schools (1997), Phillip Schlechty refers to the comparison of public schools versus private schools citing the lack of confidence the public has in public schools. He believes that "given the same level of commitment as that of parents in private schools, students in public schools will do equally well, as numerous, effective big-city schools illustrate" (p.19). When parents instill the significance of education to their children the youngsters are more likely to include education in their quality world. "Students will not work hard unless they believe there is quality in what they are asked to do" (Glasser, 1998, p.92).

Where does parent involvement lie in the discussion of the success of the charter school movement? Are these new schools outperforming other public schools because of innovative educational strategies or does the clientele they attract influence their success? Parent involvement logically must influence student success just as the educationally supportive backgrounds from which students emerge must also impact their performance. Research indicates that the rate of student achievement on
standardized tests is related to the percentage of times parents are present at school functions (Christenson, 1998).

School Choice.

When we consider school choice it must be done in the purest democratic sense. If we only give choice to the privileged who are sending their children to private school and are going to use the voucher as part of the deposit or tuition, then the disadvantaged are excluded. “If a significant number of Americans abandon public education - either out of lethargy or by opting for private, religious, ethnic or elite academies - we risk turning public schools into schools of last resort” (Meier, 1995, p.5).

Parents' belief in the school's teachers and administration guides them toward a charter public school or traditional public school in a school district. Parents and students will have a more positive attitude in a school where they have had input in the decision to attend. Teachers will be more likely to take risks utilizing innovative instructional techniques in the more competitive free market of a choice system. Educational choice may serve to expedite the change process transforming our public schools from traditional lecture-based, sometimes
boring institutions into exciting, interactive lifelong learning communities of the 21st century.

Giving parents and students a choice in the schools they can attend is not in itself going to assure that the educational experience will improve. Private schools exemplify this. Many private schools are as traditionally structured and free of innovation as their public counterparts. "By using choice judiciously we can have the virtues of the marketplace without some of its vices, and we can have the virtues of the best private schools without undermining public education" (Meier, 1995, p.104).

Affluent members of our society have been given the choice of schools for a very long time. The time has come for the rest of our democratic society to be afforded the same right. By aligning the equity possible from public school choice with the competitive spirit of independent charters, all students may soon experience the educational excellence that was once only available for the elite. From Brown vs. the Board of Education (1954) to Abbott vs. Burke (1997) we have struggled for equity, equality, and excellence for forty-five years. Choice, specifically through the public school setting, presents a viable option.
The equity issue is of major concern in the choice movement based on the premise that at-risk students receive less parental support, and, in turn, are not as likely to apply to schools of choice. Charter schools must closely monitor the demographic make-up of these schools to assure equal opportunity for minority and disadvantaged students. It is comforting to note that data from the first year report of the National Study of Charter Schools (United States Department of Education, 1997) suggests that charter schools are serving roughly the same number of minority and low-income students as their public school counterparts.

School Leadership.

The idea of transformational leadership is perplexing because of its roots in idea-based leadership. Transformational leadership is based on a universal set of beliefs collectively shared by the community. While this strategy is united by a common belief it is applied uniquely in each instance. Each group develops its own style based on the varied ideas, objectives, and strengths that each member brings with him/her (Yukl, 1998).

As stated in Leadership for the Schoolhouse (1996), Sergiovanni believes that school leadership should be connected to parents, teachers, students and their shared moral purposes. He distinguishes between two types of
moral leadership, bureaucratic and personal. Bureaucratic leadership is based on a follow me approach, often exhibited in traditional public schools, and a concept charter schools are trying to avoid. Personal leadership, a basic principle of charter school design, fulfills mutual needs. Parents may feel a connection to a particular goal of the charter school such as uniforms or zero-tolerance discipline.

Both of these views of moral leadership are individual-based rather than originating from a community theory, which is founded on shared ideas and effects the entire community. In theory, public school education should have a shared mission that effects the entire community. Shared vision is not ideal for the individual because it involves compromise for all. It is the compromise and broader perspective, however, that lends itself to interdependence and communication skills necessary to compete in the global information-based world of the 21st century (Sergiovanni, 1996).

The lack of confidence that the public has in our national educational system is correlated with the no confidence vote we have received from our colleagues within the field of education. The relationships between fellow educational professionals have had a negative impact on our
perception in the community. Educators must dispel that perception by speaking, reading, and writing about educational reform. We must empower ourselves by taking responsibility for our shortcomings and improving them (Barth, 1990).

The vision is that education is a joint venture involving parents, teachers, principals, and interested community members. The more people we empower, the stronger the message we send will be. This change in the educational paradigm cannot take place without educators' commitment to involving others in the process (Barth, 1990).

Definition of Terms

Parents/Guardians: The adult caregivers responsible for the daily care of and decision-making for the child. The reference to "parents" throughout this document should be interpreted as "parents/guardians".

Parental Involvement: Any school-related involvement at home by parents/guardians in their child's educational lives, including homework or other academic assistance. Involvement at school includes communicating with teachers, volunteering in the school-related functions or on committees. Parent involvement also encompasses time spent with children on such non-academic endeavors as going to
concerts, sharing meals together, visiting relatives, and spending quality time together.

Charter Schools: Public schools financed by approximately the same per-pupil support that traditional public schools receive (Nathan, 1996, p.1). Charter schools are authorized by statute and established by contract contingent on the success of the school as detailed in the charter document. In New Jersey charter schools are accountable to the staff through its Department of Education and its Commissioner of Education. Instruments employed to judge success may include standardized test scores, student portfolios, and school/community satisfaction. However, policy, legislation, and governing body vary from state to state. In return for the accountability that accompanies the charter, the schools are given the autonomy to create innovative opportunities for the children as established and expanded upon in the charter application (Nathan, 1996).

Traditional Public Schools: Schools in each community or regional area established by statute and funded by local and state tax dollars.

**Null Hypothesis**

There is no significant difference in parental involvement between charter public schools and traditional
public schools of similar demographic and socioeconomic status.

Significance of the Study

There has been a significant increase in the development of programs that address parental involvement. Considerable research supports the theory that the child's home environment contributes to his/her school progress. Reform efforts focused on school, teachers, administration, and curriculum have not been as successful in contributing to student progress as anticipated by the educational community. The changes in the structure of the nuclear family have given rise to concerns about the ability of the families to provide adequate preparation for their children without active support from the schools (Christenson, 1998).

The traditional parent role of attending Back-to-School conferences and signing permission slips is a scenario far too many teachers and administrators are content to accept. Christenson speaks of a partnership relationship that recognizes the need to share information and resources. "Both families and educators have legitimate roles and responsibilities in the partnership" (1998, p.2).
A healthy relationship of any kind begins with two-way communication. A parent's relationship with their child's school has the same need. Educators must serve as resources for both parents and students, in turn increasing the parent's confidence, skills and productivity levels, and creating a positive impression for their children. Teaching parents to be advocates for their schools is indispensable to the community (Cotton & Wikeland, 1989). "Parents are a child's first and most essential teachers, and in the basic school they are also active and committed members of the learning community" (Sergiovanni, 1996, p.74).

Waiting lists are the norm in 72% of the charter schools sampled by researchers for "A National Study of Charter Schools" (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). Parents who left the public system speak of a disconnection with public schools, concerns about academics, the school culture, safety, and accessibility for parents. The reports of low expectations of student performance come from teachers and administration alike.

School was not challenging enough to the students; the work that they were being asked to do was not authentic, and therefore students saw it as boring busy work. Teachers did not take the time to explain the more
difficulty material or connect it to real life experiences. Another major area of dissatisfaction generated by parents was the feeling of being ignored by the public school. They did not feel welcome in their children’s school and were not empowered to make decisions that would impact their children’s achievement.

"Are these schools simply encouraging parent involvement to exclude students and families who do not fit their expectations?" (Becker, Nakagawa, & Corwin, 1997, p.514). This is not to say that recruiting parental support is not a desired goal of a school system. Rather, this process must be nurtured through encouraging activities that support learning at home e.g., seminars, forums, or parent workshops. Parents should also be invested in the educational process by having a greater role in the school’s governance. Educational institutions cannot demand participation. They must develop it through strategically planned activities created to motivate involvement based on a mutually beneficial relationship that will provide the optimal learning environment for our children. Parents will involve themselves once the educators make it clear to them how much the children will benefit as a result.
Parental involvement was cited by 26% of administrators surveyed in Becker, et al. (1997) as being essential to student performance. This was the highest response total out of the seven-question survey the administrators were given. Efforts by California charter schools to incorporate parental involvement are obvious based on the information compiled on contracts. There is a greater effort by teachers and administrators in these schools to include parents in their activities and the way they encourage parents to participate in all facets of their children’s education. This fosters a parental voice in the school’s governance, and, in turn, will promote community support for the district and build confidence in the educational process. By apprising the parents of the daily functions within the school day and reinforcing the goals of the school, continued, consistent learning will be perpetuated in the home beyond the school day.

The question arises whether parents are more involved in charter schools based on their efforts to encourage and nurture this involvement or because the school policy on contracts discourages parents who are opposed to these restrictions from having their children apply. If parental support is a primary indicator in the academic success of students, it can be argued that these schools are
guaranteeing their own success by the selective process they use to choose their clientele. If this is the case, then the school’s success is assured based on the principles and policies on which the school is developed, and is not influenced by the programs, curriculum, innovative teaching strategies, and effective administration (Becker, et al., 1997).

“Professional educators as well as parents, community activists, and other citizens have a right to fully informed and critical participation in creating school policies and programs for themselves and young people” (Apple & Beane, 1995, p.9). Educators must learn to look at parents as sources of information on how to better understand their children. “Parents make fine pedagogical partners, for they have deep knowledge about how their children learn” (Lambert, p.23).

In Building Leadership Capacity in Schools (1998), Linda Lambert highlights Capricorn High School and its principal, Bill Johnson. “Teachers, parents, students, and community members held significant leadership roles in the school. In addition to their new roles, their participation involved skillful dialogue, inquiry, reflection, and problem solving behavior” (p.67). The interactive educational climate permeating throughout
Capricorn High School empowers teachers, parents, students and community members. Forming committees that include these important actors in the educational process is only authentic if they are engaged in the meaningful conversation and their ideas are incorporated into practice.

Parents are more likely to attend school functions and activities if they have a genuine voice through school committees and an open line of communication with the administrative body. Parental input should be included in such issues as curriculum, budget, facility renovation, and personnel (Peterson, 1993). Barth sees “the concept of the school as a community of learners, a place where all participants – teachers, principals, parents and students – engage in learning and teaching” (1990, p.43). True educational advancement must include a combined effort of students, parents, teachers, and administration working together with a common vision creating a positive educational experience for the children.

Comer (1997) addresses the potential advantages of children who are exposed to positive role models in a functional family environment with nurturing caretakers, as well as the disadvantages of a dysfunctional family
structure lacking mental and emotional stimulation. Comer feels that:

Children are programmed to seek attention and to please the caretaker. It is a beneficial survival arrangement, but means that children are vulnerable when caretakers are not functioning well. As caretakers tend to the needs of their children, an emotional bond develops—particularly to mothers, but now more and more to fathers as well. When the bond is adequately developed, its power enables parents to help their children grow (p. 79).

School systems must work to foster parental involvement from the onset of the educational experience. "The decisions that local school councils make should be guided by shared values and beliefs that parents, teachers, and students develop together" (Sergiovanni, 1996, p.178).

Parents are the primary teachers of children; they are the most influential on the children. Schools must create a mutually beneficial relationship with parents that allows for the sharing of information. To develop this relationship, the school must convince parents that there is no risk involved and that they will not be judged on their effectiveness as caretakers. Rather, they will be in situations where their ideas and concerns will be seriously
considered, and where educational professionals will work with them toward solutions (Sergiovanni, 1996).

Parenting concerns can be addressed through workshops and counseling if needed. Parents will not engage in these vulnerable interactions if they do not trust the school personnel. This trust must be fostered through mutual respect, which can only come when parents are empowered as a partner in the educational process.

**Limitations of the Study**

The sample size of this study is a limitation. Repeating the study with a different sample may produce different results as a result of the size. The survey was only distributed to the parents of 365 students. Of these 365, 163 respondents completed the survey, 112 from the public school and 51 from the charter school. The investigation was representative of only two schools, one charter (the state of New Jersey has 47 active charter schools) and one traditional public school (the state has 615 public school districts as of the 1999-2000 school year, many with multiple schools). The sample size of the traditional public school as determined by the eligible pool of participants was slightly larger than that of the charter public school.
It is also reasonable to assume that the parents who responded to this survey were more likely to be involved in their child's education as exhibited by their very willingness to complete the survey. This might raise the question of whether or not they accurately represent the average parent of either the charter public or traditional public school student.

It should be noted that an inordinate bias in favor of the charter public school may exist among charter public school parents due in part to the confirmation of the change process. The bias may to some degree influence the survey responses.

While both schools were partially comprised of a Latino population there was a higher proportion of "English as a Second Language" population amongst the traditional public school than the charter school. Of the traditional public school respondents 42.9% answered the survey in Spanish, while only 5.9% of the charter school respondents did the same.

**Organization of the Study**

The study was organized into five chapters. The first chapter included the problem statement, background, definitions of terms, hypothesis, significance and limitations.
The second chapter encompassed a review of the literature on charter schools, school choice, and parental involvement.

Chapter three described the research methodology. It outlined the design of the study, a discussion of the subjects, instruments, procedures, and data analysis.

The results of the study were presented in chapter four. It contained an analysis of the data, a discussion of the findings and a final summation of the relationships among the variables.

Chapter five was devoted to a summation, conclusion, discussion, recommendations, and implications for further research. The bibliography and appendices followed chapter five.
PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Chapter II

Review of Related Literature

The charter school movement was founded on the notion that empowering students, parents and teachers will result in a better educational atmosphere. Parental involvement in schools is a recurring theme in whole school reform. Joe Nathan, regarded by most as the father of the charter school movement, suggests a parent/student meeting with the student’s teachers prior to the start of the school year in order to develop collective, mutually acceptable expectations among all three parties. He further proposes mapping out a list of various ways parents can be involved in the enrichment of their child’s educational experience. “This allows the school to tap parent strengths and helps parents understand what they can do to promote learning” (1996, p.151).

Parent involvement includes participation at Parent/Teacher Organization meetings, parent workshops, and Back to School conferences. Educators should make a concerted effort to recruit parents into the school building and involve them in their child’s education.

Glasser, Schlechty, Nathan, Barth, Sergiovanni, and Goodlad all focus on basic, recurring principles. School
systems must empower students, teachers, and parents in the
decision making process as it affects learning. Through
the use of authentic assessment, student portfolios and
technology, schools can convince their customers that the
educational products they are selling, i.e. the curriculum,
is worthy of the price the taxpayers are paying. Charter
schools are a venue for the research and development of new
educational strategies.

A learning environment must be created based on the
children's educational and social-emotional needs, as
conventional education has in many cases failed to connect
these students to an authentic curriculum that they will
see as important in providing opportunities for the future.

Education is not the root of all problems children
suffer with, however, we must help students deal with their
personal issues before they can learn. Learning should not
cause additional problems, rather it should alleviate some
of them.

Phillip Schlechty (1997, p.191) asserts "I have no
problem with the basic assumption that part of what is
wrong in America's schools is that children and young
people no longer feel compelled to do what adults would
have them do just because the adults say they should or
because it is good for them." Children are not going to
change their behavior until they are presented with another alternative that gives them hope for a better existence. "Unfortunately, schools have always been better at teaching tolerance for boredom and passivity than at providing students with engaging work" (Schlechty, 1997, p.191). We, as quality educators, must find an alternative for bright students who find it difficult to connect school with real life situations. "Once a student takes the picture of school out of their quality world the student becomes divorced from school" (Glasser, 1998, p.70). This is the time in a student’s educational life when their grades and work ethic begin to reflect the discontent they feel with the existing system.

Legislation


Upon the conclusion of Governor Whitman’s State of the State address on January 11, 1996, the Charter School Program Act of 1995 (L 1995, c.426, N.J.S.A. 18A: 36A) was signed. The vision was that charter schools could be the catalyst for fundamental change. In the first two years after the New Jersey legislation was enacted 74 charter school applications were received, 37 in each year. Thirteen schools were in existence the first year, thirty the second year, and fifty-four schools serving between
1000 and 1400 students were expected during year three (Charter School Resource Center, 1999). "The charter school program enables teachers, parents, community leaders, private entities and institutions of higher learning to take the lead in designing public schools that will provide unique and innovative approaches toward the achievement of high academic standards" (New Jersey State Department of Education, 1998, p.1).

The Charter School Program Act of 1995 enables the Commissioner of Education to grant a four year provisional charter which can then be extended for five more years if the school is successful. "The New Jersey Administrative Code for charter schools (N.J.A.C. 6A: 11) was adopted by the State Board of Education in 1997. Amendments to these regulations were adopted by the State Board of Education in May 1998" (NJ State Dept. of Ed., 1998, p.2).

The Act establishes a cap of up to 135 charters with a minimum of three schools per county. Private and parochial schools are not eligible for charter school status and charters cannot charge tuition. Teachers, parents, institutions of higher learning or a private entity within the state can undertake the application process. The private entity, however, cannot make a profit or hold a
majority on the Board of Trustees (NJ State Dept. of Ed., 1998).

The charter is typically granted a waiver from certain state restrictions, although the waivers vary from state to state. With this freedom from state regulation comes the accountability of student performance and the realization that the school will lose the charter and be closed if it does not meet certain standards. The Commissioner retains the right to exempt a charter from regulations restricting traditional public schools with exception to issues regarding testing, assessment, civil rights, and health and safety issues. The board of trustees would have to create a rationale demonstrating the positive impact of the exemption on the educational goals and objectives of the charter school. A grievance committee is mandated by the state and created by the board of trustees whose membership is comprised of parents and teachers and chosen by parents and teachers (NJ State Dept. of Ed., 1998, Medler, 1996).

The Commissioner also has the authority to revoke the charter following review by the state board of education if it is non-compliant with the Charter School Act of 1995 or any subsequent updates to the Act. The Commissioner can place a charter on probation based on any deviation from its charter status or policies and regulations;
notification of this will come by mail. The Commissioner can grant the charter up to sixty days to stop operations. As delineated in N.J.S.A.:6-9, an appeals process has been established (NJ State Dept. of Ed., 1998).

The charter school must complete an annual report for accountability purposes. This comprehensive account of records and facilities is utilized in the annual renewal of the school. A copy of the report must be submitted to the Commissioner of Education, county superintendent’s office, district board of education, and the state operated school district if applicable. The report must also be made available to parents and guardians of the school’s children (NJ State Dept. of Ed., 1998).

**Nationwide Legislation.**

Arizona held the highest number of charter schools with 247 of the 766 charter schools functioning during the 1997-98 school year. California followed with 125, and Michigan accounted for 110 schools. Minnesota was the first to enact charter school legislation, yet only had 25 schools in existence in 1997-98 (Kane, 1998). Minnesota relinquishes sole chartering authority to local school districts which accounts for this small number. Mississippi does not have an appeals process for schools that are denied charter status, and consequently there were
no charter schools in this state during 1997-98 (Schneider, 1998).

The top three states represent 62.92% of the total number of schools in the United States as of the 1997-98 school year. States have been ranked based on the opportunities they provide for groups of teachers, parents, non-profit organizations, and/or corporations to be granted a charter. Those groups are viewed as being less susceptible to the political pressure of and conflicts of interest with local school districts (Schneider, 1998).

Criterion of Charter School Law.

Bierlein and Mulholland of the Morrison Institute (1994) developed the criteria for the categorization of charter school law. The first criterion outlines who is allowed to grant charters within the state. If local school boards are solely responsible for granting the charter, there is likely to be a conflict regarding funding which decreases the likelihood of being granted charter status (Kille, 1998).

In such states as Colorado, an appeals process has been established for this denial (Nathan, 1996). In New Jersey, charter schools are public institutions that operate independently of the local school boards of education. Instead, the Commissioner of Education grants
them charter school status, which allows the prospective school an unbiased application process (Kille, 1998, Kane, 1998). Start-up costs, a criterion of fiscal and legal autonomy, must also be considered in charter school legislation. Strong charter school legislation allows teachers, parents, non-profit organizations, or corporations to be granted a charter. Arizona and Michigan have no restrictions on the number of schools that receive charter status.

The state should offer fiscal incentives to the charter schools and the affected school districts, based on a recent U.S. Department of Education study which named lack of start up funds as the most significant barrier to developing a charter school (National Conference of State Legislatures, 1998). To maximize the effect of whole school reform the school should operate under exemptions from existing state and local regulations. Politicians in states with legislation favoring the charter school movement have embraced the innovative opportunities that these schools present. Ray Budde, considered to be the grandfather of the charter school movement, says we have a "one-in-many generations" chance to reform education as we know it (Schneider, 1998 p.17). School reform cannot take place if we restrict daily operations to stringent existing
local or state regulations. The renaissance of public education must be fostered through a continuous research and development trial and error mentality in which all educators must commit to a lifelong self-improvement philosophy.

**Opposition to the Law.**

Charter school legislation received a vote of confidence on May 17, 1999 after a three judge panel of the Appellate Division of the New Jersey Superior Court dismissed legal challenges brought by public school officials in Highland Park, East Orange, Trenton, Matawan-Aberdeen, and Red Bank. The legal action was based on the premise that charter schools adversely effect the quality of education, racial balance, and financial resources of traditional public schools. The court found that the charter school movement was too young to establish a predicted harm; it could potentially have a positive impact on the public system. The three-judge panel, in words written by Judge King, reflected “such negative impact is by no means inevitable...Indeed the impact may be positive” (Barrett-Carter, 1999, p.1).

Additional issues of charter school regionalization, public dollars being utilized by children who transferred from private schools to charter schools, and public funds
being used to renovate a privately owned building were all raised by the local school districts. Lisa Bennett, cofounder of Citizens for Public Education, is concerned that public schools will lose the actively involved parents that produce the good students who raise the academic bar in the competition for excellence. Bennett elaborated, “This is like abandoning the public school system, adding that charter schools are the precursor to school vouchers” (Barrett-Carter, 1999, p.18).

This court decision makes it clear that charter schools are not going to disappear in the near future as many public school supporters thought. While 47 schools opened their doors for the 1999-2000 school year, and six more already approved for the following year, the future of charter schools looks bright.

School Choice.

The courts are also involved in the issue of school choice. Lawmakers in New Jersey could not agree on a plan to implement a school choice program. Dave Hespe, New Jersey’s Commissioner of Education, is developing a plan that would afford a limited number of parents to choose which public school their children attend. The commissioner’s plan was on the agenda of the Wednesday, June 2, 1999 meeting of the State Board of Education.
Commissioner Klagholz first introduced the choice proposal a year ago. A clause in the 1996 school funding law created the opportunity for the Commissioner to circumvent lawmakers and institute school choice. The possibility angered legislators who believed Klagholz was abusing his authority. The Commissioner retreated from his initial position giving lawmakers a chance to develop their own plan (Associated Press, "Lawmakers Can’t Agree", 1999).

The choice proposal has been slowed with the developments in charter school legislation. Charter schools are taking tax dollars out of the urban school districts. The implementation of a choice program would further add to the financial strain that the charter innovation has created (Associated Press, "Lawmakers Can’t Agree", 1999).

Another controversial issue within the choice movement is the cap that would limit the participants in this program helping to stabilize the flight of the urban public school student. Lawmakers tried to compromise on this issue to satisfy both the public school districts who are losing 90% of the funding of the charter school students and the charter schools that can currently take up to 25% of a district’s student population (Associated Press, "Lawmakers Can’t Agree", 1999).
Hespe's regulations do not require changing existing laws because no cap was stipulated. Public school districts wanted lawmakers to lower the percentage of students that could be removed from a given district. Charter school advocates claim they are providing a quality alternative for their students. Senator Robert Martin (R-Morris) was originally opposed to Commissioner Klagholz's proposal, and sponsored the school choice legislation. Martin is now supporting Hespe's proposal because the state regulations are in line with what the lawmakers were trying to legislate. Martin expressed that the debate over charter school expansion "should not interfere with a very limited interdistrict school choice program" (Associated Press, "Lawmakers Can't Agree", 1999, p.5).

The interdistrict choice program developed by lawmakers called for a five-year pilot program which would allow one school in each county to take additional students tuition free. The driving force would be that students in failing schools would have the opportunity to attend successful schools. "The choice schools would receive additional state funding for those out-of-town students, while the students' home district would lose aid. Lawmakers have estimated that the program would eventually affect about 2000 students" (Associated Press, "Lawmakers
Can't Agree", 1999, p. 5). The Whitman administration would like to have a school choice program in place as early as September.

On Wednesday, June 2, 1999, Commissioner David Hespe presented his pilot choice program to the State Board of Education. Hespe detailed the five-year plan that would draw from no more than one school per county. Districts could sign up if they have the class space. The state will choose ten districts in the first year, fifteen in the second, and twenty-one in each year three through five. Parents who want to participate would complete their applications a year in advance, and enter a lottery system based on available space just as charter school parents do. Early reports had stipulated that there would not be a cap on the number of schools included based on legislative implications, however Mr. Hespe proposed a 7% cap per district. This rate is significantly lower than the 25% cap per district that the charter school innovation enjoys (Mooney, 1999).

The school choice plan is very close in design to the one state lawmakers were developing over the last year. The cap reflects the lobbying efforts of the New Jersey Education Association as well as the School Boards
Association. The plan was received favorably by the state board of education and lawmakers alike (Mooney, 1999).

**Accommodations for Parents.**

On Sunday, May 23, 1999, President Clinton gave the commencement address at Grambling University. He spoke of the fact that many of the graduates will some day be parents, and that parenting would be the most important job they would ever have. Clinton committed to extending support to parents needing to access sick time in order to take care of ill family members by converting their sick time to family leave time. Government employees will now be eligible to receive up to twelve weeks instead of the 13 days they currently receive.

The President urged business leaders to create a working climate where parents could take time during the day to meet with teachers as needed. The President told the graduates that their greatest challenge would be to balance their professional careers while nurturing a family environment expressing to their children that they are the most important things in their parents’ lives. The President spoke about creating an inquisitive climate for our children that embraced learning.

Mr. Clinton reflected that he had tripled federal spending for after school programs so that the empty school
building could be filled with the sounds of children playing and learning. This demonstrated the effort the government, communities, and schools are putting forth to support parents in the monumental task of raising our children. The commencement address was focused on the mission of connecting all the people in the United States to the goal of supporting the White House's efforts to increase spending for education and implementing policy changes in the workplace that would support parents in these efforts.

Charter Schools Nationally

In the state of California, the Learning Alternatives Resource Network (LEARN) developed legislation in 1985 calling for school choice within the public educational structure. A bill would soon rise sounding the alarm for school reform. School choice would receive much publicity in the ensuing years, however the separation of church and state would be its demise. Those politicians who called for educational change via the school choice voucher program were quick to gravitate toward the charter school movement. They wanted change but ran into a barrier as a result of the separation of church and state, which the parochial schools lobbying for a voucher system created.

the first reference to charter schools. The educator foresaw public school districts granting charters to teachers willing to develop new curriculum as a reward for their innovation (Kane, 1998).

At an educational conference in 1988, Sy Fliegel, a creative educator from East Harlem, and Albert Shanker, then-President of the American Federation of Teachers, were united in their support of the charter school concept (Winerip, 1998). Minnesota state senator, Ember Reichgott Jonge (D), embraced the concept and proposed the idea to the Minnesota State Legislature. From this, a citizen’s committee was created whose work produced the charter school model. Creating new public schools free from bureaucratic constraints fosters continuous implementation of new ideas, allows more than one agency to offer public education, and empowers parents and teachers to effect change in the educational system (Kane, 1998). The first charter school opened its doors in Minnesota in 1992, and as of the 1999-2000 school year 1682 schools in 31 states and the District of Columbia serving 350,000 students have been instituted. Five more states have legislation for charter schools, but have not yet opened their doors (Center for Education Reform, 1999).
Minnesota's leadership in the movement did not stop with the inception of the first school. The Center for School Change at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, under the direction of Joe Nathan, has remained in the forefront capturing the evolution of the charter school. Michigan, California, Arizona, and Colorado, led by the strong influence of their tradition of higher education, are also actively engaged in the charter school movement (University of Minnesota, 1998).

California passed legislation to increase their statewide cap on charter schools from 100 to 250 in 1998 through 1999. Michigan has three bills pending on charter legislation; two have already passed the House. One involves teachers becoming members of the public school retirement system. Colorado passed legislation allowing charter schools to continue beyond the original five year timeline showing support for the progress of the movement (Powell, Blackorby, Marsh, Finnegan, & Anderson, 1997).

President Clinton, in his strong support of charter schools, has called for quadrupling the number of charter schools to 3000 within two years. In the 1997-98 school year, Arizona's 241 charter schools and Michigan's 107 presented nearly half of the total number of charter
schools in the United States (Toch, 1998). The 1999-2000 school year has a national total of 1682 charter schools serving 350,000 students in 36 states and the District of Columbia. Arizona still champions the cause with 348 charter schools, California is second with 234, and Michigan is third with 175. These three states combine for 757 of the 1682 charter schools nationwide, accounting for 45% of the national total (Center for Educational Reform, 1999). In New Jersey, forty-seven charter schools serving 9,000 were opened in 1999 (NJ Dept. of Education, 1999).

First Year Report

The New Jersey Institute for School Innovation commissioned a report on the first year of charter schools in the state of New Jersey. This report, prepared by Professor Pearl Rock Kane of Columbia University's Teachers College, encompasses 200 interviews throughout all thirteen charter schools and includes 65 hours of observation. The study addresses such issues as how public schools and charter schools differ, and the opinions, experiences and attitudes of the students, parents and staff of charter schools. Also included are school design issues, for example the pupil average of charter schools (103 students) and the class size range (8-20 per classroom). Most charter schools have a longer school day and extended
school years. One of the charter schools is a boarding school, and four require students to wear uniforms. Site-based management is the rule of thumb with limited administration and support staff. The curriculum is teacher driven and is flexible enough to allow for deviation as a vehicle to promote innovation. Students are selected from a lottery system. School districts sponsoring charter schools range from the city of Newark’s North Star Academy to the affluent suburban Princeton Charter School (Kane, 1998).

The demographic information compiled offers an in-depth look at the infrastructure of the charter school population. Student enrollment ranges from 24 at the Gateway Charter School in Jersey City to 324 at the Leap Academy in Camden. Funding per pupil ranges from $5856 at Soaring Heights in Jersey City to $7615 at the Robert Treat Academy in Newark. Student withdrawal rates run from 25% at Gateway in Jersey City and the Samuel D. Proctor Academy in Ewing Township to 0% at the North Star Academy. Ethnic composition of the schools varies from 78% Hispanic at the Robert Treat Academy, to 98% Caucasian at the Suffolk County Charter School in Sparta, to 98% African-American at the Trenton Community Charter School. The ethnicity profile for all thirteen schools is comprised of 3% Asian,
22% Hispanic, 28% Caucasian, and 46% African-American (Kane, 1998).

The charter school movement has captured two very important factors for any school's success: parental interest and staff motivation. Professor Kane's 1998 report concluded that 90% of parents interviewed believe their child's academic experience in this venue was a positive one and that the educational process worked. The teachers interviewed praised a ten-hour workday. The educators cite the academic intimacy as being their intrinsic motivation. The directors state that the time constraints of the decreased administrative staff are inordinate, however they appreciate the close relationship with the parents. The school founders enjoy the student's academic success and the trustees express outstanding relationships with school directors.

Development and Growth

Funding.

The development of charter schools is determined by the amount of per pupil funding allotted by local and state governments. In Arizona, charter schools approved by the local school district have their funding determined by the size of the school district rather than the size of the school. Therefore, if the charter school has 100 students
it would be entitled to $3900 per student according to state funding standards. However, if the local school district approved the charter school funding, the charter school is only entitled to $3300 per student. This is a difference of $600 per student on the elementary level; the difference on the high school level is approximately $800 per pupil. This inequity causes charter schools to first apply for state approval and funding instead of local school board funding, further straining the affiliation between local school districts and the charter school fostering a competitive, adversarial relationship. When charter schools apply for state funding they will restrict their enrollment numbers in order to receive additional monies so as to not put a greater strain on the state’s budget. A demand is being created for more facilities and more administration, which will, in turn, divert money from direct classroom application (Essigs, 1997).

Charter schools are also eligible for transportation, $175 per student whether or not they ride the bus. If traditional districts in Arizona were funded this way, the Mesa Unified School District, the state’s largest district, would receive a 37% increase in transportation funding (Essigs, 1997). "Most superintendents insist that if it’s good to allow one school or group of schools to operate
outside of the confines of a state's education code or a union contract, it's even better for all schools to be given the option" (Harrington-Lueker, 1997, p.8).

Charter school funding is generated from public dollars, and the schools are most often started in urban areas where the traditional public system is failing. The procedure becomes problematic because the application process tends to exclude the children of the less involved parents, yet these are precisely the youngsters who need a strong public system the most (Schwartz, 1998).

Additionally, the millions of dollars spent to begin these research and development schools are and have been mismanaged by poor leadership decisions in some of the charters. The greatest concern stems from the number of children these schools will reach. "Charters can easily become a means of subsidizing private education for the few rather than a way of unfettering public schools from unnecessary bureaucracy, which is what the charter movement’s backers claim as the primary virtue of charters" (Neier, 1995, p.92). Policy makers and legislators may have shied away from vouchers as a form of choice because they are perceived as self-serving to private schools rather than beneficial to public schools. Charter schools do not appeal to the needs of the public at large or they
will suffer a fate similar to the voucher movement (Nazareno, 1999).

In some instances mismanagement of funds due to poor record keeping and immoral behavior by principals has given charter schools a poor reputation. In a Los Angeles charter school the principal used school funds to lease a sports car and hire a personal bodyguard. In an Arizona charter school, the principal misused the school funding to pay off her credit cards and secure a loan to buy a house. Fraud in these schools included inflation of student enrollment numbers to receive additional funding (Harrington-Lueker, 1997).

Mismanagement of funds is not the only challenge facing charter schools. The start up costs of securing and preparing a school to meet the educational as well as physical needs of students can be astronomical. Instructional materials and insurance for the school are additional financial considerations. Some school districts have adopted loan plans to pay for start up costs which can be paid back over the four-year contract of the charter school. Superintendents and school boards have great concern because of the costs of the services that the charter requires, including transportation, special education, and salaries. These services can all be
purchased from the hosting district, however if the school fails due to mismanagement of funds, the school will then incur the cost of these services (Harrington-Lueker, 1997).

**Parity.**

Parity is another consideration in the development of a charter school. The needs of the charter school must be comparable to the needs of the public school in order to maintain a balance in services (Harrington-Lueker, 1997). Similar to magnet schools, charter schools are attractive to the upper middle class parents in urban areas who have the resources and political clout to lobby for a public alternative to the failing public system without spending additional funds for private schools (Kozol, 1992). Of additional concern is the flight of the teachers to the charter schools, further upsetting the delicate balance of the already strained public system. With increased autonomy and a common vision for success among the students and parents, these schools present an enticing opportunity for teachers and students in schools with fewer resources (Harrington-Lueker, 1997).

**Growth.**

Charter schools are multiplying at an incredible rate. In 1996, the year began with 252 charter schools nationwide in ten states. By the end of 1996, 15 other states and the
District of Columbia had enacted charter school legislation. Operating charter schools totaled 428 in 1997 and nearly twice that in 1998 with 766 in existence (Schneider, 1998). Some states limit the number of charter schools their state can open. California increased its cap from 100 to 250 this year alone (Powell, et al., 1997).

The 1998 figures from the State Department of Education projected 54 charter schools serving 14,000 students for the 1999-2000 school year. Six schools chose a planning year leaving forty-seven charter schools in operation serving nearly 9,000 students. This is an increase of thirty schools from the original 1997 total of thirteen operational charters (N.J. Dept. of Ed., "Charter Schools", 1999). In 1997, those 13 charter schools began the school year serving 1344 students (Kane, 1998).

Nationally the charter school numbers grew from one in 1992 to 1682 schools in 31 states and the District of Columbia serving 350,000 students in the fall of 1999. These numbers are minute compared to the number of public schools operating nationwide.

The number of active charter schools in New Jersey has increased by seventeen for the 1999-2000 school year, more than doubling the current enrollment from 4300 to over ten thousand. The New Jersey Charter School Resource Center
(1999) has published an approved list of fifty-four schools for the 1999-2000 school year. Seven of these schools chose a planning year, while 47 opened their doors to serve approximately 9000 students. Seven charter schools were approved in Trenton alone. Jersey City has shown a decrease of 5% in its city’s Catholic school enrollment since the inception of charter schools in 1994. Jersey City has six charter schools with two more scheduled to open in the 1999-2000 school year (CSRC, 1999). In New Jersey, 10% of all charter school students came from non-public schools with the highest percentage of sending districts being Trenton, Jersey City and Newark. Three point eight million dollars in state aid would be required in the 2000-2001 school year to fund pupils previously unaccounted for in public schools i.e., pre-school and non-public school students. The total amount of charter school funding, including local tax dollars and state aid, provided by districts in which charter schools have been established is estimated to be nearly $62 million (N.J. Dept. of Ed., "Charter Schools", 1999).

In some states local school boards are the only authority that can grant a charter. This limits the number of schools in most cases because charters are funded with local school dollars creating political tension. States
with charter school friendly legislation allow the State Department of Education to grant charter approval based on the viability of the school’s application, not the approval of the local school district. This removes the possibility that the charter school will not be granted for political or financial reasons (Perkins-Gough, 1997).

All states provide for the conversion of public schools to charter schools. In certain states private schools can convert to public charters. The A.G.B.U. Alex and Marie Manoogian School in Southfield, Michigan, for example, was a private Armenian church school before it converted to a charter in 1996. The school tripled its revenue in the process. Its board of trustees, faculty, and student body are still predominantly Armenian (Toch, 1998).

Clinging to a slim majority, most states allow the school to be employers in their own right, not requiring them to adhere to collective bargaining constraints which public schools must strictly abide by. The separation from additional policies and legislation present the opportunity for innovative alternative education strategies to be tested and for the country to access the data (U.S. Dept. Ed., 1998).
New Jersey Charter schools are public schools by which state legislation through policy dictate must be granted by the Commissioner of Education. These schools operate independently of district boards of education. They are managed by a board of trustees established to be public representatives authorized by the state to control the school (New Jersey State Dept. of Ed., 1998).

"Charter approaches vary from state to state, but what they share is a contractual relationship between the public and a school, and a funding and regulatory system that at this stage leaves many issues of equity and access problematic" (Meier, p.92). The charter school form of choice lends itself to the notion of caring for the greatest good of the whole society.

Reasons for Starting Charter Schools.

Completed research (Manno, Finn, Bierlein, & Vanourek, 1997, U.S. Department of Education & University of Minnesota, 1997) on the reasons charter schools are started suggests that the realization of educational vision is the motivating factor. Of charter school staff interviewed, 61.1% felt that realizing their vision was the main reason for starting a charter school, and 66.9% of newly created charter schools identified vision as the catalyst. Charter school supporters cite such educational approaches as
project-based curricula, experiential learning, thematic instruction, team teaching, cooperative learning, and instructional uses of technology as examples of innovative academic programs and strategies. This type of experimentation is not usually possible in the traditional learning environment.

The second most important reason for instituting a charter school is autonomy (20.8%) with 50% of those schools being pre-existing public schools. Freedom from rules, regulations, school laws, and traditional practices have motivated the administration of these schools to convert to charter schools. These conventional procedures can inhibit innovative educational programs (Manno, et al., 1997, U.S. Dept. of Ed. & University of Minnesota, 1997).

A special population of students is the third reason for the institution of charter schools with 12.6% of the total charter school population citing this as the primary reason for founding their school. Eighty eight percent of this total was comprised of newly created charter schools. This is a particularly important statistic because of the very high percentage of newly created schools choosing a focused student agenda. The special population of students may be the olive branch of peace that bridges the gap between public districts and charter schools. If
charter schools can be instituted to address such problem areas in a school district as the high cost of out of district placement, the district can actually save money by the presence of the supplemental programs offered by the school. In turn, the district will be motivated to support the charter creating a cooperative venture. Forging a working relationship with the public school district is imperative to the success of the charter (Manno, et al., 1997, U.S. Dept. of Ed. & University of Minnesota, 1997).

Finance was identified as a motivating factor in 5.8% of all charter schools. Fifty eight point four percent of those were pre-existing conversion public schools suggesting that the frustration of limited funds and problems has caused certain public schools to convert to charter schools as a means of increasing the educational opportunities through additional funds (Manno, et al., 1997, U.S. Dept. of Ed. & University of Minnesota, 1997).

Parental involvement accounts for merely 4.9% of all cited reasons, however 50% of the newly created charter schools’ reasons for implementation stem from this factor. This data exposes the important role that parents are playing in newly created charter schools (Manno, et al., 1997, U.S. Dept. of Ed. & University of Minnesota, 1997).
Attracting students was important to 9.5% of all schools interviewed. Recruiting students is especially crucial to pre-existing private schools which account for a large portion of that total. Private schools that are struggling in business operations may not be the best recipients of charter school funding (U.S. Dept. of Ed. & University of Minnesota, 1997).

Teachers play a more varied role in charter schools than they do in traditional public institutions. The educators record a longer working day and have assumed many of the administrative duties because there are fewer administrators. The director of the school is typically the only administrator in the building. The student’s role in the disciplinary process is relatively unchanged (Kane, 1998). Charter schools have become involved in service and community based educational opportunities. Some schools necessitate the completion of a service learning project as a graduation requirement, for example addressing education by involving students in food banks and senior citizen complexes (University of Minnesota, 1998).

Demographics

Charter schools are not based on a central idea other than a break from what has not been successful. The statistical data suggests that 60% of all charter schools
have less than 200 students, however the school’s educational philosophy and pupils’ age and grade levels vary from school to school (Perry, 1998, Toch, 1998). Some schools are very traditional in their ideology, while others intentionally deviate from the norm. Certain schools strive for classroom structure and others pursue a less structured environment. Many schools are developed to serve a specific population and they almost always reflect the demographics of the geographic area. Schools in communities with dominant racial and ethnic trends usually reflect those trends within the student population. In New Jersey, the charter school ethnicity profile is 71% minority, which is significantly higher than the public school average. Compare this to the state of Arizona where the Caucasian population is greater in elementary charter schools at 68% than in district schools that have a 55% Caucasian population (Powell, et al., 1997).

**Parent Involvement**

Charter schools in California were demographically similar to the state average, however 60% of charter school students were less likely to be low income as compared to other students in their districts (Powell, et al., 1997). This suggests the students who will benefit most from a charter school education may never receive the opportunity
because parents must apply for their children to attend charter schools. If the parents do not fill out the application the child is ineligible for acceptance. The majority of the charter schools require parental involvement at some level which will exclude even more children. **Robinson vs. Cahill** (1976) initiated charter school legislation by highlighting the school financing system, and, in turn, was the catalyst for the Public School Act (1975) which addressed thorough and efficient education (Kane, 1998). It was in the spirit of that legislation to positively impact all youngsters who were receiving a substandard education, not merely those children whose parents applied for a better education or volunteered their time to the school.

To attract low income parents or parents of at-risk children to become involved in the choice process we must educate them about the benefits afforded their children. Charter schools in New Jersey have visitation weeks established and advertised by the media. They also have parent workshops. One school even has a parent academy, Project LEAP (Leadership, Education, and Partnership), in conjunction with the Center for Strategic Urban Community Leadership and Rutgers University, Camden Campus. Parents Academy offers ongoing training for parents of students at
Project LEAP, focusing on delivering parents as partners for educational change (Kane, 1998, Office of Innovation and Practices, 1998).

The academy recruits and selects students and parents for enrollment, keeps track of parental involvement, provides training and parent workshops, and works collaboratively with the health and human service clinic. Recruitment is accomplished through a myriad of avenues e.g., newspapers, radio advertisements, and information packets distributed to libraries, medical centers, and day care centers. The Academy has four modules: Individual Empowerment, Family Functioning (containing two parts), and Family and Community Involvement. The program begins with the personal and interpersonal needs of parents, stress management, conflict resolution, values clarification, inner and outer direction, and lifelong learning. Family functioning focuses on modeling desired behaviors and discussing behavior modification. The second part concentrates on building the children's self-esteem and self-concept. The last module focuses on political advocacy and proactive community involvement including attainment of information on resources and how to utilize them (Kane, 1998, Office of Innovation and Practices, 1998).
The Study of Charter Schools (U.S. Dept. of Ed. & University of Minnesota, 1997) used field workers to visit schools across the country and found that 19% of those charter schools used conventional approaches to parental involvement. Forty three percent of the visited schools used such less traditional parental involvement approaches as parent workshops, support groups, regularly scheduled parent meetings, utilizing parent volunteer efforts for tutoring, and offering parents at-home learning activities to support and reinforce school objectives.

Consequently, charter schools have a very high approval rating from parents. Minnesota charter schools boast a 90% approval rating while the nationwide public school approval rating is 65% (University of Minnesota, 1998). Charter schools take a business stance that students are the products, parents are the customers, and it is the responsibility of the school to serve the customer.

Finance

The privatization of public schooling has put an end to the monopoly that local school boards had on spending tax dollars for public education. The fiscal school year of 1996 produced eighteen million dollars in federal appropriations. In 1997, that figure rose dramatically to
almost sixty million dollars and continued its rapid ascent in 1998 with eighty million dollars awarded through federal tax dollars. This figure excludes local and state dollars (U.S. Dept. of Ed., 1998). As the economic opportunities increase for public school resources, so must their accountability.

**Monitoring.**

Charter schools were designed to pursue innovative educational opportunities with great energy and enthusiasm with educational excellence as the primary goal. Many schools across the country adhere to this standard, however they run the risk of being overshadowed by corrupt and ineffective, financially draining failures. As of spring 1998, Arizona had 241 charter schools, 50 of which are under the jurisdiction of local school boards that are receiving criticism for their monitoring efforts of these schools (Gifford, Ogle, & Solmon, 1998). It is difficult for local school boards to monitor charter schools when they are being criticized for the high administrative costs they have in place for the daily operation of the district. To increase the workload of these districts in order to monitor additional schools would require an increase in administration.
The remaining 191 charter schools fall under the direction of the state board of education which is not eager to bring attention to the abuses in the system. Arizona’s 1997 state report, conducted by the staff of elected state superintendent Lisa Graham Keegan, was delayed in its submission. In response to criticism that the charter school evaluations were altered by her top aide, Keegan replied, “I would prefer that everything the monitors saw was wonderful, but if it wasn’t, OK. In the main I’m pleased far and away with the quality of public charter schools...How much monitoring do you think is going on in the traditional system?” (Toch, 1998, p.41-2) The report revealed over three dozen schools that in fact did not meet the state educational standards in Arizona but were left open because they were not found to be physically endangering children, embezzling money or defrauding taxpayers. These schools did not meet the expectations of charter school proponents, and without proper supervision their failures will overshadow the positive accomplishments of other schools. (Toch, 1998)

Facilities.

The cost of facilities for a charter school comes from the school’s working budget. This is not the case in the majority of public schools which have owned the
property since the inception of the district. The charter must use a large portion of its per pupil spending to finance the building resulting in a reduction of the monies allotted for the students' educational needs. Facilities have presented a unique challenge to charter school founders and numerous solutions have been sought. Some schools have been fortunate enough to be given space in local or state government buildings or lease space from commercial property, public schools, or churches. The expense of the facility varies from situation to situation. In rare cases the facility is free, although more often than not the school pays full market price. This situation could leave the school with little more than pens, pencils, and recycled textbooks which is hardly enough to meet the needs of students facing a technologically advanced, multimedia based society (Medler, 1996, Powell, et al., 1997, Kane, 1998).

Many schools are located in buildings that were not designed for educational purposes. This poses a barrier for such extracurricular activities and electives as performing arts, athletics, and physical education, which are paramount to a well-rounded educational curriculum. Charter schools in urban cities can lease time from YMCAs or other recreational clubs, and may additionally have
access to performing arts centers. Schools in rural or suburban areas have a more difficult time creating space for these types of activities (Manno, et al., 1997, Yaffe, 1998).

Results of Financial Constraints.

Due to these financial constraints charter school educators on average have less years of experience than public school educators and a smaller population of certified teachers. In New Jersey, 54% of the teachers have less than three years of experience and 28% of the teachers are certified via the alternate route (Powell, et al., 1997, Kane, 1998). Also affected by the financial constraints were the number of New Jersey's students with disabilities served equaling only 4%, compared to the public school state average of 9.8% or the national public school average of 9.77% (U.S. Dept. of Ed., 1997). This is a byproduct of the expense of a child study team evaluation that would require charter schools to employ additional staff or receive the cooperation of the public school district to have students evaluated and regularly follow up on those students through Individual Educational Plan meetings. Without the child study team evaluation students cannot be classified as learning disabled, and therefore are ineligible for state and federal funds which would
assist the school in meeting the student’s educational needs.

Charter schools have been known to share administrative services, transportation, food services, insurance coverage, purchasing services, and special education staff with public schools. Charter schools may have difficulty meeting the needs of the special education students because of the limited staff. The charter school might produce the least restrictive environment for the youngster, however there is limited support staff available when that student can no longer function effectively in that classroom. This will result in a negative impact on the learning environment for the remaining students (Manno, et al., 1997, Powell, et al., 1997).

Advancements

Throughout the Industrial Revolution the people of the United States have prided themselves on their practical visionary ability to forge ahead in the realm of technology faster than any other nation. The advancements began with the Model T Ford, progressed to the flight of the Wright brothers, and continued through the military build up through two World Wars that led to the enhancement of both modes of transportation. The “Space Race” that took us to
the Moon proved that Americans could conquer any innovative challenge.

It is frustrating to think that despite our abilities for technological advancement, American public schools are stuck back in the beginning of the Industrial Age using the Frederick Taylor model for school development. "We ought to have more schools that help youngsters grow and develop. This is not to deny the enormous problems in our society that contribute to more achievement in school" (Nathan, 1996, p.17). This view of our present educational system seems to be a common one among charter school educators. Nathan states that our schools need to do more to address the concerns of today's students. This is not to say that our schools have caused all of the problems that afflict our youth. We as a society need to share this responsibility with our partners in education. Public schools are going to realize that a charter school in their district can be a research and development resource. The charter school can assist the school district in developing new teaching strategies and curriculum as well as implementing technology (Nathan, 1996).

Technological Innovation.

Technology is essential to this environment.

Learning is being transformed by the electronic media
whether the schools choose to recognize this or not" (Bossert, 1997, p. 15). Today's children are growing up in the technological revolution we call the Information Age. They begin with video games and the progression to a computer mouse is a natural one, whereas adults can reflect on life without computers and are having a difficult time meeting the technologically advanced children halfway. Perhaps this is why more and more students do not see schools as places where authentic, quality work is taking place. Children need to experience authentic, quality work in school in order to feel that it will help them to be successful in the 21st century.

Schoolhouse of the Future.

The alternate schoolhouse will be technology-based, fully equipped with not just a computer lab, but lap-top personal computers in addition to provide the students with the flexibility and resources they need to be successful in this educational environment. Community resources can be accessed to provide the support services that are not being provided in the traditional school setting.

The computer lab will bring us to the Internet where teachers and students can work together to find research and develop a virtual library to supplement the existing school curriculum. Through e-mail students can communicate
with other students throughout the United States and the rest of the world. Partnerships with other school systems can be established to compare writing pieces, set up chat rooms on educational topics, and work on cooperative learning activities. Virtual lecture halls can be designed and made interactive, linking students to experiences with higher education institutions where they can actually ask questions of the professor and receive immediate responses. The students could contact on-line tutors to receive instruction on subjects pertinent to the curriculum or to prepare for standardized tests (Leddo, 1997, November, 1998). The biggest advantage of on-line education is the opportunity to create a learning environment that can be accessed at different times and at different stages. One lab could be at the local hospital, another at the town library, and each student could have a laptop to take home allowing for optimal learning to take place twenty four hours a day (Gamash & Nordquist, 1997).

Technology has created another avenue for students to contact teachers, as well as parents to contact teachers and vice versa. Web sites can serve as projects of authentic work, creating a bridge between school curriculum and real life experiences. Multicultural interdisciplinary lessons can be viewed by parents from work during the day
and discussed over dinner in the evening, or viewed and discussed in the evening on the home computer (November, 1998).

Internet capabilities will afford educators the opportunity to align with the National Educational Technology Standards, launched through the Goals 2000 initiative focusing on academic standards for student performance and development based on local, state, and national plans. These standards are based on a variety of media formats, various means to access and interchange information, gathering data and compiling information, the ability to draw conclusions, analyze data and formulate generalizations, problem solving, and locating additional information as needed (Bitter, Thomas, Knezek, Friske, Taylor, Wiebe, & Kelly, 1997). Core Curriculum Content Standards provide innovative educational programs with an outline to follow when creating new programs. "Competency-based graduation standards offer us the opportunity to create pathways that complement the learning styles and career interests of our students in ways that enable them to see the relevance of a high school curriculum and achieve the same standards" (Monson, 1997, p.22).

Technology through the use of the Internet gives students authentic tools to be creative, problem solve,
research information, and engage in interactive learning that allows the students to be both teacher and learner, ultimately reinforcing lifelong learning skills. Teachers must be willing to sit side by side with students and work collaboratively forging a fresh new educational environment where lesson plans are replaced by web sites (November, 1998).

Other Internet resources can be developed with educators throughout the country and rest of the world, as well as with schools in the same area. Educators can work with students to produce quality work that parents can view on a daily basis through student portfolios available on the Internet (November, 1998). Creative projects that the students produce, such as web sites, are available for the rest of the world to see. This is a wonderful way to validate the students' work and allow them to demonstrate their success. Students could also participate in electronic field trips to museums and science centers, and work on collaborative science investigations with classes from other schools (Land, 1997). The Internet can open doors for students that they may never have been able to see without innovation and technology.

Technology is the key to the future of education, however, computers and the Internet are only as effective
as the professionals who organize and supervise the use of the information. It has been said that it takes a village to raise a child, which implies that we need a collaborative effort between parents, students, the school district, local, state, and federal agencies, and the community. We must create synergy among all of these resources to foster a community of learners so that our children will be successful in the 21st century. The "thinking outside of the box" model that charter schools create could provide the catalyst.

Working with Public Schools

David Snead, the Detroit superintendent of schools, is in support of the charter school movement. He reports that his district is "finding the charter idea is helping encourage other schools in our district to examine what they are doing" (Nathan, 1996, p.86). In large urban school districts charter schools have served to impede the flight of affluent families to private schools, which, in turn, will increase public school enrollment and allow for additional funding to the district.

Teacher unions should allow charter schools to contract services the school needs. As a result, the public schools would be encouraged to implement innovative educational strategies such as empowering teachers in the
decision making process of the instructional future of the school (Nathan, 1996). For the superintendent who is looking to make fundamental changes in the current practices of a school system but does not have the in-house support of the majority of the staff, a charter school is an advantageous opportunity for research and development. It also exemplifies how successful innovative teaching techniques can be, which will encourage support for the changes the administration is attempting to implement (Harrington-Lueker, 1997).

Arizona has some of the most liberal charter school legislation in the United States. George Garcia, superintendent of the Tucson Unified School District, points out the lack of consideration given to accountability due to limited supervision and monitoring of these schools. In a time where school funding is hard to come by, large financial resources are pouring into charter schools with little accountability. Another concern is that charter schools, like private schools before them, will be created to keep certain types of people together. John Fortheringham, executive director of the Washington Association of School Administrators, states “personally I think [a number of charter school organizers] want their
kids to be with their own type" (Harrington-Lueker, 1997, p.8).

When urban schools complain of the flight of their student population to private schools, and target that population to reenter public schools, the administration is aligning itself with a philosophy resembling elitism. Eric Premack, the director of the charter school project at the Institute of Educational Reform at California State University, Sacramento, explains his perception of the mission of charter schools. He feels, "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" (Harrington-Lueker, 1997, p.8)

In President Clinton's 1997 State of the Union address, he called for the implementation of three thousand charter schools by the year 2000. If each of those charter schools had 200 students, a population of 600,000 students nationwide would be served. That would put tremendous pressure on public education to change. The question is, however, can we afford to fund a research and development project of this magnitude without compromising the education given to the majority who will still be in
existing public schools, and based on the current status of
the public school system do we have a choice?

Collaboration

One of the biggest advantages that charter schools
have over public schools is a working relationship between
students, parents, teachers, and community members. To
achieve the national educational goal of improving the
current educational system, schools must evoke the support
of more than educators alone. True institutional change
will only be possible with the support of students,
parents, and the community. Parents and community members
will not provide the budgetary support necessary to achieve
the transformational changes to propel the public school
system to the next level without being connected to the
change process via the decision making stage. Students
must also be invested in the change process. They must see
the importance of the goals of the school and be connected
to the vision. Community resources can greatly contribute
to the opportunity for success of the public school. By
empowering these resources through committee involvement
the school wins their support.

More and more educators are becoming aware of the need
to connect with parents in order to maximize student
achievement. "Researchers recognize that a close-knit
community, linking families and schools has important benefits for improving student commitment to schoolwork and the academic outcomes that follow" (Becker, et al., 1997, p. 512). Private schools have achieved a high academic standard despite the lack of financial resources such as those of public schools. Cobb (1992) suggested that Catholic schools may not be selective based on academic ability or income; they are, however, selective based on parental interest.

Charter schools have the unique responsibility of recruiting students who are interested in an alternative educational setting. Parents are quite often involved in all facets of the educational planning, and they may serve as founding members, on the board of trustees, be involved in curriculum development, facilities management and hiring a director. This involvement in the initial planning stage of the school usually leads to a more active role in daily school life from volunteering at school functions, parent meetings, planning school policies, and development of the decision making process (Powell, et al., 1997, U.S. Dept. of Ed., 1997, Kane, 1998).

Limitations

The socioeconomic status of the parents may limit their opportunity to attend school functions as both
parents could have employment obligations. Work schedules may interfere with the parents' ability to attend the activities. Securing childcare for the siblings of the student could be problematic if it is a single parent home. Transportation to the school building may also be an obstacle.

Saul Cooperman, in his “Teachers Can’t Replace What Parents Fail to Give” (1999), feels, “part of me believes very much in schooling and what good schools can do, yet another part wonders how schools can be islands of excellence when they are frequently surrounded by seas of hopelessness and despair” (p.7). This former Commissioner of Education speaks of single-parent families headed by women that are the rule rather than the exception in today’s society, especially in our urban communities. These single parents have accepted the challenges of raising their children despite the overwhelming responsibilities the job requires. To be the primary caregiver and the only provider inevitably leaves someone short-changed. Monetary resources are imperative for survival; parents have little choice but to dedicate their energy to supporting their families.

Parents who do not speak English may be hesitant to attend the functions due to a language barrier. English as
a Second Language programs are valuable in connecting non-
English speaking parents to the school community.

Parent involvement may differ based on the practices
of different ethnic backgrounds. Muller and Kerbow (1993)
have found that Asian, Hispanic, white, and African
American parents are involved in different levels of the
educational process. For example, white parents are more
social with their children, specifically by talking with
their children about school experiences. Asian and
Hispanic American parents are less likely to become
involved in school activities. This does not suggest,
however, that they are not concerned about their children’s
academic progress. Asian American parents are more
involved at home especially in terms of setting
restrictions for their children.

Having high expectations for parent involvement could
possibly lead to alienation and exclusion of students and
their families who do not meet the school’s expectations.
This is particularly evident in schools that have parent
contracts with set guidelines for mandatory participation
dictating a particular number of hours and events per week,
month or year which the parents must attend (Becker, et
al., 1997).
Charter schools eager to tap the potential of parent involvement must be careful to not isolate parents whose work schedules, customs, or language barriers may impede regular contact with the schools. Developing avenues to reach out to and connect with these parents despite those obstructions, such as involving bilingual educators or researching various cultures represented in the community, will establish a common ground and begin the communication process. Charter schools have created learning environments for all students, including at-risk or low achieving youngsters (Becker, et al., 1997, Quiroz, Greenfield, & Altchech, 1999).

Contracts

Teachers can construct a friendly, inviting school atmosphere by attempting to incorporate parents as participants in the educational process. The educators can send home copies of unit plans, make frequent parental contacts to reinforce pupil progress, conduct home visits, create student-generated portfolios with quality work for parents to review and sign, and assign projects that parents and students can collaboratively work on (Becker, et al., 1997). In order to incorporate a profound level of parental participation, Becker, et al. believe using a contract with them is effective. "The greater levels of
parent involvement at charter schools, coupled with their widespread use of parent contracts, suggests that contracts are working as a mechanism for increasing parent involvement” (p. 522). Parent contracts outline the responsibilities and define the role they play in their children’s education. Contracts give parents an action plan to assist their children’s educational progress. However, a constant balance must be maintained to not overburden parents to the point where they begin to remove themselves from the educational life of their youngsters.

Focus must lie with engaging the students whose parents refuse to connect with their child’s educational life, and assuring that those children do not feel isolated. Parental involvement must not be viewed by children as crucial to their success, and that without it they will be held accountable. Students who are not receiving appropriate support could be assigned mentors. These adult role models can reinforce the importance of the educational process. Parent contracts should not serve to exclude students from charter schools. Thirteen of the twenty-three parent contracts in a study conducted by Becker, et al. (1997) contained a failure to comply term. Becker, et al. point out that schools which require a contract stipulating parental involvement rarely offer more
in return than a promise to educate. "It was a rare contract that even required a school representative’s signature. Where a signature was called for, it was almost never preceded by a statement of promise or oath, contrary to the pledge the parents signed" (p.524). The authors went so far as to say, "In essence, the structure of the contracts is such that the school has promised little beyond monitoring parents" (p.524).

Parent contracts obligate them to homework assistance, attendance at a designated number of school functions (including parent workshops), participation at monthly parent meetings, and donation of volunteer time. Attendance statements in the contract require reasons for an absence and have a policy on tardiness. The contracts vary in structure based on their failure to comply clause. "In particular, three times as many contracts with a failure to comply clause required parents to support school rules at home (62% vs. 20%), three times as many also specified a child’s attendance as a provision (69% vs. 20%), and more than twice as many specified homework support (62% vs. 30%)" (Becker, et al., 1997, p.525). Schools with failure to comply rules have determined that within the school’s goals and mission statement parental involvement is a top priority. They have identified ways
to meet the challenges that this concern can cause. Schools with parents representing lower socio-economic strata with fewer professional obligations, and students representing various minority groups with low levels of achievement were twice as likely to require contracts as their counterparts in wealthy districts (Becker, et al., 1997).

Contracts are not just a commitment on the school's part to empower parents, but rather a way to hold them accountable for their children's performance. Becker, et al. (1997) discuss contracts in schools with lower achieving, higher minority students to be restricting in the means to involve the parents in their school. These schools have specific visions of how they wish to utilize parent support. Students from wealthy school districts in suburban communities are less likely to dictate stringent policies outlining parental involvement.

**School Choice**

"If a significant number of Americans abandon public education - either out of lethargy or by opting for private, religious, ethnic or elite academies - we risk turning public schools into schools of last resort" (Meier, 1995, p.5). When we consider school choice it must be done in the purest democratic sense. If we only give choice to
the privileged who are sending their children to private school and are going to use the voucher as part of the deposit or tuition, then the disadvantaged are excluded.

In his *Savage Inequalities* (1992), Jonathan Kozol reminds us that Brown vs. Board of Education (1954), the landmark decision regarding desegregation, served to increase the expectations of the disadvantaged. Yet, forty-five years later we are still depriving the students most in need the educational opportunities afforded children of affluent communities who are much less in need. "The cumulative effect of our private choices, especially on those least able to exercise choice in powerful ways, is thus blurred over until it appears to be another law of nature - some have better luck than others" (Meier, 1995, p.79). Charter schools are a form of choice; parents have to choose to fill out the application and go through the lottery process.

Steven R. Covey postulates instead opting for a win-win principle as outlined in his *Principle-Centered Leadership* (1991). Society conditions us to believe we must have an advantage over others to be successful in our endeavors. We cling to the belief that there must be a loser for every winner widening the gap between the haves and the have-nots, pulling us all down in the process.
Public education in the purest sense creates a win-win opportunity for all children.

The intent of charter schools is not to replace public education, but rather to work with the public system to create new opportunities for learning. Meier (1995) proposes that:

Change won’t happen if it depends on policy makers, big name task forces, well intended governors, or systems-thinkers. Change will take people who remember what otherwise gets lost: that it’s not just about building a powerful America, beating out Japan, or even world class job skills; it’s about creating a more powerful citizenry and a more caring one. (p. 184)

Meier alludes to the essence of education. It is not about nationalism in the Information Age of the 21st century, rather it is about helping people reach their potential through discovering information and communicating with each other. To become more self-sufficient people must be more economically self-reliant. This will give them the opportunity to take care of their own families placing fewer burdens on society. We must establish a society that believes in a win-win philosophy, and public education must provide opportunity for all children.
Choice in Education

Programs of choice have been successfully implemented into public school districts. New York City's District 4 put a choice policy into action in the mid-1970's under then Superintendent Anthony Alvarado and Sy Fliegel, Director of Alternative School Programs. The system changed in that "where there were twenty-two schools in twenty-two buildings in 1974, less than ten years later fifty-one schools occupied twenty buildings" (Meier, 1995, p.94). Parents then were given the right to shop around within District 4 to find the school that best suited their children based on their individual needs. The choice structure within the public school system, created by Alvarado and Fliegel, served to connect parents and educators alike to the democratic procedure evident in public schools. This sense of control over their children's future is a driving force in parents' decisions to send their children to private schools. Democratic schools assume that parents and children are customers, and that educators have a duty to develop the youngsters' educational potential or the parents can choose to send them elsewhere. This greater accountability will hopefully lead to reflection and continued pursuit of knowledge,
which will in turn foster innovation. This will serve to create a better educational experience for all children.

Deborah Meier spent almost thirty years in the public school setting as both a teacher and administrator. She views school choice as a catalyst for the necessary change to improve the educational system. "I believe that choice is in fact an essential tool for saving public education" (1995, p.93). The autonomy given to teachers, parents and students creates an atmosphere of trust and belief in each other's abilities. "They are schools with a focus, with staff brought together around common ideas, free to shape a whole set of school parameters in accord with those ideas, all within an enormous public school system" (p.93). Often teachers, parents, and students feel powerless in the direction of the learning process; this leads to a disconnection from the people around them. This breakdown of the school community erodes the learning process.

**Equity in Education**

Yonezawa and Oakes (1999) in their "Making Parents Partners in the Placement Process" describe a white, upper middle class student with a stay-at-home mother active in school activities who is lobbying to keep her child in an honors math class while his performance warrants removal according to school policy. On the other hand, an African-
American student from a low socioeconomic background has a single parent mother with minimal education, is involved in parent athletic groups, and is intimidated to become involved in her son’s educational pursuits. She leaves her son’s educational decisions up to him because she feels he has more education than she does and she trusts his decision-making abilities.

An arrangement is made to have the Caucasian student remain in the honors math class with the assistance of a tutor and medication for his diagnosed Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. Meanwhile, the African-American child quietly accepts his demotion to college prep classes without even a phone call to his mother from the guidance counselor. “Research suggests that parents with more education and money intervene more on their child’s behalf” (Yonezawa & Oakes, 1999, p.34). This does not suggest that parents from disadvantaged backgrounds do not support their children. Rather, parents choose means of involvement that best suit their knowledge (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Oakes & Guiton, 1995; Yonezawa, 1997).

Charter schools are designed to address individual equity in educational opportunities by providing all children, especially at-risk students, the opportunity to choose highly effective schools. Those “at-risk” are
defined as low-income, urban, minority students. Charter school policy can affect these students in two ways, either by converting fading public schools to charter schools or creating new schools designed to provide an innovative alternative to public schools. Forty-five point nine percent of New Jersey charter school students are economically disadvantaged, while the public schools have only 26% disadvantaged students in their population (NJ Dept. of Ed., "Charter Schools", 1999).

The need to address low-income, urban, minority students leads to a closer look at individual equity versus group equity. Research by Kozol (1992) and Comer (1997) has documented the plight of at-risk minority students in public education, and claims that they have been all but abandoned. "The United States Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights (OCR) recently stated that charter schools may recruit special populations as long as the recruitment process is directed toward the general population" (Lane, 1998, p. 16). The school sample population should reflect the make up of the community’s total population.

Concentration on group equity, if monitored through legislation that assures all groups are equally represented, presents the greatest opportunity for success.
However, if policy is not established to create equal opportunities for all groups the isolation, stratification, and inequality that will result provides the greatest opportunity for failure. The three key policy decisions for charter schools and public education are: educating all parents to become involved in the choice movement, providing avenues for best practices and innovations to be transferred from charter schools to public schools, and emphasizing accountability through high academic achievement standards (Lane, 1998).

**Social Address.**

Social address and family process are two common concepts in parental involvement research. Social address refers to ethnic background, parental educational attainment, socioeconomic status, and family structure. Family process is based on the level of importance parents place on educational attainment by providing support, encouragement, and a positive attitude. Family process includes parental involvement, discipline and parenting styles. "The effects of family processes on educational experience are usually not independent of the effects of family status" (Lam, 1997, p.7).

Our own experiences tell us that socioeconomic status provides people with the opportunity for continued higher
education. Therefore, the expectation for educational advancement is increased when aspirations for student achievement are high based on attitudes formed by a history of family success in school. A favorable outlook on education is naturally going to elevate support and encouragement, and a high level of hope will permeate throughout the family (Lam, 1997).

A stable socioeconomic background is not the only indicator for success. Parents can be very supportive by displaying a positive attitude without having attained a high level of financial success. Monetary resources may be one factor that has an effect on parental process, but there are other variables. "We need to shift from exclusively using family status as moderating variables to incorporating family processes as mediating variables" (Lam, 1997, p. 8). Educators have no control over the level of socioeconomic attainment their students' families have. Educational professionals can, however, have a positive impact on process by providing resources for parents detailing how to help their children learn.

Social address is also defined by family structure. The make-up of the family i.e., two-parent home, stepparent, single parent, or foster care, can have an effect on the family process aspect of parental
involvement. Parenting styles will change based on the make-up of the family; for example, a single working parent does not have the same amount of time to monitor her children as a non-working parent from an intact family. An intact family consists of both biological parents while a single mother in an urban community defines a majority of single parent homes. Guardianship outside of the immediate family begins with grandparents, specifically grandmothers, and then expands to older brothers and sisters before ultimate placement in foster care (Lam, 1997).

Through the development of a strong Parent/Teacher Organization committed to involving parents in the decision making process and continued education of parents and teachers alike, family process variables can be nurtured through the education process. Social address, on the other hand, is very intimidating to educators because of the feeling of a lack of control over the children’s family dynamics and socioeconomic conditions. “Social address researchers give no explicit consideration to intervening process through which social address might affect the development of children” (Lam, 1997, p. 81).

**Family Process.**

Family process focuses on the strategies and techniques that parents implement while raising their
children. "The family process variables include three dimensions of authoritative parenting style: (1) parental monitoring/supervision; (2) parental supportiveness/warmth; and (3) psychological autonomy" (Lam, 1997, p.9). The concept of authoritative parenting is based on a combination of active supervision that is demonstrated with the use of a caring, understanding delivery.

This technique involves the children in the decision making process by discussing the problem with them, explaining the options and their consequences, and offering them choices. With young children this could be something as simple as the choice to do more homework before or after they play by discussing the ratio between after school play time and homework time. Children are not concerned about what you have to say if you are not willing to listen to what they have to say or think. Active supervision includes caring about the children's whereabouts at all times, and exhibiting that support by providing transportation and monitoring their activities personally, not through day care or supervision by other adults (Lam, 1997).

Accountability

Charter schools are founded on the concept of accountability through autonomy. "Accountability lends
charter schools an air of legitimacy that typical public schools seem to be losing" (Lane, 1998, p.4). Lane also alludes to the fact that accountability measures are highly controversial. Many would argue that standardized tests are not a true indication of knowledge retention, and that there are ethnic and socioeconomic biases hidden in the testing information.

**Autonomy.**

"As parents from diverse social and economic backgrounds rationally exercise their school preferences, schools will be held accountable for their results, and the free market will determine the success, content, and structure of the schools" (Lane, 1998, p.5). When we give parents and students the autonomy to choose their own schools, educational professionals will be more apt to see parents and students as customers, not simply by-products. Educators will be forced to reflect on all aspects of the school's infrastructure, pedagogy, personnel, programs, and budget.

John Goodlad refers to the public polling of schools and how parents rate school performance in his *Educational Renewal* (1994). Goodlad cites that if we as educators paid more attention to the input of parental concern that our schools would perform at a higher level. He implies that
the lack of parental input is related to the distrust parents have for public schools.

*Who Chooses? Who Loses?* (Fuller and Elmore, 1996) suggests that the exercise of school choice and the subsequent competition will lead to increased accountability, innovation and opportunity to choose. As a result, all students will make gains and the autonomy of the staff will increase. This autonomy will manifest itself in the restructuring of the school based upon the faculty’s united experiences, theories, and beliefs about what is in the best interest of the children. “The first component of educational reform is the incorporation of decentralization/deregulation as a key component of school choice” (Lane, 1998, p.6). This is the paradigm shift or thinking outside the box; if we keep doing what we’re doing we will keep getting what we’ve got.

The public perception fueled by documented failures and inequalities in educational opportunities has led to discontent and a lack of trust in the public school system. Public school choice through charter schools is making an impact in school reform. “Most school districts have not had a policy of encouraging educational visionaries who want to create a new approach to elementary, middle, or secondary education” (Nathan, 1996, p.19). It is the
mission of charter school enthusiasts to create a national movement that has a positive influence on education as an institution. "Accountability, decentralization, specific innovations, and choice are mechanisms that, in theory, may increase overall student achievement and provide the impetus for system-wide change or reform" (Lane, 1998, p.8). Lane stresses the importance of connecting charter schools to system-wide educational reform.

**Assessment.**

Accountability for student success in charter schools is closely scrutinized. As long as charter schools are in existence, they will be held to the high self-proscribed standard of providing a better quality education for students. Methods of assessing school and student performance include standardized tests, student portfolios, parent satisfaction surveys, and student interviews. Behavioral indicators such as attendance, suspensions, and expulsions can also be used in addition to student projects and performance-based assessments developed as part of the state and national comparison data (Medler, 1996, University of Minnesota, 1998).

Accountability is the safest way to exempt charter schools from the rules and regulations of school law. Detailed performance-based contracts assessing standardized
test scores, student portfolios, parent evaluations, and state monitoring performance can be rated according to a scale from which the charter can be evaluated (University of Minnesota, 1998). The contract should be provisional in that if the school does not meet the terms of the agreement the monitoring body must close it down.

Fifteen states use local school boards to evaluate the performance of their charter schools (U.S. Dept. of Ed., 1997). These local school board members may not even be educators or professionals in the field, rather they could be elected officials with little educational expertise. There must be an established number of times per year that the schools are monitored or a specific procedure to follow that ensures these schools will be checked on. This will confirm that the students are receiving an adequate education, as they are entitled to according to the Public School Act of 1975 citing a thorough and efficient education for all.

Charter school students must be held to the same high academic standards as children in public schools. Charter schools must administer the same standardized tests that the public schools do in order to perform a comparison analysis. This comparative analysis would be mutually beneficial to both schools, encouraging them to share
successes exploiting the research and development of innovative educational strategies and techniques. The main objective of the charter school is to have a positive impact on all public schools. For this reason, it is imperative that a working relationship is established to provide the best educational opportunities for children (Nathan, 1996).

**Charter vs. Private School**

Interestingly enough charter schools and private schools have found themselves on opposite sides of the choice issue. Research does not suggest that charter schools have had a negative impact on private schools (NJ Dept. of Ed., 1999). Proponents of the voucher system as a form of choice support charter schools as adding validity to the thought that taxpayers have the right to spend public dollars in the school they choose if they have lost confidence in their public school system.

Charter schools are not only deterring students from the public system, but from the parochial system as well. An Associated Press review ("Catholic Schools", 1999) shows that 634 of the 3500 charter school students (18%) as of September 1997 in grades K-12 came from parochial schools. Larry Thompson, Superintendent of Catholic schools in the Trenton Diocese, stated that, "Just since the charter
schools have opened, we have lost 440 children” (p.A25). This is a 15% decline in total enrollment. As a result the Trenton Diocese has closed three schools since 1993.

New Jersey’s Governor Whitman campaigned on a platform that supported a voucher system that would allow low-income parents to be able to send their children to private schools (Associated Press, “Catholic Schools”, 1999). The Governor has shifted her support from a voucher system to a charter school choice position. Charters have seemingly eroded the support base of private schools, particularly inner-city Catholic schools.

In hopes of creating a public support base for the voucher movement, Catholic school supporters emphasize that the public dollar goes further in the private Catholic school district. New Jersey spends a total of $14.1 billion on public education annually. We must find innovative ways to spend this money that has a more positive impact on the students of the Garden State (Associated Press, “Catholic Schools”, 1999).

Parents have cited numerous reasons for transferring their children from Catholic schools to charter schools. Tuition is one. Voucher supporters compare the $1500 tuition average to the near $7000 per pupil average of Charter schools. With 634 former non-public school
students in charter schools, an estimated $4.4 million in public money was spent on these students alone (Associated Press, "Catholic Schools", 1999).

School Reform

New charter schools must have a grace period by which the school can work out the start-up problems and be given a fair opportunity for success. Once that time has been granted, however, the institution must be able to prove that its innovative programs are effective, educational teaching tools. This accountability is essential to the success of any whole school reform.

Eighty million dollars in additional federal funds are to be spent on the charter school movement in 1998. The public is looking for the assurance that this money is going to produce educational advancements in the near, if not immediate, future. If this is not accomplished, the image of the American educational system will suffer further damage to its already tarnished reputation (National Conference of State Legislatures, 1998, Schneider, 1998).

Charter schools represent the forefront of whole school reform, but public schools have followed this lead. New Jersey has mandated whole school reform for its public schools by the year 2000. Many school districts are
already actively taking steps toward this advancement. Public school reform has assumed many of the same advances that charter schools have by instituting pre-school education, an extended school day, and extended school year, and improvement of standardized test scores with the use of innovative scheduling and special population grouping.

Success for All, one of the leading Whole School Reform programs, embraces parental involvement as a principal piece to their Family Support Program. Research indicates that there is a positive correlation between parental involvement and increased attendance and achievement, as well as decreased behavioral problems. In addition, parental involvement can also help meet the needs of culturally diverse populations. “Success for All stresses the need for a strong parent involvement program that is linked to a state-of-the-art program of curriculum and instruction” (Haxby, et al., 1998, p.147). Parental involvement is identified as one of the three major components of Whole School Reform, in addition to curriculum and instruction.

The American people need to see that the changes that are taking place in the public education of our youth are
going to improve as a result of the vast amount of time and resources we have invested as a nation.

**School Policy**

If charter schools are going to accomplish their goal of effecting system-wide change, all parents are going to have to participate in the choice process. This is based on the premise that given a choice, most parents will exercise their right and make a rational decision. Some research indicates this may not always be the case, however. Many parents may not become active in the process or make rational choices, even if the opportunity is there (Martinez, Godwin, Kemerer, 1996; Wells, 1996). Charter school policy must work to create equal opportunity for all students by realizing the potential for parental apathy and safeguarding against it.

The policy should guarantee the participation of schools in urban areas and the creation of a suitable number of schools so enough parents will have a choice to truly effect change. Charters must be established in the vicinity of low performing schools in order to afford those parents and children a viable option. A system must be established to ensure the effectiveness of the charter schools will be monitored. Accountability will result not only through choice, but also such measurable assessments
as student performance on quality work projects, portfolios, standardized tests, and student, teacher and parental input.

Lane (1998) outlines four policy innovations that are instrumental for charter schools as a component of comprehensive educational reform. These include: meeting all the educational requirements of state guidelines, engaging the local district and community, implementing mechanisms and policies which contribute to the transfer of innovations into the traditional public school system, and achieving high academic standards. These four policy alternatives are created to foster a working relationship between charters and traditional public schools so that all students can benefit not only through competition but also through collaboration.

If this relationship is established in good faith and in the best interest of both parties to minimize political overtones or an equal balance of power, a win-win situation will likely be the outcome (Covey, 1991). Policy must be created that serves the best interest of charter public and traditional public schools. “In the polis, cooperation is every bit as important as competition...Politics involves seeking allies and organizing cooperation in order to compete with opponents” (Stone, 1997, p.24).
The information flow regarding innovation is moving in one direction from charter schools to public schools, according to Lane (1998). An argument can be made, however, that public schools would not risk a partnership that is not founded on two-way communication based on mutual respect. Lane poses interesting questions that address the root of the polis: “Change to what type of system...Choice for whom and how is it going to happen?” (p.20). These questions address both system-wide and comprehensive reform effecting individuals and the groups they form.

Charter schools are not-for-profit educational alternatives. When the charter is approved it specifies a “region of residence” which includes the communities it will serve. Transportation guidelines have been established based on the same terms and conditions provided to the public school. The charter cannot have more than 500 students enrolled and must not exceed 25% of the district’s student population. If the charter has exceeded its capacity for enrollment, it must use a random selection process for admittance. There is an expulsion procedure with specific criteria established by the State Department of Education and approved by the Commissioner. Students may also withdraw at any time if they are not satisfied
with the educational program (N.J. State Dept. of Ed., 1998).

The board of trustees establishes personnel issues such as collective bargaining agreements. However, charter school employees in New Jersey are public servants covered by the existing PERC statute, N.J.S.A. 34:13 A-1 et seq, and can organize themselves and choose union representatives. Teachers cannot be paid below the state minimum of $18,500 or higher than the last step on the salary guide of the local public school board of education. Charter schools can hire employees either within or outside the public district. Public school employees can request a leave of absence not to exceed three years; this period counts toward time served in the public schools. The charter must make employer contributions to the district's health benefits plan when the charter hires public employees. If the employee is reinstated in the public school they will receive previously acquired seniority plus the additional years served in the charter (NJ State Dept. of Ed., 1998).

Policy Models

Stone's Policy Paradox (1997) describes three models to analyze policy: rational, analytical, and scientific. Rational policy consists of models of reasoning, models of
society, and models of policy-making. The objective of the reasoning model for charter schools is to create innovative educational opportunities for children. To accomplish this, a course of action with specific goals and objectives and an alternative plan must be developed. Charter schools originated as a result of these steps. Charters were created to be research and development tools for public schools, with the intention of impacting all public and private schools.

Charter schools in New Jersey fall under the jurisdiction of the county superintendent and are approved by the Commissioner of Education. They are independent of local school boards, which allows them the opportunity for innovation without the constraints of local regulations. (New Jersey State Dept. of Ed., 1998, Kane, 1998)

Policy governing charter schools in New Jersey was subject to rational decision making processes using the reasoning strategies of identifying objectives, developing different courses of action, predicting and evaluating the course of each action, and the possible consequences of each alternative. The alternative that best meets the greatest number of those objectives is selected. Of the thirty-seven schools that applied for charter school status in the first year, only the thirteen schools that best met
the objectives for the State of New Jersey under the authority of Commissioner Leo Klagholz were granted a conditional charter and opened their doors (Stone, 1997, Kane, 1998).

These objectives are based on the premise that teachers, parents, and community leaders must work together to create the optimal learning environment. State policy requires representation from each group in the operation of the school on every charter school's board of trustees (Kane, 1998).

The analytical model is predicated on the concept of individual's shared views leading to a consensus. This majority opinion controls the direction of the policy. Worthwhile educational systems develop a goal to achieve. The problem stems from a lack of well-run schools meeting the needs of our students. Alternative solutions are then formulated; charter schools are an example (Stone, 1997).

**Societal Issues**

Education must promote fundamental change in the philosophy of foreign policy and domestic finance procedures that support the position that for us to reach our fullest potential others must do the same. Our international trade deficit will only continue to grow until other countries begin to experience the same kind of
economic growth that we experienced in the 20th century. Capitalism in Eastern Europe will not be successful without the eastern block countries experiencing economic success. This will, in turn, only widen the trade deficit gap.

To avoid the failure of capitalism in Eastern Europe, we need only to examine foreign policy successes in history. The Marshall Plan appropriated billions of dollars in assistance starting in 1948. The money was allocated following World War II to promote Western Europe's economic revival and increase trade relations. Through development and modernization of industrial and agricultural equipment a stabilized economy was created. The Marshall Plan assisted in rebuilding a war-torn society (Papadopoulos, 1994).

Capitalism and big business have created the misconception that for us to succeed others must fail. We as a society look for an advantage at every turn. This obsession with gaining an edge over the competition has created a disparity between the education of the advantaged and the education of the disadvantaged causing a continual increase in economic strain on this great country (Kozol, 1992, Comer, 1997).

Our schools reflect this through segregation and inequality. Educators must recognize the source of this
injustice and work to change the misconceptions perpetuating these chronic societal pitfalls.

According to our textbook rhetoric, Americans abhor the notion of a social order in which economic privilege and political power are determined by hereditary class. Officially we have a more enlightened goal in sight: namely a society in which a family's wealth has no relation to the probability of future educational attainment and the wealth and station it affords. By this standard, education offered to poor children should be at least as good as that which is provided to the children of the upper-middle class (Kozol, 1992, p.207).

For the American dream to truly be a reality all children must receive the opportunity to succeed academically. For this to happen they must be given the same educational resources inherent in successful schools. These resources prepare children for continued education and eventually higher education with all the additional privileges that it provides (Nathan, 1996).

**Study of Student Achievement**

A study analyzing achievement data was comprised through a partnership between the charter public school and the traditional public school, prepared by Management and Evaluation Associates, Inc. (Summary Program Evaluation
Report, Year 2: 1998-1999). The study results were made available to this researcher. The investigation included the analysis of achievement data of the total population for the same two schools used for this study.

Results from the Stanford Achievement Test - Ninth Edition (SAT-9), administered to charter public school and traditional public school first and second grade students were compared. The compiled data was based on the total population of the two schools, not matched data using the survey sample of the population. Test scores in reading, mathematics, and language were compared between the charter public school and the traditional public school.

In looking at the first grade data, the charter school outperformed the traditional public school by 25.5 points in reading, 20.4 in mathematics, and 27.6 in language. These differences were statistically significant. (see Figure 1 in Chapter V)

In comparing the second grade data the results were much closer. The charter school outperformed the traditional public school once again; however, on the second grade level the margin was much smaller than the first. The charter school was 5.7 points higher in reading, one point better in mathematics and 5.1 points higher in language than the traditional public school.
These differences were not found to be statistically significant. (see Figure 2 in Chapter V)

**Median Grade Equivalent Comparisons.**

In comparing the performance of charter school students and the traditional public school students, the assessment data was also converted to median grade equivalents. In the charter school where achievement was compared to the national median grade equivalent, the first grade students scored 3.2 (third grade, second month) in reading, 3.0 (third grade) in mathematics, 4.4 (fourth grade, fourth month) in language, and 4.5 (fourth grade, fifth month) in listening. The national median in each category was 1.8 (first grade, eighth month). The median grade is equivalent to grade level skills attained. These differences are statistically significant. (see Figure 3 in Chapter V)

The charter school once again performed admirably based on the second grade data compared to the national median. Second grade charter school students earned a reading score of 4.3 (fourth grade, third month), a mathematics score of 4.8 (fourth grade, eighth month), a language score of 4.4 (fourth grade, fourth month), and a listening score of 3.4 (third grade, fourth month). The national median here was 2.8 (second grade, eighth month).
Once again the median grade is equivalent to grade level skills attained. The results of this data are statistically significant. (see Figure 4 in Chapter V)

**Summary**

Teachers, parents, and community members design charter schools. Ted Kolderie, of the Center for Policy Studies, states that it is essential that charter schools break "the exclusive franchise that school districts have on the operation of public schools in order to generate competition in otherwise unresponsive education systems" (Medler, 1997, p.17). The governance structure of charter schools is based on combining the efforts of parents, teachers, and community members, giving each a role in the direction of the school. The parent contract seems to offset the balance of power especially in the lower income, minority, urban schools. "First, charter schools enhance educational choice options for teachers who can participate in more autonomous, innovative schools, and for parents and students who can choose from a variety of learning environments" (Geske, Davis, and Hingle, 1997, p.16).

Geske, et al. reinforce the importance of the balance of authority in the decision-making process, describing a situation where teachers develop innovative teaching
strategies from which parents and students can choose the course of action that best suits their needs and interests.
PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Chapter III

Methodology

Design of the Study

Existing research on charter schools focuses on state legislation, individual school autonomy, and a collaborative effort among the teachers, parents, and students. A National Study of Charter Schools (U.S. Department of Education, 1998) identified the three primary reasons for the development of charter schools: educational vision, individual school autonomy, and addressing the needs of a special population. Only 4.9% of the stated reasons for starting a charter school were associated with parental involvement, as opposed to 61.9% who identified educational vision as their motivation. Becker, et al. (1997) cite that a mere 26% of administrators feel parental involvement is vital to the achievement of their students.

It can be concluded from these figures that parental involvement is not a major motivating factor in the design of charter schools. However, the community’s viewpoint differs. Eighty-nine percent of business executives believe that the lack of parental involvement is the biggest obstacle to school reform (Christenson, 1998).
The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a significant difference between parental involvement in charter public schools and their traditional public school counterparts. This study enabled parents to express their own opinions on student-focussed activities and the activities’ importance to the educational process. Additionally, it looked at parent’s academic involvement at home and at school. Communication between home and school and between parent and child are addressed as well. The study also sought to determine the parent’s participation with the child in non-academic, quality time activities. Finally, the study recorded the parents’ perception of their child’s school.

Thus, the opportunity was offered to propose a relationship between charter school legislation and policy encouraging these schools toward more parental involvement and the success of the school. Parental feedback and the students’ performance on standardized tests will provide the data.

The independent variable for this study was the child’s placement as a charter public or traditional public school student. The dependent variable was the degree of parental involvement.
Instrument

To examine the amount of parental involvement that the parents exhibited, the writer developed the "Child-Focused Activities" survey (see Appendix A), a modified version of the "Parental Involvement Survey" (see Appendix B) prepared by the Southeast Regional Center for Drug-Free Schools and Communities. The original survey was published in Prevention Plus III (Linney & Wandersman, 1991). The survey was also made available in Spanish to accommodate for the entire survey population (see Appendix C).

Certain questions were omitted from the original survey due to their socioeconomic or geographic bias. Questions deleted were those related to leisure activities primarily available only to families in suburban areas. Additionally, questions were added to address the amount of time parents spent interacting with other members of the school community. The survey consisted of 21 questions, 19 allowed for quantitative responses and 2 allowed for qualitative responses. (see Appendix A)

The survey was comprised of questions addressing school-related activities (#1-3, 11, 14-21), and questions gauging general levels of parental support (#4-13). Questions 9 and 11 addressed both categories. Parent-
school relations were the focus of questions 1-3, 14, and 17-21. (see Appendix A)

The surveys were distributed by the teachers to all first and second grade students to hand carry to their parents. This process was identical for both the charter public school and traditional public school participants. Both populations were similar in demographic and socioeconomic make up. A letter in English and Spanish accompanied the survey describing the importance of the tool and why the parents' input was critical to the success of the research (see Appendices D and E).

The letter was sent home with the children to increase the response rate. Using the students as messengers also decreased the time commitment of the parents i.e., it eliminated the mailing process. "When a sample size is large, it is most likely that any single sample will contain the full spectrum of small, intermediate, and large scores from the parent population...A larger sample size translates into a sampling distribution of the mean with a smaller variability, allowing more precise generalizations from samples to populations" (Witte & Witte, 1997, p. 212-3). According to Rea and Parker (1997, p.115), "...sample size is directly related to the accuracy of the sample mean as an estimate of the true population mean...For any given
sample standard deviation, the larger the sample size, the smaller the standard error.”

The targeted response rate for this survey was based on the central limit theorem which states, “...the shape of the sampling distribution of the mean will approximate a normal curve if the sample size is big enough...and a sample size between 25 and 100 is sufficiently large” (Witte & Witte, 1997, p. 210). The population size of the traditional public school was 265 students; there were 100 students in the charter public school population.

Careful consideration was taken to preserve the anonymity of the participants, as well as to assure the participants that the decision to participate in this study was purely optional. It was expressed to the parents that if they chose not to partake in the survey, there would be no negative consequences for their child. (see Appendices D and E)

Subjects

The parents of students in a traditional public school and a charter public school were the subjects of this study. The responses from these socioeconomically and demographically similar communities comprised the data.

The sample of parents was chosen based on voluntary participation through a distribution administered by the
teachers to all first and second grade students in the two schools, one traditional public and one charter public. The original mailing was sent to 100 charter public school students and 265 traditional public school students.

Both the charter public and traditional public school districts fall under the District Factor Group A, indicating the lowest socioeconomic districts on a scale describing the socioeconomic status of the residents. The District Factor Group is used to compare New Jersey's different schools. Factors accounted for include income, educational attainment of adults, poverty level and occupations (New Jersey Department of Education, 1999).

**Procedures**

The population for the study was chosen solely on their child's enrollment status in school. A survey in both English and Spanish was sent out to all parents of children in those two grades (see Appendices A and C). A cover letter, also in both English and Spanish, accompanied the survey that explained the project. This cover letter stressed the anonymity of the study and the parents' voluntary participation. It was also emphasized that their decision to participate or not would not have any effect on their child's academic status in school (see Appendices D and E). The letter and survey were sent home with the
children and returned by the students to their teachers in order to provide an efficient method of retrieving the responses. The educators in each school returned the materials to the researcher.

The study examined survey data based on the several areas of parental involvement: academic activities at home, academic activities at school, out of school non-academic activities, home/school communication, and perception of school performance. The purpose of the study was to determine if the emphasis on parental involvement was having a positive impact on the effectiveness of the school. Parents’ responses to the survey questions reflected their opinions about student-focussed activities and their importance to the educational process.

Survey questions also focussed on parents’ academic involvement at home and at school, non-academic involvement at home, communication between home and school and between parent and child, and the parents’ perception of their child’s school.

The intent of the analysis of the data was to test the hypothesis of the study i.e., there is no significant difference in parental involvement between charter public schools and traditional public schools of similar socioeconomic status and demographic make up. By comparing
the degree of parental involvement in the charter public school with that of the traditional public school, the writer sought to examine if the charter public schools are involving more parents in the educational process as the research initially stated. "The greater levels of parent involvement at charter public schools, coupled with their widespread use of parent contracts, suggests that contracts are working as a mechanism for increasing parent involvement" (Becker, et al., p. 522). A traditional public school identified as an Abbott district in the midst of implementing a whole school reform model was used as a measure in comparing the results. Both the charter public school community and traditional public school community were identified by the state as at-risk environments for learning.

The independent variable, the charter public versus traditional public school status of the child, and the dependent variable, parental involvement, were compiled on all of the first and second grade students. The statistical method used was an uncorrelated t-test, as opposed to a matched t-test. This choice was made in order to preserve the anonymity of the subjects. The test scores of the students were not matched to the parents' response surveys. Matching the test would have reduced the
generalization of the conclusion at the expense of the participants. However, a general comparison was drawn based on the parental involvement data of the charter public school and the general performance on the Stanford Achievement Test—Ninth Edition. The same comparison was made with the traditional public school information.

The validity and reliability of the survey data will be further tested by the use of a scale reliability analysis. Reliability refers to the consistency of an instrument in measuring whatever it is being asked to measure, while validity ensures that the test, measure or evaluation focuses on the established objective. "Without evidence of validity, an instrument may be consistent in measuring the wrong thing. Thus, reliability is a necessary condition for validity, but it is not a sufficient condition, not a guarantee that the measure is valid" (Krathwohl, 1998, p.435).

Only with a reliable and valid instrument are we consistently measuring what we set out to test.

Think of a measure’s reliability as comparable to firing a gun at a target where the bull’s eye represents a person’s construct to be measured and each shot represents an attempt to measure a score. Validity involves repeatedly hitting the bull’s eye
which shows a measure of both validity and reliability (Krathwohl, 1998, p. 435).

If the gunshots consistently hit the target in a tight cluster on the outer circle the test is reliable but not valid, meaning it is consistently measuring something other than what was trying to measure. If the gunshots consistently hit the bull's eye, the test or measure is both valid and reliable (Krathwohl, 1998).

SPSS for Windows was used to analyze the raw data. The statistical null hypothesis was $H_0: \mu_1 - \mu_2 = 0$. The alternate or research hypothesis was $H_1: \mu_1 - \mu_2 \neq 0$.

The variance of the parental involvement of the charter public school and traditional public school as defined by the .05 level of significance of social research determined whether or not the null hypothesis was correct. If the null hypothesis is not correct, then there is a significant difference in the level of parental involvement between the charter public school and the traditional public school of similar demographic and socioeconomic status. This information will have further significance if parental involvement was shown to have had a relationship when compared with student achievement.

If charter public schools are involving more parents in the educational process of their children, and that
involvement is having a significant influence on the children’s academic performance, then traditional public schools should emulate these practices. If the above is true, the traditional public schools should be encouraged to nurture the same level of parental involvement to afford those children the same opportunity to be successful.

Increased levels of parental involvement both in school and non-school related activities, it is believed, would also aid the social development of the child.

As outlined in Chapter II, it is essential to involve parents in the day to day school experience by opening our doors to them for school activities. "Parents can continue to be in-school participants by visiting the school; attending school events, performances, and athletics; and initiating contact with teachers and administrators" (Finn, 1998, p.23). "Authoritative parenting is consistently found to be associated with better developmental outcomes of children. Such effective parenting includes (1) a high degree of monitoring, (2) a high degree of support or involvement, and (3) a high degree of psychological autonomy" (Lam, 1997, p.102).
PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Chapter IV

Analysis

The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a significant difference between parental involvement in charter public schools versus traditional public schools. This study enabled parents in both settings to express their own opinions on student-focussed activities and the importance of those activities to the educational process. The reference to "parents" throughout this document should be interpreted as "parents/guardians". Additionally, the investigation looked at the parents' academic involvement at home and at school, and communication between home and school and between parent and child. The study also sought to determine the parents' participation with his/her child in non-academic, quality time activities. Finally, the study recorded the parents' perception of their child's school.

The relationship of parental involvement and student performance was examined through a comparison of scores on the Stanford Achievement Test-Ninth Edition among charter public school students and traditional public school students. The independent variable for this study was the child's placement as a charter public or traditional public
school student. The dependent variable was the degree of parental involvement.

**Instrument**

To examine the degree of parental involvement that the parents exhibited, the writer developed the “Child-Focused Activities Survey” (see Appendix A). The survey was comprised of questions addressing school-related activities (#1-3, 11, and 14-21), and questions gauging general levels of parental support (#4-13). Questions 9 and 11 addressed both categories. Parent-school relations were the focus of questions 1-3, 14, and 17-21. Using the statistical tool, SPSS, nine questions were statistically significant at the level of p<.05 using a t-test for equality of means.

**Testing the Null Hypothesis**

The intent of the analysis of the data was to test the null hypothesis of the study i.e., there is no significant difference in parental involvement between charter public schools and traditional public schools of similar socioeconomic status and demographic make up. By comparing the degree of parental involvement in the charter public school with that of the traditional public school, the writer sought to determine if charter public schools are involving more parents in the educational process as the research initially stated.
Findings.

Based on the results of the SPSS data, seven school-related activities questions (#1, 11, 14, 15, 18-20) were proven to be statistically significant, as well as two questions (#7, 9) related to parent/child activities outside of school. Questions 4 and 13 show a strong trend in their significance. A total of eleven questions suggest that the null hypothesis of the study i.e., there is no significant difference in parental involvement between charter public schools and traditional public schools of similar socioeconomic status and demographic make up, should be rejected. These findings suggest, instead, that the research hypotheses of the study i.e., there is a significant difference in parental involvement between charter public schools and traditional public schools of similar socioeconomic and demographic make up should be accepted.

Level of Significance.

The level of significance for the study was .05, as is standard for social research. SPSS for Windows was used to analyze the raw data (see Appendix F). The statistical null hypothesis was $H_0: \mu_1 - \mu_2 = 0$. The alternate or research hypothesis was $H_1: \mu_1 - \mu_2 \neq 0$. 
The variance of the parental involvement of the charter public school and traditional public school as defined by the .05 level of significance for social research determined whether or not the null hypothesis was correct. If the null hypothesis is not correct, then there is a significant difference in the level of parental involvement between charter public schools and traditional public schools of similar demographic and socioeconomic status.

Statistical Results

Seven of the school-related activity questions (#1, 11, 14, 15, 18-20) proved to be statistically significant at a level of p<.05 acceptable for social research questions (see Appendix F). The number of parent meetings attended was significantly higher in charter public schools than in traditional public schools as judged in question 1 of the survey with a p value of .000, showing a significant difference between the number of meetings attended in each school. Charter public schools implement these programs to involve parents and place more responsibility on them to become active participants in their child’s education.

Interestingly enough, neither question 2 nor question 3, both measuring parental involvement in school, showed a significant statistical difference between the charter
public school and the traditional public school. Question 2 specifically asked the number of parent/teacher conferences attended by parents. The p value for question 2 was .989, which represents little if any trend that would support the theory of a significant difference between the number of parent/teacher conferences in these two schools. Question 3 recorded the number of school committees parents had been asked to serve on. This represents tangible evidence of parental involvement in non-traditional ways. The p value of .129 for question 3 did not suggest a difference in the number of parents asked to serve on school committees between the two schools (see Appendix F).

Question 11, which pertains to daily communication, seeks to reinforce the importance of showing what has happened in the child’s daily life. The p value of .023 showed that there was a significantly higher number of parents from charter public schools that discuss day to day events. Through this interaction the parents emphasize that what happens at school is important and interesting to them (see Appendix F).

Question 14 is a further example of the importance of communication as it looks at parents calling the teacher for progress reports. The p value of .001 explained that a significantly greater number of charter public school
parents communicate by phone with their child's teacher than do traditional public school parents. This is an indication to both the teacher and the child that the parent is genuinely concerned about the student's progress (see Appendix F).

Question 15, regarding completing homework with the child, is a strong indication of the commitment to the youngster's educational experience. The parents' rapport with the teacher is addressed in question 18; whether or not parents would reach out to the educator is the focus. The p value of .042 indicates that there is a significantly greater number of charter public school parents that call or make an appointment to meet with their child's teacher than the traditional public school counterparts (see Appendix F).

Calling the principal with questions or concerns in question 19 demonstrates an openly communicative climate for parents. Based on a p value of .001, it can be assumed that parents of the charter public school students call or meet with their child's principal on a more regular basis. Question 20 gauges overall satisfaction with the school's performance. Based on a p value of .000, the parents of charter public school students are significantly more
satisfied with the school’s performance than their traditional public school counterparts (see Appendix F).

Questions 6-9, 10 and 12 emphasized parental involvement outside of the school environment. Question 6 measured how often parents spent time with their children in leisure activities. The p value of .456 for question 6 suggested little difference between the two groups in the amount of time spent in leisure activities. However, when asked in question 7 about shared leisure time, specifically at the movies, parents of the charter public school students are significantly more likely to take their children to the movies (p=.000) than their traditional public school counterparts. This involvement between parent and child showed a significant relationship. The specific example of the movies brings to light the differences in how leisure time is utilized between the two groups. Question 8 looked at the time commitment parents made to visiting other relatives. The p value of .103 revealed little if any difference in time spent with parents visiting other relatives between the two groups (see Appendix F).

Similar results were revealed in question 10 where participation in purchased activities showed little to no statistical relationship at all with a p value of .453.
These numbers indicate there is virtually no difference in parents' participation in purchased activities between the two groups. A difference might have suggested possible socioeconomic influences. Question 9 examined the parents' time commitment to instructing their child in some skill or activity. With a p value of .027 the charter public school parents were more likely to instruct their children in some skill or activity than the traditional public school parents. Although school was not mentioned as an activity parents may have used homework as an indicator to determine their answer. Further, this inconsistency could be linked to the small sample size of the survey or the parents' inability to see the movies as a purchased activity (see Appendix F).

Question 12 examined the regularity of parents eating meals with their children in the home. The p value of .398 was not significant and did not suggest a difference in meals eaten at home with children between charter public school parents and traditional public school parents (see Appendix F).

Questions 4 and 13 showed a substantial trend very close to the significant level of p<.05; question 4 had a value of p=.06, question 13 had a value of p=.058. Question 4 looked at the parents' knowledge of their
child's whereabouts outside of school day. Question 13 emphasized such spontaneous engagement as watching television. The p value of .058 shows a trend that suggests parents of charter public school students are more likely to engage in such spontaneous activities as watching television with their children than their traditional public school counterparts (see Appendix F).

Question 5 sought to determine if the parents were aware of whom their children were with after school. Despite the close content between questions 4 and 5, the p=.093 significance of question 5 showed a limited trend, while the p=.06 relationship of question 4 produced a strong trend. This trend could be explained by saying that the charter public school parents are more likely to know where their children are outside of school than the traditional public school parents (see Appendix F).
Frequency

General.

Table 1
(Total Respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>68.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>163</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total number of useable surveys completed were 163: 51 charter public school respondents, representing 31.3 percent of the total sample, and 112 traditional public school respondents, representing 68.7 percent of the total sample (see Table 1).

The percent and valid percent differ only when there is a discrepancy in the number of respondents and the total number that completed the surveys. The valid percent is adjusted based on the missing number of responses to that question reflecting a more accurate account of responses to that question.
Table 2
(Total Respondents)

Grade Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid First Grade</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>49.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Grade</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the one hundred and sixty three parents surveyed, eighty-one respondents represent the parents of a first grader. This shows a valid percentile of 49.7. Eighty-two second grade parent respondents with a valid percentage of 50.3 complete the cumulative grade level data (see Table 2).
Table 3
(Traditional Public Respondents)

Grade Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid First Grade</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>50.9</td>
<td>50.9</td>
<td>50.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Grade</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>49.1</td>
<td>49.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4
(Charter Public Respondents)

Grade Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid First Grade</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>47.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Grade</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first grade breakdown consisted of fifty-seven traditional public school respondents and twenty-four charter public school respondents. Eighty-two respondents represented second grade parents for a valid percent of 50.3. The second grade breakdown consisted of fifty-five traditional public school respondents for a valid percent of 49.1, and twenty-seven charter public school respondents for a valid percent of 52.9 (see Tables 2, 3, & 4). There was a relatively even distribution between first and second
grade parent respondents. Less than one valid percent separated the two grades (see Table 2).

Language.

Table 5
(Traditional Public Respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid English</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The language frequency distribution showed more of a contrast, however. Sixty-four of one hundred and twelve in the sample were the traditional public school, English speaking survey respondents representing a valid percentage of 57.1. The remaining forty-eight traditional public school, Spanish speaking respondents marked a valid percentage of 42.9 (see Table 5).

Table 6
(Charter Public Respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid English</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>94.1</td>
<td>94.1</td>
<td>94.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the charter public school sample (see Table 6), forty-eight of the surveys were completed in English and
only three surveys were completed in Spanish. In other words, 94.1 percent of the charter public school surveys were completed in English and only 5.9 percent of the charter public school surveys were completed in Spanish. This could bias the study based on the discrepancy between the English speaking population of the two groups. Language could be a barrier for non-English speaking parents when school communication is the issue.

PTA Involvement.

Table 7
Survey Question Number 1 (Charter Public Respondents)

1. How many PTA meetings have you attended in the last year?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>37.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>51.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>68.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In examining the frequency percentage of survey question number 1 (see Table 7), only 21.6 percent of the surveyed respondents representing charter public schools
attended less than seven Parent/Teacher Association meetings. Forty-nine point zero percent of the charter public school respondents attended nine to twelve meetings (see Table 7).

Table 8
Survey Question Number 1 (Traditional Public Respondents)

1. How many PTA meetings have you attended in the last year?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In looking at the traditional public school frequency data, 50.0 percent of the parents surveyed did not attend any Parent/Teacher Association meetings. Ninety-eight point two percent of the traditional public school parents attended fewer than seven meetings (see Table 8). When looking at the combined totals of the two groups, sixteen of the seventeen respondents to the maximum number of twelve PTA meetings attended were from the charter public
school population. Recall, however, that charter public
school respondents only made up 31.3 percent of the
cumulative data (see Table 1).

Communication.

Table 9
Survey Question Number 14 (Charter Public Respondents)
14. How often do you communicate by phone with your child's
teacher?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a Year</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>94.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>System</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey question number 14 looked at phone
communication between the school and the teacher. Thirty-
four out of fifty-one charter public school respondents
communicate at least once per month by phone with their
child's teacher. Only 29.2 percent of the charter public
school parents communicate by phone yearly or never with
their child's school (see Table 9).
Table 10
Survey Question Number 14 (Traditional Public Respondents)

14. How often do you communicate by phone with your child's teacher?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a Year</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>70.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>84.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>94.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>92.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the traditional public school, fifty-two out of one hundred and four respondents, or 50.0 percent, did not communicate by phone at all with their child’s teacher. Only thirty-one out of one hundred and four traditional public school respondents communicate using a phone at least once a month with their child’s teacher. Surprisingly, 70.2 percent of traditional public school respondents only communicate with their child’s teacher by phone once a year or less (see Table 10).
### Table 11
Survey Question Number 14 (Total Respondents)

**14. How often do you communicate by phone with your child's teacher?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>40.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a Year</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>57.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>83.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>94.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>System</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In looking at the total frequency distribution of the sixteen respondents that communicate weekly with their child’s school, ten are from the traditional public school pool and six are from the charter public school group. Of the nine respondents that communicate daily by the use of phone, six are from the traditional public school. These lower figures may be due to dissatisfaction or perhaps a lack of trust on the part of the parent toward the school (see Table 11).
Approachability.

Table 12
Survey Question Number 18 (Charter Public Respondents)

18. I do call or make an appointment to meet with my child's teacher when I have a question or concern about my child.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>82.2</td>
<td>82.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mildly Agree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>88.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>95.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>88.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey question number 18 examined the approachability parents felt from their child's teacher. Did the parents feel comfortable calling and meeting with their child's teacher? Thirty-seven out of forty-five charter public school respondents strongly agreed they could call and make an appointment with their child's teacher. This represented a valid percentage of 82.2 percent of the charter public school sample. Only two of the respondents strongly disagreed with this position, three respondents were neutral, while another three respondents mildly agreed (see Table 12).
Table 13
Survey Question Number 18 (Traditional Public Respondents)

18. I do call or make an appointment to meet with my child’s teacher when I have a question or concern about my child.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>57.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mildly Agree</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>75.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mildly Disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>96.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the traditional public school sample, fifty-two out of ninety strongly agreed that they could call or make an appointment with their child’s teacher. This represented a valid percentage of 57.8 of the total traditional public school respondents. Six traditional public school respondents disagreed with this position, three mildly and three strongly, while sixteen mildly agreed and sixteen were neutral. When examining the valid percentage of these two groups, the 82.2 percent of the charter public respondents who strongly agree compares favorably with the 57.8 percent of their traditional public school counterparts (see Tables 12 & 13). The total comparisons do not necessarily reflect the valid percentages because the
traditional public school sample is twice the size of the charter public school sample.

Table 14
Survey Question Number 19 (Charter Public Respondents)
19. I do call or make an appointment to meet with my child’s principal when I have a question or concern about my child.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Valid</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>70.6</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>73.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mildly Agree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>83.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>91.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>49</td>
<td>96.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Missing</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey question number 19 looks at the perceived availability of the principal for parents to call or make an appointment to meet with when there is a question or concern. Thirty-six out of forty-nine respondents in the charter public school sample strongly agreed in the approachability of their school principal. Another five mildly agreed, while four were neutral, and four strongly disagreed. The valid percent of 73.5 who strongly agreed with the approachability of their child’s principal does reflect a confidence by a majority of charter public school parents (see Table 14).
Table 15
Survey Question Number 19 (Traditional Public Respondents)

19. I do call or make an appointment to meet with my child's principal when I have a question or concern about my child.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mildly Agree</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>55.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>83.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mildly Disagree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>92.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>79.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In examining the traditional public school respondents, thirty-two out of eighty-nine strongly agree that their child’s principal is approachable either by phone or appointment. This represents a valid percent of 36.0. Seventeen parents mildly agreed, while twenty-five were neutral, and fifteen disagreed, eight mildly and seven strongly (see Table 15).
Table 16
Survey Question Number 19 (Total Respondents)

19. I do call or make an appointment to meet with my child’s principal when I have a question or concern about my child.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>49.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mildly Agree</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>65.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>86.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mildly Disagree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>92.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>84.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One hundred and thirty eight respondents between charter public and traditional public schools are considered in survey question number 19 regarding making an appointment with the school principal. Seven of the eleven parents that strongly disagree, as well as all eight parents that mildly disagree with the availability of their principal were representative of the traditional public school (see Table 16). The strongest indicator, however, is the valid percent of charter public school parents who strongly agree with the availability of their child’s principal: 73.5 percent versus the traditional public school mark of 36.0 percent (see Table 14&15).
Perception.

Table 17
Survey Question Number 20 (Charter Public Respondents)

20. What grade would you give your school for its performance in educating your child?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>94.1</td>
<td>98.0</td>
<td>98.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>96.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In analyzing survey question number 20, which discusses the parents' grade for their child's school, forty-eight out of forty-nine charter public school parents gave the grade of A (Excellent) with one B (Good). The valid percent of A (Excellent) for charter public school respondents was 98.0 percent (see Table 17).
Table 18
Survey Question Number 20 (Traditional Public Respondents)

20. What grade would you give your school for its performance in educating your child?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A (Excellent)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>47.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (Good)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>84.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C (Average)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>98.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D (Below Average)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>94.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In comparing the traditional public school frequency distribution data, fifty out of one hundred and six respondents graded their child’s school with an A (Excellent). Forty more gave the mark of B (Good), while fourteen graded the school with a C (Average) and two with a D (Below Average) (see Table 18).
Table 19
Survey Question Number 20 (Total Respondents)

20. What grade would you give your school for its performance in educating your child?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>A (Excellent)</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>63.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B (Good)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C (Average)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D (Below Average)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>155</td>
<td>95.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Missing System
8 4.9

Total 163 100.0

In looking at the totals of the ninety-eight highest marks possible (see Table 19), forty-eight were charter public respondents although there were only forty-nine charter public school parents that answered the question. Of the one hundred and six traditional public school respondents, fifty gave the highest mark possible (A, Excellent). Forty traditional public school parents gave the mark of B (Good); meanwhile only one charter public respondent gave the equivalent mark. No lower grade was given to the charter public school. The traditional public school recorded fourteen grades of Average and two Below Average. The most telling statistic is the 98.0 percent of the charter public school parents who gave their child’s school the highest possible mark, while only 47.2 percent
of the traditional public school parents acted in kind.

The traditional public school did, however, demonstrate a high level of competence with 84.9 percent of the school parents rating them as either Excellent or Good (see Tables 17, 18, & 19).

School-related Activities.

Parent-school relations in survey question numbers 1, 14, 18, 19, and 20 were the first five examined for frequency distribution. These five questions also fall under the category of school-related activities along with questions eleven and fifteen.

Table 20
Survey Question Number 11 (Charter Public Respondents)

11. How often do you and your child talk about day-to-day events?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey question number 11 examines the regularity with which parents discuss day to day events (see Table 20).

Forty-one of the fifty-one charter public school respondents discuss events daily, eight weekly, and two monthly. To further interpret this data, 80.4 percent of the charter public school parents discuss the day's events
on a daily basis, 15.7 percent on a weekly basis and only 3.9 percent on a monthly basis.

Table 21
Survey Question Number 11 (Traditional Public Respondents)
11. How often do you and your child talk about day-to-day events?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a Year</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>69.6</td>
<td>70.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>99.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td></td>
<td>.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In looking at the traditional public school data, seventy-eight out of one hundred and eleven discuss the day's events with their children on a daily basis. This accounts for 70.3 percent of the traditional public school respondents. While eleven, or 9.9 percent, discuss daily events weekly. Another fifteen, or 13.5 percent, discuss daily events on a monthly basis, and still four more parents only discuss daily events on a yearly basis. This accounts for 3.6 percent of the traditional public school sample. Finally, three traditional public school respondents, or 2.7 percent, never discuss daily events with their children (see Table 21).
There is a 10.1 percent difference between the 80.4 percent of charter public school parents who discuss daily events and the 70.3 percent rate for the traditional public school. In analyzing the frequency totals of both groups, only 3.9 percent of the charter public school parents discuss daily events on a monthly basis and none fewer than that. Nineteen point eight percent of the traditional public school parents responded as discussing daily events on a monthly basis or even less frequently. (see Table 21)

Table 22
Survey Question Number 15 (Charter Public Respondents)
15. How often do you and your child do homework together?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid Weekly</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>86.3</td>
<td>88.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>98.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey question number 15 examined the regularity of parents working on homework with their children (see Table 22). Forty-four charter public school respondents out of a total of fifty work on homework with their children on a daily basis, representing 88.0 percent of the charter public school parents surveyed. The remaining 12.0% of the
charter public school respondents work with their children on a weekly basis.

Table 23
Survey Question Number 15 (Traditional Public Respondents)

15. How often do you and your child do homework together?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a Year</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>65.2</td>
<td>67.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>96.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the traditional public school setting seventy-three respondents out of one hundred and eight total participants do homework with their children on a daily basis. This marks 67.6 percent of the respondents to the question, while 23.1 percent of the traditional public school parents responded to weekly homework participation, leaving 9.3 percent with monthly involvement or less (see Table 23).
Table 24
Survey Question Number 15 (Total Respondents)

15. How often do you and your child do homework together?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a Year</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>71.8</td>
<td>74.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>96.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>System</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 6.3 percent of the one hundred and fifty-eight respondents to this question that reported monthly involvement or less were all representative of the traditional public school portion of the sample. The charter public school data did not have any parent involvement with less than weekly participation (see Table 24).

Leisure Activities.

Questions 6-9, 10 and 12 emphasized parental involvement outside of the school environment including going to the movies and instructing the child in a skill or activity.
Table 25
Survey Question Number 7 (Charter Public Respondents)

7. How often do you and your child go to the movies together?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a Year</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td>82.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>96.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>98.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>System</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey question number 7 examined the regularity with which parents take their children to the movies (see Table 25). Thirty-three charter public school respondents take their children to the movies on a monthly basis, representing 66.0 percent of the total charter public school parents surveyed. Seven charter public respondents go to the movies on a weekly basis and another seven go once a year; each of these two groups account for fourteen percent of the total population. Two parents reported daily movie attendance, which suggests that they perhaps included watching movies on television in their answer. These respondents accounted for four percent of the total charter public sample. One charter public school parent
reported never going to the movies with their child, representing two percent of the total population.

Table 26
Survey Question Number 7 (Traditional Public Respondents)
7. How often do you and your child go to the movies together?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a Year</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>61.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>89.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>95.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>97.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>System</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In looking at the traditional public school respondents (see Table 26), thirty-four out of one hundred and nine parents reported never going to the movies with their children, comprising 31.2 percent of the traditional public school sample. Another thirty-three traditional public school respondents marked once a year, representing 30.3 percent of the traditional public school sample. Thirty-one traditional public school respondents reported taking their children to the movies monthly, or 28.4 percent of this sample. The weekly number of reported traditional public school parents that take their child to the movies was six, or 5.5 percent of this sample.
Finally, five respondents reported going to the movies on a daily basis with their children, or 4.6 percent of the total traditional public school sample. This suggests the possible inclusion of watching television movies in this category.

Table 27
Survey Question Number 7 (Total Respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Once a Year</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>97.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>163</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In analyzing the frequency table totals for both charter public and traditional public schools only one of the thirty-five respondents who chose “never” for taking their child to the movies was from the charter public school sample. Only seven of the forty who checked once a year were from the charter public school sample. These figures were based on a total of one hundred and fifty nine total respondents (see Tables 25, 26, & 27).
Survey Question Number 9 (Charter Public Respondents)

9. How often do you instruct your child in some skill/activity?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>Once a Year</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>60.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey question number 9 examines the regularity with which parents instruct their children in daily skills or activities. Thirty-one out of fifty-one charter public school respondents, representing 60.8 percent of the charter public sample, reported instructing their children on a daily basis. Another ten parents recorded weekly instruction, corresponding to 19.6 percent of the total charter public sample. Monthly instruction accounted for 15.7 percent of the charter public sample with eight respondents. Finally, two charter respondents, 3.9 percent of the charter public sample, reported once a year for daily skill or activity instruction (see Table 28).
Table 29
Survey Question Number 9 (Traditional Public Respondents)
9. How often do you instruct your child in some skill/activity?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a Year</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>61.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
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<td>37.5</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>97.3</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>System</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In looking at the traditional public school sample surveyed, forty-two out of one hundred and nine respondents (38.5 percent) reported daily involvement in skill/activity instruction. Another forty parents, representing 36.7 percent of the traditional public sample, reported weekly instruction. Monthly instruction accounted for fourteen respondents, or 12.8 percent, of the traditional public sample of parents. Nine parents responded once a year on involvement in skill/activity instruction, while four parents report never instructing children in this area. The cumulative percentage for these two categories was 11.9 percent of the traditional public school sample surveyed (see Table 29).
In comparing the daily percentages between the two schools, 60.8 percent of the charter public school parents and 38.5 percent of the traditional public school parents report daily instruction. On the other hand, 3.9 percent of the charter public school parents instruct their children in a skill/activity on a yearly basis, and there were no responses to less frequent instruction recorded. The cumulative percentage of the traditional public school parents who responded either once a year or never was 11.9 percent (3.7 percent were "never" responses) (see Tables 28 & 29).

Table 30
Survey Question Number 13 (Charter Public Respondents)

13. How often do and your child watch television together or engage in some other spontaneous activities at home?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In analyzing survey question number 13 which looks at parent involvement in spontaneous activities such as watching television with the children (see Table 30), thirty-nine out of fifty-one charter public school parents chose "daily" as their response making up 76.5 percent of the sample. While the remaining twelve respondents chose
"weekly" as their response to involvement in spontaneous activities with their children.

Table 31
Survey Question Number 13 (Traditional Public Respondents)
13. How often do you and your child watch television together or engage in some other spontaneous activities at home?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a Year</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The traditional public school data shows that seventy-seven out of one hundred and twelve parents, 68.8 percent of the traditional public school sample population, chose "daily" as their response to question thirteen on participation in spontaneous activities (see Table 31). Another twenty-two traditional public school parents representing 19.6 of the sample population chose "weekly" in describing spontaneous involvement, while another ten chose monthly involvement representing 8.9 percent of the sample. Finally two traditional public school respondents chose "once a year", accounting for 1.8 percent of the population, and one respondent (0.9%) choose "never" in
explaining involvement in spontaneous activities with their children.

Table 32
Survey Question Number 13 (Total Respondents)

13. How often do and your child watch television together or engage in some other spontaneous activities at home?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Once a Year</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daily</td>
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<td>71.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>163</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As depicted by the cumulative data on spontaneous involvement (see Table 32), one hundred and sixteen out of the one hundred sixty-three parents chose “daily” to explain their level of involvement in spontaneous activities. This category accounted for 71.2 percent of the total sample population, while 76.5 percent of the charter public school parents and 68.8 percent of the traditional public school parents chose the same response. The close relationship between these percentages reflects the reason that there is not a more significant difference between the charter public school and traditional public school on this issue, however, the difference in the numbers suggests a trend has been established. All of the
thirteen respondents who chose "less than weekly" involvement in spontaneous activities representing 8.0 percent of the total sample population are from the traditional public school survey pool.

**Parent Support.**

Survey question numbers 4 and 13 showed a substantial trend very close to the significant level of p<.05. These two questions examine general parental support outside of school.

Table 33
**Survey Question Number 4 (Charter Public Respondents)**

4. How often do you know where your child is outside of school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the Time</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>86.3</td>
<td>88.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>98.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey question number 4 looks at the parents' knowledge of their child's whereabouts outside of school (see Table 33). Forty-four out of fifty charter public school parent respondents chose the indicator of "always" when describing knowledge of the whereabouts of their child. This figure represented 88.0 percent of the charter
public school respondents. Another four parents responded knowing the whereabouts of their child “most of the time”, representing 8.0 percent of charter public population. Only two parents, 4.0 percent of the charter public population, acknowledged never knowing the whereabouts of their children.

Table 34
Survey Question Number 4 (Traditional Public Respondents)

4. How often do you know where your child is outside of school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once in Awhile</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the Time</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>74.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>96.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In looking at the traditional public school data (see Table 34), eighty out of one hundred and eight traditional public school respondents always have knowledge as to the whereabouts of their children outside of school. This figure represents 74.1 percent of the traditional public school sample. Another thirteen parents chose “most of the time” to describe their knowledge of the children’s whereabouts, representing 12.0 percent of the sample
population. Four parents chose "once in a while" to describe their knowledge of the children's whereabouts, or 3.7% of the sample population. Finally, nine traditional public school parents, 8.0% of the sample population, chose "never" to describe their knowledge of their children's whereabouts outside of school.

Table 35
Survey Question Number 4 (Total Respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once in Awhile</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the Time</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>76.1</td>
<td>78.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>96.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In examining the cumulative data of this question (see Table 35), one hundred and twenty four out of one hundred and fifty eight respondents chose "always" to describe their knowledge of the children's whereabouts outside of school. This figure represents 78.5 percent of the total sample population, compared to 88.0 percent of the charter public school sample and 74.1 percent of the traditional
public school sample that chose the same response (see Tables 33, 34, & 35).

Table 36
Survey Question Number 5 (Charter Public Respondents)

5. How often do you know whom your child is with outside of school hours?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Valid</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the Time</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>82.4</td>
<td>84.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>98.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey question number 5 seeks to discover if the parents are aware of whom their children are with after school. In looking at the charter public school respondents, forty-two out of fifty (84.0 percent) chose "always" in describing knowing whom their children are with outside of school. Six charter public school parents representing 12.0 percent of the sample population chose "most of the time" to describe their knowledge of whom the children are with outside of school. While two respondents, only 4.0 percent of the population, chose "never" in describing their knowledge of whom the children are with outside of school (see Table 36).
Table 37
Survey Question Number 5 (Traditional Public Respondents)

5. How often do you know whom your child is with outside of school hours?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once in Awhile</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the Time</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>70.5</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>97.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In seventy-nine out of one hundred and nine surveys, the traditional public school parents responded by choosing “always” in referring to their knowledge of whom their children are with outside of school (see Table 37). This figure represents 72.5 percent of the traditional public school sample of the population. Another sixteen traditional public school respondents chose “most of the time”, representing 14.7 percent of the sample. Five parents chose “once in a while” in describing their knowledge of whom the children are with outside of school; this is 4.6 percent of the traditional public school sample population. Finally, eight respondents, 7.3 percent of the traditional public school sample, chose “never” to describe
their knowledge of whom their child is with outside of school.

Table 38
Survey Question Number 5 (Total Respondents)

5. How often do you know whom your child is with outside of school hours?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once in Awhile</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the Time</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>74.2</td>
<td>76.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>97.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In examining the cumulative data for question five, addressing knowledge of whom the children are with outside of school, one hundred and twenty-one parents out of one hundred and fifty-nine respondents chose “always” in describing their knowledge of whom the children are with. This represents 76.1 percent of the total sample population, as compared to the 94.0 percent of the charter public respondent sample and the 72.5 percent of the traditional public school response rate. While eight of the ten “never” responses correspond to the traditional public school population (see Table 38).
Additional Findings

Despite the close content between questions 4 and 5, the level of significance of question 5 showed a limited trend, while the level of significance of question 4 produced a strong trend. An explanation for this trend could be that charter public school parents are more likely to know where their children are outside of school than their traditional public school counterparts. In question four, forty-four charter public school parents chose "always" knowing where their child was outside of school, and forty-two charter public school parents chose "always" knowing whom their children are with outside of school as asked in question five. This frequency difference of two responses reflects the difference in the level of significance between questions four and five in the charter public sample.

Question fifteen, focusing on school-related activities, specifically addressing the amount of time that parents have invested in homework with their children. Eighty-eight point zero percent of the charter public school parents assist their children with homework on a daily basis (see Table 22). With 67.6 percent of the traditional public school parents responding in kind, the
p = 0.005 level of significance rejects the null hypothesis (see Table 23 and Appendix F).

Questions 1, 14, 18, and 19 not only speak about school-related activities, but they also address school climate. A p value of >0.05 represents a rejection of the null hypothesis: There is no significant difference between parental involvement in charter public schools and traditional public schools of similar socioeconomic background. These four questions rejected the null hypothesis with each having a p value of >0.05. The frequency data presented in percentages is given to help clarify the conclusions.

Question one looked at the number of parent/teacher meetings attended with p = 0.000 representing the level of significance (see Appendix F and Table 7). Seventy nine point four percent of the charter public school parents attended at least eight meetings in the last year, while 50.0 percent of the traditional public school parents did not attend one parent teacher meeting (see Table 8).

Question fourteen asked about parent phone communication with the teacher. This question presented with a strong p = 0.001, with 70.9 percent of the charter public school parents reporting communication with their child’s teacher at least on a monthly basis (see Appendix F and Table 9).
Only 29.2 percent of the charter public school parents communicated with their child’s teacher once a year or less, while 70.2 percent of traditional public school parents communicate with their child’s teacher at the same rate (see Tables 9 & 10).

Question eighteen examined the approachability of the teacher. Eighty two point two percent of the charter public school parents strongly agree they can call or make an appointment with their child’s teacher, while 57.8 percent of the traditional public school parents answered they had the same belief with a p=.042 level of significance.

Question nineteen, gauging school-related activities and parent-school relations, looks at the approachability of the principal; this question had a p=.001 level of significance (see Appendix F). Seventy three point five percent of the charter public school parents strongly agree that they can call or make an appointment with their child’s principal, while only 36.0 percent of the traditional public school parents had the same beliefs (see Tables 14 & 15).

Question twenty, also gauging school-related activities and parent-school relations, asked the grade the parent would give the school. With a p=.000, 98.0 percent
of the charter public school parents gave the school a grade of "Excellent" (A), while 47.2 percent of traditional public school parents responded in kind (see Appendix F, Tables 17 & 18).

In looking at parent-school relations, four communication questions (#1, 14, 18, and 19) measured the school climate as it applies to parents attending meetings in the school, talking to teachers and the principal. These are not examples of innovative school strategies, but rather effective examples of traditional techniques and practices. The grades the parents gave the school in question twenty reflect their position on the school's ability to educate the children.

Questions 7, 9, 11, and 13 reflect general levels of parental support. Question seven looks at the frequency with which parents take their children to the movies. Sixty-six point zero percent of the charter public school parents surveyed take their children to the movies at least on a monthly basis, while only 28.4 percent of the traditional public school guardians responded in kind (see Tables 25 & 26). The p=.000 represents the statistical level of significance of the difference in these schools (see Appendix F).
In question nine, 60.8 percent of the charter public school parents instruct their children in some skill or activity on a daily basis, while only 38.5 percent of the traditional public school parents responded the same (see Tables 28 & 29). This data reflected a level significance with $p = .027$ supporting the research hypothesis (see Appendix F).

Question eleven looks at parent/child communication regarding day to day events. Ninety-six point one percent of the charter public school parents communicate weekly with their children about daily issues, while 80.2 percent of traditional public school parents communicate about daily issues on a weekly basis (see Tables 20 & 21). The $p = .023$ reflects the level of significance supporting a difference between the two schools that would confirm the research hypothesis (see Appendix F).

Question thirteen emphasizes such spontaneous engagement as watching television. The p value of .058 shows a trend that suggests parents of charter public school students are more likely to engage in such spontaneous activities as watching television with their children than their traditional public school counterparts (see Appendix F).
This research has shown that there is a significant difference between charter public schools and traditional public schools in two basic areas: school approachability or school climate and strong parenting practices. Parents of charter public school children attend more meetings, and feel comfortable that they can communicate with the teacher and principal on a regular basis. In turn, charter public school parents gave a higher grade to their children’s school showing confidence in the school’s ability to educate their children. These issues raise the question, “Does effective communication with parents lead to a more positive perception of the school’s performance?”

This research also indicates that charter public school parents more regularly exhibit such effective parenting skills as doing homework with their children, instructing them in different skills and activities, parent/child communication and spending leisure time together at the movies.

Reliability Analysis

The results of this research were thoroughly analyzed and documented. Internal and external validity was maintained by incorporating methodical requirements throughout the research. With rare outcomes in nine out of twenty questions and strong trends in another two
questions, the researcher calculated and recalculate the data to ensure the results were accurate. The recalculation resulted in the exact same numbers. A reliability analysis of the respondent data was conducted using a correlation matrix to alleviate possible questions regarding the reliability of the research. In general, the concept of reliability refers to how accurate, on the average, the estimate of true score is in a population of objects to be measured (SPSS Base 8.0 Applications Guide, 1998). The matrix correlated each question in the child's placement in a charter public school or traditional public school and degree of parental involvement. The resulting reliability was fixed at .5424, reflecting moderate data reliability (see Table 39). For detailed output from the correlation matrix calculations see Appendix F.
Table 39
(Total Respondents)

Reliability Analysis for Independent Samples t-test for Equal Means and 18 Survey Questions
Analysis of Variance (t-test)

Reliability Analysis Scale (Alpha)

Reliability Coefficients:

N of Cases = 163.0  N of Items = 18

Alpha = .5424

The data and results of this chapter suggest a rejection of the null hypothesis. Based on the Alpha of .5424, further research in this area may confirm or refute the findings. The research and subsidiary questions are now to be answered by the results and findings. The elements will be summarized and conclusions will be drawn. Recommendations for further research will also be discussed. This information will be covered in Chapter V.
Chapter V

Summary, Conclusions, Discussion, Recommendations

This chapter summarizes the study design and the findings, and presents the conclusions and recommendations. The chapter is divided into four sections: summary, conclusions, discussion and recommendations.

Summary

Involving parents in the educational process encompasses a myriad of possibilities. The parents can be involved at home, at school, or within the community. Engaging with their children in schoolwork is a simple yet vital strategy for parents to undertake as a part of the educational process.

Cottan & Wikeland (1989) propose that the more active the parents' involvement the greater the achievement benefits. However, any involvement, passive or active, will have a positive impact on student performance in the classroom. "Research shows that the more intensively parents are involved in their children's learning, the more beneficial are the achievement effects" (p.3).

The Purpose of the Study.

The purpose of the study was to determine if there is a significant difference between parental involvement in
charter public schools and their traditional public school counterparts with similar socioeconomic and demographic status. This study encouraged parents to express their own opinions on student-focused activities and their importance to the educational process. Additionally, it looked at parents' academic involvement at home and at school. Communication between home and school and between parent and child were addressed as well. The study also observed the parents' participation with the child in non-academic quality time. Finally, the study recorded the parents' perception of their child's school.

The independent variable for this study was the child's status as a charter public or traditional public school student. The dependent variable was the degree of parental involvement.

**Null Hypothesis.**

There is no significant difference in parental involvement between charter public schools and traditional public schools of similar demographic and socioeconomic status.

**Testing the Null Hypothesis.**

The intent of the analysis of the data was to test the null hypothesis of the study against the research hypothesis i.e., there is a statistically significant
difference in parental involvement between charter public schools and traditional public schools of similar socioeconomic and demographic status. By comparing the degree of parental involvement in the charter public school with that of the traditional public school, the writer sought to determine if charter public schools are involving more parents in the educational process as the research initially stated.

Conclusions

Child-focused Activities Survey.

The school related activity questions i.e., number of PTA meetings attended in the last year (#1), phone contacts with teachers (#14), and homework assistance (#15), were shown to have a strong statistical significance. Charter public school parents showed a significantly higher level of involvement in the number of PTA meetings, phone contacts with teachers, and regularity with homework assistance. The general level of charter public school parental involvement was also statistically significant in the number of times parents took their children to the movies (#7).

Parent/child communication regarding day to day events (#11) and parents instructing their child in some skill or activity (#9) were both statistically significant
addressing school-related activities and general level of parental involvement. It would seem logical that parents and children engaging in these types of activities will lead to more involvement in school-related activities.

In looking at the relationship between parents and school professionals, there was a significant difference in the approachability of the teacher (#18) and approachability of the principal (#19) favoring the charter public school. By creating an educational climate where parents felt comfortable calling or making an appointment with the teacher or principal, the charter public school received a higher grade rating by the parents than the traditional public school (#20).

One of the biggest charter public school affirmations in New Jersey has come from the large percentage of schools that report waiting lists. Eighty-three percent of the operating charter public schools in the State of New Jersey report they have waiting lists for the 1998-1999 school year. The demand is so high that 2,888 students are on waiting lists throughout the state (N.J. Dept. of Ed., "Charter Schools", 1999). Taking the time to fill out the applications is a demonstration of parents' approval of the school. Charter public schools take a business stance that students are the products, parents are the customers, and
it is the responsibility of the school to serve the
customer (Schlechty, 1997, Lane, 1998).

Based on the research data, charter schools are more
effective at such traditional practices as parent/child
communication, parent/school relations, and parent/child
instruction, as well as parents spending more general
quality time with their children e.g., watching television
and going to the movies. Showing interest in activities
that the children are interested in doing is the key to
this involvement.

This data supports the research hypothesis: there is a
significant difference in the level of parental involvement
of charter schools versus traditional public schools of
similar demographic and socioeconomic status.

Study of Student Achievement

A study analyzing achievement data was undertaken
through a partnership between the charter public school and
the traditional public school (Summary Program Evaluation
Report, Year 2: 1998-1999, 1999). The study results were
made available to this researcher. The investigation
included the analysis of achievement data of the total
population for the same two schools used for this study.

Results from the Stanford Achievement Test - Ninth
Edition (SAT-9) taken by charter public school and
traditional public school first and second grade students were compared to the median grade equivalent. The compiled data was based on the total population of the two schools, not matched data using the survey sample of the population. Test scores in reading, mathematics, and language were compared between the two schools.

**Charter Public and Traditional Public Comparison.**

In looking at the first grade data for reading, the mean score for the charter public school was 79.5 and the traditional public school, 54.0. In mathematics the charter public school scored 81.3 and the traditional public school scored 60.9. The language results saw the charter public school perform with a score of 80.0 and the traditional public school score 52.4. The charter public school outperformed the traditional public school by 25.5 points in reading, 20.4 in mathematics, and 27.6 in language. These differences were statistically significant at a level of p<.001 (see Figure 1).
Figure 1. Grade 1 SAT-9 overall achievement results comparison between charter public school and traditional public school in reading, mathematics, and language.

In comparing the second grade data the results were much closer. The charter public school scored 70.2 in reading while the traditional public school scored 64.5. The mathematics results were virtually equal; the charter public school scored 78.9 while the traditional public scored 77.9. In looking at the language data, the charter public school scored 72.0 and the traditional public school scored 66.9. The charter public school outperformed the
traditional public school once again; however, on the second grade level it was much closer than the first. The charter public school was 5.7 points higher in reading, one point better in mathematics and 5.1 points higher in language than the traditional public school. These differences were not found to be statistically significant at any level (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Grade 2 SAT-9 overall achievement results comparison between charter public school and traditional public school in reading, mathematics and language.
Median Grade Equivalent Comparison.

In comparing the performance of the charter public school students to the traditional public school students, the assessment data was also converted to median grade equivalents. In the charter public school achievement as compared to the national median grade equivalent, the first grade students scored 3.2 (third grade, second month) in reading, 3.0 (third grade) in mathematics, 4.4 (fourth grade, fourth month) in language, and 4.5 (fourth grade, fifth month) in listening. The national median in each category is 1.8 (first grade, eighth month). The median grade is equivalent to grade level skills attained. These differences are statistically significant based on corresponding Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) at the level of \( p < .001 \) (see Figure 3).
Figure 3. Grade 1 SAT-9 overall achievement results comparison of charter public school and national median in reading, mathematics, language, and listening.

The charter public school once again performed admirably based on the second grade data compared to the national median. Second grade charter public school students earned a reading score of 4.3 (fourth grade, third month), a mathematics score of 4.8 (fourth grade, eighth month), a language score of 4.4 (fourth grade, fourth month), and a listening score of 3.4 (third grade, fourth month).
eighth month). Once again the median grade is equivalent to grade level skills attained. These differences are statistically significant based on corresponding NCE at the level of p<.001 (see Figure 4).

![Bar chart showing median grade equivalents for reading, mathematics, language, and listening.]

**Figure 4.** Grade 2 SAT-9 overall achievement results comparison of charter public school and national median in reading, mathematics, language, and listening.

More and more educators are becoming aware of the need to connect with parents in order to maximize student
achievement. "Researchers recognize that a close-knit community, linking families and schools has important benefits for improving student commitment to schoolwork and the academic outcomes that follow" (Becker, et al., 1997, p. 512).

Parent involvement logically must influence student success just as the educationally supportive backgrounds from which students emerge must also impact their performance. Research indicates that the rate of student achievement on standardized tests is related to the percentage of times parents are present at school functions (Christenson, 1998).

**Discussion**

Existing research on charter schools focuses on state legislation, individual school autonomy, and a collaborative effort between the teachers, parents, and students. The National Study of Charter Schools (U.S. Dept. of Ed., 1998) identified the three primary reasons for the development of charter schools: educational vision, individual school autonomy, and addressing the needs of a special population. Only 4.9% of the stated reasons for starting a charter school were associated with parental involvement, as opposed to 61.9% who identified educational vision as their motivation. Becker, et al. (1997) cites
that a mere 26% of administrators feel this involvement is vital to the achievement of their students. It can be concluded from these figures that parental involvement is not a major motivating factor in the design of charter schools. However, the community’s viewpoint differs. Eighty nine percent of business executives believe that the lack of parental involvement is the biggest obstacle to school reform (Christenson, 1998).

The Strong Families, Strong Schools Report (Ballen & Moles, 1994) identifies acknowledgement from parents, teachers, community members, and students that parental involvement is a crucial issue in student achievement. "Parental perceptions of their children can be so potent that parents’ beliefs about children’s ability affect performance more than children’s actual ability as measured by standardized tests" (Parsons, Alder, & Kaczala, 1982 in Alexander & Entwisle, 1988, p.105). The research is clear in its support for the relationship between parental involvement and student achievement.

Research suggests that “teachers pay more attention to students whose parents are involved in the school” (Finn, 1998, p.23). In his book, Inventing Better Schools (1997), Phillip Schlechty refers to the comparison of public
schools versus private schools citing the lack of confidence the public has in public schools.

Parents are the primary teachers of children; they are the most influential on the children. Schools must create a mutually beneficial relationship with parents that allows for the sharing of information. To develop this relationship, the school must convince parents that there is no risk involved and that they will not be judged on their effectiveness as caretakers. Rather, they will be in situations where their ideas and concerns will be seriously considered, and where educational professionals will work with them toward solutions (Sergiovanni, 1996).

Research data for this study has shown that there is a significant difference between charter public schools and traditional public schools in two basic areas: school approachability or school climate and strong parenting practices. Parents of charter public school children attend more meetings, and feel comfortable that they can communicate with the teacher and principal on a regular basis. In turn, charter school parents gave a higher grade to their children’s school showing confidence in the school’s ability to educate their children. These issues raise the question, “Does effective communication with
parents lead to a more positive perception of the school’s performance?"

The research data also indicates that charter public school parents more regularly exhibit such effective parenting skills as doing homework with their children, instructing them in different skills and activities, parent/child communication and spending leisure time together at the movies.

The review of the literature supports the statistically significant data in this survey concluding that communication between school and home, parent involvement in school and at home, and parent participation in the school decision making process results in the parents’ increased level of confidence in the school’s ability to educate their child.

**Recommendations**

Educational leaders, in seeking to improve the performance of their schools as a whole, should consider incorporating those strategies which have been demonstrated as effective in improving student performance in charter public schools.

Roland Barth sees "the concept of the school as a community of learners, a place where all participants - teachers, principals, parents and students - engage in
learning and teaching" (1990, p.43). Establishing a climate where all these participants can respect the needs of each other is the challenge; charter public schools have demonstrated the effectiveness of this concept. Charter public schools are not merely inviting parents to meetings for a regurgitation of the month’s events, but instead involving parents in the very real discussions that will guide the educational direction of the school.

Professional educators from all educational settings can benefit from the strategies discussed in this study. These practices would be effective in any educational setting including traditional public, private, and charter public schools. When we give parents and students the autonomy to choose their own schools, educational professionals will be more apt to see parents and students as customers, not simply by-products. Charter public schools and private schools are likely to see parents as customers based on a mutually beneficial relationship; parents apply for their children to go to the school where they believe the child will thrive and, in turn, are a valuable resource for the educators and leaders of the school (Lane, 1998).

Public school professionals far too often take the stance that they do not need parents because parents have
limited choice in where the children are sent to school. Children are sent to a school system based on the town in which they live. For years, failing public school districts have had strong parochial or private schools in the area where more affluent parents could send their children, however, today parochial and private schools have competition from charter public schools which provide much of the same extra attention without many of the additional costs (Associated Press, "Catholic Schools", 1999).

Traditional public schools, now, not only face the challenges of competing private, parochial and charter public schools, but competition from other traditional public schools in the same district such as magnet schools which offer the opportunity to choose among public schools within the same district. Interdistrict school choice opportunities are now becoming available; plans toward this movement in New Jersey are moving forward for September 2000. The interdistrict choice program developed by lawmakers called for a five-year pilot program which would allow one school in each county to take additional students tuition free. The driving force would be that students in failing schools would have the opportunity to attend successful schools. "The choice schools would receive additional state funding for those out-of-town students,
while the students’ home district would lose aid.

Lawmakers have estimated that the program would eventually affect about 2000 students” (Associated Press, “Lawmakers Can’t Agree”, 1999, p. 5).

David Snead, the Detroit superintendent of schools, is in support of the charter public school movement. He reports that his district is, “finding the charter idea is helping encourage other schools in our district to examine what they are doing” (Nathan, 1996, p.86). Traditional public schools should utilize the charter movement as a guide for their research and development.

Further Research

Regarding further research in the area of this topic, it is recommended that studies be conducted to determine answers to such questions as:

1. Does the socioeconomic status of parents, e.g. long work days and/or long work weeks, limit their opportunity to contribute to their child’s charter public school education?

2. Do cultural differences, mainly language, create a barrier making it less likely for parents to apply for charter public school admission?
3. Does the amount of time parents are encouraged to spend in school limit their willingness to apply for charter public school admission?

4. Would a longitudinal study focusing on parents of the students in the same grade level from these two schools result in the same level of parental involvement as the students progress into secondary school?

5. What factors other than parental involvement have an influence on student achievement as measured by standardized test scores?

The research data of this study supports the position that there is a significant difference in parental involvement between charter public schools and traditional public schools of similar socioeconomic and demographic backgrounds. Further research on the aforementioned questions could help to explain the results of this study.

Finally, this researcher must point out a potential survey bias. Three hundred and sixty five surveys were sent home with children for their parents to complete. One hundred were distributed to the charter public school parents and two hundred and sixty five to the traditional public school parents. The total returned survey sample was one hundred and sixty three, fifty-one from the charter
public school and one hundred and twelve from the
traditional public school. This was not a true random
survey of the population based on the parent’s choosing to
respond to the survey as opposed to random selection of the
population. These participants may or may not accurately
reflect the total population. In addition, not all the
surveys were completed in their entirety; SPSS was used to
assign an averaged response to the uncompleted surveys.

These two factors may have had a negative impact on
the overall Alpha. Based on this information as well as an
Alpha of .5424, further research in this area may confirm
or refute the researcher’s findings.

The relationship between charter public school
professionals and the parents of students attending these
schools is different than traditional public school
professionals and the parents of their students.

There is presently an emotional component associated
with the charter public school movement; this may interfere
with an objective assessment of charter public schools.
Hopefully, such contributions as this will provide
objective data upon which valid conclusions can be drawn.


Medler, Alex. (March 1997). Charter schools are here to stay. Principal, 76, 16-19.


Robinson vs. Cahill, 360 A.2d 400 (N.J. 1976).


Appendix A

Child-Focussed Activities Survey
Child-Focussed Activities Survey

Name of child's school: ___________ Grade: ____

1. How many PTA meetings have you attended in the last year? ____

2. How many parent-teacher conferences regarding your child have you attended in the last year? ____

3. How many times have you been invited to serve on school committees working together with teachers and students? ____

4. How often do you know where your child is outside of school?
   1(never) 2(once in awhile) 3(sometimes) 4(most of the time) 5(always)

5. How often do you know whom your child is with outside of school hours?
   1(never) 2(once in awhile) 3(sometimes) 4(most of the time) 5(always)

The following questions should be answered with the following scale:
   1=never 2=once a year 3=monthly 4=weekly 5=daily

6. How often do you spend time with your child in leisure activities?
   1 2 3 4 5

7. How often do you and your child go to the movies together?
   1 2 3 4 5

8. How often do you and our child visit relatives?
   1 2 3 4 5

9. How often do you instruct your child in some skill/activity?
   1 2 3 4 5
10. How often do you and your child participate in purchased activities (e.g., concerts, sporting events, going out to dinner) together?
   1  2  3  4  5

11. How often do you and your child talk about day-to-day events?
   1  2  3  4  5

12. How often do you and your child eat together at home?
   1  2  3  4  5

13. How often do you and your child watch television together or engage in some other spontaneous activities at home?
   1  2  3  4  5

The following questions should be answered with the following scale:
1=never  2=once a year  3=monthly  4=weekly  5=daily

14. How often do you communicate by phone with your child’s teachers?
   1  2  3  4  5

15. How often do you and your child do homework together?
   1  2  3  4  5

16. How often do you read aloud to your child?
   1  2  3  4  5

17. How does the school communicate with you? Check all that apply:
   — Newsletter       — Home visit
   — Telephone call    — Note on report card
   — Personal meeting  — Written correspondence

18. I do call or make an appointment to meet with my child’s teacher when I have a question or concern about my child.
   1(strongly agree) 2(mildly agree) 3(neutral)
   4(mildly disagree) 5(strongly disagree)
19. I do call or make an appointment to meet with my child's principal when I have a question or concern about my child.
   1 (strongly agree) 2 (mildly agree) 3 (neutral) 4 (mildly disagree) 5 (strongly disagree)

20. What grade would you give the school for its performance in educating your child?
   1 = A (excellent) 2 = B (good) 3 = C (average) 4 = D (below average) 5 = F (failing)

21. What might cause you to be more actively involved in activities at the school? Check all that apply:

   ___ Parental input in decision-making
   ___ Classroom visitation appointment
   ___ Parent workshops
   ___ Contact from school Committee participation
   ___ other

Source: This is a modified version of the "Parent Involvement Survey" prepared by the Southeast Regional Center for Drug-Free Schools and Communities, Atlanta, GA, 1989.
Appendix B

Parent Involvement Survey
Parental Involvement Survey (M33)

Please answer the following questions with respect to your son or daughter. If you have more than one child, answer the questions with respect to the child who is closest to 14 years of age.

1. How many PTA meetings have you attended in the last year? ________

2. How many parent-teacher conferences regarding your child have you attended in the last year? ________

3. List any youth organizations (e.g., Scouts, sports teams, music groups, church groups) you are involved with at least once per week.

4. How often do you know where your child is outside of school hours?
   1 = never  5 = always  1  2  3  4  5

5. How often do you know whom your child is with outside of school hours?
   1 = never  5 = always  1  2  3  4  5

The following questions should be answered with the following scale:
   1 = never  2 = once a year  3 = monthly  4 = weekly  5 = daily

6. How often do you spend time with your child in sports or athletics?
   1  2  3  4  5

7. How often do you and your child go to movies together?
   1  2  3  4  5

8. How often do you and your child go camping, fishing, hunting?
   1  2  3  4  5

9. How often do you and your child go on vacations together?
   1  2  3  4  5

10. How often do you and your child visit relatives?
    1  2  3  4  5

11. How often do you instruct your child in some skill/activity?
    1  2  3  4  5

12. How often do you and your child participate in purchased activities (e.g., concerts, sporting events, going out to dinner) together?
    1  2  3  4  5
13. How often do you and your child talk about day-to-day things?
   1    2    3    4    5

14. How often do you and your child eat together at home?
   1    2    3    4    5

15. How often do you and your child watch TV together or engage in some other spontaneous activities at home?
   1    2    3    4    5

Source: Southeast Regional Center for Drug-Free Schools and Communities. Atlanta, GA. 1989.
Appendix C

Child-Focussed Activities Survey (Spanish)
Encuesta Enfocando en las Actividades de los Niños

1. ¿Cuántas reuniones de "PTA" (comité de padres y maestros) ha asistido usted en el último año?

2. ¿Cuántas conferencias entre padre y maestro ha asistido usted en el último año en referencia a su hijo/a?

3. ¿Cuántas veces ha sido usted invitado para servir en comités trabajando junto con maestros y estudiantes?

4. ¿Cuántas veces sabe usted dónde está su hijo/a fuera de la escuela?
   1 (nunca)  2 (a veces)  3 (de vez en cuanto)  4 (la mayoría del tiempo)  5 (siempre)

5. ¿Cuántas veces sabe usted con quien está su hijo/a en las horas fuera de la escuela?
   1 (nunca)  2 (a veces)  3 (de vez en cuanto)  4 (la mayoría del tiempo)  5 (siempre)

Las siguientes preguntas deben ser contestados en la siguiente escala:
   1=nunca  2=una vez al año  3=mensualmente  4=semanalmente  5=diariamente

6. ¿Cuántas veces pasa usted tiempo con su hijo/a en actividades de comodidad?
   1  2  3  4  5

7. ¿Cuántas veces a la semana va usted al cine con su hijo/a?
   1  2  3  4  5

8. ¿Cuántas veces visitan sus familiares usted y su hijo/a?
   1  2  3  4  5

9. ¿Cuántas veces usted instruye a su hijo/a en una actividad de destreza?
   1  2  3  4  5

10. ¿Cuántas veces participan usted y su hijo/a en actividades de compras? (eje. conciertos, eventos de deportes, saliendo a comer juntos)
    1  2  3  4  5
11. ¿Cuántas veces hablan usted y su hijo/a de los eventos de cada día?
   1  2  3  4  5

12. ¿Cuántas veces a la semana comen usted y su hijo/a juntos en la casa?
    1  2  3  4  5

13. ¿Cuántas veces ven usted y su hijo/a televisión juntos o se comprometen en alguna actividad espontánea en el hogar?
   1  2  3  4  5

14. ¿Cuántas veces se comunica usted por teléfono con el maestro de su hijo/a?
   1  2  3  4  5

15. ¿Cuántas veces trabajan usted y su hijo/a juntos en las tareas de la escuela en el hogar?
    1  2  3  4  5

16. ¿Cuántas veces le lee a voz alta usted a su hijo/a?
  1  2  3  4  5

17. ¿Cómo se comunica la escuela con usted? Marque todos los que sean aplicables:
    — Impresión boletín
    — Visitas al hogar
    — Llamada teléfono
    — Informe de notas
    — Reuniones personales
    — Correspondencia escrita

18. Llamo y hago citas para ver al maestro de mi hijo/a cuando tengo alguna pregunta o interés sobre mi hijo/a.
    1(frecuentemente de acuerdo) 2(suavemente de acuerdo) 3(neutro) 4(suavemente desacuerdo) 5(fuertemente desacuerdo)

19. Llamo y hago citas para reunirme con el principal cuando tengo alguna pregunta o interés sobre mi hijo/a.
    1(frecuentemente de acuerdo) 2(suavemente de acuerdo) 3(neutro) 4(suavemente desacuerdo) 5(fuertemente desacuerdo)
20. ¿Qué grado le daría usted a la escuela por su ejecución en educar su hijo/a?

1 = A (exelente)   2 = B (bueno)   3 = C (promedio mediano)   4 = D (promedio bajo)   5 = F (fallar)

21. ¿Qué puede causarle ser más activa en envolverse en actividades en la escuela? Marque todos los que le sea aplicable:

___ contribución parental en hacer decisiones
___ visitación de clase por citas
___ taller para padres
___ contacto de la escuela
___ participación del comité
___ otros

El nombre de la escuela de su hijo/a ____________________________
Grado _____________

Origen: Esto es una versión modificada de "Los Padres Envolventos en la Encuesta" preparada por el Centro Regional de Escuelas y Comunidades Libre de Drogas, Atlanta, GA, 1989.
Appendix D

Survey Participation Letter
William O. George  
4 River Bend  
Oceanport, NJ  07757

May 26, 1999

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am writing you to ask for your voluntary participation in a research project that I am conducting on child-focused activities in both public and charter schools.

I have enclosed the "Child-Focussed Activities" survey that allows you to rate the frequency of several types of interactions between you and your child, and with your child's school. Your input through this survey is crucial to the success of the research. The research addresses the possible benefit of increased parental involvement in the public school educational process.

This survey is being used as a part of my doctoral study in education. I am a doctoral student at Seton Hall University in South Orange, NJ. Please be assured that all responses will remain anonymous. Should you choose to participate, please supply the information and have your child return the survey to the school by June 16, 1999. Do not include your name anywhere on the survey or envelope. Completion and return of this survey indicates your willingness to participate in this research project. The survey should take approximately ten minutes to complete. Failure to participate or withdrawal from the survey will not affect the status of your child’s academic standing. The researcher has no affiliation with the participating schools.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research. The IRB believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subject’s privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights. The Chairperson of the IRB may be reached through the Office of Grants and Research Services. The telephone number of the Office is (973) 275-2974; the fax number is (973) 275-2978.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me, William O. George, Assistant Principal, Long
Branch Middle School, 364 Indiana Avenue, Long Branch, NJ 07740. My work telephone number is (732) 229-5533 x19.

Your input is greatly appreciated. It is my hope that this research will provide me with a better understanding of how schools and parents work together to best serve our children. Thank you for your anticipated cooperation.

Sincerely,

William O. George
Appendix E

Survey Participation Letter (Spanish)
Estimado Padre o Guardian,

Le escribo para pedirle su participación voluntario con un trabajo de investigación que estoy haciendo con el tema de actividades enfocando en los niños en las escuelas públicas y "charter".

Adjunto el "Child Focussed Activities" encuesta que le deja a Ud. estimar la frecuencia de varios tipos de interacción entre Ud. y su hijo/hija y con sus escuelas. Su gerencia es crucial para el éxito del proyecto. El trabajo de investigación se trata de los beneficios que puede ocurrir con la cooperación de los padres y sus hijos en el proceso de las escuelas públicas.

La encuesta que Ud. va a llenar es para mi Tesis Doctoral en el estudio de Educación. Soy estudiante en la Universidad de Seton Hall en South Orange, NJ en el programa Doctoral. Por favor asegúrese de que todas las respuestas en la encuesta serán anónimas. Si Ud. desea participar en las encuesta, favor de suministrar la información y mandarla con su hijo/hija antes de el 16 de junio de 1999. No incluye su nombre en ningún sitio de la encuesta o sobre. Si Ud. complete este formulario, quiere decir que Ud. está dispuesto a participar en este proyecto. La encuesta debe de durar aproximadamente diez minutos para llenar. Si Ud. no desea participar en el proyecto, no cambiará la condición o estado académico de su hijo/hija. El investigador no está afiliado con ningunas si las escuelas participando.

El proyecto ha estado revisado y aprobado por El Consejo de la Universidad de Seton Hall, South Orange, NJ. El "IRB" está de acuerdo que el procedimiento protegí adecuadamente a la privacidad, derechos, y libertades civiles de participante. El Presidente del "IRB" puede estar a su orden llamando a la Oficina de Becas y Investigaciones al numero (973) 275-2974; fax (973) 275-2978.

Si Ud. tiene alguna pregunta, por favor llámame, William O. George, Asistente Principal, Long Branch Middle School, 364
Indiana Avenue, Long Branch, NJ 07740. Mi numero de teléfono en el trabajo es (732) 229-5533x19.

Agradezco mucho su ayuda y cooperación. Es mi deseo que esta investigación me ayudará a entender como las escuelas y los padres pueden trabajar juntos, para beneficiar a los niños. Muchas gracias por su cooperación.

Sinceramente,

William O. George
Appendix F

SPSS Independent Sample T-Test
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### Independent Samples Test

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| How many parent-teacher conferences regarding your child have you attended in the last year? | .989 | .987 | 3.83E-03
| How many times have you been invited to serve on school committees working together with | .129 | .130 | .42
| How often do you know where your child is outside of school? | .060 | .031 | .36
| How often do you know whom your child is with outside of school hours? | .093 | .056 | .32
| How often do you spend time with your child in leisure activities? | .456 | .367 | .13
| How often do you and your child go to the movies together? | .000 | .000 | .82
| How often do you and your child visit relatives? | .103 | .082 | .28
| How often do you instruct your child in some skill/activity? | .027 | .018 | .39
### Independent Samples Test

#### t-test for Equality of Means

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How often do you and your child participate in purchased activities (e.g., concerts)</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed: .453  Equal variances not assumed: .396</td>
<td>.11  .11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you and your child talk about day-to-day events?</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed: .023  Equal variances not assumed: .004</td>
<td>.35  .35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you and your child watch television together or engage in some other spontaneous activities</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed: .058  Equal variances not assumed: .019</td>
<td>.23  .23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you communicate by phone with your child's teacher?</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed: .001  Equal variances not assumed: .000</td>
<td>.74  .74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you and your child do homework together?</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed: .005  Equal variances not assumed: .000</td>
<td>.35  .35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do call or make an appointment to meet with my child's teacher when I have a question or concern</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed: .042  Equal variances not assumed: .035</td>
<td>-.39  -.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do call or make an appointment to meet with my child's principal when I have a question or concern</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed: .001  Equal variances not assumed: .001</td>
<td>-.75  -.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What grade would you give your school for its performance in educating your child?</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed: .000  Equal variances not assumed: .000</td>
<td>-.68  -.68</td>
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</table>
**Independent Samples Test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Equal Variances Assumed</th>
<th>Equal Variances Not Assumed</th>
<th>Std. Error Difference</th>
<th>95% Confidence Lower</th>
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<tr>
<td>How many PTA meetings have you attended in the last year?</td>
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<td>6.99</td>
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<td>-.52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>How often do you know where your child is outside of school?</td>
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<td>-.12</td>
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<tr>
<td>How often do you know whom your child is with outside of school hours?</td>
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<td>-.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>How often do you spend time with your child in leisure activities?</td>
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<td>-1.59E-02</td>
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<td>How often do you and your child go to the movies together?</td>
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<td>How often do you and your child visit relatives?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>How often do you instruct your child in some skill/activity?</td>
<td>.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>95% Confidence</td>
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<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
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<td>How often do you and your child participate in purchased activities</td>
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<td>- .18</td>
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<td>(e.g., concerts)</td>
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<td>How often do you and your child talk about day-to-day events?</td>
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<td>- .15</td>
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<td>How often do you and your child eat together at home?</td>
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<td>4.90E-02</td>
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<td>How often do you and your child watch television together or engage</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>in some other spontaneous event?</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.11</td>
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<td>How often do you communicate by phone with your child's teacher?</td>
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<td>- 9.53E-02</td>
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<td>- 6.30E-02</td>
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<td>- 7.68E-03</td>
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<td>.12</td>
<td>.11</td>
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<tr>
<td>you?</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Std. Error and 95% Confidence are provided for each question. The</td>
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<td>table shows the significance of the differences between groups.</td>
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Independent Samples Test

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<tr>
<th>How many PTA meetings have you attended in the last year?</th>
<th>Equal variances assumed</th>
<th>8.47</th>
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<td>.97</td>
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<tr>
<td>How often do you know whom your child is with outside of school hours?</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>.64</td>
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<tr>
<td>How often do you spend time with your child in leisure activities?</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
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<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
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<tr>
<td>How often do you and your child go to the movies together?</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
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<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
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<tr>
<td>How often do you and your child visit relatives?</td>
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<td>How often do you instruct your child in some skill/activity?</td>
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<td>.74</td>
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## Independent Samples Test

<table>
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<th>t-test for Equality</th>
<th>95% Confidence Upper</th>
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<td>How often do you and your child watch television together or engage in some other spontaneous activities</td>
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<td>How often do you communicate by phone with your child's teacher?</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
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<td>How often do you and your child do homework together?</td>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
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<td>I do call or make an appointment to meet with my child's teacher when I have a question or</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do call or make an appointment to meet with my child's principal when I have a question or</td>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>.42</td>
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<td>What grade would you give your school for its performance in educating your child?</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
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<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
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Appendix G

SPSS Reliability and Validity Data
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Result Variable</th>
<th>Missing Values Replaced</th>
<th>First Non-Miss</th>
<th>Last Non-Miss</th>
<th>Valid Cases</th>
<th>Creating Function</th>
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<tr>
<td>Q1_1</td>
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<td>163</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>MEAN(Q1,2)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>MEAN(Q2,2)</td>
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<td>Q3_1</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>MEAN(Q3,2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>MEAN(Q4,2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q5_1</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>MEAN(Q5,2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q6_1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>MEAN(Q6,2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q7_1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>MEAN(Q7,2)</td>
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<td>163</td>
<td>MEAN(Q8,2)</td>
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<td>MEAN(Q9,2)</td>
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<td>MEAN(Q10,2)</td>
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<td>1</td>
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</table>
***** Method 1 (space saver) will be used for this analysis *****

RELIABILITY ANALYSIS - SCALE (ALPHA)

Reliability Coefficients

N of Cases = 163.0
N of Items = 18

Alpha = .5424

***** Method 2 (covariance matrix) will be used for this analysis *****

RELIABILITY ANALYSIS - SCALE (ALPHA)

Correlation Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Q1_1</th>
<th>Q2_1</th>
<th>Q3_1</th>
<th>Q4_1</th>
<th>Q5_1</th>
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<tbody>
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**RELIABILITY ANALYSIS - SCALE (ALPHA)**

**Correlation Matrix**

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N of Cases = 163.0
Reliability Coefficients 18 items
Alpha = .5424 Standardized item alpha = .6148