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THE FINANCIAL AND LOGISTICAL ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF
CHARTER SCHOOL OWNERSHIP BY TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOL
DISTRICTS

by

JOHN ANTMANN

B.M. University of Florida, 2006

M. Ed. University of Central Florida, 2010

A dissertation in practice submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education
in the School of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership
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Major Professor: Kenneth Murray

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify the financial and logistical advantages and disadvantages to be realized by public school districts in California, Florida, Louisiana, and Texas through the ownership of charter schools. A policy review was completed examining relevant state statutes, department of education administrative rules, and school board policies in each of the four states included in this study. Interviews were completed with the chief financial officer, or their designee, from school districts in each of the four states using a series of structured interview questions. Interviews were conducted over the phone and data was recorded via detailed notes or recordings with transcripts created.

Data from the policy review and structured interviews were analyzed using the constant comparison method in order to answer each of the four research questions. The analysis was used to create a comprehensive listing of fiscal and logistical advantages and disadvantages associated with charter school ownership by traditional public school districts.

To Leslie and Benjamin

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

In the United States educational community, charter schools are a relatively new concept having been introduced only 25 years ago. In that time, they have become an increasingly popular alternative to traditional public schools as parents look for new ways to educate their children in innovative ways. Charter schools now account for 6.7% of all public schools in the United States and serve more than 229,000 students annually (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2015).

With the passage of Minnesota State Statute 124D.10 in 1991, Minnesota became the first state to allow the operation of charter schools (Minn. State § 124.D.10, 2015). Since 1991, 41 other states and the District of Columbia have enacted legislation to allow charter schools to operate, including California in 1992, Texas in 1995, Louisiana in 1995, and Florida in 1996 (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2015). The number of charter schools continue to grow annually with growth in total number of schools of at least 6% each year since 2010 (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2015). Additionally, the first public school district comprised entirely of charter schools was developed in New Orleans, Louisiana for the 2014-2015 school year (Layton, 2014).

Research varies widely concerning the achievement of students enrolled in charter schools with some research finding gains in student achievement and other research showing negative impact. Hattie (2009) stated, regarding charter schools, that “there is a

mixture of positive and negative effects, and there is much variation across states (p.76). One common theme found amongst the research regarding charter schools shows that strong relationships with public school districts lead to greater achievement for both the charter schools and the neighboring traditional public schools. Ni and Rorrer (2012) found that charter schools experienced greater success when they partnered with a local school district for guidance both prior to opening and during general operations.

Conceptual Framework

Friedman (1980) defines a free market as an environment without financial regulations or oversight. Freidman (1980) further states that many advancements in business, education, and social norms came about through the use of an open market environment. Market forces were introduced into United States public education with the passage of legislature by Minnesota in 1991 allowing the approval of charter schools to operate within the state. Since that time, 41 other states and the District of Columbia have enacted similar legislation allowing the approval and operation of charter schools within existing public school districts (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2015). The debates centering on charter schools revolve around sensitive issues including segregation, school funding, and politics with equity rarely achieved in funding between traditional public schools and their charter counterparts. Batdorff et. al (2014) found that charter schools received less per-student funding from state funding programs than similar traditional public schools and that traditional public schools generated greater funding from outside funding sources than did charter schools. “Instead of reducing the funding disparity, other funding in FY11 contributed to a broader disparity resulting from

state funding policies.” (Batdorff, et al., 2014, p. 9). Shen and Berger (2011) found that, on average during the 2011 school year, charter schools received 19% less funding when compared to neighboring traditional public schools.

When examining the difference in funding for charter schools and traditional public schools, it is important to note the different requirements put forth on each school. “Most charter schools do not have legal obligations to provide some costly services such as lunch and transportation” (Shen and Berger, p. 5, 2011). Additionally, charter schools in many states are required to assume debt or take on partners in order to fund the building of school facilities. Ascher et al (2004) found that many charter schools must rely on grants, loans, and leases in order to develop facilities to educate students with grants being the funding least likely to be available.

When charter schools open within an existing public school district, the school district loses the funding associated with any students who choose to attend the charter school. This loss results in a drop in overall funding for the school district so districts often reallocate their existing funding to adjust for the decreased revenue or to develop programs aimed at competing with charter schools. Arsen and Ni (2012) found evidence indicating traditional public schools, when faced with increased competition from charter schools, tend to allocate a reduced amount of funding to instructional programs in order to preserve the level of funding in their support services. “Higher levels of charter competition clearly generates fiscal stress in districts – as revealed by a reduction in their fund balances” (Arsen & Ni, p. 23, 2012).

A traditional public school serves a community as a whole and receives funding collected from all members of the community. When the need for reform is present in traditional public schools, the community is frequently involved because the school is an established part of the community. Hess (2004) found that, while the families served by a charter school are active in reform within the school, the surrounding community typically does not show concern for the performance or operation in a charter school unless extremely negative actions are taking place. Regarding charter schools, Hess (2004) stated “Consequently, the inattentive broader community is unlikely to get exercised enough to want to close a school, unless a situation arises that is so egregious as to command public attention” (p. 510).

Hattie (2009) states that charter schools have an effect size of $d=0.20$ in relation to improving student achievement when compared to traditional public schools. Hattie (2009) further stated regarding charter schools that “there is a mixture of positive and negative effects, and there is much variation across states” (p. 76). Imberman (2010) and Ni and Rorrer (2012) both found that charter schools tend to perform at lower levels than traditional public schools but tend to show improvement in performance as time passes. Imberman (2010) also found evidence supporting improved performance for both charter schools and neighboring traditional public schools when the charter schools have a close working relationship with the public school districts. Winters (2011) found that traditional public schools showed improved student performance as more charter schools entered their districts.

Statement of the Problem

Although charter schools owned and operated by public school districts currently exist, the practice is not common and the charter schools owned by public school districts are few. When students leave a traditional public school in favor of their charter competitors, the funding associated with educating these students also move to the charter school. Unless the ability to adapt and form partnerships with charter schools is developed, traditional public schools face the prospect of limited enrollment and reduced funding. To date, insufficient information exists concerning charter school ownership by traditional public school districts.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to provide a qualitative analysis of the financial and logistical advantages and disadvantages that can be realized by public school districts choosing to own and operate charter schools. While charter schools receive a large portion of their funding from state government agencies, they generate funding from a variety of sources depending upon their location and local laws. When a student enrolls in a charter school rather than a traditional public school, the state funding associated with that student travels with him/her to the charter school. Determining the financial and logistical advantages of charter school ownership by traditional public school districts will allow the school districts to determine the effectiveness of keeping this funding within their budgets.

Research Questions

Using the available research and conceptual framework, the researcher has developed four research questions to guide this study which are included in Table 1.

Table 1
Research Questions and Data Sources

Number	Research Question	Data Sources
1	What are the financial advantages to be realized by public school districts owning and operating charter schools within their existing district boundaries?	State Statutes, State Education Rules, Interviews
2	What are the financial disadvantages to be realized by public school districts owning and operating charter schools within their existing district boundaries?	State Statutes, State Education Rules, Interviews
3	What are the logistical advantages to be realized by public school districts owning and operating charter schools within their existing district boundaries?	State Statutes, State Education Rules, Interviews
4	What are the logistical disadvantages to be realized by public school districts owning and operating charter schools within their existing district boundaries?	State Statutes, State Education Rules, Interviews

Definition of Terms

Charter School: Privately managed, taxpayer-funded schools exempted from some rules applicable to all other taxpayer-funded schools.

Dependent Charter School: A term used in California to represent a charter school that falls under the governance and management of a traditional public school district.

Effect Size: A measure indicating impact on student achievement whereas an effect size of $d=1.0$ is equal to an outcome increase of one full standard deviation (Hattie, 2009).

In-District Charter School: A term used in Texas to represent a charter school that falls under the governance and management of a traditional public school district.

Public School (Traditional Public School): An elementary, middle, or high school established under state law, regulated by local state authorities in the various political subdivisions, funded and maintained by public taxation, and open and free to all children of the particular district where the school is located.

SELPA: An acronym used in California to represent “Special Education Local Plan Area.” An individual school or grouping of schools recognized by the department of education to provide and facilitate special education services.

Methodology

In completing this study, the researcher will conduct a qualitative analysis of the current state laws regarding charter schools in the three states with the highest number of operating charter schools (California, Texas, Florida) as well as the state in which the only public school district comprised entirely of charter schools exists (Louisiana).

The researcher will conduct interviews with the chief financial officer of school districts that currently own and operate charter schools to determine what financial benefits and detriments are currently being realized by these school districts. The qualitative analysis and subsequent interviews will include the identification of financial and logistical advantages and disadvantages associated with the ownership and operation of charter schools by public school districts. The results from interviews will be combined with the qualitative analysis of state laws to create a comprehensive listing of financial and logistical advantages and disadvantages.

Data Collection

Data for this study will be collected through the analysis of available statutes, rules from state education organizations, and school district policies regarding charter schools. These data sources will be obtained using available databases of scholarly information and publicly available legal sources.

Interviews will be conducted with chief financial officers from traditional public school districts that currently own or provide financial support to charter schools within their school districts. Interviews will be conducted over the phone or in person based upon availability.

Participants

For each of the research questions, interviews will be conducted with the chief financial officer for all Florida traditional public school districts which own and operate charter schools within their district boundaries. A representative sample of chief financial officers from traditional public school districts owning and operating charter schools within their district boundaries will be used for California, Texas, and Louisiana.

Significance of the Study

Traditional public schools and charter schools serving students in grades kindergarten through twelve accounted for approximately 25.4% (\$18.84 billion) of the State of Florida budget during fiscal year 2014-2015 (State of Florida, 2014). In 2011, fewer than 21% of all charter schools in the United States were operated by non-profit organizations (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2015). The inverse would suggest that more than 79% of charter schools are operated with the goal of developing profit; which profit could be reinvested into the school and district to improve the education of those the school serves. Additionally, Ni and Rorrer (2012) found that charter schools and traditional public schools mutually benefitted in student achievement from a positive working relationship between the charter school and the district in which it operates.

Limitations

1. The results of the analysis are limited to the availability of statutes within states that allow the operation of charter schools.
2. The results of the analysis are limited to the participation of district chief financial officers for interviews from districts presently owning charter schools.
3. The results of the analysis are limited to the truthfulness and accuracy of responses received during interviews.

Delimitations

1. The primary focus of the study is to determine the financial and logistical impact of public school districts owning and operating charter schools. Other impacts are not investigated.
2. The study is delimited to the three states with the largest number of operating charter schools as well as the state with the only public school district comprised entirely of charter schools: California, Texas, Florida, and Louisiana.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Charter schools were first authorized in the United States with the adoption of Minnesota State Statute 124D.10 in 1991 (Minn. State § 124.D.10, 2015). The addition of charter schools to public schools, private schools, and religious schools provided a new facet to the market forces already present in education and created a new system competing to enroll public school students.

Charter schools and traditional public schools are often seen as adversarial in nature. It is a common perception that they compete with one another for students and the funding that is associated with increased enrollment. Despite these perceptions, it has been shown that a partnership established between the two can lead to improvements in student achievement and greater overall success for both schools (Imberman, 2010). These partnerships can prove to be critical during the first few years of a charter school's existence as charter schools experience the majority of their operating difficulties within the first three years of operation. Ni and Rorrer (2012) found that charter schools that partnered with traditional public school districts during the opening process and general operation in the first few years experienced greater success.

This chapter presents a review of relevant literature related to charter schools and their financial and logistical planning in order to provide a rationale for this study. The literature has been organized to present an overview and history of charter schools, an overview of charter school finance, an overview of charter school logistics, and the

effects of partnerships between charter schools and traditional public schools and school districts.

Overview and History of Charter Schools

Charter schools were a concept first introduced by Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, during a conference address in 1988 (Kahlenberg & Potter, 2014). In his address, Shanker advocated for the development of a new type of school in which the teachers and administration would be free from many of the restrictions placed upon traditional public schools. Based upon his observations of European schools, Shanker outlined a set of ideas and beliefs that would allow charter schools to accomplish that at which traditional public schools were failing. He believed that charter schools should employ teachers who would be free to experiment with new and innovative teaching methods and develop a unique curriculum tailored to meet the needs of specific students. Additionally, he believed charter schools should be able to develop professional learning opportunities designed to enhance the instructional practice of each teacher on campus and that charter schools would become successful models whose lead could be followed by neighboring traditional public schools (Kahlenberg & Potter, 2014).

The first operating charter schools in the United States were formed following the passage of the 1991 State Statute 124D.10 in Minnesota (Minn. State § 124.D.10, 2015). The following year, Minnesota became the first state with an operating charter school when City Academy opened for student enrollment. In the time since the opening of the first United States charter school, 42 additional states and the District of Columbia have

passed legislation authorizing the operation of charter schools, including California, Florida, Louisiana, and Texas. In 2014, charter schools accounted for 6.7% of all public schools in the United States and served more than 2.9 million students each year (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2015).

With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002, underperforming traditional public schools were allowed to convert to private or charter schools in order to improve performance under a different set of accountability measures. This led to a significant increase in the number of charter schools in the years that followed (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2015). The number of charter schools in the United States has grown each year since 2010 and, during the 2014-2015 school year, the first public school district comprised entirely of charter schools was created in New Orleans, Louisiana (Layton, 2010).

With charter schools being authorized in 42 states and the District of Columbia, it can be expected that a wide variety of policies and regulations would exist to govern these schools. Vergari (2007) noted that the laws, regulations, and accountability measures vary for charter schools depending upon the state and locality in which they are located. The variation in policies can be found at nearly every level of operation in charter schools, including unions, teacher certification, and funding sources. Specific states require charter schools to allow the establishment of unions for employees, some states leave charter schools exempt from district unionization policies, and other states allow each specific charter school to determine whether unions will exist at their school. Some states, including New York and North Carolina, impose statutory limits on the

number of charter schools allowed to operate within the state, while other states have no such limit (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2015). Many states allow charter schools the flexibility to hire teachers and administrators that do not need to meet the same certification requirements as similar employees in traditional public schools. This flexibility allows the schools to hire teachers that meet only the certification requirements that may be imposed by federal law, including requirements set forth under No Child Left Behind (2002), which requires that teachers be deemed highly qualified but not carry specific certification. “States have some leeway under federal law to fashion different policies for charter schools, enabling them to employ teachers who are highly qualified but not necessarily certified through normal state channels” (Brinson & Rosch, 2010, p. 14).

Charter schools in the United States can be operated under a variety of different management structures, including for-profit groups, non-profit groups, single-school management organizations, and groups that manage multiple charter schools. During the 2010-2011 school year, 20% of charter schools were operated by non-profit management groups overseeing multiple schools, 13% of charter schools were operated by for-profit management groups overseeing multiple charter schools, and 67% of charter schools were managed independently as either for-profit or non-profit entities (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2015). These numbers indicate that the majority of charter schools are operating without the support system created by a multi-school system. Individually operated schools must manage each individual need of the school while having the resources allotted from only one school. Rather than creating departments to

serve multiple schools as would be done with a traditional public school district, individually managed charter schools must create these departments to serve only one school. While non-profit and for-profit businesses tend to operate in different manners, this is not always the case when related to the business of charter schools. “It appears that, while real differences may exist between for-profits and nonprofits in overarching motivation and goals, they do not show up in many aspects of their relationships to charter schools” (Holyoke, 2008, p. 311).

Beyond management organizations, charter schools are divided into two specific categories based upon the structure from which they were authorized. The majority of charter schools are brand new organizations that were formed from no previous school structure. These types of charter schools are labeled as start-up charter schools. The passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002 allowed public schools with repeated poor performance in student achievement to convert to charter schools in an attempt to improve student achievement under different accountability and operating restrictions (20 U.S.C. 6319, 2002). Charter schools that began operation in this manner are labeled as conversion charter schools. During the 2012-2013 school year, 89.3% of operating charter schools were start-up charter schools while the remaining 10.6% were conversion charter schools (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2015).

While there is a common perception that charter schools do not serve a racially diverse population and only enroll students who are academically talented, gifted in a specific skill area, or from a financially stable background, this is not the case for a large number of charter schools (Chapman & Donnor, 2015). “The majority of states have an

over-representation of African American students in charter schools and an under-representation of white students, particularly in urban areas (Chapman & Donnor, 2015, p. 138). Bodine et al. (2008) had similar findings, stating that charter schools tend to serve a greater number of minority students than neighboring traditional public schools, but also found charter schools to have a higher representation of economically disadvantaged students than their traditional public school counterparts. The differences in student population extends beyond race and economic status to include students with mental or physical disabilities receiving exceptional student education (ESE) services. Carpenter and Noller (2010) found that charter schools tend to serve a similar or higher number of mentally and physically disabled students when compared to traditional public schools in the same area. Although one of the original purposes of charter schools was to develop new teaching methods to help all students, there is some evidence that they have harmed some students by increasing segregation within schools. Kahlenberg and Potter (2014) found that, in many cases, charter schools have become more segregated than the traditional public school districts in which they operate. Kahlenberg and Potter (2014) further noted that this increased segregation can threaten the success of a charter school as students in socioeconomically and racially diverse schools have shown greater academic achievement when compared to students in a homogenous environment.

Charter schools were first authorized in Florida in 1996 with the passage of Florida State Statute 1002.33. Since that time, the number of operating charter schools has grown to 625 charter schools serving more than 229,000 students during the 2013-2014 school year (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2015). The State of

Florida has no caps imposed on the number of charter schools that may be authorized or the number of students that may attend a charter school (Fla. Stat. § 1002.33, 2015).

Teachers working in charter schools in Florida must be certified using the same criteria as teachers working in traditional public schools. Charter schools in Florida are provided with an exemption from the requirement for collective bargaining but must participate in the same assessment and accountability program as traditional public schools. When adequate student progress and performance is not demonstrated, the charter school authorizer is authorized to take corrective actions or issue sanctions as needed. The state of Florida recognizes the authorizing traditional public school district as a Local Education Agency (LEA) rather than recognizing each individual charter school as such.

Charter schools were first authorized in Louisiana in 1995 and are authorized under Louisiana State Statute 17:3972. Since authorization, the number of charter schools operating in Louisiana has grown to 117 schools serving more than 59,000 students during the 2013-2014 school year (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2015). Louisiana imposes no caps on the number of charter schools that may be authorized as well as no cap on the number of students that may attend charter schools (La. Stat. § 17:3972, 2015). Louisiana requires that any collectively bargained contract agreed to within a school district apply to charter schools operating with the district unless the charter school stipulated otherwise in their approved charter application. Teachers employed by charter schools in Louisiana are not required to meet the certification requirements that are set forth for teachers working in traditional public schools but charter school teachers are required to have earned a minimum of a baccalaureate degree.

Charter schools in Louisiana participate in a modified version of the assessment and accountability program in which traditional public schools are required to participate and each charter school must provide their authorizing agency with an annual report detailing the academic progress of students. Louisiana only specific types of charter schools as Local Education Agencies (LEA) while leaving this label with the authorizing traditional public school district for a select group of charter schools (La. Stat. § 17:3972, 2015).

Charter schools were first authorized in Texas in 1995 and are authorized under Texas State Statute 12.001. Since authorization, the number of charter schools operating in Texas has grown to 689 schools serving over 235,000 students during the 2013-2014 school year (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2015). Texas imposes no limits or caps on the number of students that may attend a charter school, but does have an annually adjusted limit of the number of charter schools that may be authorized within the state (Tex. Stat. § 12.001, 2015). The limit on the number of charter authorizations is increased each year, with the limit rising from 240 charter authorizations in 2014 to 255 charter authorizations in 2015. While this limit is in place for the number of charter authorizations available each year, charter schools meeting specific criteria of success are allowed to open and operate additional campuses without prior approval from the authorizing Local Education Agency. Charter schools in Texas are not permitted to allow employees to collectively bargain and most teachers are not required to meet certification requirements imposed on traditional public school teachers. Charter schools operating within Texas participate in the same assessment and accountability programs as their traditional public school counterparts and corrective action may be taken by the

authorizing Local Education Agency should charter schools not demonstrate adequate progress or performance (Tex. Stat. § 12.001, 2015). Texas does not recognize charter schools as Local Education Agencies, but retains the designation for the traditional public school district which authorized the charter.

Charter schools were first authorized in California in 1992 and are authorized under California State Statute 47600. Since authorization, the number of charter schools in California has grown to 1,131 schools serving more than 500,000 students during the 2013-2014 school year (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2015). California has no limit on the number of students that may attend charter schools but does, however, limit the number of charter schools that may be authorized; this limit is increased by one hundred charter authorizations annually (Cal. Stat. §47600, 2015). Charters schools operating within California are exempt from collective bargaining requirements for their employees but teachers working in charter schools must meet certification requirements imposed upon traditional public school teachers if they are working in a core, academic subject such as mathematics, science, English/language arts, or social science. Within California, charter schools must participate in the same assessment and accountability programs as traditional public schools in order to assess student performance and academic growth. California allows charter schools to have the option of being designated as a Local Education Agency, but those that do not choose to receive the designation must receive services from the Local Education Agency which authorized their charter application (Cal. Stat. §47600, 2015).

Charter School Finance

The majority of funding for public education comes from each individual state, with some funding for specific programs being provided by the federal government. The state funding usually comes in the form of per-pupil funding where the state provides a specific funding amount to school districts for each student they serve. When students enroll in a charter school, as opposed to a traditional public school district, the per-pupil funding travels with that student. “In most states, when a student chooses to attend a charter school, the per-pupil funding that would otherwise be allocated to a traditional public school follows the student to the charter school” (Vergari, 2007, p. 24). In the states involved in this study, this results in a significant loss of revenue for traditional public schools. In the state of Florida, during the 2013-2014 school year, the average per-pupil funding was \$6,800 for each student educated (Florida Department of Education, 2015). During the same school year, approximately 229,000 students in Florida attended charter schools (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2014). This charter enrollment indicates that budget amounts for traditional public schools in Florida were reduced by more than \$1.5 billion during the 2013-2014 school year when compared to the amount of funding that would be received had all of these student attended a traditional public school. With the number of charter schools authorized increasing each year (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2015) and per-pupil funding rising for each of the past two school years (Florida Department of Education, 2014), the amount of funding that shifts to charter schools from traditional public schools will continue to increase annually following these trends.

Vergari (2007) noted that the transfer of funding from traditional public schools to charter schools goes against the fundamental ideology of public education in that public schools are financed by the government and do not generally compete with one another for funding. When the funding does shift from traditional public schools to charter school, the traditional public school districts are sometimes forced to change the way they operate and distribute their financial resources. “Higher levels of charter competition clearly generates fiscal stress in districts – as revealed by a reduction in their fund balances” (Arsen & Ni, 2012, p. 23). While fewer students generally means lower expenses, these expenses do not always lower in proportion to the number of students enrolled in a school or school district. A reduction of 30 students in a traditional public school may reduce the need for the total number of teachers in classrooms, but would not make a significant difference in the number of buses needed to transport students to and from school or the cost of utilities needed to operate the school. Additionally, it is unlikely that such a reduction in enrollment would reduce the need for clerical and district support staff needed to operate each department used to support the schools. Arsen and Ni (2012) found that, as charter schools enter a traditional public school district, the traditional public school district uses a lesser percentage of funding for instruction and a greater percentage of funding for school operations and student services.

Despite the research findings and perception that charter schools receive all of the funding that traditional public schools would have received for educating students, a large body of research exists showing that charter schools are funded at a significantly lower level than traditional public schools. Should charter schools receive a lower level

of funding, the achievement of Shanker's vision for charter schools would be difficult to achieve in that funding would not be available to develop new and innovative teaching methods or curricula. "One of the promises of the charter school model is that with overall financial parity, charter schools will direct more funds into programs and fewer into administration" (Jacobowitz & Gyurko, 2004, p.5).

"Overall, charter schools are significantly underfunded relative to district schools" (Speakman & Hassel, 2005, p. 3). Batdorff et al. (2014) found that charter schools receive a lower amount of per-pupil funding from established state funding programs when compared to traditional public schools and school districts. While there is a large amount of available research showing that charter schools receive reduced funding when compared to traditional public schools, there is great variation when determining the size of the difference. Some research shows the difference in funding to be sizeable, with Anderson et al. (2005) stating that the gap can measure more than \$1000 per student in some locations. "Charter schools are generally funded at a lower rate than traditional public schools in their area, with the per pupil allocation often as low as 75 percent of the comparable public school per pupil in their districts (Ascher et al., 2004, p. 6). The difference in funding can vary greatly depending on the state and locality in which the charter school operates. Speakman and Hassel (2005) found that the differences in funding vary greatly between districts and states, with the variance measuring anywhere from 4% to 40%. Shen and Berger (2011) found that, during the 2011 school year, charter schools averaged 19% less funding when compared to nearby traditional public schools. The difference in funding stretches to students at all levels of education and all programs.

“This funding disparity exists at all education levels – elementary, middle, and high school – and for students in both general and special education” (Jacobowitz & Gyurko, 2005, p. 2).

Some findings indicate that the discrepancies in funding are greater in areas where the funding is most needed to serve high-minority, low-income student populations. “In urban districts we studied, most of them major cities, district-charter revenue discrepancies were even more substantial than for the states themselves” (Speakman & Hassel, 2005, p. 11). Gallagher et al. (2011) showed that schools in urban locations serve a greater percentage of minority students, a greater percentage of economically disadvantaged students, and a greater percentage of students with disabilities. These revenue shortfalls in high-need, urban areas work to further create situations in which greater divides develop within populations in urban communities. “The substantial variation in resources introduced into urban education systems by the emergence of well-funded and less-well-funded charter schools created significant equity concerns” (Baker et al., 2012, p. 32).

Some of the discrepancy in funding between charter schools and traditional public schools can be attributed to the lack of a variety of income sources available to charter schools. In addition to per-pupil funding, many states provide funding sources to traditional public school districts to cover other programs or needs, including facility costs and professional development, but these funds are not provided to charter schools in all states. In some states, charter schools are able to apply for state-sponsored grants or low interest loans in order to finance their facilities and buildings, but many states do not

provide access to the capital outlay funding that traditional public school districts receive on an annual basis. “Charter schools in most states do not have access to public capital funding streams that are available to public schools” (Brown, 2006, p. 8). Charter schools rely on the per-pupil funding they receive when enrolling student and are sometimes able to supplement this amount through various philanthropic sources. The lack of access to these additional funding sources causes many charter schools to use instructional funds to develop, maintain, and operate their facilities. “The literature and our interviews indicate that the per-pupil allocation can be insufficient to cover both the operating and the facility costs charter schools incur (Shaul, 2000, p. 4). With charter schools not typically operated by governmental agencies, they are unable to raise revenue through specific methods that are reserved for municipalities that include bonds and property tax millage increases. “Charter schools generally do not have access to the most common source of facility financing for public schools – municipal bonds” (Shaul, 2000, p.4). Davis (2013) found that, while a variety of funding sources do exist for public schools to finance facility planning, the funds were either not available to charter schools or not adequate to overcome the underfunding that charter schools face. The lack of facility funding sources for charter schools requires the sacrifice of some funding for classroom instruction in order to build the classroom in which the instruction takes place.

One manner in which charter schools are able to begin to close the funding gap they experience in comparison to traditional public schools is through philanthropy. Charter schools are able to present themselves as a new alternative to traditional public schools and tout the benefits of school choice when securing private funding. With school

choice becoming an increasingly popular topic in politics, new charitable organizations are beginning to target charter schools at greater levels. “A number of relatively newly formed philanthropies are pouring large sums into education reform: they are specifically targeting school choice and privatization in key urban markets” (Scott, 2009, p. 107). Charter schools in some areas have shown significant success in seeking donations. “Philanthropists have shown great generosity to charter schools in recent times, donating roughly \$250 million to California charters alone over the past eight years” (Coulson, 2011, p.11).

When seeking philanthropy, some charter schools experience great success while others have difficulty in securing any additional funding. Baker and Ferris (2011) found that some charter schools receive additional funding that can be equal to an additional \$10,000 per student while other charter schools received no significant donations. Additionally, schools at all levels with a particular curricular focus, such as technology or industrial arts, are able to more easily find corporate donations from companies that work within those fields. Ratteray (1997) found that, while schools with specialized curriculums did have an easier time soliciting philanthropic assistance, the donations did not continue if the school adopted a broader academic focus. Additionally, Coulson (2011) found that schools that serve larger minority populations, specifically black and Hispanic students, had more success in finding philanthropic support. One manner in which charter schools are able to obtain philanthropic contributions is through the guarantee of a debt obtained by a charter school to acquire or maintain a facility. Robelen (2008) found that the guaranteeing of a charter school’s debt is often a more attractive

way to contribute to the success of a charter school as it requires little up-front investment and only requires significant cost if the charter school closes prior to debt fulfillment.

When charter schools solicit philanthropy from organizations and individuals, the contributions can come with requests or requirements for change within the organization. Some organizations that desire to implement change in education have begun to do so through monetary contributions in exchange for input in the operation of a school. “Formal venues of policy design and formation are expanding beyond traditional state structures to include philanthropies as central and active drivers of policy making, research, and advocacy” (Scott, 2009, p. 108). Scott (2009) further goes on to call the use of philanthropy to shape educational reform *venture philanthropy*. *Venture philanthropists* typically seek out desirable schools to which they contribute and, in return, expect returns by way of improved student achievement and expansion of educational services (Scott, 2009). Although charter schools are often in need of additional funding, it is important caution be exercised when working with *venture philanthropists*. When donations are received in exchange for educational policy shifts or the promise of goals to be met, these benchmarks are not necessarily established by educational experts and sometimes may be unattainable (Scott, 2009).

While there is much research showing charter schools are funded at lower levels than traditional public schools, it is difficult to measure the manner in which this funding is spent. Baker et al. (2012) found that spending levels of charter schools varied greatly when compared to neighboring traditional public schools and that this variation was

difficult to measure due to differences in reporting guidelines for charter schools in different states. The financial reporting guidelines vary by state and, at times, by the type of charter school within each state. Some states require strict financial oversight and regular fiscal reports to be provided by each charter school to their authorizing Local Education Agency while other states provide greater financial autonomy and require little more than annual financial reports to be published (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2015). In states where charter schools are recognized as Local Education Agencies, financial reporting is typically done at the state level with no accountability to the local charter authorizer. In states where charter schools are not recognized as Local Education Agencies, they are typically required to issue regular financial reports to the authorizing Local Education Agency. As public schools, charter schools are held fiscally accountable in all states with varying levels of accountability and the content requirements for financial reports differ by location.

Charter schools receive a large portion of their funding from the same channels through which traditional public schools are funded. When a student enrolls in a charter school rather than a traditional public school, the charter school receives the per-pupil funding associated with educating that student. Charter schools, however, do not have access in all states to other funding that traditional public schools receive for facilities and other programs. The lack of access to facility funds leads to charter schools having less overall funding than their traditional public school counterparts and causes them to divert funds from instructional purposes to facility needs. Miron and Urshel (2010) found that most available research indicates that charter schools are significantly underfunded

when compared to traditional public schools. Charter schools are not able to issue municipal bonds or request millage increases in the manner that traditional public schools often can. In order to address the funding inequities experienced by charter schools, they often turn to philanthropy to generate funds but, when the funding comes from venture philanthropists, they risk losing some autonomy. The lack of adequate available funding works to prevent charter schools from fulfilling Shanker's original vision of developing new and innovative teaching methods. The funding issues experienced by charter schools result from insufficient clarity in statute or funding methods that have not been updated since the authorization of charter schools within a specific state. "Until states overhaul both their education and charter school finance policies, no one should be surprised that, absent help from philanthropy, many schools, even the very best ones will operate on tight margins and struggle with growth and scale" (Lozier & Rotherham, 2011, p.9).

Charter Schools and Student Achievement

Charter schools have become increasingly popular of the past two decades as parents and educators look for an alternative to their traditional public schools. Charter schools are seen as a solution to many of the problems faced in traditional public schools, including inadequate special education services, outdated curriculum, and the achievement gap seen amongst students from various racial backgrounds. Despite the enrollment continuing to grow at charter schools around the country, research has shown charter school performance to be inconsistent and often difficult to measure. Even without evidence to support success, charter schools are touted in political and social forums as a more effective alternative to traditional public schools. "Despite the lack of

empirical evidence supporting their effectiveness, elected officials, business leaders, and education entrepreneurs hail charter schools as an effective means to close the proverbial Black-White achievement gap and to create a more viable workforce” (Chapman & Donnor, 2015, p. 138).

While a wide body of research has been conducted regarding charter schools and their impact on student achievement, the research has failed to reach a consensus on the impact these schools have on students. Hattie (2009) found, through a meta-analysis study, that there is a great deal of variation amongst states when it comes to student performance within charter schools and that the research was split with some studies showing positive effects, some showing negative effects, and some having no significant effects whatsoever. Miron (2011) noted similar findings, stating “There are still no definitive studies of student achievement in charter schools and all studies suffer from some limitations” (p.4).

One reason for the inconsistent findings on student achievement in charter schools could be the lack of quality data reported by the schools. Reporting requirements vary greatly from state to state with charter schools in some states being required to report data in the same manner as traditional public schools and schools in other states needing to report only minimal student achievement data (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2015). The lack of quality data and inconsistent accountability measures have been noted by some researchers as they attempt to determine the effectiveness of charter schools. “Because only a few states and localities collect the same information on charter

school as they do for traditional public schools, what is known comes from small localized studies that us little about charter schools in general” (Hill et al., 2006, p. 15).

Hattie (2009) found charter schools to have an effect size of $d=0.20$ in reference to student achievement. While this effect size does indicate a positive impact, it is important to note that the effect size is relatively small when compared to other educational tools and represents only modest improvements over general education services. When discussing the effect size, Hattie (2009) further noted that there was a large amount of variation in student achievement amongst charter schools, especially when schools were examined across state lines. Other researchers have found that, although there is great variation between amongst schools in different states, similar variations are seen between charter schools in the same state. Betts and Tang (2011) found that, while there was much variation between states in relation to student achievement, the same levels of variation could be seen amongst charter schools in the same state. Despite the variation, some research has shown that, in general, charter schools do not have any significant difference from traditional public schools in the area of student achievement. “This study found wider variability in performance among charter schools than in traditional public schools, but overall results were similar for charter schools and traditional public schools” (Miron, 2011, p. 4). Additional research shows that students in charter schools do show growth year-over-year, but that this growth is not unique to charter school settings. Witte et al. (2012) found that students attending charter schools in Wisconsin showed annual growth over a four year period but

that there was no significant difference in growth when the achievement was compared to students attending traditional public schools in the same city.

While the research is inconsistent concerning charter schools and their impact on student achievement, some research has found charter schools to have a negative impact on student learning outcomes. “At the national level, there is a consistent pattern of higher average NAEP scores for regular public schools than for charter schools. This pattern is apparent in all grades/subjects analyzed: grade 4, 8, and 12 in reading, math, and science” (Chudowsky & Ginsburg, 2012, p. 13). Other research shows that charter schools do perform at lower levels than traditional public schools, but only in specific academic areas. Carpenter and Noller (2010) found that charter schools perform at lower levels than traditional public schools in the area of reading with no difference noted between the two in mathematics. Nelson et al. (2004) found that, when measuring the 2003 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores, charter schools performed at lower levels than traditional public schools in both overall average scores and student achievement levels.

The lower performance of charter schools is sometimes diminished as time progresses. Imberman (2010) found that charter schools perform at lower levels than traditional public schools but that the charter schools tend to show improvement over time the longer they continue to operate. This growth in achievement could be attributed to charter schools better identifying which instructional strategies are most effective for their students and teachers gaining more experience as the years pass. This idea is supported by Nicotera et al. (2010) who stated “Schools may need an academic year or

longer to put in place the instructional strategies that will have a positive impact on student performance” (p. 2).

Despite the research showing negative impact on student performance, some research has shown charter schools to have a positive impact on student achievement. Some of the research showing improved student achievement in charter schools shows the improvement taking place in specific subject areas. Sass (2006) found that charter school students in Florida outscored traditional public school students in reading once a charter school had been operating for at least five years. “Students who switched to Indianapolis charter schools experiences significant gains in mathematics achievement” (Nicotera et al., 2010, p. 1). In some cases, the positive impacts can be found at even more granular levels with improvement shown in specific subject areas in only certain grade levels. Imberman (2011) found that charter schools that do not start as traditional public school conversions show improvement in the areas of attendance, student discipline, and mathematics in grades six through eight. Miron et al. (2007) found similar results in that charter schools were continuing to show greater improvement as years passed but noted that these improvement may be due to the identification of more effective teaching methods. Hoxby and Murarka (2009) found positive impacts in the areas of both reading and math for students attending charter schools in New York City, but the observed increases in student achievement were modest. Additionally, Ozek (2014) found that charter schools entering a specific geographic area, when paired with other education reforms including new tenure policies, yielded achievement gains within all schools in the area.

While the research fails to come to a consensus regarding charter schools and their overall impact on student achievement, there is evidence of overall positive effects on specific groups of students or on students in specific geographic areas. Charter schools located in large, urban areas are shown to have a significant impact on the learning outcomes for the students which they serve. This improvement is seen when urban charter schools are compared to nearby traditional public schools and suburban and rural charter schools in the same state. Angrist et al. (2012) found that charter schools in a large, urban setting have much larger effects on student achievement than non-urban charter schools and the schools from which their students came. Angrist et al. (2012) further stated that the students enrolled in urban charter schools typically started at a lower achievement level than those in other schools. This initial lower achievement level could account for some of the improvement seen as these students had greater potential improvement. When speaking of charter schools in urban areas, Chudowsky and Ginsburg (2012) stated “The pattern is clear that students in charter schools significantly outperform their peers in regular public schools” (p. 13). Charter schools also find increased success when dealing with specific subgroups of students, specifically minority groups. Chudowsky and Ginsburg (2014) found more favorable student achievement findings for schools that specifically focused on black, Hispanic, or low-income backgrounds. It is important to note that a relationship may exist between improved performance in urban areas and improved performance with minority groups as charter schools that are located in urban locations are more likely to enroll a larger percentage of minority students.

When a charter schools opens within an existing traditional public school district, it is important to examine the impact that the new charter school may have on the neighboring traditional public schools from which they will enroll students. Ozek (2014) found that the introduction of charter schools into a school district, when paired with additional school reforms, had a positive impact on student achievement in all local school. Chapman and Donner (2015) stated that charter schools, on average, enroll more students from subgroups and populations that tend to perform lower on standardized assessment. The shift of these students from traditional public schools into new charter schools helps the average student performance in traditional public schools to improve while charter schools initially appear to have low levels of student achievement. Carpenter and Noller (2010) found that charter school student achievement decreased due to the increased enrollment of minority, disabled, and economically disadvantaged students. Winters (2011) found similar evidence in stating that traditional public schools showed improvement in student performance and that the improvement grew in relation to the number of new charter schools opening within the traditional public school's district. Conversely, if a charter school opens within a district that aims to specifically serve students who are gifted in academics or a specific skill area, the student achievement in neighboring traditional public schools may suffer. "Charter schools might be detrimental for struggling traditional public schools if they attract good students and take away much-needed resources as enrollments decline" (Ozek, 2014, p. 21). While there is a possibility of helpful and hurtful effects of charter schools on student achievement in traditional public schools, there can be a benefit to both schools when

charter schools enter a district and form a relationship with the existing schools.

Imberman (2010) showed that student achievement improved in both charter schools and neighboring traditional public schools as the two formed a relationship and learned to work with one another to support improved student outcomes.

Despite the provided research showing that charter schools can have an impact on the student achievement at neighboring traditional public schools, there have been findings that show no significant effects exist. “Although charter competition was associated with improved aspects of organization, these changes appear to have been too modest to yield any meaningful improvements in achievement” (Davis, 2013, p. 22). This finding could indicate that, like overall student achievement in charter schools, the impact experienced by traditional public schools varies greatly from location to location.

Additionally, any change noticed in student achievement at a traditional public school when a charter school enters their district may be caused by program and curriculum shifts the traditional public school makes in order to remain competitive. Chisesi (2015) found that traditional public schools often needed to adopt new programs in order to compete with new charter schools. Much like overall student achievement in charter schools, evidence exists to suggest both a positive and negative shift in student achievement at traditional public schools, but more evidence exists showing that there is no consistent change of significance. “The findings indicate that distance to a charter school has no association with either reading or math achievement” (Davis, 2013, p. 15).

Charter schools continue to experience annual growth in both the number of operating schools and the number of enrolled students, but the impact that charter schools

have on the academic achievement of their students is unclear. Evidence exists to show that charter school students outperform students from traditional public schools in specific subject areas or grade levels, but the evidence is inconsistent in findings and much of the research shows no difference in achievement. Additionally, charter schools appear to be most effective when operating in urban areas and predominantly serving students of racial minority or low-income backgrounds. “The bulk of charter school research ascertains that the majority of students in charter schools do not significantly outscore their traditional school peers on measurable indicators of academic performance” (Chapman & Donnor, 2010, p. 137).

Charter School Logistics

Charter schools are governed using a different set of laws, policies and regulations than those used to govern traditional public schools and, therefore, deal with a different set of logistical issues. Wilkens (2013) found that fewer than 20% of charter school closures in the United States were due to poor academic performance and that the second leading cause of charter school closures came from organizational management and logistical issues. Charter schools experience logistical difficulties in many areas, including unionization of employees, student enrollment, types and style of management, and obtaining and maintaining facilities. When examining the differences between charter schools and traditional public schools, as well as the difficulties experienced by charter schools, in these key specific areas, the research varies widely.

As noted by Kahlenburg and Potter (2014), Shanker’s original vision for charter schools called for employee unions to play a key role in driving the change and

innovation needed to improve student achievement outcomes. Charter school laws vary greatly from state to state, but the majority of charter schools are not required to participate in or honor the collective bargaining agreements that exist in the school districts in which they operate. During the 2013-2014 school year, 24 of the 43 states authorizing charter schools did not require any of their charter schools to participate in or honor the collective bargaining agreements used in their authorizing traditional public school district. During the same year, seven states required that only certain charter schools honor the collective bargaining agreements from their authorizing traditional public school district and this requirement most often applied to conversion charter schools only. 11 states required charter schools to honor the collective bargaining agreements in effect within their authorizing traditional public school district, but the majority of these states included provisions that allow the teachers at a charter school to vote to amend the agreement for their own purposes or to vote on a new agreement altogether. Only one state, Texas, did not allow collective bargaining in charter schools as the state is an “at-will” employment state and does not allow most forms of collective bargaining to take place (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2015). Broileette and Williams (1999) found that, at the time of their study, 100% of traditional public school districts in Michigan had teachers that were served by a union for collective bargaining while only 5 of the 139 operating charter schools had unions for teachers.

The lack of uniform collective bargaining requirements within a state is one possible reason that charter school teachers tend to have shorter careers and less experience than their traditional public school counterparts. “Charter school teachers in

2003-2004 were significantly younger and less experienced than their TPS counterparts, which put them at much greater risk of both attrition and mobility” (Stuit & Smith, 2012, p. 277). This greater risk for attrition causes the experience difference between charter school teachers and traditional public school teachers to continue and often grow larger. “The teachers who work in traditional public schools have more experiences and education compared to those working in charter schools” (Carpenter & Noller, 2010, p. 406). As charter school teachers move out of the school or profession, they are typically replaced with teachers with similar or lesser experience. While the lack of unions may contribute to the high teacher turnover rate at charter schools, the turnover rate may, in turn, prevent established unions from wanting to join with charter school teachers. Brouillette and Williams (1999) discussed that when schools lose teachers, unions lose paying members and stated “the short-term financial self-interests of unions and the growth of charter schools are thus incompatible with one another” (p.14).

Although collective bargaining does happen in some locations, the majority of charter schools are exempt from the collective bargaining seen in traditional public school districts and, in most locations, charter schools have been operating for significantly shorter periods of time than the traditional public school districts in which they operate. The lack of long contract history means that charter schools that do not collectively bargain with their authorizing school district can avoid many of the outdated policies and practices that hinder traditional public schools during school reform processes. Prince (2011) found that charter school contracts tend to provide greater flexibility for staffing and employee requirements and often do not include clauses that

protect more experienced teachers over more talented, less experienced teachers. Additionally, charter school contracts are more likely to contain teacher pay for performance language and a quicker due-process procedure for ineffective teachers being terminated (Prince, 2011). This represents an advantage over traditional public school districts as Schachter (2010) found that the majority of public school districts retain their ineffective teachers due to these contractual obligations. Additionally, the performance pay provisions many charter schools can employ allow them to be more innovative with salaries rather than rely on traditional raises for years of service. “Non-unionized charter schools tend to calculate salaries according to a more diverse range of factors including teacher expertise, experience, education, student achievement, and other criteria” (Brouillette & Williams, 1999, p. 14).

The lack of collective bargaining in charter schools has been shown, in some places, to lead to lower compensation for teachers and administrators working in the schools. The lower salaries and levels of service in the areas of healthcare and retirement could further contribute to teacher attrition as the teachers look to move to charter schools with more attractive compensation to or to traditional public schools with larger, more effective collective bargaining units. “Charter school teachers were also more likely than their district counterparts to cite a desire for a better salary and benefits package” (Kahlenberg & Potter, 2015, p. 24). Prince (2011) found that, in general, the total compensation packages (salary, retirement, and health care) offered by charter schools were comparable to average compensation packages offered by traditional public schools. These compensation packages were similar in total value but provided health care and

retirement at lower levels with increased costs while also providing generally lower salary levels. While much of the available research focuses on the salaries of teachers in charter schools, there is evidence that the salary differences exist at the administrative level as well. Bodine et al. (2008) found that, on average, charter school principals earn a salary that is 19% less than that earned by traditional public school principals. The loss of instructional staff due to low levels of overall compensation and lack of contractual input through collective bargaining has the potential to hurt the long-term success and growth of charter schools. “Charter schools that burn through teachers will struggle over time, within themselves and in expansion” (Wilkins, 2013, p. 235).

As previously discussed, Shaul (2000) found that charter schools generally do not have access to the same revenue sources for facilities and capital planning as do traditional public schools. This lack of facility funding presents a logistical issue for new charter schools as it makes building or leasing a suitable school building difficult. Sugarman (2002) found that finding and paying for facilities is a difficulty experienced by charter schools, regardless of the state or locality in which they operate. In order to ease the difficulties experienced in finding appropriate facilities, Sullins and Miron (2005) states that many charter schools must share their facilities with other organizations, including religious organizations or private businesses, in order to have a financially feasible building in which to operate.

The facility issues experienced by charter schools are detrimental to the overall financial stability of the school. Facility issues are more likely to occur in start-up charter schools as conversion charter schools typically operate within the existing building from

which the traditional public school was converted. “Any fiscal challenges charter schools are experiencing are likely to be experienced by start-up rather than conversion charter schools and that these challenges result in part from lower participation in categorical programs and from facility needs” (Krop & Zimmer, 2005, p. 20). These fiscal issues related to facilities have the potential to impact the quality of instruction within a charter school as the facility requires the appropriation of a larger portion of the overall school budget. As charter schools age, this problem lessens as the initial cost of building acquisition is realized during the opening process. Arsen and Ni (2012) found that longer established charter schools spent more on instruction and less on facilities than those in their first years of operation. When start-up charter schools do find a suitable facility, it is often adequate for only their current needs and does not provide the necessary room for growth that the school should experience with success. Sullins and Miron (2005) found that charter schools often have to move shortly after opening as they are quick to outgrow the original facility they were able to acquire for use.

In order to overcome the difficulty charter schools experience in acquiring or building quality facilities, Sullins and Miron (2005) stated that many schools choose to lease buildings from municipalities, religious institutions, or from traditional public schools districts. Brown (2006) found that many charter schools that find early success operate within facilities leased from local governments and municipalities as these local governments typically find charter schools to be economically desirable. “It is clear that the municipal desire to operate a charter school is tied to an unmet need for public

services, coupled with the belief that schools are an active part of the economic development and health of cities” (Brown, 2006, p. 12).

When charter schools lease a facility from another organization, the initial cost is usually low, especially when the leasing party is a traditional public school district. “Approximately 15 percent of all charter schools are in former public school facilities, with 13 percent of all schools paying minimal rates for their facilities” (Harris & Echazarreta, 2004, p. 9). The cost paid by charter schools to lease buildings from traditional public school districts is minimal, but the cost is recurrent and the charter school does not build equity in the building as they would through the financing of a facility purchase. While the leasing of a building may not contribute to the long-term financial health of a charter school, leasing a facility from a municipality or traditional public school district remains attractive due to the low initial cost and additional benefits that may be offered to the charter school. Brown (2006) found that partnering with local government agencies provided not only affordable facilities to new charter schools, but also provided access to other municipal facilities including auditoriums, fields, and athletic facilities.

Kahlenberg and Potter (2015) found that charter schools are able to try different models of management and structures that traditional public schools are not able to employ. “Charter schools also have the flexibility to try out new governance models and school structures by giving teachers representation on the governing board, shifting the school schedule to guarantee time for collaboration, or even forgoing traditional administrative models in favor of teacher-run governance” (Kahlenberg & Potter, 2015,

p. 23). This flexibility is available to charter schools through the reduced oversight and accountability measures present in the authorizing statutes in most states. Many states do not require charter school teachers to meet the certification requirements that are required of traditional public school teachers. Teachers within these states are only required to meet the requirements set forth through applicable federal programs in which the states participate; these programs typically only require that teachers be deemed highly qualified within their subject area (No Child Left Behind, 2002). These certification requirements are similar for school-based administrators but, in many cases, there are fewer requirements for the administrators to meet when working in charter schools. These reduced certification requirements allow charter schools to employ teachers who may be more specialized in their subject areas but may not be able to meet traditional public school certification requirements due to their education or work backgrounds. Additionally, the administrators hired to supervise these teachers can be subject area experts that are not required to meet the leadership certification requirements necessary in traditional public schools, allowing the charter schools to accept advanced degrees in specific areas, including fine arts or technology, rather than advanced degrees in fields related to educational leadership studies.

Charter schools can operate as independent, standalone schools or as a part of a Charter Management Organization (CMO) that oversees multiple schools or campuses. Independent charter schools are typically owned by municipalities, religious organizations, or businesses founded specifically for the purpose of operating the charter school. CMO's operate schools that can span large geographic areas with some operating

only schools within a specific school district and others operating schools in multiple localities and states. These two types of management organizations can be further divided into profit-seeking and non-profit charter schools. Although the common reason for a multi-school CMO is to recreate the services provided by a traditional public school district, Lake et al. (2010) found that this issue cannot be resolved, regardless of the type of management organization, without funding or facility changes. When the management group of a charter school is clearly defined and able to function independently of the authorizing school district, the charter school is likely to experience greater success in operations and achievement. Wong et al. (2010) found that clear delineation between the charter school organization and the related public school district contributed to the success of the school and the students which it serves.

As charter schools are governed by a different set of laws and regulations, their logistical needs and operation differ greatly than those of traditional public schools and school districts. Many states exempt charter schools from participating in the collective bargaining agreements in place within the traditional public school districts in which they operate and the majority of charter schools do not have a faculty that are served by a union. The lack of teacher unions in charter schools allows greater management flexibility in contractual terms but may also contribute to higher teacher attrition. The lack of collective bargaining may also contribute to smaller compensation packages for teachers, which Prince (2011) found to be at lower levels than those provided to teachers in comparable traditional public schools. Charter schools typically experience difficulty locating suitable, affordable facilities in which to operate and often must rely on second-

hand facilities leased from traditional public school districts, religious organizations, municipalities, or private businesses. All of these logistical differences and challenges experienced by charter schools lead to difficulty in retaining teachers and finding success during the first years of operation. As charter schools remain open for longer periods of time, Arsen and Ni (2012) found that they are able to shift a greater percentage of their financial resources to instruction rather than logistical needs. This shift helps charter schools become more successful and achieve improved student outcomes.

Charter School Partnership with Traditional Public Schools

The adversarial relationship that exists between charter schools and traditional public schools is inconsistent with Shanker's vision for charter schools. Shanker envisioned charter schools being places where new and innovative instructional strategies and curricula could be developed and then shared with traditional public schools so they may have an impact on a larger population of students (Kahlenberg & Potter, 2014). With no structure created to facilitate the necessary partnership between charter schools and traditional public schools, there is little collaboration that has been observed. "There are no mechanisms in place for charter schools and regular public schools to learn from one another" (Davis, 2013, p. 6). Additionally, traditional public schools shy from partnerships with charter schools as they are typically seen as being in competition to enroll the same students. Finkel (2011) found, through an interview, that charter schools are reluctant to work with charter schools due to a perception that charter schools exist to take financial resources away from school districts while presenting themselves as more successful schools. An additional barrier to partnerships is the burden that collaboration

places on both parties. “Although partnerships offer many benefits to both the charter school and the partner organization, partnering often increases time commitments and decreased autonomy” (Smith et al., 2008, p. 25).

In some states, the local laws encourage specific types of partnerships to take place between charter schools and the traditional public school district which authorized the charter. In states in which charter schools are not recognized as a Local Education Agency (LEA), the traditional public school district is required to provide specific resources to the charter school (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2015). These required services vary by state, but typically include support for exceptional student education (ESE) services, human resources support, services for English language learners (ELL), and various other federal programs.

Although partnerships do not exist in large quantities, there is evidence to support incentives through increased student achievement and logistical efficiency for both parties when charter schools partner with traditional public schools. Izu (2009) stated that charter schools and traditional public schools are more effective when they are able to learn from one another about instructional strategies that are either effective or ineffective. When traditional public school districts provided charter schools with easier access to district resources, student achievement improved for all schools in the district (Izu, 2009). Additionally, when traditional public school districts partner with new charter schools to offer services or programs not yet present within their district, the students in the district benefit from the gaps being filled in the district’s curriculum (Phillips, 2011). Partnerships were found to have greater effects when they went beyond a

relationship between charter school and traditional public schools to include local colleges, universities, or community organizations. Szente (2012) found that partnerships between charter schools, traditional public schools, local colleges and universities, and community support groups lead to greater student achievement, lower rates of teacher attrition, and greater community support for all involved schools.

Partnerships between charter schools and traditional public schools have been shown to have a positive effect on student achievement and academic outcomes. Imberman (2010) found evidence to support improved performance in both parties when charter schools developed working partnerships with traditional public schools. These benefits went beyond student achievement on standardized testing. Hung et al. (2014) showed that relationships formed between charter schools and traditional public schools led to improved graduation rates. These partnerships are most effective when they are formed prior to the opening of a charter school (Ni & Rorrer, 2012). One of the largest benefits associated with these partnerships is the possible reduction in achievement variances between students of different races and subgroups. “Districts can partner with charters to create a powerful tool for closing the achievement gap” (Lake & Hernandez, 2011, p. 7).

When charter schools and traditional public schools form partnerships, one of the key benefits comes in the form of improved professional learning opportunities for the teachers and staff at both schools. Each school has a unique faculty with access to different resources that may not be available to other schools. Lam (2014) found that when partnerships were formed between traditional public schools and charter schools,

teachers in both schools benefited from more specialized training in the areas of exceptional student education and English language learner instructional strategies.

Lubienski (2003) showed that charter schools have a unique opportunity to innovate and experiment with new instructional strategies to improve student achievement. The charter school can use what is learned regarding these new strategies and share the information through trainings provided to the traditional public schools as part of a continuing partnership. The content from these trainings are mutually beneficial to both the charter school and traditional public school and the strategies are used to impact instruction for students at both schools.

In some cases, the relationship between charter schools and traditional public schools has been taken to a more concrete level in which traditional public school districts own and operate charter schools within their boundaries. Lake and Hernandez (2011) define portfolio management in a school district as the management of a variety of schools by one management organization with a single district boundary. These schools could include traditional public schools, charter schools, or magnet schools and can each be operated by the traditional public school district in which they exist. When charter schools are managed and owned by traditional public school districts, many of the logistical hardships experienced by independent charter schools can be overcome as the traditional public school district has established systems for their existing schools that can be used to support the charter school. Bleyaert (2010) found that it was difficult to operate a charter school for the same price as a traditional public school as the initial cost of operation is greater in charter schools. These startup costs could be diminished by the

existing systems of administration, human resources, student services, and facility management already present in the traditional public school district. Bleyaert (2010) found that charter schools owned by traditional public school districts had higher rates of post-secondary matriculation and lower drop-out rates.

Partnerships between traditional public schools and charter schools are not common in the United States. Despite the lack of existing partnerships, there is evidence to support partnerships being mutually beneficial for both schools. Izu (1999) suggests that appointing a liaison to oversee a partnership between charter school and traditional public schools can lead to better working conditions between the two and, in turn, help both schools realize the positive effects of the partnership. The relationship can be especially helpful to the charter school as start-up charter schools can greatly benefit from the school district resources and expertise during the first years of operation (Izu, 1999). Additionally, when creating a partnership with a charter school, the traditional public school district can potentially obtain new programs and services for students that were not yet available. The most important component of a partnership between charter schools and traditional public schools is the ability to take innovative programs created in charter schools to a larger level. “One of the most promising things about the compacts is that participating charter schools must actively share demonstrated best practices and work with district public schools to scale up what works” (Phillips, 2011, p. 13).

Summary

This chapter has presented a review of research and literature related to charter schools and their operating within the United States. The review provided information

related to the history and operation of charter schools, charter school finance, charter schools and student achievement, and the formation of partnerships between charter schools and traditional public schools.

Charter schools were described by Shanker in the 1980's as an alternative to traditional public school where educators could develop innovate teaching methods while free from many restrictions placed upon other schools (Kahlenberg & Potter, 2014). Charter schools, while being supported by strong unions, would become breeding grounds for new teaching methods and student-centered curricula that could be shared with other schools in the area. This vision has not yet come to fruition. Many charter schools have become adversaries to public schools in terms of finance and student enrollment (Finkel, 2011). Additionally, charter schools tend to serve specific groups of students rather than representative populations of the districts in which they operate (Kahlenberg & Potter, 2014).

Charter schools have been shown to be funded at lower levels when compared to similar traditional public schools. The per-pupil funding received by charter schools has been shown, in some areas, to be significantly lower than traditional public schools, with the variance being as high as approximately 25% in some locations (Ascher et al., 2014). The difference in funding is most evident in the area of facility funding. The lack of funding for facilities leaves less funding for employee compensation and causes a lesser percentage of resources to be allocated for classroom instruction.

Charter schools in many states do not have access to capital project funding that is provided to traditional public schools (Speakman & Hassel, 2005). This often causes

charter schools to lease facilities from other organizations including school districts or religious organizations. When charter schools do acquire a facility for start-up purposes, it is usually inadequate for growth and causes the school to relocate during the first years of operation (Sullins & Miron, 2005). If charter schools are able to overcome the difficulties experienced during the first few years of operation, they have been shown to become more efficient and able to allocate more of their financial resources to classroom instruction (Arsen & Ni, 2012).

Although Shanker's vision for charter schools called for a collaborative relationship between the school and a teacher union, the majority of charter schools in the United States are not served by unions (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2015). The lack of unions in charter schools may contribute to the lower levels of compensation offered to charter school teachers and higher rates of teacher turnover when compared to traditional public schools. The lack of collective bargaining does, however, provide benefits to charter schools aiming to improve student achievement. Many charter school contracts contain provisions with quick due process proceedings for the termination of ineffective teachers (Prince, 2011).

Despite the continuing rise in annual charter school enrollment (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2015), the overall body of research is inconclusive regarding charter schools and their impact on student learning and achievement. Some of the negative effects could be due to the fact that charter schools typically enroll students from lower performing subgroups (Chapman & Donner, 2015). Positive effects on student achievement were more likely to occur in large, urban areas in which students

demonstrated the greatest potential for improvement (Angrist et al., 2012). The positive and negative effects of charter schools on student achievement vary greatly from state to state and from school to school (Hattie, 2009).

The research has generally shown positive outcomes for both traditional public school districts and charter schools when a partnership is formed between the two. Although partnerships are not common, they offer access to resources and ideas that are generally not made available to one another. When the partnerships are formed, charter schools are able to draw on the experience and resources of the school district while the school district is able to introduce new programs and opportunities to students. Due to reduced accountability measures and a different set of regulations, charter schools have a unique opportunity to experiment with new educational strategies that is not afforded to traditional public schools (Lubienski, 2003). The school district can support the implementation of these new strategies and curricula within the charter school and take the successful ideas to a larger scale using the other schools within the district (Phillips, 2011).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology that was used to answer each of the research questions included in this study. The included sections in this chapter are state of the problem, purpose, research questions, participants, data collection, and summary.

Statement of the Problem

Although charter schools owned and operated by public school districts currently exist, the practice is not common and the charter schools owned by public school districts are few. When students leave a traditional public school in favor of their charter competitors, the funding associated with educating these students also move to the charter school. Unless the ability to adapt and form partnerships with charter schools is developed, traditional public schools face the prospect of limited enrollment and reduced funding. To date, insufficient information exists concerning charter school ownership by traditional public school districts.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to provide a qualitative analysis of the financial and logistical advantages and disadvantages that can be realized by public school districts choosing to own and operate charter schools. While charter schools receive a large portion of their funding from state government agencies, they generate funding from a variety of sources depending upon their location and local laws. When a student enrolls in a charter school rather than a traditional public school, the state funding associated with that student travels with him/her to the charter school. Determining the financial and logistical advantages of charter school ownership by traditional public school districts will allow the school districts to determine the effectiveness of keeping this funding within their budgets.

Research Questions

Using the available research and conceptual framework, the researcher has developed four research questions to guide this study which are included in Table 2.

Table 2
Research Questions and Data Sources

Number	Research Question	Data Sources
1	What are the financial advantages to be realized by public school districts owning and operating charter schools within their existing district boundaries?	State Statutes, State Education Rules, Interviews
2	What are the financial disadvantages to be realized by public school districts owning and operating charter schools within their existing district boundaries?	State Statutes, State Education Rules, Interviews
3	What are the logistical advantages to be realized by public school districts owning and operating charter schools within their existing district boundaries?	State Statutes, State Education Rules, Interviews
4	What are the logistical disadvantages to be realized by public school districts owning and operating charter schools within their existing boundaries?	State Statutes, State Education Rules, Interviews

Data Collection

Interviews

In order to gather data to answer each of the established research questions, the researcher conducted interviews with chief financial officers from school districts that currently own and operate charter schools within their existing boundaries. The researcher contacted the selected interview participants, as indicated in the participants section, directly to request their participation in the structured interview process. Prior to interviews taking place, an explanation of research (Appendix B) was provided to participants and informed consent was obtained. Interview participants were provided with a copy of the structured interview questions (Appendix A) prior to the interview in order to allow them the ability to gather necessary data needed for responses. Interviews were conducted in a face-to-face setting or over the phone depending on the travel and time restrictions of the researcher and participants. During the interview process, one question was asked at a time and each participant was given the time to provide a complete response prior to advancing to the next question. With consent from each participant, interviews were audio recorded and transcribed into Microsoft Word™ documents for later analysis. For interviews in which consent to record was not obtained, detailed notes were collected by the researcher.

Using interview transcriptions, the researcher reviewed each participant's response to each question using two different methods. The researcher first used the word search feature in Microsoft Word™ to identify commonly used words and phrases for that could be used to indicate a financial or logistical advantage or disadvantage being realized by the participant's school district. The researcher then read each response in

detail to determine relevant responses that used unique or non-standard terms or phrasing. The response data collected through interview analysis was categorized using the constant comparison method (Dye, Schatz, Rosenberg, & Coleman, 2000; Elliot & Lazenbatt, 2005). The responses for each question were grouped into categories based upon their classification as a financial or logistical advantage or disadvantage. Each category was reviewed following the analysis to determine the existence of commonalities from interviews.

To ensure the confidentiality of interview participants was maintained, each participant was assigned a code based upon the state they represented and the order in which they were interviewed. The codes used for state were as follows: Florida – F, Texas – T, Louisiana – L, California – C. The numbers assigned to accompany each state letter were assigned sequentially with the first participant numbered one and the seventh participant numbered seven. A key of participant identifying information was available to only the researcher and the researcher’s dissertation committee. The key of participant identifying information was destroyed upon the completion of the study.

Review of State and Local Laws

In order to gather data to answer each of the established research questions, the researcher completed a review of state statutes and state board of education rules related to charter schools within the states of California, Florida, Louisiana, and Texas. Statutes for each state were obtained using the LexisNexis™ legal database and were obtained in full text. State board of education rules were obtained using public databases located on the websites for the California Department of Education, Florida Department of Education, Louisiana Department of Education, and the Texas Department of education.

Once all statutes and state board of education rules relevant to the ownership and operation of charter schools were obtained, the researcher analyzed the documents using the constant comparison method (Dye, Schatz, Rosenberg, & Coleman, 2000; Elliot & Lazenbatt, 2005). As the documents were reviewed, information was placed into categories indicating a financial or logistical advantage or disadvantage. Each category was reviewed to determine commonalities that exist between each state.

Participants

To answer each of the research questions, interviews were conducted with the chief financial officers of school districts that currently own and operate charter schools within their district boundaries. These districts were identified through information provided by the California Charter Schools Association, the Florida Consortium of Public Charter Schools, the Louisiana Association of Public Charter Schools, the Texas Charter Schools Association, and the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools.

Within each state included in the study, participating districts were selected based upon their current ownership or management of charter schools or the number of charter school authorized for operation within their district. At least one school district from each state agreed to participate in the study through the completion of a structured interview. Demographics, socioeconomic status, and size of district were not considered when selecting participants for the interviews.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the methodology used to answer each of the research questions associated with this study. This description included a statement of the problem, purpose statement, research questions, participants, and the collection of data. Subsequent chapters include the analysis of data, a discussion of the data gathered, and the findings associated with the qualitative analysis as well as implications and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

This study intended to examine the financial and logistical advantages and disadvantages of charter school ownership by traditional public school districts. In order to answer each of the research questions, data was collected through interviews with school personnel from traditional public school districts and through a policy review of relevant state statutes and board of education rules. This chapter presents the data related to each of the four research questions and is divided into four sections: (a) policy review, (b) interview findings, (c) research questions, and (d) summary.

Review of Policy and Law

Sources of Law

Each of the four states researched for this study have charter schools that are governed under unique state statutes and guidelines (see Table 3). The information presented in this policy review was obtained from the state statutes and administrative rules relevant to each referenced state. In the state of California, charter school policy is provided in three different sections of the state code. California Statute 47600-47644 provides for the authorization of charter schools and details the guidelines for their authorization and operation. California Statute 17078.52-17078.66 details the funding program available for charter schools to finance their facilities. California Statute 56145-56146 states that charter schools must adhere to the exceptional student education requirements which apply to traditional public schools.

In the state of Florida, charter schools are governed under two specific statutes within the state code. Florida Statute 1022.33 provides for the authorization of charter schools within the state and details the guidelines for their authorization and operation. Florida Statute 1013.62 provides guidelines for capital outlay funding for charter schools operating within the state. Specific operating guidelines, including application forms and training documents, are governed by section 6A of the Florida Administrative Code (FAC).

In the state of Louisiana, charter schools are governed by a section of the state code, but the majority of their guidelines and policies are found within a policy bulletin issued by the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (LBESE). Louisiana Statute 17:3971-17:3999 provides for the authorization of charter schools within the state and details the guidelines for their authorization and operation. Guidelines for authorization and operation are provided in greater detail in LBESE Policy Bulletin 126.

In the state of Texas, charter schools are governed under sections of the state code and the Texas Administrative Code. Texas Statute 12.001-12.156 provides for the authorization of charter schools within the state and details the guidelines for their authorization and operation. The policy governing their operation is further defined under Chapter 100 of the Texas Administrative Code (TAC).

Table 3
Sources of Charter School Law and Policy by State

State	Statute	Administrative Rule
California	CA Stat. §47600-47644 CA Stat. §56145-56146 CA Stat. §17078.52-17078.66	-
Florida	FL Stat. §1022.33 FL Stat. §1013.62	FAC Chapter 6A
Louisiana	LA Stat. §17:3971-17:3999	LBESE Policy Bulletin 126
Texas	TX Stat. §12.001-12.158	TAC Chapter 100

Types of Schools, Authorizers, and Limits

Each state researched for this study allows the authorization of multiple types of charter schools and, in some cases, limits the number of charter schools that may be authorized within the state (see Table 4). In California, Florida, Louisiana, and Texas, the types of charter schools that are able to be authorized can be placed into three categories: start-up charter schools, conversion charter schools, and virtual charter schools. Start-up charter schools are authorized as new schools with no relation to a previously operating public school. Conversion charter schools are authorized to assume operation of a current traditional public school. Conversion charter schools are opened for a number of reasons, including poor student performance, financial difficulty, or community desire. Virtual charter schools are schools which predominantly utilize internet-based, computer instruction rather than traditional, face-to-face instruction.

The state of Louisiana further divides charter schools into seven specific types based upon the model of school and authorizer. A type 1 charter school is a start-up charter school that has been authorized by a local school district. A type 1B charter school is a start-up or conversion charter school that has been authorized by a local

charter authorizer other than a school district. A type 2 charter school is a start-up or conversion charter school that has been authorized by the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (LBESE). A type 3 charter school is a conversion charter school that has been authorized by a local school district. A type 4 charter school is a conversion or start-up charter school that is authorized by the LBESE and contracted by a local school district. A type 5 charter school is a conversion charter school that has been transferred to the Louisiana Recovery School District as a result of prior performance; these charter schools are authorized by the LBESE. A type 3B charter school is a former type 5 charter school that has been transferred to the authorization and supervision of the local school district.

Although each of the states included in this study allow charter schools to be authorized by local school districts, there is variation amongst the states as to which other parties may provide charter school authorization (see Table 4). Charter schools in California may be authorized by a local school district, a county board of education, or the state board of education. When approved by a county board of education, a charter school must serve students from within the county and offer services for students who cannot be served by another county within the school district. The state board of education may authorize charter schools that will operate multiple campuses in various school districts and counties in California. Florida allows charter schools to be authorized by local school districts, state universities, and local community or state colleges but limits the types of charter schools that may be authorized by post-secondary institutions. While local school districts may authorize any type of charter school, state universities

may authorize only lab schools and local community or state colleges may authorize only schools which specialize in career or technical education. In Texas, charter schools may be authorized by either a local school district or the state commissioner of education with no restrictions on the types of charter schools that may be authorized for either party. Louisiana allows charter schools to be authorized by local school districts, the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (LBESE), and local charter school authorizers with each authorizer limited as to the types of charters they can authorize. Local school districts are able to authorize type 1 and type 3 charter schools while the LBESE is able to authorize type 2, type 4, and type 5 charter schools. Local charter authorizers are able to authorize type 1B charter schools and must meet specific requirements in order to be designated as a local charter authorizer. As required by Louisiana Policy Bulletin 126 (2016), a local charter authorizer must meet the qualifications listed below in Table 5.

Table 4
Types of Charter School Authorizers by State

Type	California	Florida	Louisiana	Texas
Local School District	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
University	-	Yes	-	-
Community College	-	Yes	-	-
Commissioner of Education	-	-	-	Yes
County School Board	Yes	-	-	-
State Board of Education	Yes	-	Yes	-
Local Charter Authorizer	-	-	Yes	-

Table 5
Local Charter Authorizer Requirements in Louisiana

Number	Requirement
1.	State agency, non-profit business, in-state postsecondary institution, or a municipally sponsored non-profit.
2.	Have an established education mission.
3.	Operate no charter schools.
4.	In operation for at least 3 years.
5.	Possess \$500,000 in assets.
6.	Have no management employees with a felony criminal history.

In addition to the restrictions placed upon charter school authorizers, there are locations in which limits are placed on the number of charter schools that may be authorized to operate within a state (see Table 6). Florida and Louisiana each impose no limits on the number of charter schools that may be authorized or the number of students that may attend charter schools. Texas imposes a limit on the number of charters that may be authorized for some types of charter schools, but allows each charter to operate multiple campuses. The limit for the number of charters in Texas for the 2015-2016 was established at 235, and the limit increases by 15 charters annually. California places no limits on the number of students that may attend charter schools, but limits the total number of charter schools that may operate each year. During the 2014-2015 school year, 1,950 charter schools were permitted to operate within the state of California, and the limit increases by 100 charter schools annually.

Table 6
Charter School Limitations by State

State	Student Limit	School/Charter Limit	2014-2015 Limit	Annual Change
California	None	Yes	1950 Schools	Increase 100 Schools
Florida	None	No	-	-
Louisiana	None	No	-	-
Texas	None	Yes	235 Charters	Increase 15 Charters

Collective Bargaining, Certification, and Retirement Plans

Along with the overall governance of charter schools, the requirements and provisions for collective bargaining in charter schools varies with each authorizing state (see Table 7). In the states of California and Florida, charter schools are exempt from collective bargaining practices as a part of a larger exemption from other laws applied to traditional public schools. Charter schools may elect to participate in collective bargaining as a part of their charter and may also partner with a traditional public school district to utilize existing agreements. In the state of Louisiana, type 1 and type 3 charter schools are exempt from collective bargaining while type 2 and type 4 charter schools are subject to the collective bargaining agreement effective in the district in which they are located unless their charter application indicates they will not participate. Type 5 charter schools are exempt from collective bargaining but are allowed to bargain at their discretion for all or a portion of their employees. The state of Texas is an at-will employment state and does not allow collective bargaining.

As a part of the compensation package offered to employees, each of the states in this study provide a retirement compensation program to employees working in

traditional public schools. Charter schools operating within each of these states have different requirements in respect to state retirement programs (see Table 7). Florida and California allow charter schools access to state retirement programs but participation in such programs is optional. Louisiana allows charter schools access to state requirement programs, but participation in such programs is optional for all charter schools with the exception of type 4 charter schools who must participate. Texas requires all charter schools to participate in the state retirement programs.

Legislation for each of the four states included in this study varies in terms of teacher certification requirements (see Table 7), with state teacher certification being required for some and not for others. Florida and California require all teachers in charter schools to hold the same teacher certification as traditional public school teachers. Texas does not require charter school teachers to be certified unless they are working with students enrolled through specific federal programs, including English Language Learners (ELL) and students receive exceptional student education (ESE) services. Louisiana requires no charter school teachers to hold a state teacher certification, but does require that all charter school teachers possess at least a baccalaureate degree.

Table 7
Bargaining, Retirement Program, and Teacher Certification by State

State	Collective Bargaining	State Retirement Program	State Teacher Certification
California	Exempt, Optional	Optional	Required
Florida	Exempt, Optional	Optional	Required
Louisiana	Exempt, Optional	Optional Required for Type 4	Not Required
Texas	No, At-Will State	Required	Required for ELL/ESE Teachers

Student Enrollment

Each of the states involved in this study were found to have different requirements for which students are permitted to enroll in charter schools and the process through which these students are selected (see Table 8). In the state of California, there is little statutory language to limit which students may attend a charter school. CA Stat. §47605.5 states that “a charter school shall admit all pupils who wish to attend the charter school” (2016). This broad statement requires that charter schools open their doors to all students within the state that wish to attend so long as capacity is not exceeded. Charter schools in the state of Florida must admit students living within the district in which they were authorized. Charter schools in Texas are, by default, open to be attended by any student residing within the state. Each charter school has the ability to limit the area from which students may enroll through their charter application process.

Charter schools in Louisiana have varying student enrollment requirements that change based upon the type of charter school being attended. Type 1, type 3, and type 4 charter schools are limited to enroll only students who live within the district in which the charter school operates. Type 2 charter schools must designate a geographic region from which students may be enrolled and have the option of selecting the entire state, a single school district, or multiple school districts. Type 5 charter schools must admit students who would have been previously eligible to attend the traditional public school from which they were converted. Additionally, type 5 charter schools may enroll additional students from within the district in which they operate should there be space available within their enrollment capacity.

Each state stipulates the manner in which charter schools must select students for enrollment should the number of acceptable student applications exceed the maximum student capacity (see Table 8). California, Florida, and Louisiana each require charter schools to utilize a random selection lottery to determine student enrollment should the number of acceptable applications exceed the charter school’s maximum enrollment. The lottery can be used on a school-wide basis or can be used for a specific grade-level or program area. Charter schools within Texas may choose to use a random selection lottery to determine student enrollment should the number of acceptable applications exceed enrollment capacity. Charter schools within Texas that do not choose to use a random selection lottery must admit students in the order in which their acceptable applications are received.

Table 8
Charter School Geographic Enrollment Areas and Lottery Requirements

State	Enrollment Area	Lottery Requirement
California	State-Wide	Yes
Florida	District-Wide	Yes
Louisiana	Type 1 – District-Wide	Yes
	Type 2 – Stated in Charter Application	
	Type 3 – District-Wide	
	Type 4 – District-Wide	
	Type 5 – Previous School Enrollment	
Texas	State-Wide	Optional
	May be Limited in Charter Application	

Authorizer Fees and Services

While each of the states involved in this study are required to provide specific services to charter schools which they have authorized, the compensation received by the district in exchange for these services varies (see Table 9). Additionally, charter schools may contract additional services from their authorizer or school district in which they operate at additional cost should they choose to do so.

In California, charter school authorizers are permitted to collect 1% of the per-pupil funding a charter school receives in order to provide services and monitoring to each charter school. If the authorizer provides a facility to the charter school at no cost, then the authorizer may increase their fee to 3% of the per-pupil funding received by the charter school. In Louisiana, charter school authorizers are able to collect 2% of the per-pupil funding allocated to the charter school in exchange for specific services that include data management and school monitoring. Louisiana requires that school districts provide documentation to show the manner in which the authorizer fees are used. In Florida, the fee charter authorizers collect varies based upon the number of charters managed by a governing board and the past performance of a school. For individual schools, Florida charter authorizers collect 5% of the per-pupil funding for the first 250 students enrolled in the school. If a charter school has been deemed to be high-performing using the same accountability measures employed by traditional public schools, the charter authorizer fee is reduced to 2% of the per-pupil funding received by the charter school for the first 250 students enrolled. If a system of charter schools in Florida is located entirely within one county, is managed by a non-profit organization, or has an enrollment that exceeds the smallest school district within the state, the charter authorizer may collect the

aforementioned percentages of per-pupil funding for the first 500 students enrolled within that charter school organization. Texas does not have a required fee to be paid to charter authorizers from charter schools.

In addition to any required services performed by a charter authorizer or local school district, laws in three of the four states involved in this study specifically allow charter schools to contract a school district for additional services (see Table 9). These services are not specified and could include food service, transportation, or custodial services. Texas law does not specifically make mention of charter schools contracting additional services from a local school district or charter and, as such, is not required or prohibited. California allows charter schools to contract services from a local school district with no mention of a limit on the cost of such services. Florida and Louisiana both allow charter schools to contract additional services from a local school district and require the school district to collect a fee no greater than the actual cost of the service to the district.

Table 9
Charter Authorizer Fees and Contracts for Additional Services

State	Authorizer Fee	Additional Services Contract Allowed	Additional Services Maximum Fee
California	1% of Per-Pupil Funding	Allowed	Not Specified
	3% of Per-Pupil Funding if Rent-Free Facility Provided		
Florida	5% of Per-Pupil Funding for First 250 Students	Allowed	Actual Cost to District
	Increased to 500 Students for Specific Systems of Charter Schools		
	Reduced to 2% of Per-Pupil Funding for High-Performing Charter Schools		
Louisiana	2% of Per-Pupil Funding	Allowed	Actual Cost to District
Texas	Not Provided for in Statute or Administrative Rule	Not Specified	N/A

Capital Outlay Funding and Charter School Facilities

In addition to the per-pupil funding received to educate students in each state, capital outlay funding is received in some locations in order to help finance the purchase, construction, lease, or maintenance of a school building for charter schools. As with other areas, there is great variation amongst the states included in this study related to capital outlay funding (see Table 10).

In Louisiana and Texas, there is no provision to provide capital outlay funding through grants or a per-pupil funding amount. Charter schools in Louisiana have the opportunity to apply for limited-term loans through the state department of education. School districts in Louisiana are required to offer unused district facilities to charter

schools at current market value prior to selling them to other parties. Texas does not provide opportunities for charter schools to receive loans for facility purposes but does provide access to bonds to finance their buildings. Charter schools in Texas must be allowed to submit a proposal to purchase unused district facilities but there is no obligation for the school district to accept the proposal over those from other groups.

Charter schools in California are provided with capital outlay funding on a per-pupil basis. Charter schools receive a specific per-pupil amount that varies annually and may not exceed 75% of the total cost of a building lease or 50% of the cost of the acquisition or construction of a new building. California also provides a loan program for charter schools requiring additional funding to finance their facility needs. Public school districts are required to offer any unused facilities to charter schools prior to selling the facilities to other parties.

Florida provides charter schools with an annually varying per-pupil funding for capital outlay purposes if the charter school meets specific requirements. Charter schools may receive capital outlay funding if they have been operating for 3 or more years, are governed by a board that operates other charter schools that have been in operation for 3 or more years, are accredited by Commission on Schools of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, exist in a feeder pattern with another charter school currently receiving capital outlay funding, or operate as a work-study program in partnership with a local business. In addition to the per-pupil funding, Florida allows local school districts to charge additional property taxes for school facilities and charter schools are eligible to receive a portion of this funding.

Table 10
 Capital Outlay Funding and Access to District Facilities

State	First Access to Unused District Facilities	Per-Pupil Capital Outlay Funding	Other Sources of Capital Outlay Funding
California	Yes	Yes	State Loan Program
Florida	No	Yes	District Sponsored Property Tax
Louisiana	Yes	No	State Loan Program
Texas	Yes – Offer Not Required to be Accepted	No	State Assisted Bonds

Interview Findings

Overview of Interviews and Participants and Interview Question 1

In each of the states included in this study, interviews were conducted with the Chief Financial Officer, or their designee, of public school districts which own or operate charter schools within their public school district. Interviews were conducted with school districts from California, Florida, Louisiana, and Texas (see Table 11) using a set of structured interview questions (see Appendix A). Interviews were completed on the phone and records of all interviews were created (see Appendix D). Records of interviews include complete transcripts for interviews in which permission to record was granted and detailed notes for interviews in which permission to record was not granted (see Table 11). Unique codes were applied to each school district to ensure confidentiality of information (see Table 11).

Through the completion of interviews, a variance in terminology was discovered in each of the four states. While the structured interview questions asked each interviewee the number of charter schools owned by their traditional public school

district, each state had different terminology to indicate this relationship (see Table 11). School districts in California define charter schools included within the traditional public school district as dependent charter schools. In Florida, charter schools have management agreements with public school districts rather than pursuing traditional ownership. In Louisiana, charter schools falling under management of traditional public school districts are classified as type 4 charter schools. In Texas, charter schools operated by traditional public school districts are identified as in-district charter schools.

Table 11
District Information for Participating Schools

Participant Code	State	Transcript Available	Relationship Term
C1	California	Yes	Dependent Charter
C2	California	Yes	Dependent Charter
C3	California	No – Detailed Notes	Dependent Charter
C4	California	Yes	Dependent Charter
F1	Florida	No – Detailed Notes	Management Agreement
F2	Florida	Yes	Management Agreement
F3	Florida	No – Detailed Notes	Management Agreement
F4	Florida	Yes	Management Agreement
L1	Louisiana	Yes	Type 4 Charter
T1	Texas	Yes	In-District Charter
T2	Texas	Yes	In-District Charter

In California, interviews were conducted with four school districts that each had varying numbers of dependent charter schools (see Table 12). School district C1 currently has 16 authorized charter schools operating within the school district, none of which is a dependent charter school; this school district was selected due to the high

number of charter schools operating within the district. School district C2 currently has 12 charter school operating within the school district, two of which are dependent charter schools. School district C3 currently has 15 charter schools operating within the school district and 6 of which are dependent charter schools. School district C4 currently has 84 charter schools operating within the district, 51 of which are authorized by the local school district.

In Florida, interviews were conducted with four school districts that each had varying numbers of managed charter schools (see Table 12). School district F1 currently has 102 charter schools operating within the district, four of which are managed by the school district. School district F2 did not indicate the number of charter schools currently operating within the district but did indicate that one charter school is managed by the school district. School district F3 did not indicate a specific number of charter schools currently operated within the school district but did indicate that four charter schools are managed by the school district. School district F4 currently has 17 charter schools operating within the school district, one of which is managed by the school district.

In Louisiana, there is currently only one type 4 charter school operated within the state (Louisiana Association of Public Charter Schools, 2016). The school district in which this charter school operates elected to not participate in this study. School district L1 participated in an interview despite not operating any type 4 charter schools. School district L1 indicated that there are currently 25 charter schools operating within the school district, eight of which were district-approved charter schools and none of which were managed by the school district.

In Texas, interviews were conducted with two school districts that each had a different number of dependent charter schools (see Table 12). School district T1 did not indicate the number of charter schools currently operating within the district but did indicate that the school district currently has 17 in-district charter schools. School district T2 did not indicate the number of charter schools currently operating within the district but did indicate that the school district currently has two in-district charter schools.

Table 12
Number of Charter Schools by District

School District	Total Number of Charter Schools	Number of Charter Schools Owned/Managed
C1	16	0
C2	12	2
C3	15	6
C4	84	51
F1	102	4
F2	Not Stated in Interview	1
F3	Not Stated in Interview	4
F4	17	1
L1	25	0
T1	Not Stated in Interview	17
T2	17	2

Interview Question 2

Are budgets handled differently between your charter schools and traditional public schools? If so, how?

Each of the school districts participating in the interviews indicated a varying level of financial autonomy when responding to Question 2 (see Table 13). School districts T1 and C3 indicated that dependent charter schools and in-district charter schools utilize the same budget structures as traditional public schools within the school

district with school district C3 stating that the dependent charter schools have significantly more flexibility than traditional public schools within those budget structures. School districts C2, C4, F1, F3, and L1 each indicated that their charter schools were all financially autonomous and developed their budgets using their own systems. School districts C1 and F4 indicated that the charter schools are autonomous in the creation of their budgets but must submit their budgets and financial reports to the school district for regular monitoring. School district T2 indicated that each charter school is free to develop its own budget, but that in-district charter schools must have their budgets approved by the school district. School district F2 indicated that the managed charter school within the district has its budget created by the school district but that it is monitored by an independent party.

Table 13
Budget Differences for Charter Schools

School District	Differences in Handling of Budget for Owned/Managed Charters
C1	Financially Autonomous – Regular Monitoring
C2	Financially Autonomous
C3	Same Structures as Traditional Public Schools
C4	Directly Funded, Fiscally Autonomous
F1	Financially Autonomous
F2	Created by District – Monitored by Independent Party
F3	Financially Autonomous
F4	Financially Autonomous – Regular Monitoring
L1	Financially Autonomous
T1	Same Structures as Traditional Public Schools
T2	Develops Own Budget – Approved by District

Interview Question 3

Do you allow charter school staff to collectively bargain?

Collective bargaining in charter schools varied widely amongst the school districts participating in interviews (see Table 14). School districts F3, F4, L1, T1, and T2 each had no charter schools operating within their districts that participated in collective bargaining. It is important to note that school districts T1 and T2 are located in Texas which is an at-will state and, as such, does not permit collective bargaining. School districts C1, C2, C4, and F1 each have some charter schools that participate in collective bargaining. Each of the four managed charter schools in school district F1 participates in the school district's collective bargaining agreement while no other charter schools in the district collectively bargain. Two charter schools within school district C1 collectively bargain with one of the charter schools participating in the school district's collective bargaining agreement despite not being a dependent charter school. One charter school in school district C2 collectively bargains but does not participate in the school district's bargaining agreement. School districts F2 manages one charter school and that school does participate in the district's collective bargaining agreement. School district C3 has 6 dependent charter schools and each of those schools participate in the district's collective bargaining agreement.

Table 14
Collective Bargaining in Charter Schools

School District	Do Charter Schools Participate in Collective Bargaining	Number of School Participating in Collective Bargaining
C1	Yes	2
C2	Yes	1
C3	Yes	6
C4	Yes	Most, Not Specified
F1	Yes	4
F2	Yes	1
F3	No	N/A
F4	No	N/A
L1	No	N/A
T1	No	N/A
T2	No	N/A

Interview Question 4

Do charter school and traditional public school teachers participate in the same professional development opportunities?

Each of the school districts participating in an interview indicated that the school district provides professional development to charter schools in some form with the majority of districts providing opportunities similar to programs offered to teachers in traditional public school districts. School districts C3, C4, F1, F2, F3, F4, L1, and T1 each indicated that they offer the same professional development programs and opportunities to all teachers, regardless of employment in a charter school or traditional public school. School districts C1 and T2 each indicated that the same professional development opportunities are offered to traditional public schools and charter schools, but also stated that participation from charter school teachers is often low or inconsistent. School district C2 provides only provides professional development in areas in which

charter school performance impacts the overall school district rating and stated that charter schools are responsible for planning any other professional development.

Interview Question 5

Do charter school and traditional public school teachers participate in the same retirement programs?

In each of the states included in this study, the state provides a retirement program for teachers working in public schools. As discussed in the policy review, Texas requires charter schools to participate in the state teacher retirement program while California, Florida, and Louisiana leave participation optional for charter schools. These legal requirements left the majority of responses for this question divided into two groups comprised of school districts in which all owned or managed charter schools participate in the state retirement program and school districts in which some charter schools participate in the state retirement program while others do not (see Table 15). One respondent did not fit into either group and had no charter schools that participate in the state retirement program.

School districts C1, C2, C3, C4, T1, and T2 each indicated that all of their managed or owned charter schools participated in the state retirement program provided for teachers. School district T1 further clarified in their response that participation is not optional and all charter schools must pay into the state retirement program. School districts F1, F2, F4, and L1 each indicated that some of the charter schools within their district participate in the state retirement program while others choose not to. School district F1 stated that each school has the option to participate and school district F2 stated that all charter schools not operated by a charter management organization

participated in the state retirement program. School district F4 indicated that only one charter school within the district participated in the state retirement program and stated that each charter school must indicate their intention to participate during the charter application process. School district L1 stated that each charter school may opt to participate in the state retirement program but the majority of charter schools in the district did not; the interviewee was unable to cite a specific number of charter schools that participate.

Table 15
Charter School Participation in State Retirement Program

School District	Participation	Charter Schools in District Participate?
C1	Optional	Yes
C2	Optional	Yes
C3	Optional	Yes
C4	Optional	Yes
F1	Optional	Yes
F2	Optional	Yes
F3	Optional	No
F4	Optional	Yes
L1	Optional	Yes
T1	Required	Yes
T2	Required	Yes

Interview Question 6

Do you receive additional capital outlay (i.e. PECO) funding for charter schools?

Capital outlay funding for charter schools varied amongst the school districts participating in interviews (see Table 16). The variation existed most when looking at districts in different states with less variation observed amongst school districts in the same state. School districts in Louisiana and Texas stated that no specific funding was

received by charter schools for capital outlay while school districts in California and Florida stated that capital outlay funding was received by charter schools. The designee interviewed for school district C3 did not have information available to provide an answer to this question.

School districts T1 and T2 both indicated that charter schools in Texas receive no specific funding for capital outlay. School district T1 further clarified that charter schools needing to raise funds for facility needs would need to do so independently; none of the charters in the district had done so as of yet. School district L1 stated that facility funding could vary depending on the type of charter school but that specific funding for capital outlay was not received. School district L1 further stated that some charter schools may receive funding for specific federal programs, including exceptional student education, which could be used for specific facility needs.

Each of the school districts in Florida stated that charter schools do receive capital outlay funding and each district indicated that charter schools do not receive any additional capital outlay funding when compared to traditional public schools. School district F1 stated that charter schools receive a standard amount of capital outlay funding based upon the completion of an application but was not specific as to the amount of funding provided. School districts F2 and F3 indicated that charter schools receive a standard allotment of capital outlay funding but made no mention of the application discussed by school district F1. School district F4 stated that charter schools do receive capital outlay funding but at a level less than that of traditional public schools. School

district F4 further clarified that capital outlay funding is only available for charter schools following the completion of three years of operation.

School districts C1, C2, and C4 each stated that charter schools are eligible to receive capital outlay funding in the state of California. School district C1 discussed a program through which school districts are required to provide low-rent leases to charter schools operating within their district. School district C2 specified that amount of capital outlay funding received by charter schools to be \$750 per student or 75% of the cost of their facility lease, whichever amount was less in value.

Table 16
Charter School Capital Outlay Funding

School District	Capital Outlay Received	Details Provided by Interviewee
C1	Yes	Charter Schools May Apply for Low-Cost Lease of District Facilities
C2	Yes	\$750 Per Student or 75% Cost of Lease
C3	No Response	N/A
C4	Yes	Funded on a Per-Pupil Basis
F1	Yes	Charter Schools Must Complete an Application for Funding
F2	Yes	No Additional Funding Beyond State Allocation
F3	Yes	No Additional Funding Beyond State Allocation
F4	Yes	Charter Schools Receive Less Than Traditional Public Schools
L1	No	Could Possibly Fund Facilities Through Federal Program Funding
T1	No	Could Raise Facility Funding Independently
T2	No	District Provides Some Support for In-District Charter Schools

Interview Questions 7 & 8

What restrictions exist for charter school facilities?

Can charter school facilities be shared with traditional public schools?

The majority of the school districts participating in interviews indicated that no additional restrictions are placed on charter school facilities. School districts C1, C3, C4, F1, F3, T1, and T2 each stated that the facility requirements for charter schools within their districts were similar to the requirements imposed upon traditional public schools. School district C3 further stated that each of their dependent charter schools meet the same building requirements as traditional public schools because all of their dependent charter schools are located in district buildings. School district F1 stated that, while charter schools have no additional restrictions, the school district inspects buildings to ensure they are appropriate for school use. School district T2 stated there are rules for facility size set forth by the state but further clarified that these rules were the same for traditional public schools.

School districts C2 and F4 stated that there were no additional restrictions placed upon charter school facilities operating within their district but further stated that charter schools have the ability to operate facilities with significantly fewer regulations than traditional public schools. School district C2 indicated that a charter school is exempt from the legal requirement imposed upon traditional public schools for building inspections and facility size and further stated that charter schools are only responsible for meeting the local city occupancy requirements for buildings. School district F4 stated that charter schools have the option of following only the state building code and, as such, have the option of building in non-traditional settings that could include shopping

centers and malls. School district F4 also stated that the district conducts pre-opening inspections to ensure that the school has met the state building codes.

School district L1 shared that the issue of charter school facilities can be complex due to the various types of charter schools operating within the district and state. School district F2 provided a response that did not address restrictions on charter school facilities.

The responses provided for question 8 were able to be divided into two groups with one group representing school districts in which charter schools and traditional public schools share facilities and one group representing districts in which facilities were not shared (see Table 17). School districts C3, F1, F4, L1, and T1 each indicated that no charter schools within their district share facilities with traditional public schools. School district C3 stated that the sharing of facilities was allowed but not currently an option pursued by charter schools within the district. School districts C1, C2, C4, F2, F3, and T2 each stated that at least one charter school within their district currently shared a facility with a traditional public school in some manner. School districts C1, F2, and T2 each stated that one charter school within each district shared common grounds, including a cafeteria and gym, with a traditional public school. School district C2 stated that a public school shared a facility with a charter school but was not specific as to how that facility was shared. School district F3 stated that a charter school within the district utilizes an unoccupied portion of a traditional public school but that no overlap occurs between the two schools on the campus.

Table 17
 Charter School Facility Restrictions and Shared Facilities

School District	Facility Restrictions	Facilities Shared	Shared Facility
C1	No Additional	Yes	Common Areas
C2	Fewer	Yes	Not Specified
C3	No Additional	No	N/A
C4	Fewer	Yes	Jointly Operated Schools
F1	No Additional	No	N/A
F2	Fewer	Yes	Common Areas
F3	No Additional	Yes	Unoccupied Buildings
F4	Pre-Opening Visits by District	No	N/A
L1	No Additional Varies by Type	No	N/A
T1	No Additional	No	N/A
T2	No Additional	Yes	Common Areas

Interview Questions 9 & 10

What funding restrictions exist for charter schools?

Can funding for charter schools be combined with funding for traditional public schools?

Each of the participating school districts stated that no additional funding restrictions are placed upon charter schools operating within their school districts and multiple districts stated that charter schools need only follow the funding guidelines established by the relevant state guidelines. School district F2 clarified the state financial guidelines set forth by the state include the monitoring of school finance by the authorizing school district. School districts C1, C2, and T2 each discussed the required charter authorizer fees paid by each charter school to the school district while discussing possible restrictions.

The majority of school districts indicated that funding for charter schools and traditional public schools is not combined in any manner. School district F1 stated that all per-pupil funding is initially directed to the school district prior to being dispersed to the charter school and that the funding for both charter schools and traditional public schools is combined for specific federal programs, including Title 1 services. School district T1 stated that the district employs a similar process with all per-pupil funding for charter schools and traditional public schools directed to the school district prior to being provided to individual schools.

Interview Question 11

How is transportation provided for charter school students within your district?

In regards to student transportation, the participating school districts were able to be placed into two groups with one group representing school districts who provided transportation services to charter schools and one group representing school districts who provided no such service (see Table 18). None of the participating school districts indicated that charter schools were required to provide students with transportation to or from school.

School districts C1, C2, C4, F1, F3, L1, and T1 each indicated that no district transportation services were provided to charter schools within their districts. School district C2 stated that, while the district not provide transportation to charter schools, some charter schools within the district contracted with local municipal bus services to transport students. School district F1 stated that one charter school within the district received state funding for transportation due to road hazard issues but that funding was used to contract a private transportation vendor rather than the school district.

School districts C3, F2, F4, and T2 each stated that the school district provided transportation services to at least one charter school within the district. School district C3 stated that student transportation was contracted between charter schools and the school district as part of a larger agreement involving several services. School district F3 stated that student transportation services were provided to one charter school and that the same buses were used for charter and neighboring traditional public schools. School district F4 stated that the demand for charter school transportation services from the district was increasing and a third party vendor was beginning to be utilized to help support district transportation services. School district T2 clarified that transportation was provided by the school district for two in-district charter schools for any students residing within a specific distance to the school and, as such, was not provided for all students attending the schools.

Table 18
 School Districts Providing Transportation Services to Charter Schools

School Districts Providing Transportation Services	School Districts Not Providing Transportation Services
C1	C3
C2	C4
F1	F2
F3	F4
L1	T2
T1	

Interview Questions 12 & 13

Are teachers able to transfer between charter schools and traditional public schools?

If teachers do transfer between schools, what are the contractual impacts?

The topic of teachers transferring between charter schools and traditional public schools showed a clear divide amongst participating districts with few districts affording teachers the opportunity to transfer between the two (see Table 19). School districts C3, F2, and T1 each stated that teachers were able to transfer from a managed or owned charter school to or from a traditional public school in the same manner that a teacher would be able to transfer between two traditional public schools. School district C3 stated teachers working at dependent charter schools are able to transfer to a traditional public school with no contractual implications but that teachers working in independent charter schools must apply to traditional public schools as any outside applicant would. School district F2 clarified that employees at the managed charter school in the district are technically school district employees and as such, can transfer to any school in the district in the same manner as teachers from traditional public schools with no contractual implications. School district T1 stated that teachers in the district are able to transfer between in-district charter schools and traditional public schools but noted that contract language provides for higher levels of compensation for teachers employed at in-district charter schools. All other participating school districts stated that teachers may not transfer between charter schools and traditional public schools within the district.

Table 19
 Teacher Transfers Between Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools

School District	Transfers Permitted	Contract Implications
C1	No	N/A
C2	No	N/A
C3	Yes	None
C4	No	N/A
F1	No	N/A
F2	Yes	None
F3	No	N/A
F4	No	N/A
L1	No	N/A
T1	Yes	Salary Difference
T2	No	N/A

Interview Question 14

What financial advantages are realized by your school district through the ownership of charter schools?

Responses to this question varied with each responding school district with some school districts not providing relevant information in their response. Each response is included in Table 20.

Table 20
Financial Advantages of Charter School Ownership or Management

School District	Financial Advantage
C1	Savings realized through fewer education codes with which to comply.
C2	Substantial monetary savings stemming from fewer facility codes and requirements. Unique ability to create a memorandum of understanding with the bargaining unit to offer financial incentives to teachers.
C3	Charter schools have access to a larger number of grants not available to traditional public schools.
C4	Financial gain goes against the spirit of the charter law.
F1	Bringing back a substantial number of students resulting in higher overall funding for the district.
F2	Lower costs for charter school services (i.e. insurance) due to the inclusion in a larger purchase.
F3	The district experiences no large financial gains outside of the required management fee.
F4	No financial advantages shared by interviewee.
L1	Increased overall funding from more students being enrolled in district schools.
T1	More financial support and guidance provided for the charter schools operating within the district.
T2	No financial advantages for the district as of now.

Interview Question 15

What financial disadvantages are realized by your school district through the ownership of charter schools?

Responses to this question varied with each responding school district with some school districts not providing relevant information in their response. Each response is included in Table 21.

Table 21
Financial Disadvantages of Charter School Ownership or Management

School District	Financial Disadvantage
C1	No disadvantages shared by interviewee.
C2	Higher chance of financial liability, but noted the possibility exists with the addition of any type of school.
C3	Charter schools would remain fiscally autonomous leaving the school district little discretion over the use of district funds provided to the school.
C4	Financial gain goes against the spirit of the charter law.
F1	The district feels the value of their education product would be reduced.
F2	All of the observed costs for charter schools are higher than similar expenses for traditional public schools.
F3	No disadvantages that the interviewee was currently aware of.
F4	No disadvantages were shared by the interviewee.
L1	The financial relationship would be difficult to manage due to state guidelines and requirements.
T1	Charter schools would maintain financial autonomy.
T2	The cost is difficult to manage for the district with only two charter schools.

Interview Question 16

What logistical advantages are realized by your school district through the ownership of charter schools?

Responses to this question varied with each responding school district with some school districts not providing relevant information in their response. Each response is included in Table 22.

Table 22
Logistical Advantages of Charter School Ownership or Management

School District	Logistical Advantage
C1	Stated advantages would exist, but was unsure of specific advantages.
C2	Charter schools could be used to develop innovative instructional programs. Charter schools are not required to follow most requirements placed upon traditional public schools.
C3	Greater financial autonomy for the charter schools. Access to district services and resources for charter schools.
C4	Charter schools share innovative ideas and new instructional methods.
F1	The advantages only exist for the charter schools and the district deals with logistical hardships associated with a more diverse portfolio of schools.
F2	No logistical advantages shared by the interviewee.
F3	The interviewee did not have information available to provide a response.
F4	Charter schools can be used to combat overcrowding through the opening of a school with fewer restrictions in densely populated areas.
L1	Stated that advantages may exist, but was not specific.
T1	Ability to provide greater school choice and a more customized educational experience.
T2	The students would remain in the district and be able to be included in extracurricular and transportation more easily.

Interview Question 17

What logistical disadvantages are realized by your school district through the ownership of charter schools?

Responses to this question varied with each responding school district with some school districts not providing relevant information in their response. Each response is included in Table 23.

Table 23
Logistical Disadvantages of Charter School Ownership or Management

School District	Logistical Disadvantage
C1	No real logistical disadvantages to the district.
C2	No disadvantages shared by the interviewee.
C3	Moving students to charter schools causes class size difficulties in the traditional public schools. Traditional public schools end up with smaller classes but the same logistical needs for fewer students.
C4	The application process could be confusing.
F1	Moving students into the charter schools creates a logistical hardship as the school must maintain the same level of services for fewer students.
F2	The addition of charter schools presents individual school issues to a large school district.
F3	No disadvantages are being realized by the school district.
F4	The application process would be difficult to manage as the school district would technically be responsible for approving their own application.
L1	The application process would be difficult to navigate using the state templates.
T1	Currently not able to provide transportation to in-district charters which creates difficulty in increasing student enrollment.
T2	Having only two in-district charter schools creates difficulties with efficiency as district services do not scale down to the charter school effectively.

Research Questions

Using the qualitative data obtained through the completion of the policy review and series of structured interviews with participating school districts, each of the four research questions were addressed. Data for each interview question is presented in list form and the results are discussed in Chapter 5.

Research Question #1

What are the financial advantages to be realized by public school districts owning and operating charter schools within their existing district boundaries?

1. The addition of charter schools to a school district's portfolio would allow a school district to enroll a larger number of students in district-sponsored schools. The increase in student enrollment would result in additional per-pupil funding allocations and a larger overall budget with which the district may operate.
2. School districts would have the ability to differentiate compensation levels and financial incentives for teachers working in specialized charter schools through agreements with collective bargaining units. This benefit could also be realized through the prevention of collective bargaining for charter school employees.
3. With some charter schools operated as for-profit entities, the funding that would typically be generated as profit can be reinvested into each charter school to offer improved services or reinvested into the school district as a whole to benefit all schools.
4. School districts can operate charter schools at a lower cost due to existing structures for services provided to individual schools including transportation,

human resources, food service, and insurance. Charter schools would be incorporated into the existing structures for these school districts, resulting in savings and a lower cost of operation.

5. Charter schools are subject to fewer facility restrictions and, as such, experience a lower cost of facility construction or remodeling. School district C3 estimated the financial savings as approximately \$250,000 per school. Savings of this volume can be redirected to instructional programs.
6. The addition of charter schools to a school district's school portfolio would allow the school district to gain access to revenue sources typically available to only charter schools and their management organizations. These sources include charter school specific grants and state sponsored loans for charter school facilities.

Research Question #2

What are the financial disadvantages to be realized by public school districts owning and operating charter schools within their existing district boundaries?

1. Due to state guidelines and regulations, charter schools would maintain fiscal autonomy over many aspects of their individual budgets.
2. School districts in Louisiana and Texas would not receive capital outlay funding for any district-owned charter schools. Additionally, school districts in Florida would not receive capital outlay funding for district-owned charter schools for the first three years the schools were in operation.
3. The operation of a school has specific fixed costs that do not fluctuate based upon the number of students enrolled, including custodial needs and building costs.

With charter schools serving, on average, smaller student populations, the fixed costs would be realized at a higher per-pupil basis.

4. School districts which own charter schools tend to own a small number relative to the number of traditional public schools. A small number of charter schools would reduce or eliminate many of the financial advantages for the school district.

Research Question #3

What are the logistical advantages to be realized by public school districts owning and operating charter schools within their existing district boundaries?

1. School districts in Texas and Louisiana would experience greater flexibility in the hiring of teachers as charter schools within these states do not require state teacher certification.
2. School districts in Florida, Louisiana, and Texas would be able to admit students to charter schools from anywhere within the district as opposed to traditional public schools which typically have specified enrollment areas.
3. Charter schools are subject to fewer facility restrictions, allowing districts to have specialized buildings for specific school programs while not being required to conform to the requirements set forth for traditional public schools.
4. The addition of charter schools to a school district's portfolio of schools would allow the school district to offer greater program choices to students.
5. Charter schools can be used to create additional student seats to counter district-wide student overcrowding. One charter school can be used to absorb students from multiple schools of the same level within the district. School district F4 stated this as a benefit currently being realized.

Research Question #4

What are the logistical disadvantages to be realized by public school districts owning and operating charter schools within their existing district boundaries?

1. In the state of California, charter school enrollment would be open to any student within the state. A school district would not be able to restrict enrollment in a dependent charter school to students within their district.
2. As charter schools are open enrollment for a specific geographic area, the school district would not be able to control the impact of charter school enrollment on class size and student enrollment at district traditional public schools.
3. As school districts are eligible charter school authorizers in each of the states included in this study, the application process could become difficult to manage and may present a conflict of interest.

Summary

Qualitative data from a policy review and a series of structured interviews was presented in this chapter. The qualitative data represented specific financial and logistical aspects of charter school operation and charter school ownership by traditional public school districts. For research questions #1, #2, #3, and #4, a list of advantages and disadvantages related to charter school ownership by traditional public school districts was presented in the areas of finance and logistics. A study summary, recommendations for further research, and discussion will be presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Introduction

In the preceding chapter, qualitative data was presented and analyzed in relation to the research questions. This chapter includes a summary of the study and a discussion of the findings in relation to the prior research presented in Chapter 2. Additionally, this chapter includes implications for practice and recommendations for further research.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the financial and logistical advantages and disadvantages associated with charter school ownership by traditional public school districts. The study examined traditional public school districts in California, Florida, and Texas as these states had the largest numbers of charter schools in operation within the United States at the time of the study (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2015). The study examined traditional public school districts in Louisiana as the state had the first traditional public school district comprised entirely of charter schools in the United States (Layton, 2014). For each of the four states included in the study, a policy review was conducted which examined state statutes and administrative rules relevant to charter schools. Additionally, interviews were conducted with the chief financial officer, or their designee, from traditional public school districts within each of the four states using a series of structured interview questions (see Appendix A).

The interviews conducted for the study included 11 school districts from amongst the four selected states. Four participating school districts were from California, four

participating school districts were from Florida, one participating school district was from Louisiana, and two participating school districts were from Texas. School districts were selected for participation based upon ownership of charter schools within the traditional public school district or based upon the number of independent charter schools operating within the traditional public school district.

The study included four qualitative research questions:

1. What are the financial advantages to be realized by public school districts owning and operating charter schools within their existing district boundaries?
2. What are the financial disadvantages to be realized by public school districts owning and operating charter schools within their existing district boundaries.
3. What are the logistical advantages to be realized by public school districts owning and operating charter schools within their existing district boundaries?
4. What are the logistical disadvantages to be realized by public school districts owning and operating charter schools within their existing boundaries?

Each of the research questions were answered using qualitative data from both the policy review of statutes and administrative rules relevant to charter school and the structured interviews conducted with participating school districts. Qualitative data from each of the data sources was analyzed using the constant comparison method (Dye et al, 2000; Elliot & Lazenbatt, 2005). The data analysis was used to develop a listing of financial and logistical advantages and disadvantages associated with charter school ownership by traditional public school districts.

Discussion of the Findings

For each of the research questions included in this study, qualitative data was used to create a list of advantages or disadvantages relevant to the research question. The qualitative data was obtained through a policy review of relevant statutes and administrative rules and a series of structured interviews with school districts in each of the included states. The analysis showed that there were multiple advantages and disadvantages associated with charter school ownership by traditional public school districts in the areas of logistics and finance, but the advantages outnumbered the disadvantages in both areas.

The inclusion of charter schools into a school district's portfolio of school offerings allows the owning school district to experience a number of key financial advantages. Vergari (2007) noted that school districts lose the per-pupil funding associated with students who choose to enroll in a charter school as opposed to a traditional public school. Additionally, Arsen & Ni (2012) found that the loss of this per-pupil funding creates a higher level of financial stress within the school district due to lower overall funding. The ownership of charter schools allows the district to counteract both of these issues as the district retains the per-pupil funding for the students in district-owned charter schools and the overall budget for the district is not reduced due to student enrollment in district-owned charters.

Speakman & Hassel (2005) found that most charter schools were underfunded when compared to traditional public schools. This lack of funding is, in part, due to the lack of capital outlay funding available to charter schools in many states (Brown, 2006). School districts owning charter schools are able to overcome these issues as district-

owned charter schools can be operated within existing district buildings. Additionally, the district has the ability to provide funding sources to district-owned charter schools that are not typically available to charter schools independently owned. This relationship also allows traditional public school districts to access revenue sources that are typically available to only charter schools.

The ownership of charter schools by traditional public school districts offers the district increased flexibility in bargaining and contract structures for teachers working within the district. Prince (2011) found that charter school contracts typically have greater flexibility and opportunities for performance incentives when compared to the contracts for the traditional public school districts in which they operate. In each of the four states included in this study, collective bargaining is either optional or not permitted for charter schools. This exemption from collective bargaining would allow the district to employ greater flexibility for hiring and compensating teachers working at district-owned charter schools while providing many of the improved benefits traditional public school teachers enjoy. Charter school teachers could receive bonuses and performance incentives that are not included in the school district bargaining agreement while being able to participate in the group insurance coverages employed by the district at the rates obtained by the school district. Stuit & Smith (2012) found that charter school teachers, on average, were younger and had fewer years of experience when compared to teachers in traditional public school districts. School districts which own charter schools would have the opportunity to create mentoring programs with more experienced teachers working in traditional public schools and create incentive programs for their more

experienced teachers to transfer to district-owned charter schools without sacrificing contract status.

Kahlenburg & Potter (2014) stated that charter schools had the opportunity to be models for traditional public school districts for the use of innovative instructional strategies and professional development. Finkel (2011) found that this relationship does not frequently take place due to the perception that charter schools and traditional public schools are adversaries. The ownership of charter schools by traditional public school districts would make this adversarial perception more manageable to overcome as the relationship between the two would be created by the school district. Phillips (2011) found that charter schools would be able to develop new instructional methods prior to the strategies being delivered to the traditional public school districts in which the charter schools are authorized and owned.

The ownership of charter schools would expand the offerings a traditional public school district is able to provide to the students within the district. The expanding offering would move districts closer to the portfolio management model described by Lake & Hernandez (2011). While Davis (2013) notes that there is currently little structure in place to support a partnership between charter schools and traditional public school districts, forging a partnership through the ownership of charter schools would be beneficial to the overall success of all schools involved (Bleyaert, 2010).

Implications for Practice

Although this study indicated that there are both advantages and disadvantages associated with charter school ownership by traditional public school districts, the

findings can be used to help school districts maximize the advantages while minimizing the disadvantages. The following recommendations are presented based upon the findings of this study:

1. Traditional public school districts should expand their portfolios of school offerings to include district owned or managed charter schools. Previous research has shown that a larger number of students attend charter or private schools each year resulting in a loss of overall funding for school districts. The ownership of charter schools would allow the traditional public school districts to offer a greater variety of school choice while not sacrificing the per-pupil funding associated with the students choosing to attend charter schools. Additionally, this practice would allow traditional public school districts to access funding sources only available to charter schools.
2. When opening schools with specialized curricula, traditional public school districts should operate these schools as charter schools. Schools with specialized curricula, including fine arts, vocational, or technical education, often require specialized facilities to facilitate instruction in these areas. When school districts build these specialized facilities, the cost is often far greater than that of building a school with a traditional curriculum. If operated as a charter school, the school district would be required to meet a lower standard of facility and building requirements and could realize significant savings when converting an existing building to a school setting. This would allow a school specializing in automotive repair to acquire a building that was once a

mechanic or auto-body shop with little requirement for renovations.

Additionally, in states with a lower standard of teacher certification for charter school teachers, the school district could staff the charter schools with specialized curriculum using industry experts who may possess technical certifications rather than traditional teacher certifications.

3. School districts which currently own or manage a small number of charter schools should expand the practice to a larger, more diverse portfolio of charter schools within the district. While a traditional public school district can operate a charter school at a lower cost due to the efficiency of the district when compared to individual charter schools, the presence of specific fixed-costs associated with charter schools minimized the benefits realized by the traditional public school district. Increasing the number of charter schools operated by traditional public school districts allows the charter school specific costs to be spread out over a greater number of schools. This would result in a greater operating efficiency in both overall operation and charter school operation for the district.
4. For states in which school districts are the main source of charter school authorizations, including Florida, school districts should consider organizing the school board as a separate corporation in order to pursue the ownership or management of charter schools. This practice is common in the financing and construction of school buildings and facilities and could be used to avoid a

school district considering an application for a charter school put forth by the school district.

Recommendations for Further Research

1. For future research, this study could be expanded beyond the selected four states to include a larger region of the United States or all states in which charter schools are presently authorized. With such variation in charter school law and practice, a greater sample of states could provide a more comprehensive list of advantages and disadvantages for traditional public school districts exploring the option of charter school ownership.
2. For future research, this study could be expanded to include examining impacts of student achievement in charter schools owned or managed by traditional public school districts. While finance and logistics do have an impact on instruction, student achievement outcomes are generally used to measure the success of both traditional public schools and charter schools alike.
3. For future research, this study could be expanded to examine relationships between traditional public schools, charter schools, and other non-traditional schools beyond ownership. These relationships could include management agreements, service contracts, and community programs.

APPENDIX A: LIST OF STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Structured Interview Questions

1. How many charter schools does your traditional public school district own?
2. Are budgets handled differently between your charter schools and traditional public schools? If so, how?
3. Do you allow charter school staff to collectively bargain?
4. Do charter school and traditional public school teachers participate in the same professional development opportunities?
5. Do charter school and traditional public school teachers participate in the same retirement programs?
6. Do you receive additional capital outlay (i.e. PECO) funding for charter schools?
7. What restrictions exist for charter schools facilities?
8. Can charter school facilities be shared with traditional public schools?
9. What funding restrictions exist for charter schools?
10. Can funding for charter schools be combined with funding for traditional public schools?
11. How is transportation provided for charter school students within your district?
12. Are teachers able to transfer between charter schools and traditional public schools?
13. If teachers do transfer between schools, what are the contractual impacts?
14. What financial advantages are realized by your school district through the ownership of charter schools?

15. What financial disadvantages are realized by your school district through the ownership of charter schools?
16. What logistical advantages are realized by your school district through the ownership of charter schools?
17. What logistical disadvantages are realized by your school district through the ownership of charter schools?

APPENDIX B: EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH



EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH

Title of Project: THE FINANCIAL AND LOGISTICAL ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF CHARTER SCHOOL OWNERSHIP BY TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Principal Investigator: John Antmann

Faculty Supervisor: Kenneth Murray, Faculty Advisor

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Whether you take part is up to you.

- The purpose of this research is to determine the financial and logistical advantages and disadvantages of charter school ownership by traditional public school districts. The researcher will interview chief financial officers from school districts currently owning and operating charter schools within their boundaries using a set of structured interview questions. The results of the interview will be combined with a qualitative analysis of state and local laws to develop a comprehensive list of advantages and disadvantages.
- You will be asked a series of established structured interview questions at their work locations in either a face-to-face setting or over the phone as schedule and travel allow.
- The duration of the interview will be approximately one hour.
- With your consent, the interview will be audio recorded. Should you prefer to not be audio recorded, the interviewer will take written notes to record your responses.
- Names and personal identifiers will not be used or included in this study.
- All recordings will be destroyed at the completion of the study.
- You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this study.

Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem: If you have questions, concerns, or complaints John Antmann, Graduate Student, Educational Leadership Program College of Education and Human Performance, (352) 408-8609 or Dr. Kenneth Murray, Faculty Supervisor, Department of Educational Leadership at (407) 823-1468 or by email at kenneth.murray@ucf.edu.

IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint: Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901.

APPENDIX C: UCF IRB APPROVAL



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1
FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To: **John Antmann**

Date: **June 26, 2015**

Dear Researcher:

On 06/26/2015, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination
Project Title: THE FINANCIAL AND LOGISTICAL ADVANTAGES AND
DISADVANTAGES OF CHARTER SCHOOL OWNERSHIP
BY TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS
Investigator: John Antmann
IRB Number: SBE-15-11389
Funding Agency:
Grant Title:
Research ID: N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the [Investigator Manual](#).

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 06/26/2015 12:16:15 PM EDT

IRB manager

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW NOTES AND TRANSCRIPTS

School District C1 – Transcript of Responses

1. No, um, and you know, I have the questions that you sent me on your, it says how many charter schools does your traditional public school district town. Um, I'm a little confused on the terminology. We don't own any charter schools. Our district does authorize 13 charter schools. Currently there are 3 authorized by the state board of education.
2. We are only involved with,, uh reviewing their annual budget. We don't really approve them we just review them and make sure that, you know, the quality criteria.
3. Uh, two of the thirteen collectively bargain. Um, one creates its own contract and the other uses our contract.
4. Uh, the opportunity is there, but it doesn't happen very often.
5. That is an option that the charter schools have. Um, some of ours do and some choose to do their own plan. It's up to each school.
6. So, there are a number of specific charter school facility programs in California that they participate in, and there's also a constitutional provision that was enacted in 2000 that requires districts to provide, districts to provide facilities to charter schools if they meet certain criteria and we have, we're able to charge them, um, a statutorily prescribed rent that is very low.
7. Um, part of the programs that are provided by the state that we have to adhere to, they are supposed to have roughly the same reasonably equivalent facilities that the regular schools provide to the students.
8. Yes. So under the program I was telling you where we have to provide them with space, um, actually only, we provide space to the charter schools that we authorize and to charter schools authorized by the state that operate within our district, Uh, so we currently have 9 charter schools in district facilities, but only one of those charter schools shares a space with one of our schools. So they have, they are separated within the building, and then they share common areas, cafeteria, gym, things like that.
9. So, the state, um, as, as of, 2014, instituted a new, um, funding formula for local districts and charter schools are included in that. So there's no hard cap or I guess I should say hard floor for what they have to spend on direct instruction, um, but we have what's called a local control funding formula that applies to regular school districts and to charter schools, and basically you have to go through an annual process of allocating funds, and in that process, ya know, you need to show that you are spending your instructional dollars on instruction and, in specifically, for what's called the unduplicated count of students. The ones that are in poverty, foster youth, ya know, things like that. So there's no, ya know, requirement for funding, but a process that gets ya there.
10. No, not really. But, the administrative fee, in California its 1 percent. That would be it.
11. We do not provide transportation to any of the charter schools. It's up to each one how they handle it.

12. No. Teachers would have to quit their current job and apply with the new school.
13. (This question is not applicable.)
14. Um, well I have trouble with the term, but lets say if we had, if we actually operated a what's called a dependent charter school, which means it's a charter school that is governed by the district, not governed by an independent, um, 501c3, um, sure, I could see where we could have some savings based on the fact that we have, um, less education codes with which to comply.
15. None that I can see.
16. I'm sure there would be advantages.
17. None really.

School District C2 – Transcript of Responses

1. 13 authorized charter schools. 12 are open and active, we have another that, um, this past year was their planning and they will open this year. So right now 12 are actually opening and one is in the process of opening. We actually have two that work with the district.
2. All of our, um, charter schools are funded directly, with the exception of the property tax, which is then sent to the district and then distributed from the district. Um, they are fully autonomous. There is one other further exception, um, for 11 of the charter schools we retain all the special ed funding as they are a part of our SELPA, and so we retain all of their, uh, special ed funding. The other two charter schools belong to a different SELPA, so that, their funding, their special ed funding is through that SELPA.
3. One. They have their own bargaining agreement, yes. The other twelve, all of their employees are at-will employees.
4. They are uh, it's its a mix. We, um, invite, for purposes of staff development, if the charter schools are, um, interested, we provide, um, staff training. We've don't this with the common core training, they're invited, if we ever have any opening for, um, staff developments, the charter schools are more than welcome to come. And we've also actually even gone to the charter schools to provide training as necessary or requested, um, but for the most part, they're on their own.
5. That, for the teachers, all of the charters are members of the state teacher's requirement system. So that would be a yes.
6. Ours is, uh, different, they, if they, for example if they go and lease a building, and this is only those who have what we call, um, site-based programs where they kids come and attend a whole day at school, the independent study are not, this is not open to the independent study programs, but if they have, see, they can receive, they can receive additional funding for the, um, student, it's 750\$ per student, and/or 75% of the lease cost, depending on which one is the least from a special senate bill and that helps offset the cost of the lease program. Or the charter schools can do what's called, um, a prop 39 request, which enables them to request from the district district, um, sites or space at district sites to house the number of district students enrolled at that charter school.
7. Um, no. In fact, uh, charter schools out, as long as you're not a prop 39 request, charter schools do not have to, uh, meet field act requirements. Which means we have to go through state DSA to have all our buildings, to make sure they meet earthquake codes and the ADA codes and everything else. Charter schools only have to meet the city occupancy requirements, which is lower.
8. At this, at, actually yes. I will correct myself. We have a pre-school that shares a, um, site with a charter school that receives a, um, charter school as part of a prop 39 request.
9. The only thing that a charter school provides back to the district is a 1% oversight fee. To the district, that's it, and that's the most we can charge by law.
10. Not really. Not in any way beyond that 1% fee.

11. None of the charter schools, uh, the charter schools provide their own transportation. There are a couple that have agreements with the uh local public bus service to get bus passes but, as far as the district, we do not support them with transportation.
12. It would be, they would be hired.
13. (This question is not applicable.)
14. Uh, yes. Um, if you have a dependent charter school and, let's say you want to occupy a particular building, if it's a dependent charter, then you do not have to submit that building for field act requirements. That would be saving several hundred thousand dollars because if, lets just say, I wanna open up a, I wanna start an automotive program and I, for heavy diesel mechanics, and I find a building in an empty mall that's got 18 bays and its got everything perfect for this school, well, before I can open up that school, if I open it as a regular school within the district, I'm gonna have to go to the DSA, have the site approved, put in all the renovations to bring it up to the current ADA and safety requirements. Whereas, if I do a dependent charter, we can just go to the city and the city can say it meets the local ADA and safety requirements, saving hundreds of thousands of dollars. Um, the other financial advantage of having a dependent charter is you can, um, enter into an MOU with the local union that can change transfer rights, change the work day, um, provide incentives, that, that you, you would not normally have to provide. Whereas under collective bargaining, generally the bargaining rights is for every single unit member.
15. I would say if you were looking at, once again, the same scenario of the dependent charter, the disadvantage, of course, could be, no, actually I don't see a financial disadvantage. There might be, there might be a higher liability chance, in case something, if something does go wrong in the building and they link it to the building. But that's with anyone. You're always facing that liability. So I would say none.
16. For a dependent charter, um, I think it could be a great way to pro, to develop and implement innovative programs and afford them directly to the students in a much faster methodology because, because of the fact that the dependent charter, outside of the requirements of the charter school act, don't have to follow any education code whatsoever. So that gives you a lot of leeway.
17. None, really, no.

School District C3 – Detailed Notes

1. The district has 5 dependent charters that encompass 6 total dependent charter schools. There are also 9 independent charter schools.
2. The dependent charter schools go through the same budget process as the district schools. The charter schools have significantly more flexibility in respect to finance when compared to the traditional public schools.
3. All of the dependent charter schools are under the same bargaining agreement as the traditional public schools.
4. All district charter schools are offered the same professional development opportunities as the teachers in traditional public schools.
5. All district charter schools participate in the same state retirement program as traditional public schools.
6. Interviewee did not know the answer to the question.
7. Cannot think of any restrictions that are different for the charters when compared to the traditional public schools. Charter schools have the use of district facilities.
8. No schools currently share facilities, but it is possible to be done.
9. The funding is kept separate in terms of accounts and registers. The money and information is all provided by the district, so it is combined in that sense. Charter schools have a tremendous amount of flexibility and the funds carry over annually, which is different than traditional public schools.
10. Yes, if you consider that they contract out a large amount of their services to the district. This money comes back to the district and is placed into the district budget.
11. None of the charter schools within the district provide transportation.
12. Teachers can transfer from the dependent charter schools because they are under the same collective bargaining agreement. There is no difference between teachers in dependent charters and traditional public schools in the view of human resources. Independent charter school teachers must resign and reapply with the respective school.
13. For dependent charter schools, no implications. For independent charter schools, teachers must resign their contract to transfer.
14. Charter schools have access to some more grants that the traditional public schools may not have access to.
15. The drawback to the district is that the district doesn't have full say-so in their finances. They are still charter schools, so they still have a fair amount of fiscal autonomy.
16. There is more financial autonomy and the ability to still receive the services provided by the district that can be costly for independent charters. They services include transportation, food service, and human resources.

17. Maximizing the effective the use of class size is hindered by the use of the dependent charters. Moving a small amount of students from a traditional public school has a significant financial impact due to the shift of the per-pupil funding. We lose the full class size but are still incurring the same costs.

School District C4 – Transcript of Responses

1. We would rephrase that to say authorized, so the school district currently authorizes 51 charter schools that are in operation.
2. Yes, um, so as we, we call ourselves the charter granting authority, or the authorizer. And so, what that means is, our 51 charter schools, in California, they can be locally funded or directly funded. Locally funded is more typical of a dependent charter. All of our 51 charter schools are directly funded. That means the funds flow directly from the state to the charter school. There are technical pass-throughs through the county and district, uh but they are funds that essentially, as long as the school is in good standing, automatically go to the charter school, are calculated based on charter school numbers, and there is not an approval from the district that, you know, certain funds are released in a different way, um, so, which is very different than a traditional district operated public school, of course, where the funds go to the district and the budget, um, governs how those funds are run. Our charter schools are required to prepare 51 budgets, 51 audits, 51, uh, first interims, and so they should use those funds, of course, in alignment with those documents, which are publicly approved by those non-profit corporation governing boards. So, that's the main distinction. Um, In California, recently, we've switched to what we call a local control. So the way funds are largely calculated are similar between charter school and district schools now, and that's a recent change.
3. Under California law, um, charter schools are required under the application process to say if they will be exclusive, exclusive employers under the EERA, and all of our charters are exclusive employers of their staff. Um, we do have, some of our charter schools have elected to collectively bargain under that statute, which means some of the charters do have unions, um, not necessarily the same as the district, although some are, and they do have collective bargaining agreements. We are aware of them, we monitor them, but we don't participate in the bargaining, because they are charter operated and independent employers.
4. Largely no. Um, they are independent employers, so, essentially, the easiest analogy is that they are school districts. They are what we call LEA's, which is a federal term, local educational agency. So even though they may be one school, or three charter schools operated by the same corporation, they are independent LEA's for, uh, special education, employee. So for professional development, to be participating collectively, they might do so shoulder to shoulder at our county office, but they would be participating and paying fees based on their independent organization.
5. Yes. In California, we have CalSTRS for our teachers, nurses, counselors, and psychologists. We have CalPRS for everybody else, which we call classified. Um, the majority of our charter schools do participate in CalSTRS for the teacher

pension, just a few do not. And those tend to be charter schools that might have a national presence, and so they might have a nationally structured retirement program. Um, and with CalPRS, which is our non-teaching California pension program, charter schools do participate, but at a substantially lower participation rate. Um, it's not required. It's required for charter schools to describe how they will offer retirement programs, so most do STRS and some do PRS, is our shorthand form.

6. Ok, so charter schools are eligible for a series of funding mechanisms, including revolving loans and grants that relate to facilities that are not available to district schools. Uh, one of the most significant ones is what is commonly referred to as SB 740, senate bill 740, and that allows charter schools that are on non-district sites who are paying rent, in the ,to the rental market to receive rental reimbursement on a sliding scale that reflects how many, um, low-income students they serve. So the higher the low-income students, potentially, the larger your rental reimbursement might be. That's not a grant that is available to district schools, in part, because district schools operate on district funds. And then there are a lot of other types of significant grants that are only available to charter schools. Probably the most, um, the most significant is what we call the public charter school grant program, the acronym is PCSGP. It's a, it's federal money, but it's administered and applied for by the department of education, and it allows charter schools to apply for start-up funds. Um, I believe upwards of half a million dollars, um, higher for serving more low-income students. Um, and the other one is replication. So, an existing charter school seeking to essentially start up again, replicate itself, can also apply for those federal funds administered through the state and those funds are not available for a district school.
7. It's actually the reverse. The restrictions for district schools are, uh, are more stringent in terms of field act and some other earthquake related facilities requirements for district schools. Um, a charter school that elects to be, uh, on a private site, ya know, just a campus that's not publicly owned, um, is not subject to those more stringent requirements. They are still subject to minimum local building safety codes. Their, ya know, they can't just set up in a tent, but it is, um, on its face, less restrictive than district schools.
8. Yes, uh, we have something that we call proposition 39, or prop 39. Um, it refers to California Education Code 47614 and a series of regulations. This is a method, under statute, where charter schools can annually apply with their district where they are located. Which may be the authorizing district or may be just a geographical relationship. Um, charter schools can ask the district to, essentially, provide district classrooms, buildings, etc., um, and that can be on a complete campus or shared. So we do have charter schools that are what we call co-located. So you would drive up to a campus, it would look like a single school

ampus but half of it would be charter school operated and half of it would be traditional district school operated.

9. We do have, we have what we call classroom-based charter schools and non-classroom based charter schools and those are largely referred to independent study charter schools. Um, they are sometimes confused with, um, virtual charter schools and, so they don't all fit together. Some virtual charter schools are independent and some independent charter schools are not. With respect to independent charter schools, non-classroom based, there are funding restrictions that they must, um, spend a certain percentage on instruction. Um, whether that means curriculum and so forth they can't just spend the majority of their funds even, just because they are not classroom based. But I wouldn't really call that a restriction, it's more along the lines that a non-classroom based charter school has to demonstrate that it's using the majority of its funds to educate the pupil and not for, you know, non-instructional purposes. Other than that, charter schools and district schools, currently under the state, um, they are essentially funded at the base for the same, um, ratio based on grade level and a student's, uh, low-income stats, free-reduced uh lunch eligibility, as well as if they're foster youth, and they're English learner. And those are, those amounts are state set and they apply in the same manner as district and charter schools.
10. Well, um, ya know in a charter school structure, but here we would not be combining funds. Any comingling would be troublesome as they are LEA's so our independent auditors would need to see if there is a, um, fee collected, but those funds are not combined.
11. Uh, we have a mix. So some of our charter schools actually own their own buses, or, um, they provide for their own buses, or they work with local programs to provide bus passes. Um, and then if there is a special education student with a need for specialized transportation, the charter school is responsible for providing that. And that can either be through contract with, uh, a transportation agency, or some of the charter schools can get together to share that service through what we call a SELPA, a special education local plan area, so they are members of the SELPA's and the SELPA's can sort of jointly provide for transportation. Um, and then some of charter schools, like our district schools, do not provide general education transportation.
12. Yes, to the extent that they are you know, newly hired, newly interviewed. That's certainly something that, you know, is not either encouraged or discouraged it's just a reality of the employment market. So we do see that, but it's not something that is seamless. You're changing organizations so you would need to withdraw, or resign and leave one and join the other one.
13. (This question is not applicable.)
14. Um, yeah, so we authorize them, and in terms of financial advantages I would say that's not the spirit or structure of the charter school's act. As an authorizer you

have an obligation to authorize a charter school unless that application is deficient.

15. Before we could get to financial analysis, we'd have to consider the legal and, um, academic operational concern. Charter schools have a legal requirement to be autonomous from the public schools. Financial advantage would not be, um, ya know, a reason for establishing a charter school.
16. Um, we do have charter schools that have, um, partnerships with the district. So we call them a memorandum of understanding. So one of the legislative intents of the charter schools act is that if there is an innovative best practice that is shared, charter schools can be a great resource for the district that authorizes them. One of our charter schools petitioned for federal grant money to share the things that they do well.
17. I think, nationwide, there is often a discussion about what who is the most appropriate authorizer. School districts, of course, are approving a charter school in its backyard, there can be challenges. Some states, I understand, have them approved by, um, university, or higher-ed, non k-12, and I think, logistically, the challenge is that's not really your area of expertise per se. It can be awkward for state authorizations. In our district, we have a very positive, collaborative and professional relationship with our charter schools. We enforce the accountability and will deny or close are charter school if necessary.

School District F1 – Detailed Notes

1. Currently 102 charter schools in the district. 4 managed by the school district.
2. Budgets are handled by each individual charter school in a unique manner.
3. Only four schools within the district unionize and all four are under the same management agreement with the district.
4. Yes. The school district is required to provide the same opportunities for the charter school teachers. Many charter schools choose to not participate.
5. Each charter school has a choice as to whether they participate in the state plan or not. Many schools within the district do, but some do not.
6. The state allocates a specific amount of money for charter school capital outlay and the charter schools most complete an application online with the state department of education. The state determines if the charter school is eligible for the capital outlay funding.
7. There are no restrictions placed on the school facilities by the district. Each charter school rents space from different providers. We inspect the site to make sure they meet the minimum standards required by the state.
8. Currently, there is no sharing of facilities. There is plan to have a shared facility at a school that is going to be closed. The shared site would be an ESE center that would become a conversion charter school.
9. The district does not place any restrictions on the charter schools. The only restrictions are those set forth in the relevant state statutes.
10. All of the funding for all schools is combined at the district level and then dispersed to each school, including charter schools. For federal programs, all of the money also comes through the district prior to being sent to schools.
11. Each charter school is responsible for determining transportation services. One charter school in the district receives additional state funding due to the roads and sidewalks in the area being declared hazardous. The charter schools are responsible for all transportation costs.
12. No transfers are permitted between charter schools and traditional public schools. Teachers would need to resign their position and apply with the new school.
13. This question is not applicable.
14. There are currently over 40,000 students in the charter schools. Owning charter schools allows the district to take some of them back rather than remaining in direct competition. Additionally, the district is able to provide a higher-quality education.
15. The disadvantage would be having to own a charter school. Financially, they are difficult.
16. There is a fixed cost to operate a school, regardless of the number of students enrolled. When you only have 100 students in a school, the per-student cost of operation is higher. The charter schools would have to reach specific enrollment numbers in order to break even. The advantage would really be for the charter schools. It would be difficult for the district.

17. With the current state of charter schools, adding more charter schools to the district offerings would lessen the quality of the district educational product.

School District F2 – Transcript of Responses

1. We don't own, were not authorized to operate any charter schools, we manage one.
2. I'm not sure what you're asking. All of our charter schools including our managed school, use the same template, which is the state template that is required, even the managed school. Now we actually, um, we do the budget for the managed school, but the managed charter also has an independent CPA which checks us. So there's checks and balances so that there is an arm's length distance between the school board and the charter school's board and there is somebody that is checking behind us. And he really does check behind us.
3. Yes, because they are school district employees. The charter school, that's part of the management agreement, that we provide them that. We have no other charter schools that actually bargain. Two of our charter schools are operated by management companies so they are not FRS employees, they're not Florida Retirement system employees, and the others don't bargain.
4. All of our charter schools are invited in our professional development. Not just the managed charter school.
5. Yes, all of the other charter schools not operated by management organizations participate in the state retirement system.
6. No, they get what the state gives them.
7. They, they're all in different situations. The two management company run ones are, they work with their management companies. I think the one company is a subsidiary of the company that they lease from. I think another national company is the same way. Their boards secure their facilities, as our math and science specialized charter. And actually, our managed charter owns the portables that are on one of our campuses. The managed charter school board owns the portables that they are using.
8. They share the grounds, nobody else does. They also, they actually, they share the facility. They share the common areas. They have one brick and mortar classroom space and some office spaces. They are in the building as well, they use the cafeteria and the media center.
9. No. We don't, there aren't, the charter schools determine what the budgets are. In terms of, we don't restrict them in relation to budgets. We monitor them, but we don't restrict them. If they have budgetary problems, we would treat our managed charter school just like anybody else. I would hate to let the department of education know they had a financial crisis with us managing them, but we would do that.
10. No. no combining go funds. I think that the elementary school is located there and the charter school probably participate in fundraising activities together and probably split the funds when they fundraise together, but the funds would go into

separate internal accounts. So, the managed charter school, each school has their own separate internal accounts.

11. The only thing we do, I'm going to talk about the managed charter school separately, the only we do for our charter schools relative to transportation is we contract with them to perform their, um, their safety checks and their services. We repair buses for them and we provide substitute bus drivers as per contract. One of our charter schools doesn't provide transportation at all, , they are with a national company, they provide no transportation. The managed charter school, we use the FTE generated by those students, they ride our buses, they ride the same buses as the elementary school does. As per the management agreement, but they pay for it.
12. Yes. Because they are school district employees.
13. The same as other school district employees.
14. None, whatsoever. In fact, what I, no.
15. I don't there is an advantage or disadvantage. What I see, what I have found in doing this is I've learned a lot more about um, probably the inefficiencies that there are out there in having little itty bitty schools that are here and there. I think that while there are a lot of research to show that charter schools are more efficient. I don't believe it, they can't be, they can't be. That's what I've found in our managing this school. If they, if we, If they were part of our insurance, which they're not, liability insurance, and the, we could insure them at a cheaper rate if they were, but we can't. They can't be, so they have to buy their own insurance. The same goes for board expenses, which other schools don't have. So that's shared across the board for anything we would have for our school board, and they don't cost as much. Except for their salaries. There are a lot of efficiency, inefficiencies, in having charter schools that are onsies, if you know what I mean. They have to go out and pay for their own things. We're wasting a lot of public money, the way I feel. I didn't know enough to know that until we managed our own. Because I had to go out and get insurance for them. The things I had to do and I couldn't. It's not a district function, so I was able to find out things like that and I just think that it is a very inefficient systems.
16. None really. I can't really see the advantage. Like I said, it is hard when you have these individual schools and the district can do things so much easier.
17. I think it's across the board, you might have a big company, as long as they are willing to cover gaps in funding if they're willing not to make a profit, then maybe, if they have lots of charter schools, then they'll get insurance a lot cheaper and products a lot cheaper that they have to buy. But I don't know that I've seen that that's the case either, when I'm looking at the cost of facilities.

School District F3 – Detailed Notes

1. We have a division of district managed charter schools. That division provides management services to four schools.
2. The budgets for these schools are developed by independent governing boards. The budgets are managed by the individual schools, not the school district. They have different sources of revenue so each budget looks different.
3. They are not a part of the district contract as they are not officially employees of the district. The statute allows them to organize a union but none of them have done so.
4. Charter schools are invited to district professional development and also provide their own professional development opportunities.
5. None of the charter schools participate in the state retirement system in which traditional public school teachers participate. Each offer different retirement packages.
6. If they meet the state criteria for capital outlay, there is a standard allotment provided by the state.
7. Three charter schools lease facilities from the school district.
8. One charter school uses a portion of a traditional public school, but does not share the common areas. Charter schools also use unoccupied district buildings.
9. Charter schools are required to follow all state statutes and school board funding policies in the same manner as traditional public schools.
10. No, absolutely not.
11. Each charter school handles transportation differently. Some offer transportation and some do not, but none contract the district for the service.
12. Teachers would have to resign and apply with the new school. Transfers are not permitted.
13. (This question is not applicable.)
14. Beyond the management fee, there is not a large financial gain.
15. No disadvantages that the interviewee was aware of. The department deals mostly with compliance and did not foresee any disadvantages.
16. The interviewee did not have information available to answer this question.
17. The district experiences no logistical disadvantages associated with charter schools.

School District F4 – Transcript of Responses

1. I want to make a correction, the school district does not own any charter schools. The school district has contracts, because the contract is very, I don't know if you've had a chance to review the statute, its 1002.33. And it tells you about what is the relationship with the school district, contract, that's what they call charter schools. At this point the school district has 17 charter schools in operation. We have 10, we have 5 contracts with schools that they are on a planning year and we just approved 5 new schools and we are on a contract with them. Our school district is contracted to provide services to one school.
2. The charter schools have to submit during the application process, they have to submit um, a budget, a projected budget, and they have to provide there is, we have a monitoring checklist, and there are certain deadlines for documents that they have to submit throughout the year. Uh, and that will include but not limited to monthly financial statements that they have to submit to the school um district.
3. No, we don't. All of our charter schools are independent. We only have one that decided to be a public employee so they take advantage of the retirement.
4. Absolutely. They have an option. All our charter school employees, I mean the teachers, when they get fingerprinted they get an ID number, and they can go on our district website, and our professional development site, and they can sign up for professional development.
5. Yeah, when they start working on the contract, they have the option to decide if they want to be public employee or private. All of them are private but we have one school that decided to be a part of the, uh, retirement system.
6. No, they receive less, and a charter, a school that opens does not get, uh, capital outlay until at least the third year, the third year of operation. There was a lot of, uh, funding that they received years ago, but you can tell that, um, the charter law changes constantly, and right now there is more new legislative changes that might change the landscape of the charter language.
7. Well, charter schools have the option of building to SREF like our school, or they have the option of following the building, the state building code. That's why you see a lot of charter schools that build in the shopping center. But what we do is we do pre-opening, where we do visits, to make sure that they are compliant with the state regulations like, you know, doors, and say fires, and all that stuff. And you have to remember that class size, the law, is very clear. Charter schools, because they are a choice school, they don't have to meet class size classroom by classroom. They meet class size by school average, so they meet level 2.
8. No, we don't have any of that. All of the charter schools are in their own buildings. They don't share with our schools.

9. Again, there are no real restrictions I would say. They complete the budgets for monitoring throughout the year, um, yeah, but we don't restrict them. That's up to the state.
10. No, we can't really combine any of the money.
11. We have a number of charter schools that they have contracted with the district to provide transportation, but because our number of charter schools is increasing, we have other charter schools that they have contracted with a third party, which is also allowable.
12. Well, the charter school teachers are at will. Now, if a charter, if one of our school employees would like to go and work for a charter school, they can be granted a leave of absence just like anybody else. And then sometimes we have charter school teachers that they decide to come and work for the district.
13. (This question is not applicable.)
14. Let me share this with you, the statute is clear. We have to process every application that comes to us. And the only reason you can deny a charter application is if you have statutory due cause. So district, it's not a choice of let me let you open or not, we have to follow very specific guidelines. What we do, is we have a good relationship with charter schools.
15. I can't really think of any disadvantages. Again, we have to process every application that comes in so we don't really consider the finance being good or bad.
16. We have issues with overcrowding, so we try to establish a collaboratively uh kind of relationship. And we work with them and try for them to help us out and locate charter schools uh where we have overcrowded schools. And a lot of our charter schools help us with that.
17. It comes back to the application process. We have to process each one the same way. If one came in from the school district, I think that would be a difficult one. It would be from us.

School District L1 – Transcript of Responses

1. We have eight district-approved charter schools currently.
2. They are pretty much autonomous. Um, they do have the option of purchasing services back from the district, if they so choose. For instance, if you're a charter operation, operator, who does not want to deal with transportation, you may choose to buy bus services from us, or food services from us, or special education services from us, and but other than that, that's really, that's really the only the only budgetary piece that we would interact with them on. We do offer them though professional development and curriculum support for no cost, uh, because we do receive a school performance score for those schools. It's bubbled into our district performance score. So for any of our, let's say principal meetings or district level professional development for teachers, anything of that nature, they receive the blanket invite just as any other district staff would. And for you to know, when they do an application to us, and they go through the renewal process, they do, by the guidelines set up by the state of Louisiana, do have to provide a budget. So in their initial application, and then their reauthorization process, they do have to provide that information and it's part of like, it's part of a, uh, rubric. That they give with the application.
3. We do not have that in Louisiana.
4. I think we covered that earlier, but yes, they do. (Answer supplied in response #2)
5. By Louisiana law, it is up to them to opt in or out. Most of them don't, of the eight, I'm thinking about, don't cite the actual number, but of the eight, I think it's only one or two. Most of them don't. In Louisiana, a public school system has to, um, as a teacher, or employee of this school system in the state of Louisiana, I don't have a choice. I have to participate. But for a charter school the, the charter organization has the option of participating in or out. Most choose not to though.
6. Ok, so, it depends on the type of the charter. Because there, there are different types. The 8 that I was referring to that are district approved are some that they provide their own facilities. They either lease a pre-existing building or buy their own. And they really don't use district equipment as such. They, they could receive some titles for, um, exceptional student services, special education funding, directly from the federal government that will funnel through us and be allocated to them, because it's a per pupil allocation that is earmarked for those students. But other than that, they really don't receive that. However there is a different type of charter that, under Louisiana, that if there is a failing school, the state may take it over and turn it over to a charter provider. Under that type of charter school, that issue comes up with, with facilities, capital outlay.
7. Well, again it depends on the type of the charter. If you are a district-approved, and you submit an application, part of your application process is, again it's like a rubric scoring, is to tell us where you propose your site to be and the type of

facility you will offer. If you are a charter who has come in because the state department of education has taken over a failing school, which we have had some of those in the past, then you move into one of our pre-existing facilities and you just flip it under your management.

8. No. We do not have any that share, um, buildings or facilities in our district.
9. With all of our charters being, um, not the type that we would directly take care of, we don't really have any restrictions, I would say, that we place on them with funding. The state has certain requirements. There are templates and worksheets that they use for their budgets. They submit them and we are required to, um, monitor the budgets, but that's really it.
10. Except for those federal programs I mentioned earlier, no, not really. Um, we receive the money for certain things like special education, but we give that money directly to the charter schools for those things. We don't combine the funding with our schools.
11. That's an option. There are some who actually, do, do um, contract their own transportation services, and they hire their own drivers and their own bus company. There are some who actually do not offer transportation at all. Louisiana public schools have to offer transportation, however there is a stipulation that a charter school does not. There is actually one who is currently not offering transportation.
12. We kinda put them in the loop on some of those emails, and some of them may participate in some of our teacher networking opportunities, and so, in that regard, there would be some communication. But there is really no recip, reciprocation agreement. Uh, you would need to resign from the system to go and work for a charter.
13. (This question is not applicable.)
14. I guess one of the big advantages, um, would be more money coming into the school district. We would have more kids in the schools run by the district so we would receive more, um, funding for our operating costs.
15. Like I said, it would mean more money but would also be difficult due to the state guidelines.
16. I'm sure that there would be advantages, but, um, I'm not really sure how to answer.
17. Um, again, I think if we were approached with a situation like that, we would ask for an application like we do with anyone else and put that application through our rubric. What, and the statute is gonna give you some guidance on this, but there is an application that districts are mandated to use by the state department of education, that link is on our website, its up on the state department of education's website, and there is a timeline that were mandated to use. So I think that if we were approached about, that's an interesting concept, and I think we would be willing to listen, um, and anything's possible, but I think we were approached we

would follow that same process and vet it the same way that we would any other application or proposal.

School District T1 – Transcript of Responses

1. Um, yes, but I think that's what I was trying to clarify yesterday. When we say that, at least what we currently have um, traditional neighborhood public schools, neighborhood schools that on their own, sought an in-district charter designation. So they're still very much district schools and not, um, what we're now thinking now is allowing outside our independent charter organizations coming in and using them for schools. Like we just started having that conversation and are pursuing what that might look like. But we, up to this point and currently, they are district schools and they have an in-district charter designation. So they have the same flexibility and opportunities that, um, outside organizations have, but still within the umbrella of the district. So the number of schools we have, we have 17 schools that have an in-district charter designation.
2. At this time, no. We've had conversations about what that might look like but have never actually changed that. But we do have new district leadership so that could change in the future.
3. Um, okay so, just help me out a little bit. So in terms of collective bargaining, that's not something that we do in Texas period. But something that's unique about our school district is we do have um a relationship with our teacher organization and so they do, we have a consultation practice where they are included in, um, having the opportunity to provide feedback and input and that sort of thing on district-wide decisions. That's not specific to individual charters.
4. They are always encouraged to participate in everything that the district is requiring of campuses, but if there is not something that is specific to their charter, that would be whatever the district is offering. But typically they try to schedule it so that there is no conflicts, so that they can continue to stay in the loop and receive the same information the district is providing.
5. Texas requires the same. They have to. Anybody operating a charter has to contribute to the teacher retirement system that the state has.
6. So, how can I say this. Charter funding available never includes money for capital outlay. Any charters that are interested or need funding for that would have to raise those funds independently. And up to this point, um, our charters have not participated in any process like that. That make sense?
7. Well, so what I would say, in general no, um, what is like I said, our conversation here is starting to shift, we have been going through a process of school closures for a period of time, and so we have a lot of unused facilities that are supposed to go on the market, and with new leadership, we're now, that's part of the reason we are pursuing the idea of partnering with some outside charter organizations to see if they would come in and use the facilities, um, the only thing is all of those facilities that we closed didn't receive updates for many years. If we partner, then we are going to be in a position where we would have to bring those up to par.

8. For us, since they are on in the same, no. And then, what we've talked about doing, it would still be a no. Because anybody who comes in will ultimately operate the school, as a whole. And then, maybe hopefully we would get to a point where if they decided to then, um, move on, and move out, leave the model in place.
9. Um, no, not really. Not that would be unique to them versus the traditional public schools. Um, that's all the same (FTE) really, and a lot of our charters were not necessarily motivated for the right reasons to become charters because of the charter startup grant that's available to them through the state.
10. Well, so right now, just the way our funding operations work, all of the per-pupil funding goes into a big pool and is then reallocated. So schools aren't operating off of an independent budget anyway. So that applies to both our in-district designated charter schools and our traditional campuses. And we have had conversations about that changing.
11. We do not provide transportation. So, unless you are going to receive transportation because it's your neighborhood school anyway, um, your parents then, if you don't qualify for that, then your parents would be responsible for getting you there. So some of our charter schools, like early college high school, that definitely, ya know there's no neighborhood attached to it, everybody wants to go there, um parents are responsible for getting students to and from.
12. By and large, yes. But last year we opened, um, what I would call district charters. We took two, what's the word I'm looking for, IR, improvement required campuses, we took two campuses that were improvement required for the third year in a row, and we made them district charters, meaning that for the first time because of legislation that was available to us, we didn't have to go through like a grass roots process of community buy in and voting and that sort of thing to become a charter. But the district, because they were in improvement required status could say, you are a charter, and so, as part of that process, people had to kind of re-interview for their positions, and their, they receive more compensation if they go there.
13. So contract stays the same, um, just because of the way, we initially talked about having different contracts, but in the end we ended up not utilizing different contracts. The difference is just in how the compensation is disbursed.
14. Only because that's an area where we haven't really taken advantage of opportunities to make a difference there in how we operate. It's hard for me to identify what advantages or disadvantages there would be. And part of it is, you know I was a teacher first, so my thinking is always, if the district has a system that is working, and I'm a principal, you know, I would rather be concerned with instruction than having to manage my funds or worry about the financial piece. That's the only thing I can really think of. Any time we've talked about trying to

give them more financial autonomy and that sort of thing, I don't know that I would want that necessarily.

15. (No response provided for this question.)
16. Advantages, um, I guess I just feel like, well it's not really logistical, just school choice in general. The opportunity to provide with more and more opportunities to customize their educational experience. If anything, the numbers of schools that are seeming to go in that direction are increasing, and I think that's a good thing, and students are taking advantage of that. Um, we had a parent seminar recently, and there were so many sessions, so many cool topics, I was really surprised at the number of parents who chose my session. So it's definitely in demand, especially in our district.
17. Well, so, I guess, so, for me disadvantages logistically, I wish that we could provide transportation. We would have students, more students, taking advantage of those opportunities. But, a lot of times, transportation is an issue. And that applies to our magnet schools as well.

School District T2 – Transcript of Responses

1. We currently own two charter schools that we contract an outside organization to manage, um, but we are looking to discontinue that relationship for next year. Its not working very well.
2. The budgets aren't really handled different, um, we give the figures to the management team for the schools that we own and they develop the budgets. Our only step in that process, really, is to approve the budget.
3. No, no. That's a big no-no in Texas. We don't have collective bargaining in any form.
4. We invite them to participate in all of our PD opportunities, but I'll tell ya, it is not that often that they come. They like to plan their own things.
5. Yes, the two schools that we own participate in the state retirement program from Texas, they are required to pay into it just like the other public schools we have. Some of the other charters participate in different things, it depends on who runs them.
6. No, they don't really receive any capital outlay funding. We provide some facility support for the two schools that we own and the others get their funding for buildings and such from other places.
7. We don't really place any restrictions on them. The state has some rules for size and what not, but that is the same for regular public schools and charter schools the same.
8. For us, a couple of them shared during the start of the schools. One of the charter schools shared a campus with one of our elementary schools, but they didn't overlap for classrooms or anything like that. They shared the gym and cafeteria – that sort of thing, but they did not use the same classrooms. Once they were up and running, they had their own space.
9. There aren't really any funding restrictions. They get the same level of per-pupil funding, the only difference is that charter schools have to pay us a percentage of their funding to provide them with something. You know, mostly federal things like special ed and that sort of thing. I don't remember what that percentage is, something small like two or three percent.
10. No, no. We tend to keep those very separate. They are our schools, but they are still charter schools. The only time we have their funds in our budgets is when we get our fee, that percentage, for the services.
11. We did provide transportation for the two schools that we own, but only if the students were in the right zone. Just like our regular schools, if they are out of zone their parents have to drive them. We don't give buses to any of the other charter schools – they are allowed to pay us for bus services like they do in some of the other districts around here, but none of them have as of now.
12. No – they don't transfer between the two. If they wanted to move, they would have to apply just as anyone else would.
13. (This question is not applicable.)

14. I wouldn't say that there are any real advantages financially. Ya know, its just really expensive when you are dealing with a small number of charter schools because they have to have everything separate. We can include them in some of the things we have, like the buses, but for other things, like the board, it is just them. Its hard because that cost is put on only the two schools rather than the whole district.
15. Like I said, its tough with just one school. That cost is put on just one or two schools than what we do with the dozens of other schools that we have.
16. Logistically – good question. The real advantage there is that they were still our kids. We weren't losing them to the competition. IT gave us a sense that we were working together – a lot of the other charter schools feel like they are against us. We get to bus these kids, we get to include them in the other stuff ilke sports, its good for the kids. It goes back to having just the one or two schools. It's like having a lesson in what isn't efficient. When we have so many schools, it is easy to put things in place because we have so many places to do it. With just two, it doesn't work that way. It takes more planning.

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