A SINGLE CASE STUDY OF AN INNER-CITY HIGH SCHOOL DURING AN ERA OF
SCHOOL CHOICE

by

Stephen C. Parker

An applied dissertation submitted to the faculty of
The University of North Carolina at Charlotte
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education in
Educational Leadership

Charlotte

2024

Approved by:

_____
Dr. Walter Hart

_____
Dr. Jim Watson

_____
Dr. Rebecca Shore

_____
Dr. Erik Byker

ABSTRACT

STEPHEN C. PARKER. A Single Case Study of an Inner-City High School During an Era of School Choice (Under the direction of DR. WALTER HART)

With the recent increase in the number of available options for families to consider when selecting a school, diverse publicly funded public schools are now competing for both students and funding. This study intended to contribute to the available research on the changes at inner-city schools during increased school choice options. The purpose of this single case study was to gain additional insights into changes in student demographics, academic achievement, and perceptions of stakeholders of an inner-city high school during an era of increased school choice from 2010-2023. This single case study included both qualitative and quantitative data sources. The researcher's data for this study involved semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with five participants and publicly available data from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions survey. The researcher also reviewed school yearbooks for the 2010-2023 school years to further develop an understanding of the school changes during the study period. Findings indicate that there has been a decline in enrollment over the period the study investigated, with an increase in the percentage of students of color attending the school. Findings also indicate a decline in the school's academic profile, with only a small improvement over the last two years. Implications included the need for the local school district to review the number of district-supported school choice options, the potential impact of choice programs on non-choice schools, the need to recruit and retain capable leadership, and evaluating the out-of-district application process.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my immediate family members. To my wife, Alessia Parker, and my two daughters, Riley and Sidney Parker.

Alessia – This has been a crazy educational journey. You have supported me in each degree adventure and worked to ensure that we could afford whatever life has thrown at us. We have always supported each other in each endeavor and shared parental duties. However, your support and encouragement through the dissertation process made the final product possible. Thank you for believing in me and encouraging me even when I was unsure. I love you.

Riley - Since we share many of the same personality traits, you are probably underwhelmed with this accomplishment. You have grown into an incredible young lady who is driven to be successful both in and out of the classroom. I am excited to see where the future takes you, and I hope you will share the same confidence I have in you. You are loved beyond measure.

Sidney – I appreciate your sarcasm and know that due to your social network, everyone will know about completing this journey. You have been my sidekick, even when you did not want to be. I enjoy our time together and hearing all your stories. I look forward to seeing where your journey ends as your confidence continues to grow. You are capable of more than you know or believe. I love you dearly.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACT	American College Testing
AP	Advanced Placement
EOC	end of course
FRL	free and reduced lunch
IB	International Baccalaureate
NCDPI	North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
NCTWC	North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions
RQ1	Research Question 1
RQ2	Research Question 2
RQ3	Research Question 3
SAT	Scholastic Aptitude Test
TPS	traditional public school

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

A recent area of concern for diverse, publicly funded schools is the recent explosion of school choice opportunities. Through public funding, both the charter school movement and school voucher programs have provided families with alternatives to traditional public schools. Perhaps in response, traditional public school districts have introduced their own choice options (Cookson et al., 2018; Gleason, 2019). These various choice programs have grown in popularity in recent years and have impacted individual traditional public schools (Cookson et al., 2018; Holme et al., 2013).

Charter schools are independent public schools that are tuition free for families. They are also exempt from some of the rules, regulations, and statutes that apply to traditional public schools. In many states, charter schools are funded through both state and local tax dollars (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023; Public Schools First NC, 2021). The initial impetus for the charter school movement was to increase the choice of learning opportunities for families while encouraging creativity in the delivery of instruction. Additionally, the charter school concept was intended to promote the sharing of innovative teaching practices with non-charter public school counterparts (Gleason, 2019).

Charter schools have increased in popularity and have been established in 45 of the 50 states, including the District of Columbia. Over the last decade, the number of charter school options nationally has grown from approximately 5,000 to 7,500 schools, with an increase in the number of students served from 3% to 7% of school-aged children. In North Carolina over the last twenty years, the number of charter school options has more than doubled while the number of students served by charter schools has increased by 270% (Public Schools First NC, 2021).

School voucher programs are a way for a student's tuition to be paid at a private school using state and local tax dollars (Egalite et al., 2020). Currently, 32 out of 50 states offer vouchers for students to attend private schools (Public Schools First NC, 2021). The criteria to receive public funds for private schools vary from state to state and continue to change. For example, the 2022-2023 income cutoff for families to participate in the North Carolina Opportunity Scholarship voucher program was 200% of the federal free lunch cutoff, or approximately $100,000 for a family of four. The 2023-2025 biennium budget eliminated the income requirement to receive a voucher, meaning the state now has universal vouchers. Children qualifying for free or reduced meal prices are eligible to receive a voucher equaling the previous year's state per pupil expenditure. Children in the highest income brackets are eligible to receive 45% of that amount to attend private schools. In addition to allowing more students to qualify for the vouchers, the amount of funding for the voucher program continues to increase. North Carolina voucher funding will increase by $82 million to $176.5 million in 2023-2024. It will increase an additional $15 million in 2024-2025. In 2025-2026, it will increase by an additional $224 million. By 2032-2033, voucher funding will equal $520.5 million annually, over triple the current funding (House Bill 259. *2023 Appropriations Act*).

The primary premise of school choice was to provide different educational options to families whose children may have been attending low-performing schools (Gleason, 2019; Ladd, 2019). Free from some of the oversight experienced by traditional public schools, the choice model allowed for innovative approaches to teaching, curriculum, staffing, and learning that could be shared with the broader public education system. Proponents of school choice argue that this approach allows parents to better align their educational goals with the school's offerings with the potential outcome of an enhanced educational experience. Proponents also

suggest that doing so will positively affect the overall educational system (Ayscue et al., 2018; Gleason, 2019; Ladd, 2019).

Critics have raised concerns about school choice. One issue with school choice, critics argue, is that both charter and private schools do not have to follow some of the same state statutes as public schools. This makes comparing student achievement and other metrics more difficult because the schools follow different standards (Ladd, 2019; Nordstrom, 2018).

According to Ladd (2019), a fundamental problem with school choice is that it can undermine the coherence and effectiveness of a local school system. For example, the impact on the local school system can be witnessed in the reduced funding available to local schools. The public funding sent to schools of choice reduces the funding available for traditional public schools, potentially impacting the programming and staffing at the traditional schools. The reduced curricular choices and larger class sizes can have a significant impact on the students served (Ladd, 2019).

Another issue with school choice is the impact on demographics that may occur for traditional public schools. Some researchers have found that school choice has led to increased segregation of students in traditional public schools by socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity (Dee & Fu, 2003; Nordstrom, 2018). The ability to choose their child's educational opportunities has led to some families choosing less racially and economically diverse schools while pursuing higher achieving schools. Additionally, some research suggests that the school choice movement has begun to erode the overall public support for conventional public schools (Dee & Fu, 2003; Nordstrom, 2018).

Studying the historical changes in a traditional public school during an era of heightened choice opportunities could lead to a greater understanding of the potential impact of school

choice on traditional public schools. Analyzing changes that have occurred in an inner-city high school during an era of school choice can lead to conversations among policymakers at the national, state, and local levels about the shifts in both demographics and achievement that may occur among traditional public schools affected by school choice. This analysis and discussion could lead to a greater understanding of changes that may occur in a traditional public school during an era of heightened school choice.

Problem Statement

Over the last few decades, when discussing the evolution of local school districts, the topic of school choice has quickly entered the discussion. While the level of impact of school choice varies within school districts across the nation, the implementation and expansion of school choice have been an area of contention in education (Baker et al., 2015; Gleason, 2019; Ladd, 2019). School choice has created contentious debate in many states and communities (Egalite, 2020).

North Carolina has been no exception to the often controversial topic of school choice (Bifulco & Ladd, 2007; Egalite, 2020). Bifulco and Ladd (2007) highlighted the growth of charter schools in North Carolina and the resulting increased racial isolation of both Black and White students. Moreover, in referencing Fiske and Ladd (2000), Bifulco and Ladd also summarized the school choice issue in North Carolina quite clearly when they noted that without proactive intent and planning to avoid the continuing trends of resegregation and wider achievement gaps, the stratification of demographics and achievement would continue to grow around school choice.

While confronting segregation in public schools may not be a new issue in America, the persistence of this issue does not make it any easier to resolve at the national, state, or local

levels. Additionally, school districts are often navigating the growth of charter schools and the expansion of other school choice variants (e.g., specialty schools, magnets). For example, some public school districts have created specialty schools or magnet programs in an attempt to satisfy specific programming requests while simultaneously providing a school choice option within the traditional public school framework (Nordstrom, 2018). Nonetheless, regardless of how controversial or accepted the change, there is evidence of the impact of school choice on district or school demographics in many school districts (Dalane & Marcotte, 2019; Goldring & Smrekar, 2002; Holme et al.,2013; Kitmitto et al., 2016; Nordstrom, 2018).

Some studies found that charter school expansion and the growth of other school choice options into city school districts have increased socioeconomic and racial segregation within schools (Dalane & Marcotte, 2019; Holme et al., 2013; Nordstrom, 2018). The free-market education created by the choice movement system has provided both students and parents with choices regarding their educational options. Families are no longer confined to the school within their neighborhood or busing zone. The school options, whether charter schools, voucher-funded private schools, or specialty settings operated by public school districts, may create demographic imbalances due to the competition for students. Many times, this competition is driven by the perception of student achievement, further widening the gap in both demographics and socioeconomics while creating schools with less diversity and with little resemblance to their surrounding communities (Dalane & Marcotte, 2019; Holme et al., 2013; Nordstrom, 2018). Therefore, this study seeks to add to the literature about school choice by examining changes at one inner-city high school during an era of increased school choice from the 2010-2011 school year until the 2022-2023 school year.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was constructed around the market theory of choice (Ayscue et al., 2018). Under this theory, school choice was originally viewed as a school improvement measure by allowing parents to choose a school based on the achievement needs of their children. The first school choice law in America was loosely inspired by a talk given by Al Shanker, the head of the American Federation of Teachers (Cohen, 2016). The initial vision for charter schools was not to create a market system but rather to devise a method through which teachers within the public schools could create semi-autonomous schools unbound by local and state regulations. However, policy analyst Ted Kolderie departed from the original vision for charter schools and explicitly linked them to the ideas of competition and market efficiency (Cohen, 2016).

The market theory of choice is based upon economic principles where individuals act as consumers, allowing parents to choose schools that may best meet the needs of their students. The surrounding theory is that government involvement in education interferes with the natural market forces of competition. Proponents maintain that the market theory of choice will enhance the overall educational system. At the same time, critics suggest that the resulting change moves education away from working to benefit the common good and more in the direction of privatization and competition (Ayscue et al., 2018).

The market theory of choice within an urban school market is further discussed by Jenkins (2020). Specifically, Jenkins described how the reputation of traditional public schools may be impacted by choice. Jenkins further noted that commercial marketing is pivotal in the branding of schools as market forces further the competition for students. Both Ayscue et al. (2018) and Jenkins (2020) discussed how different demographics of parents research potential

school options and the important role that marketing plays in shaping the reputations of schools from which parents choose.

The market theory of choice created the foundation of this research and directly shaped the research questions and the interview questions associated with each. Both Ayscue et al. (2018) and Jenkins (2020) discussed the effects of the market theory on school choice and the potential impacts on traditional public schools. Using this conceptual framework and the effects of market forces within education resulted in a more consistent alignment throughout the study. Chapter 2 contains a more detailed description of Ayscue et al. (2018) and Jenkins' (2020) market theory of choice and the resulting perceptions associated with increased choice options.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this single case study is to explore changes in an inner-city high school from the 2010-2011 school year through the 2022-2023 school year. Specifically, the research explores changes in demographics, academic achievement, extracurricular opportunities, and perceptions of an inner-city high school during this period.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this single case study:

1. How has racial and economic diversity changed in an inner-city high school during the 2010-2023 era of school choice?

2. How has school achievement changed in an inner-city high school during the 2010-2023 era of school choice?

3. How have stakeholder perceptions of an inner-city high school changed during the 2010-2023 era of school choice?

Overview of Research Methodology

For this study, the researcher investigated changes in an inner-city high school over a 13-year period. This time period is marked by increases in school choice opportunities for families in the area served by the inner-city high school. Specifically, the researcher explored changes in the school's demographics, academic achievement, and community perceptions during this time. To protect the identity of the school, the school of study will be referred to as "City High School."

A single case study was utilized to investigate the enrollment trends, achievement scores, extracurricular offerings, and stakeholder perceptions of City High School. A case study design was chosen to allow the researcher to analyze the changes in one setting over a period of time. The case study design is appropriate in this context because it allowed the researcher to focus on the changes within the school in its natural context (Hancock et al., 2021). Stake (2008) shared the importance of the case study design as it relates more to the significance of the particular case than the methods used.

Data for this study were gathered from several sources. First, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with stakeholders of City High School who have an in-depth understanding of the history of the school. Additionally, the researcher retrieved data from public databases maintained by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) and the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (NCTWCS). Finally, the researcher analyzed information from current and past yearbooks from City High to gain additional insight into the history of the school. Yin (2009) reiterated the ability of the case study design to be both descriptive and exploratory in nature. This approach, according to Yin, allowed the researcher to

deeply investigate multiple data sources to explore changes at City High School over a 13-year period.

Research Site, Participants, and Data Collection

Research for this study was conducted primarily at City High School. City High School resides in western, North Carolina. City High School began serving students in 1906; however, it was at a different location than its current site. The location in which City High School presently resides was established in 1966, just outside of the city's downtown. The school was remodeled in 2009 with upgrades to classrooms, the gymnasium, athletic facilities, and the auditorium. City High School currently serves approximately 890 students, with another 300 enrolled in an early college program that is located on the same campus. While the facility is shared, the early college is an independent school choice option that is operated by the public school district. Therefore, students attending the early college program at City High School are not part of the City High student population. A thorough description of City High School will be presented in Chapter 2 of this study.

The researcher identified five potential participants for this study who are either alumni of City High School or former employees. These participants possessed both intimate and historical knowledge of City High School. Two of the participants were former administrators at City High School. The third participant was a graduate of City High School and is currently involved with the school and city in various capacities. A fourth participant was a former teacher at City High School who had taught at the school for over twenty years. The fifth participant was a graduate of City High School who attended the school during the time of desegregation. The participants were familiar with changes that had occurred at the school during the time period of this study. A thorough description of each participant will be provided in Chapter 4.

Participant data for this study was gathered using semi-structured interview questions, which were aligned with the research questions. The semi-structured interviews provided the participants the opportunity to share their perceptions and understandings of the changes at City High School during the past 13 years. This protocol allowed the researcher to include clarifying prompts and questions as needed to gain additional insights.

Data for this study was also collected from NCDPI and the NCTWC survey. These were chosen because NCDPI houses most of the historical enrollment and achievement data for City High School, and the NCTWC survey website provides longitudinal data about teachers' perceptions of the school. Finally, data was collected through document analysis. Specifically, City High School yearbooks were reviewed to uncover changes in extracurricular programs or any other notable changes during the period of study.

Significance of the Study

 Exploring changes in an inner-city high school during an era of school choice is an important topic because the exponential increase in choice options may affect traditional public schools. Specifically, the study will provide insights into changes at City High School regarding demographics, academic achievement, and community perceptions during an era of increased school choice and nontraditional school options.

Previous studies have indicated the impact on both students and the resources that follow them when choice options continue to increase within a school district (Bruno, 2019; Cook, 2017; Fitzgerald, 2015; Han & Keefe, 2020; Jones, 2018; Lee, 2016; Mamo, 2022). The changes in enrollment may also impact the demographics within the traditional public school. These changes may have a direct impact on academic offerings, retention of qualified teachers, and extracurricular offerings. The competition for students within the school choice model can create

racial imbalances that impact both the social and academic experiences of all students within their zoned school (Fitzgerald, 2015; Lee, 2016).

There remains a need to examine the competition for students within local school districts. This study will contribute to the relevant literature by evaluating changes in an inner-city high school during a school choice era and the subsequent changes in the perception of the educational value for its students.

Delimitations

The first delimitation of this study is to look at the changes within City High School over a specific 13-year period. Specifically, this research will focus on the school years starting with the 2010-2011 school year and culminating with the 2022-2023 school year. During these years, different school choice options began competing with City High School for students.

The second delimitation of this study was the use of interview data, enrollment data, achievement data, document analysis, and NCTWC survey data to provide insights into the changes at City High School over time. These items will illuminate how the school's demographics, student achievement, perceptions, and extracurricular offerings may have changed during the era of choice.

The third delimitation of this study was to select participants who had previously attended or worked at City High School. The goal was to identify and interview five participants with direct knowledge and experiences within City High School. The participants were selected because they had intimate knowledge of the perceptions of City High School both prior to and following school choice expansion.

Assumptions

The first assumption made in this study was that all participants were either former students or staff members of City High School. The researcher verified that all participants fell into one of these two categories due to his familiarity with City High School.

The second assumption was that the sample size of five participants would produce sufficient data and information to answer the research questions. The participant data combined with the enrollment data, achievement data, and document analysis made the study realistic and feasible.

The third assumption was that the participants in this study responded openly and honestly, providing accurate and timely data. To encourage participants to provide forthright answers, they were informed that their participation was voluntary and that all data gathered would be de-identified to ensure confidentiality.

Definition of Terms

Charter schools. Charter schools are public schools of choice that are authorized by the State Board of Education and operated by independent non-profit boards of directors (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023).

Inner-City School. An inner-city school is a school located in the central part of a city where people live (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023)

Nontraditional schools. Nontraditional schools are magnet schools that are organized and operated by the public school district, such as an early college program or the International Baccalaureate Program (Holme et al., 2013).

Traditional public schools. Traditional public schools are schools that are authorized by the State

Board of Education and operated by a locally elected board of education (Cambridge

Dictionary, 2023).

School vouchers. Vouchers are tax dollars used for students who opt out of public schools to

attend private schools, usually in the form of a scholarship (Carnoy, 2017).

Summary and Organization of the Study

The expansion of school choice within and around public schools necessitates attention to

the changes in demographics and achievement of the affected public schools. The resulting

perceptions of the traditional public schools as they compete for students are essential in

determining the changes in curricular opportunities and outcomes for students within the public

school system. This research is intended to fill a gap in scholarly knowledge and offer

professional practice recommendations for policy decisions.

The remainder of this study is organized into four subsequent chapters. Chapter 2

introduces a review of scholarly literature regarding the segregation of schools, the impact of

school choice on traditional public schools, and the contextual theories utilized to interpret the

study's findings. Chapter 3 outlines the research and design methods utilized in the study, the

role and positionality of the researcher, research site and participants, protection of human

subjects, approaches to sampling and data collection, data analysis and interpretation techniques,

and strategies for quality applied in the research. Major discoveries drawn from the inductive

and descriptive analysis of data and thematic interpretations of the research findings are

presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the research, a discussion of significant

outcomes and contributions to the scholarly body of knowledge, implications for professional

practice, and recommendations for future research. The study culminates with a bibliography of

referenced literature and appendices.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The historic *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954) decision of the United States Supreme Court determined that the racial segregation of public schools in the United States was no longer constitutional. The intent of this landmark decision was to end racial segregation in schools and to promote diverse learning environments. While the desegregation of schools was not a quick or easy task for students or their families, children of all races were eventually able to thrive in the same school environment. However, at the end of the twentieth century, federal judges began terminating school desegregation orders across the country. Through legal loopholes, the resegregation of schools began, never more prominent than in the southern portion of the United States (Amsterdam, 2017).

One such legal loophole is school choice. The dynamic of school choice allows alternatives to the traditional public school system, where parents can opt to send their children for their education (Gleason, 2019). The choice options, which compete with traditional public schools, could include charter schools, private schools, and magnet schools. Though the impact of school choice varies within school districts across the country, the implementation and expansion of educational options have created an atmosphere of tension in education and an ongoing debate in several states and local communities (Bifulco & Ladd, 2007; Ladd, 2019). While proponents of school choice have suggested that infusing market-like forces into the educational arena will create positive competition that will drive improvements, critics have noted that school choice may heighten the racial and economic isolation of students in schools without delivering on the promise of better educational opportunities for all (Bifulco & Ladd, 2007; Carney, 2017; Ladd, 2019; Wells et al., 2019).

North Carolina has not been an exception to the evolving expansion of school choice (Bifulco & Ladd, 2007; Egalite, 2020; Nordstrom, 2018). While private, parochial, and charter schools have existed for decades, they historically had minimal impact on attendance in traditional public schools. However, the impact of school choice on traditional public school systems has magnified in the past decade as legislative decisions to lift the state's cap on the number of charter schools and to implement vouchers for students to attend private schools have quickly unleased more school choice opportunities (Nordstrom, 2018). For example, from 2010 to 2021, the number of charter schools in North Carolina more than doubled (Public Schools First NC, 2021). Of specific concern is the fact that the growth of school choice options in North Carolina has brought about an increase in racial isolation among White and Black students (Bifulco & Ladd, 2007; Nordstrom, 2018). Additionally, critics have argued that school choice options have undermined moral and financial support for traditional public schools (Wells et al., 2019).

While there is growing literature on the impact of school choice, questions remain about the impact of choice on individual schools. Therefore, this study is intended to examine the changes that occurred in an individual, inner-city high school in North Carolina during the school choice era from 2010-2023. This high school is referred to as City High School for this study.

This chapter reviews the literature surrounding school choice in six sections. These sections include (a) an overview of the common school movement, (b) the desegregation of public schools, (c) school choice in North Carolina, (d) the impact of school choice, (e) the history of City High School, and (f) the theoretical framework. These sections are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Sections of Identified Literature

Category	Sources
History of the Common School Movement	History (Kahlenberg, R.D. 2000; McWilliams, J.A. 2017; Danns, D. 2008; Baines, L., & Foster, H. 2006; Warren, D. 1988, WestEd, 2019; Brimley, et. al, 2016; Provinzano, K. T., Sondergeld, T. A., & Knaggs, C. M., 2020; Brimley, V., Verstegen, D.A., & Garfield, R. R., 2016; Belfield, C. R., & Levin, H. M. 2007)
Desegregation of Schools	United States (Beese, J., & Martin, J. 2020; Amsterdam, D. 2017; Warkentein, S., & Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness (SREE). 2016; Barnes, C. 2013; Reardon, S.F.,Grewal, E.T., Kalogrides, D., & Greenberg. E, 2012; Frey, A., & Wilson, M. 2009; Adamson, F., & Galloway, M. 2019; Monarrez, T., Kisida, B., & Chingos, M. 2019; Wells, A.S., Keener, A., Cabral, L. & Cordova-Cobo, D. 2019; Chapman, T.K. 2018; Thompson Dorsey, D.N. 2013; Glenn, W.J. 2012; McPherson, E. 2011; Houck, E.A. 2010; Russo, C.J. 2004)
	Benefits of Integration (George, J., Darling-Hammond, L., & Learning Policy Institute., 2021; Willie, C.V., 2005; Kahlenberg, R. D., Potter, H., & Quick, K., 2019; Nordstrom, K., 2018)
	School Choice During Desegregation (Arcia, E., 2006; Diem, S., Frankenberg, E., Cleary, C., & Ali, N., 2014; McPherson, E., 2011; George, J., Darling-Hammond, L., & Learning Policy Institute., 2021; Hausman, C., & Goldring, E., 2000; Holme, J. J., Frankenberg, E., Diem, S., & Welton, A. D., 2013; Kahlenberg, R.D., 2000; Kahlenburg, R.D., 2019; Chapman, T.K., 2018)
	North Carolina (Nordstrom, K., 2018; Ayscue, J. B., Siegel-Hawley, G., Kucsera, J.,

Table 1

Sections of Identified Literature (continued)

	& Woodward, B., 2018; McPherson, E., 2011; Diem, S., Frankenberg, E., Cleary, C., & Ali, N., 2014; Chapman, T.K., 2018; Williams, S. M., & Houck, E. A., 2013; Smith, S.S., 1996; George, J., Darling-Hammond, L., & Learning Policy Institute., 2021)
School Choice in North Carolina	Desegregation (McPherson, E., 2011; Smith, S.S., 1996; Williams, S. M., & Houck, E. A., 2013; Arcia, E., 2006) 21st Century (Ayscue, J., Nelson, A. H., Mickelson, R. A., Giersch, J., Bottia, M. C., Civil Rights Project, P. D. C. C. for C. R. R. (CCRR), & University of North Carolina, 2018; Kemerer, F. R., & Godwin, R. K., 2002; Ayscue, J. B., Siegel-Hawley, G., Woodward, B., & Orfield, G, 2016; Cullen, J. B., Jacob, B. A., and Levitt, S. D., 2005; George, J., Darling-Hammond, L., & Learning Policy Institute., 2021; Holme, J. J., Frankenberg, E., Diem, S., & Welton, A. D., 2013; Goldring, E., & Smrekar, C., 2002; Fowler-Finn, T., 2002; Cookson, P. W., Jr., Darling-Hammond, L., Rothman, R., Shields, P. M., & Learning Policy Institute., 2018; Baker, B. D., & Economic Policy Institute., 2016; Ladd, H.F., 2019; Gleason, P.M., 2019; Chapman, T.K., 2018; Mead, J. F., Green, P. C., III, & University of Colorado at Boulder, N. E. P. C., 2012; Public Schools First NC, 2021; North Carolina History Project, 2016; Howell, W. G., Wolf, P. J., Campbell, D. E., & Peterson, P. E., 2002; Miner, B., 1998)
Impact of School Choice	

Table 1

Sections of Identified Literature (continued)

	Inputs (Jones, P.A., 2018; Cook, J.B., 2018; Bruno, P., 2019; Mamo, M., 2022)
	Outputs (Cullen, J. B., Jacob, B. A., and Levitt, S. D., 2005; Cookson, P. W., Jr., Darling-Hammond, L., Rothman, R., Shields, P. M., & Learning Policy Institute., 2018; Darling-Hammond, L., Rothman, R., Cookson, P. W., Jr., & Learning Policy Institute., 2017; Culvershouse, R., 2018; Public Schools First NC, 2021; Jenkins, D. A., 2020)
	Racial Composition (Ayscue, J.B. 2016; Billingham, C.M., Hunt, M. O., 2016; Glenn, W.J., 2012; Martinez, V. J., & And Others., 1995; Nordstrom, K., 2018; Berry, B., 2020; Blankenship, C., 2021; Fowler-Finn, T., 2002; Holme, J. J., Frankenberg, E., Diem, S., & Welton, A. D., 2013)
History of City High School	History (Reese, J., 2022; Nordstrom, K., 2018; Blankenship, C., 2021; Holme, J. J., Frankenberg, E., Diem, S., & Welton, A. D., 2013; Fowler-Finn., T., 2002)
	Desegregation (Spencer, P., 2013; Reese, J., 2022; Fuller, B., 2009)
	School Choice (Kahlenburg, R.D., 2006; Wells, A. S., Keener, A., Cabral, L., & Cordova-Cobo, D., 2019)
Conceptual Framework	(Ayscue et al., 2018; Frontier & Rickabaugh, 2014; Jenkins 2020)

The Common School Movement

The common school movement, originally conceived by Horace Mann in the 1830s, worked to establish universal schooling for all children. Mann believed that schools should educate students from all walks of life under one roof and in one community. It was Mann's hope that the common school, as an institution, would eventually spread across the nation to bring about national unity, promote political morality, reduce crime, and promote civic literacy (Warren, 1988). The original design for the common school was to be an inclusive environment. In Mann's words, the country's ability to progress demanded a public education that was "open to all, good enough for all, and attended by all" (Warren, 1988, p.247). This ideal, the common or neighborhood school, was promoted as the best way to promote educational quality for all students.

Mann believed that the common school movement would generate benefits for individuals and society at large. The common school could bring about cohesiveness to a community, as the value derived from the neighborhood school would be developed through the partnership between the community, students, and teachers (Kahlenburg, 2000). Since the school would be funded by the community it served, the community itself would take great pride in the school's success. The school would be the center of the community, to be celebrated both academically and socially. According to Henry J. Hyde, the state representative from the 16th district in Chicago, the importance of maintaining the school concept could not be overemphasized. This model would promote the parent-teacher connection, which encourages increased parental responsibility. Another benefit was that it would allow older siblings to care for their younger siblings (Danns, 2008). This community-driven culture would be motivated to

improve both academic and non-academic outcomes while strengthening the spirit of community for the students (Provinzano et al., 2020).

According to Warren (1988), another benefit of the common school movement was that it would promote civic engagement in the surrounding community. One of the reasons given for providing public support for common schools was the need to produce community leaders who would be able to enhance the social fabric. The common school, producing educated graduates, could assist in navigating the coming social changes within the community it served and the nation as a whole. The school's educational objectives would equip individuals with the knowledge and cognitive skills needed to enter the workforce and support their local communities (Warren, 1988).

Mann's vision of the common school has largely been realized as public schools are widely recognized for contributing to the public good (Brimley et al., 2016). Public schools have historically served as engines of economic and social progress. High school graduates provide economic benefits such as higher tax revenue and lower government spending on criminal justice, health care, and social welfare programs (WestEd, 2019). According to Belfield and Levin (2007), the investment of approximately $82,000 for one student to graduate from high school is offset by the public benefit of $209,000 that is generated when that individual provides additional government revenue and requires less government spending. More recently, Brimley et al. (2016) noted that individuals completing advanced levels of education enjoy more career opportunities, higher incomes, lower unemployment, lower rates of incarceration, and more economic prosperity than individuals with less educational attainment. Additionally, businesses enjoy a highly skilled and productive workforce, and the United States' representative

democracy benefits from well-informed voters who engage in civic responsibilities (Brimley et al., 2016).

Desegregation of Schools

Horace Mann's vision that all children would attend school together regardless of their ethnicity or socioeconomic status remained unrealized throughout the 19th and much of the 20th centuries. Prejudices that kept schools racially segregated were enshrined through state constitutions following the Civil War and through the United States Supreme Court's support of the doctrine of separate but equal in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) (Russo, 2004). Fifty-eight years later, in the case of *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas (1954),* also known as Brown I, the United States Supreme Court established that segregation in public schools violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment by depriving Black students of equal educational opportunities (Russo, 2004). The Court further explained that within public education, the Fourteenth Amendment implied that equal educational opportunities should exist for all children, irrespective of race (Frey & Wilson, 2009). This landmark decision started the dismantling of the dual system of racially segregated schooling that shaped American public education (McPherson, 2011).

The *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954) decision did not immediately end segregation in the nation's schools. A year later, the Supreme Court ruled again with *Brown v Board of Education II* (1955) that schools should desegregate with all deliberate speed. However, the Court did not provide a desegregation plan or specify a timeline for achieving desegregation; therefore, it was left to the local school systems to manage desegregation (McPherson, 2011). As a result of inaction by school districts throughout the South, roughly 99% of Black students in the South attended all-Black schools. However, by

1971, only about 20% of Black children attended all-Black schools, making the South more integrated than other parts of the country (Reardon et al., 2021).

In the years following *Brown II,* the lack of deliberate speed toward desegregation enabled litigation to proceed at a brisk pace. Ten years following the *Brown II* verdict, in the case of *Griffin v County School Board of Prince Edward County (1964)*, the Court ruled that school officials in Virginia could no longer circumvent desegregation efforts (Russo, 2004). The school officials in Virginia had created a freedom of choice program for their students which sought to deny minority students the right to equal protection by supporting segregated, private schools. These private schools worked to replace the public schools, thus slowing the desegregation efforts. This ruling acknowledged that the freedom of choice could further the segregation of schools and outlawed its use as a desegregation tool.

Another case from Virginia, *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County (1968),* made its way to the Supreme Court just four years later. This case resulted in a ruling that the local school district could not operate only two schools, one for White students and one for Black students, under a freedom of choice plan (McPherson, 2011). The Court ordered school officials to stop operating separate schools because this approach failed to end segregation (Russo, 2004). With this ruling, the Court developed the six "Green" factors to determine whether a local school board had done enough to end segregation. The factors addressed the following: (a) the composition of the student body, (b) faculty, (c) staff, (d) transportation, (e) extracurricular activities, and (f) facilities. These factors are still applied in school desegregation cases.

In another effort to integrate schools, busing became a remedy for school systems with the *Swann v Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education (1971)* decision (Russo, 2004). The

Court ordered the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools to develop mandatory student assignments by

using cross-town busing as the vehicle to desegregate schools (McPherson, 2011). The court

affirmed that the Constitution did not indicate a specific degree of desegregation in public

schools; however, numerical ratios and quotas could be used as a starting point. The court further

ruled that if the assignment of a student to their neighborhood school did not effectively

dismantle a segregated system, a federal trial court could utilize busing as a desegregation

remedy.

During the years between 1954 and 1979, the courts resolved more than 30 cases

involving racial desegregation in K-12 schools (Russo, 2004). These cases involved children of

color from multiple racial and ethnic groups. In the case summary for *Keyes v School District*

No. 1, Denver, Colorado (1973), Mexican Americans were also identified, just like Black

students, as suffering the same racial inequities (Russo, 2004). Additionally, families in Detroit

in the three cases of *Milliken v Bradley (1974)* continuously litigated the city of Detroit's plan to

desegregate schools (McPherson, 2011). Ultimately, both *Brown* decisions and the cases that

followed worked to desegregate schools. As a result, 50 years after *Brown II,* 400 school districts

in the United States still continued to operate under court-ordered desegregation plans.

Benefits of Racially Integrated Schools

White students and students of color can benefit from desegregated school

settings. According to George et al. (2021), Black students' achievement is improved when

attending a less segregated school, while there are no negative impacts on White students'

achievement. These results can loosely correlate with a more supportive school environment,

increased access to qualified teachers, and enhanced student discussions. The increase in

achievement of all subgroups in an integrated school also increases the likelihood of students

graduating from high school and continuing their post-secondary education. In the fifty years post-*Brown*, with the desegregation of schools, the number of Black students completing high school increased sixfold, with an eightfold increase in the number of Black students completing at least four years of college (Willie, 2005). During this same time period, graduation rates and college completion rates also increased for White students. Kahlenberg et al. (2019) noted that these results are the product of an integrated classroom and its ability to close achievement gaps for all students.

In addition to positive academic gains, racially integrated education can benefit both Black and White students' social growth. Researchers have warned that racial segregation in schools can teach White children to gain personal status in an unrealistic way and prevent them from developing self-awareness based on their own abilities (Kahlenberg et al., 2019). Through integration, all students can have the opportunity to become more self-aware and reduce racial stereotyping. This can be correlated to increased intergroup contacts, which have been shown to reduce prejudice and negative attitudes (George et al., 2021). Through intergroup contact, students are exposed to new ideas and challenges, which can strengthen their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The opportunities presented within an integrated school setting can only build both Black and White students' capacity to work with others (Nordstrom, 2018). An increased capacity to work across demographics can also increase the likelihood of living and working in integrated workplaces as adults (Kahlenberg et al., 2019). Desegregation within schools and the increased capacity of students to work across demographics can strengthen their civic engagement and help to reduce national division (Kahlenberg et al., 2019).

School Choice Programs in the Era of Desegregation

With both *Brown* verdicts and the understanding of the benefits for both Black and White students to experience an integrated educational setting, the work began to implement the *Brown* decision. In 1972, Congress approved the Emergency School Aid Act, which provided school districts with the strategies and funding for desegregation efforts (Arcia, 2006). One strategy was to merge suburban school districts with municipal school districts. While a city school district may predominantly include students of color, the opposite may be true for a suburban school district (Diem et al., 2014). The merger of the two school districts would allow for the desegregation of schools by way of school assignment. However, the creation of countywide school districts was directly impacted by the limitations set forth by the *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974) verdict, which stated that a multi-district desegregation plan that would merge school districts around Detroit, Michigan, in order to achieve greater racial integration could not be mandated by the court. Nonetheless, in other areas of the country, there were some successful efforts to assign students from suburban areas to schools in the city or vice versa (Diem et al., 2014). Along with forced mergers, which allowed no parental choice, districts sought ways to integrate schools voluntarily. This desire led to several choice options for parents, including magnet schools and freedom of choice plans (McPherson, 2011).

The magnet school concept, one component of the school choice initiative, has been a strategy in the desegregation of schools across the United States since the 1960s (George et al., 2021). The magnet school's mission is to provide students access to a unique curriculum and to create schools with diverse student bodies (McPherson, 2011). To achieve this objective, magnet schools were initially placed in predominantly Black neighborhoods to attract White students and in White neighborhoods to attract Black students (Arcia, 2006). Not only did this effort assist in

desegregation, but one potential by-product of the magnet schools was to raise educational achievement for all students. The trends in enrollment for magnet schools showed that a higher number of Black students enrolled in predominantly White schools, thereby aiding in the integration efforts (McPherson, 2011). McPherson (2011) also noted that the voluntary magnet programs did increase the racial exposure of White students to their minority peers in public schools. The magnet school option, to a degree, aided in the racial balance among schools within a school district (Arica, 2006).

Also, starting in the 1960s, local school districts introduced freedom of choice plans in an effort to desegregate schools. Proponents believed that they could achieve racial integration voluntarily by allowing parents to send their children to a school of their choice within their school district (McPherson, 2011). When developing the school choice models, the districts worked to provide all students with equal access to educational opportunities. School choice was also believed to foster a higher level of satisfaction for parents with their child's educational experiences relative to their assigned school (Hausman & Goldring, 2000). Another aspect of the choice option was the belief that competition among schools would increase overall school performance and achievement (Holme et al., 2013). The school choice model had varying levels of success in desegregating schools across the United States.

An additional strategy to assist in the school choice process has been for districts to pursue socioeconomic integration (Kahlenberg, 2000). The premise is that school systems will approve choice options to promote economic integration with the by-product of racial integration. The process of controlled choice has shown promise in racial balancing in both Cambridge, Massachusetts and Montclair, New Jersey (Kahlenberg, 2000). This option allows families to choose from a cluster of choices, with the district monitoring the socioeconomic

makeup of the schools. This method of choice does provide advantages to busing plans, as it adds to the number of school options available for families instead of limiting them. By leveling the economic tiers within the schools, parents can choose options that best fit their children's educational needs while reducing parent worry over the location of a school. An added benefit to socioeconomic integration as a school choice option is that parents may better support their child's school through participation and financial means (Kahlenburg et al., 2019).

The limited success of school choice options in fully desegregating schools ultimately led some districts to implement mandatory school assignments (McPherson, 2011). The primary mechanism to facilitate school assignments was busing (McPherson, 2011). The *Swann v Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education (1971)* introduced an elaborate intradistrict busing program to modify the racial demographics of schools within the district (Chapman, 2018). The busing model did provide some relief in the desegregation of schools.

Charlotte Mecklenburg was not the only school system to utilize intradistrict busing that subsequently found its way to the Supreme Court. In *Keyes v Denver School District No. 1 (1973),* the use of busing was the primary tool to combat de facto segregation in Northern cities. This ruling was also followed by *the Milliken v. Bradley (1974)* decision*,* which also addressed busing in the Detroit area as a remedy for segregated schools. This decision did impact the ability of buses to cross county lines in order to desegregate schools (Chapman, 2018). Unfortunately, there were some unintended consequences with mandatory reassignment of students, such as inconsistent treatment of minority students and over-representation in special education classrooms. A more controlled student assignment plan was found to increase students' exposure to peers from different racial backgrounds (McPherson, 2011). A more

controlled approach mitigated some of the desegregation issues that arose when balancing the demographics of local schools (McPherson, 2011).

School Desegregation Efforts in North Carolina

The initial reluctance to racially desegregate schools nationally was also reflected in North Carolina. To initially respond to *Brown I*, North Carolina passed the Pupil Assignment Act of 1955, which had provisions that would impede the desegregation of schools. The following year, Governor Luther Hodges called a special session of the General Assembly to adopt a state plan in response to the *Brown* decision, with Governor Hodges making it clear that he did not support the ruling (Nordstrom, 2018). The result of the session was the passage of the Pearsall Plan, which was fully supported by the voters of North Carolina. These two state legislative responses to federal desegregation initiatives transferred student assignment, enrollment, and transportation authority from the state board of education to the local boards, believing that doing so would make it easier for local districts to remain segregated (Ayscue et al., 2018). Both acts also made the procedure for appealing a school board's decision as complicated as possible to stall integration efforts. The Pearsall Plan allowed school districts to close any school that became integrated and provided state-funded vouchers for White students to flee integrated schools. This implementation of the Pearsall Plan was evident in Hyde County, North Carolina, where White students were provided funds to attend private schools in an effort to escape desegregation (McPherson, 2011). To assist with desegregation, many of the Black schools closed to force integration into White schools. Despite voter support for the Pearsall plan, Attorney Julius Chambers filed hundreds of lawsuits on behalf of community leaders across the state to desegregate schools. Finally, in 1969, with the Godwin v. Johnston County Board of

Education decision, the Pearsall Plan was declared unconstitutional, and the work of integrating schools in North Carolina could begin (Nordstrom, 2018).

In 1960, the Charlotte City Schools and Mecklenburg County School District merged, thereby consolidating two of the largest school systems in the state. The purpose of the merger was to support the expansion of the city of Charlotte without financially damaging the county schools (Ayscue et al., 2018). The merger of county and city school districts continued throughout the state to support growing city schools as it was noted that residence patterns showed that most segregation occurred between city centers and suburbs (Diem et al., 2014). Between the years of 1975 and 2018, the number of counties in North Carolina with split school districts decreased from 35 to 11 (Nordstrom, 2018). While the consolidation of city and county schools was originally intended to support growth in local communities, an unintended consequence was that it began to address the desegregation of schools in North Carolina. The merger of city and county schools created more diverse school districts than would have been possible had they remained separate. The merger of school districts allowed Black students the opportunity to attend better-resourced White schools, which further impacted the students' educational experiences (Chapman, 2018). The merger of city and county schools also helped to create a shared commitment to the school system between city and county residents while decreasing the likelihood of White flight (Ayscue et al., 2018). Through the merger of county and city school districts and other innovative plans, North Carolina became one of the fastest states in the South to desegregate schools (Ayscue et al., 2018).

Prior to merging their school systems, the Charlotte and Mecklenburg School Districts were complicit in racially segregating schools through school choice plans. In the years before their merger, many of the transfer requests for Black children to attend White schools were

rejected by both boards of education (Ayscue et al., 2018). Finally, in 1965, the Swann family filed a lawsuit against the district for not allowing their Black son to attend an all-White school that was closest to their home. Six years later, the *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools* (1971) decision led to the district using student assignment and busing to integrate their schools (Nordstrom, 2018).

The goal of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) desegregation plan was for their schools to have school populations that mirrored the community demographics (Williams & Houck, 2013). It was through the busing plan that the district's plan for integration was realized (Smith, 1996). The district's plan called for (a) geographic zones to maximize diversity, (b) busing Black and White students to both urban and suburban settings, (c) satellite assignment of Black students at predominantly White schools for the duration of their elementary schooling where pairing was unsuccessful in achieving racial diversity, and (d) the creation of magnet schools to draw diverse groups of students from across the district (Ayscue et al., 2018). These strategies allowed CMS to successfully achieve desegregation and ensure their students attended a racially desegregated school during their academic career.

The city of Raleigh faced challenges similar to Charlotte's in its desegregation efforts. A decade after *Brown II*, only 70 of Raleigh's approximately 5,800 Black students and just seven of the 7,700 in Wake County schools had enrolled in predominantly White schools (Ayscue et al., 2018). Due to federal pressure and the withholding of nearly $1 million in federal funding, the Raleigh and Wake County boards of education began to discuss merging. Finally, the two school systems merged in 1976. In 1982, Wake County converted 27 schools into new magnet schools to successfully desegregate schools. The purpose of the magnet schools was to draw families to the schools by offering high-quality instruction and improved resources (George et

al., 2021). In addition to the magnet schools, the Wake County Board of Education also implemented a 15% to 45% balancing policy, which mandated that Black enrollment in each school should not fall below 15% or above 45%. This policy was well received by the business community because it did not have a negative effect on economic growth (Ayscue et al., 2018).

<div align="center">**School Choice in North Carolina**</div>

School Choice During Desegregation

With the *Brown* I decision, the North Carolina General Assembly approved the use of vouchers through the Pearsall Plan to allow students, mostly White students, to choose the school they would attend (McPherson, 2011). While the Pearsall Plan was ultimately ruled unconstitutional and the use of vouchers by White students to leave integrated schools was discontinued, it was one of the first school choice plans in North Carolina. These public funds allowed students to initially escape racial desegregation efforts (McPherson, 2011).

The *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools* (1971) decision allowed for busing to assist with choice plans by allowing students to attend schools of their choice. The busing plan allowed schools to mirror the demographics of their geographic zones (Smith, 1996; Williams & Houck, 2013). The ability to bus students within the school district allowed both Black and White students to choose the school that met their educational goals, even if the school was not in their neighborhood.

A final choice option during desegregation in North Carolina was the creation of magnet schools. The magnet school concept allows schools to offer creative approaches to curriculum while also racially integrating schools (Arcia, 2006; McPherson, 2011). Magnet schools were placed in predominantly Black neighborhoods to attract White students while conversely placing schools in White neighborhoods to attract Black students. The magnet school concept allowed for

school choice while simultaneously assisting the racial desegregation efforts in North Carolina (Arcia, 2006).

School Choice During the 21st Century

With the resegregation of schools increasing since 1973, school choice emerged as a policy option due to the failure of previous policies to achieve integration while working to improve educational outcomes for inner-city students (Godwin & Kemerer, 2002; Ayscue et al., 2018). The premise of school choice allows families to potentially match their students' educational interests with a school's curricular offerings.

The prevailing school choice theory today is the market theory of choice. This theory is based on the premise that the government's involvement in the daily operation of public schools prevents schools from being influenced by market forces or competition, essentially making them a monopoly (Ayscue et al., 2016; Ayscue et al., 2018). By contrast, the school choice model has worked to create competition among schools within a local community for parents to choose. The competition for students, in theory, will force schools to expand their curricular offerings and improve achievement scores.

Open Enrollment

One choice option in many school districts is open enrollment or intradistrict school choice. At one time, open enrollment was the most prevalent type of school choice in the country (Cullen et al., 2005). This policy allows students to attend any school of their choice within a school district, regardless of residence (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Holme et al., 2013). These schools typically offer different, specific curriculum options to personalize a student's experience. The choice of schools based on curricular offerings led to the development of both magnet schools and the early college model, a form of magnet school in which students can earn

community college credits while in high school. These open enrollment choice models were originally developed to assist in desegregating schools by drawing students from outside their normal attendance zones by appealing to their academic interests (Goldring & Smrekar, 2002).

The original intent of this open enrollment choice model was to provide racially balanced schools that provided students with a sound educational experience. However, if a school system has been granted unitary status and is no longer under court order to desegregate, admission policies must remain racially neutral (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Goldring & Smrekar, 2002; Holme et al., 2013). The resulting shift has led to White families disproportionately taking advantage of intradistrict school choice (Fowler-Finn, 2002; Holme et al., 2013). According to Fowler-Finn (2002) and Holme et al. (2013), the ability and the means granted through intradistrict school choice have resulted in a pattern of transfers in which White families may choose schools with less diversity while students of color often transfer into schools in which they are more represented.

Charter Schools

City Academy Charter School, which opened in 1992 in St. Paul, Minnesota, was the nation's inaugural charter school. Charter schools are publicly funded schools that are governed by a non-profit or for-profit organization through a contract or charter with the state or local education authority. There are three primary types of charter schools: those utilizing an education management organization (EMO), those utilizing a charter management organization (CMO), and the majority which are stand-along or single-site schools. Typically, the CMOs are not-for-profit schools, and EMOs are for profit. These organizations can operate much like a school district without borders in that they run a network of schools in multiple areas (Cookson et al., 2018; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). The third type of charter school, the stand-alone or single-

site charter school (Bradford, 2018), can prove essential in achieving a differentiated mix of educational options for families. Regardless of the type and depending on each individual state's charter school laws, the organization's charter grants the school flexibility with regulations, curriculum, and management while still holding the school accountable to a federal set of standards. A school's charter is reviewed periodically and may be revoked by the authorizing agency if guidelines on curriculum and management are not followed or if the accountability standards for student achievement are not met (Baker, 2016; Cookson et al., 2018; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Ladd, 2019).

A charter school is a choice school option in that no students are assigned to the school. Potential charter school operators must submit an application to an authorizing organization for the right to open a school and must apply for renewal at the end of the approved charter (Zimmer et al., 2014). Authorizers differ across states and can include local school boards, postsecondary institutions, the state department of education, independent state charter boards, county educational agencies, or nonprofit groups (Zimmer et al., 2014). The authorizers fulfill three key roles. First, they decide which charter schools are approved to open. Second, they monitor each school's performance and determine when to offer assistance. Third, they decide which schools become authorized (Zommer et al., 2014).

Students may choose to attend a charter school based on the school's academic offerings (Gleason, 2019). Depending on the school's charter, they can provide innovative approaches to teaching and learning that proponents claim will benefit traditional public schools. While most charter schools do have the flexibility to alter what could be perceived as a traditional approach to teaching and learning, many charter schools still must adhere to federal and state testing standards (Gleason, 2019).

Charter schools may also target different populations depending on their location. Within more urban areas, charter schools typically provide choice to students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Proponents suggest that this school choice option may provide students with a better educational opportunity than the traditional public school options. However, charter schools may have different enrollment philosophies. While some charter schools aim for racial integration, some studies have found that the overall impact has increased racial segregation and socioeconomic isolation (Chapman, 2018; Cookson et al., 2018; Holme et al., 2013; Ladd, 2019; Mead & Green, 2012). In fact, some traditional public school districts have changed school assignment plans that would racially balance traditional public schools for fear of families leaving to attend charter schools, thereby further segregating both the charter and public school options (Chapman, 2018; Cookson et al., 2018; Ladd, 2019).

Some student demographics may be underrepresented in charter schools. Because charter schools can select their students, unlike a district-run public school, they typically serve fewer students with disabilities (Ladd, 2019; Mead & Green, 2012). While the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act makes it clear that charter schools must serve students with disabilities, their inclusion may run counter to the current initiatives to include children with disabilities in general classrooms (Mead & Green, 2012). Students with disabilities are not the only underserved population; students who are English Language Learners tend also to be underrepresented in charter schools. By controlling the programming offered to students, charter schools may also be controlling the student population they serve (Ladd, 2019; Mead & Green, 2012). Through the control of programming, charter schools can further the stratification of schools both in the traditional and charter schools, further depleting resources for students and reversing integration policies (Ladd, 2019; Mead & Green, 2012).

The charter school movement in North Carolina began in 1996 with the Charter School Act. This Act authorized the establishment of 100 charter schools. During the first school year after the Charter School Act was passed, 34 charter schools opened. By 2010, there were 99 active charter schools open in North Carolina. In 2011, under pressure to expand school choice options, the North Carolina legislature passed Senate Bill 8, which removed the 100-school limit while also removing the limits on enrollment for charter schools (Public Schools First NC, 2011; North Carolina History Project, 2016). In addition to lowering the required student enrollment for a charter school, Senate Bill 8 also eliminated provisions that guarded against schools being created for specific demographics. With the cap on charter schools lifted, the number of charter schools increased to 200 for the 2020-2021 school year (Public Schools First NC, 2021). With the increase in the number of charter schools, the number of students served in charter schools has also dramatically increased in North Carolina. From the 2012 school year to the 2021 school year, enrollment increased from approximately 45,000 students to over 122,000 students (Public Schools First NC, 2021).

The increase in charter enrollment also affects the funding for traditional public schools in North Carolina. Local school districts lose state and local funding to the charter school for students within their county who have chosen to attend one of the charter school options. However, this loss of funding is oftentimes not offset by a reduction in fixed costs to the district. This reduction in funding can impact the services the non-charter public schools are able to offer to the students they serve. This transfer of funds can create a negative fiscal effect on traditional public school districts by reducing spending capacity, number of students, and budget flexibility (Bruno, 2019; Cook, 2018; Han & Keefe, 2020; Jones, 2018; Mamo, 2022).

Vouchers

The original and historical concept of a school voucher, where public funding was used to support private school attendance, was to allow White students to choose a different school to thwart the desegregation efforts within a school system. There are currently 14 states and the District of Columbia that operate voucher programs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Depending on the state, the successful implementation of a school voucher program has met varying levels of success. There have been instances where the legislature's policy has been struck down due to the separation of church and state by not allowing public dollars to pay for a child's education in a religiously affiliated school. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) also noted that ballot initiatives to spend public funds for private school vouchers have been unsuccessful in California, Colorado, Oregon, Utah, and Washington.

Voucher programs vary from state to state by determining who is eligible for a voucher and who is not eligible. In more recent years, the premise of the voucher program was to provide access to a quality education for students of all races. Depending on the state, voucher programs may be restricted to students in low-income families, students who previously attended a public school, students from certain geographic areas, and students with disabilities. Most states do have a cap on the number of vouchers that are granted each year, with the cap continuing to increase over time (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

One issue with voucher programs is their level of funding. Depending on the state, the amount of the voucher for each student may be so small that they do very little to enhance the educational market in an area (Howell et al., 2002). This lack of funding may not cover the total cost of attending an independent private school while also failing to provide the receiving school with adequate resources to maintain its facilities or pay staff (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017;

Howell et al., 2002). This lack of funding can also limit the number of independent schools that enter the market to provide innovative curricular experiences for students, thereby limiting the intended effects of the voucher program. This also allows private schools to carefully select the students they serve while also maintaining the ability to dismiss students who are not academically strong or behaviorally challenged. The funding for eligible students has also led to mixed results for the students the voucher was intended to support (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Howell et al., 2002).

Private schools typically do not have to adhere to the same state guidelines as state-funded public schools (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Howell et al., 2002). For example, a private school is typically not required to follow state-mandated curricula, participate in statewide achievement testing programs, or employ state-licensed teachers. Additionally, private schools are not required to publicly release employee wages or benefits, test scores, attendance figures, suspension rates, or drop-out rates. Finally, a private school may not have to adhere to a state's open meeting and records laws (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Howell et al., 2002; Miner, 1998). Even though a private school that participates in voucher programs receives public funding, they do not have to follow the same testing and reporting procedures as the public schools. Therefore, despite receiving public dollars, it is difficult to determine the academic and social benefits of those dollars due to differing requirements for private and public schools (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Howell et al., 2002).

According to Egalite (2020), the North Carolina General Assembly created its version of a voucher program called Opportunity Scholarships in 2013. The Opportunity Scholarship program initially awarded $4200 for qualified students to attend participating nonpublic schools. Families could qualify for a scholarship under the following conditions: (a) students had to

attend a public school for at least one year prior to applying for a scholarship, (b) students received a voucher the previous year, (c) be eligible to enter kindergarten, first or second grade, (d) live in foster care or be an adopted child whose decree was entered not more than one year before applying for the grant, (e) have a parent in full-time active duty in the military or receives an honorable discharge within 12 months before applying for the voucher, or (f) live in a household with an income level not in excess of 175% of the amount for the student to qualify for the federal free or reduced lunch program. The first tax dollars were issued to a private school in the 2014-2015 school year. The voucher was not without controversy; however, the constitutionality of the program was upheld in 2015 by the North Carolina Supreme Court after having previously been ruled unconstitutional (Egalite, 2020).

The North Carolina General Assembly has provided additional support for its voucher program each year. In 2016, the North Carolina General Assembly increased the percentage of the education budget available to the Opportunity Scholarship fund. It also created a reserve fund to be augmented by $10 million dollars each year until 2027-2028 where it would plateau at $144.8 million in annual funding (Public Schools First NC, 2021). The 2021 budget further increased the program's funding as well as raising the augmentation to $15 million to reach an annual funding level of more than $255 million by 2032-2033. Additionally, the 2021 budget also allocated funds to market the vouchers due to demand lagging behind the funding. In 2022, the budget raised the income eligibility for a private school voucher to 200% of the income needed to qualify for a federally subsidized meal (about $100,000 a year for a family of four) and added an additional $56 million a year for the voucher program. The 2022-2023 budget for the program was $94.8 million dollars (House Bill 259. 2023 Appropriations Act; Public Schools

First NC, 2021). At that time, the dollars that were allocated to the voucher programs, even if unused, were not transferred back to the public school budgets.

The 2023-2025 biennial budget law made significant changes to North Carolina's Opportunity Scholarship voucher program. As illustrated in Table 2, the new budget triples funding for the program and ends income restrictions for getting a private school voucher. The budget calls for adding more than a billion dollars in new state funding over the next decade, raising the current funding level of $176.5 million to $520.5 million by 2032-2033. Additionally, $1 million is appropriated to contract with an independent company to market the program (House Bill 259. 2023 Appropriations Act).

Under previous provisions, a North Carolina family had to make 200% or less of the amount needed to qualify for free or reduced school meal prices to qualify for the vouchers. That amounts to $111,000 per year for a family of four. Under the new law, vouchers are available to all families regardless of income, although the individual voucher amount will vary according to family income. Specifically, lower-income families will receive a voucher that equals the state per pupil expenditure. That means a family of four making less than $55,000 would be eligible to receive the maximum amount of $7,213. A family of four making more than $249,750 a year would be eligible for a voucher of $3,346 for each child attending private schools. Additionally, the new law eliminates the requirement that voucher recipients must have previously attended a public school (House Bill 259. 2023 Appropriations Act).

Proponents say that additional voucher funding will let more families escape public schools. However, State Superintendent Catherine Truitt recently explained in a State Board of Education meeting that most voucher dollars will go to families already in private schools. An

Office of State Budget and Management analysis found that the program will cost traditional

public schools over $200 million in state funding (Hui, 2023).

Table 2

State Appropriation for the North Carolina Opportunity Scholarship Voucher Program, 2023-

2032

Fiscal Year	Appropriation
2022-2023	$94,840,000
2023-2024	$176,540,000
2024-2025	$191,540,000
2025-2026	$415,540,000
2026-2027	$430,540,000
2027-2028	$445,540,000
2028-2029	$460,540,000
2029-2030	$475,000,000
2030-2031	$490,540,000
2031-2032	$505,540,000

Note. Table adapted from House Bill 259. 2023 Appropriations Act.

https://www.ncleg.gov/Sessions/2023/Bills/House/PDF/H259v6.pdf

The Impact of School Choice

This section describes research related to the impact of school choice on traditional

public schools. Most studies examining this topic have focused on charter schools. This is

probably because of their popularity and because of the greater challenges associated with

examining the impact of vouchers. Studies examining school choice have typically examined the impact on inputs (funding), outputs (student achievement), and the racial composition of schools (Danns, 2008; Dee & Fu, 2004; Gleason, 2019; Ladd, 2019).

Impact on Inputs

Studies suggest that charter schools may create fiscal stress for traditional public schools (Bruno, 2019; Cook, 2017; Han & Keefe, 2020; Jones, 2018; Mamo, 2022). While traditional public schools and charter schools both receive revenues from local, state, and federal sources, changes in these revenues for traditional public schools may occur as the distribution of students attending traditional public or charter schools' changes (Jones, 2018). In addition to losing revenue, traditional public schools may lose economies of scale but maintain relatively unchanged fixed costs when students enroll in charter schools (Bruno, 2019). Examining Ohio districts, Cook (2017) found that charter school competition led to revenue losses for traditional public school districts. Likewise, Bruno (2019) found that traditional public schools in California spent less per pupil, allocated smaller shares of spending toward day-to-day operations, and experienced greater levels of financial strain as the first charter schools opened nearby. Mamo (2022) found similar results in Utah. While these studies analyzed individual states, Jones (2017) used 17 years of longitudinal data from across the United States to report clear evidence that revenues for traditional public schools decreased as charter school competition increased. Han and Keefe (2020) concurred that losing students to charter schools decreased the educational revenue available to traditional public school students.

Impact on Outputs

Intradistrict Choice

When examining the impact on outputs, Cullen et al. (2005) found mixed results about the impact of a school choice program that was operated by the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). These findings are noteworthy because at the time of their study, the CPS had an open enrollment policy that afforded families the choice to attend practically any public school they desired. About one-half of all students in CPS opted to attend a public school other than the one to which they were assigned. Furthermore, CPS had a large representation of students of color, a group that choice proponents suggest will benefit greatly from choice options (Cullen et al., 2005).

In their analysis, Cullen et al. (2005) found little tangible academic benefit associated with students opting to attend a school other than the one to which they would have been assigned. However, they found that students who opted into a choice school were 7.6% more likely to graduate than their peers who did not. Upon further analysis, they discovered that the students who commonly opted into high-achieving schools were academically advanced, meaning they were likely to outperform their peers who did not opt into high-achieving schools regardless of their school choice. By contrast, they found that students who chose to attend one of the district's career academies graduated at higher rates than peers who remained in their assigned schools. This was an important finding because students who opted into the career academies were not commonly among the higher achieving students, implying real benefits for students who choose to attend those schools (Cullen et al., 2005).

Similar to the Cullen et al. (2005) findings in the Chicago Public Schools, Culverhouse (2018) found mixed results when comparing student achievement results between middle school

students at inner-city magnet schools in Virginia. Culverhouse determined that the pass rates for the magnet school students in each demographic were higher than the students at the traditional public schools. However, the results were not significant and did not show that the school choice magnet school program provided students with an academic advantage.

Charter Schools Nationally

The debate over charter schools has existed for decades. Proponents praise charter schools' autonomy, while opponents criticize traditional public school resources going to charter schools (CREDO, 2023).

An early national study of charter schools found mixed results, with some doing better than district-run public schools and some doing worse. Specifically, a 2009 large-scale study from the Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford University found that 17% of charter schools produced greater academic gains than traditional public schools. However, 37% performed worse than their traditional public school counterparts serving students from similar demographics (Cookson et al., 2018; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

More recently, CREDO released a study in June 2023 that concluded that charter schools outperform traditional public schools on reading and math examinations (Raymond et al., 2023). CREDO researchers examined data across 29 states and Washington, D.C. by matching charter school students with virtual twins (students with similar characteristics such as test scores and free or reduced lunch status) from a nearby traditional public school to compare students' academic growth from the 2014-2015 school year to the 2018-2019 school year. They found that 36% of charter schools have stronger annual gains in both reading and math, while weaker gains than traditional public schools shrunk to 17% in reading and 25% in math from their previous studies. They found that charter school students have an average of 16 more days of learning in

reading and six more days in math than their traditional public school peers. They concluded that achievement growth is higher on average in charter schools, with student attendance in charter schools generating gains in math and reading. CREDO found that attending a charter school for one year would raise the average student's math score from the 50th to the 50.4 percentile. They found that attending a charter school for one year would raise the average student's reading score from the 50th to the 51st percentile (Raymond et al., 2023).

According to CREDO (2023), the effects of charter schools vary according to region, type of charter school, and individual student characteristics. Charter schools in the Northeast generally posted larger test score gains. Also, charter school networks outperformed stand-alone charter schools. Overall, Black, Hispanic, and low-income students benefitted more from attending charter schools (Raymond et al., 2023).

Two concerns were noted in the CREDO (2023) study. First, virtual charter schools had large negative effects. Second, students with disabilities had smaller learning gains in charter schools than their matched peers in traditional public schools (Raymond et al., 2023).

Harris and Larsen (2018) examined charter school outcomes in New Orleans from 2005-2014. This was an important study because the New Orleans school reform movement was the first time that a traditional public school system was completely replaced by a market-driven model.

Following Hurricane Katrina, the state of Louisiana took over the public schools in New Orleans in 2005 and turned them over to non-profit organizations that operated them as charter schools. This action was in response to tremendous underachievement, instability, and corruption in New Orleans' schools. For example, New Orleans' schools ranked 67th of 68 districts in Louisiana in reading and mathematics during the 2004-2005 school year. The high school

graduation rate was 56% (10% below the state average). The district had eight superintendents

between 1998 and 2005, with an average superintendent tenure of 11 months. Also, 11 school

officials were charged by the FBI for criminal financial mismanagement (Harris & Larsen,

2018).

The non-profit organizations that ran the New Orleans schools had autonomy over nearly

all facets of school operations. Student assignment to schools moved from using neighborhood

schools to a choice system in which families could choose schools from across the city. Like

other charter school models, funding followed students to specific charter schools (Harris &

Larsen, 2018).

The results of the Harris and Larsen (2018) study of New Orleans from 2005-2014 were

very positive. The charter reforms increased student achievement by 11-16 percentiles,

depending on the subject area. High school graduation rates also improved by three to nine

percentage points. Additionally, the college entry rate for graduating seniors increased by eight

to 15 percentage points, and college graduation rates increased by three to five percentage points.

The reforms also improved all outcomes for disadvantaged students and reduced inequities in

high school and college outcomes.

When describing the impressive charter results from New Orleans, Harris and Larsen

(2018) noted that it is unusual to see programs and policies improve all educational outcomes.

However, they cautioned that these substantial results might not arise in other districts because

the circumstances in New Orleans were extraordinary in two important ways. First, the charter

reforms were accompanied by a significant infusion of funding. School revenue increased

through higher local and federal funding and philanthropic support. Second, New Orleans was

experiencing unusual corruption and dysfunction before the reforms, meaning that the bar for

improvement was low. Nonetheless, they found that the charter school results in New Orleans were impressive and noteworthy (Harris & Larsen, 2018).

Charter Schools in North Carolina

North Carolina General Statutes (N.C.G.S. §115C.83.15) and the North Carolina Every Student Succeeds Act State Plan require schools to receive an annual performance letter grade of "A-F." The school performance grades are based on two overall components: an achievement component based largely on students' performance on end-of-year standardized testing and a growth component. Eighty percent of the "A-F" grade a school receives is based on the achievement component. Twenty percent is based on the growth component. The final school performance grade is based on a 15-point scale (North Carolina General Statute 115C.83.15).

Table 3 illustrates the distribution of the percentages of "A-F" letter grades for traditional public schools and charter schools for the following years: 2018, 2019, 2022, and 2023. Grades were not reported for the 2020 and 2021 school years because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Charter schools had a higher percentage of schools receiving a grade of "A" in 2018 and 2019 and a lower percentage of schools receiving a grade of "A" in 2022 and 2023. Regardless of school type, the largest percentage of schools received a grade of "C" in most years. Traditional public schools had a higher percentage of schools with a grade of "C" each year except for 2023. Charter schools had a higher percentage of schools to receive a grade of "F" in 2018, 2019, and 2023. Traditional public schools had a higher percentage of schools making an "F" grade in 2022.

Table 3

Percentages of North Carolina Traditional Public Schools and Charter Schools Receiving A-F

Letter Grades, 2018, 2019, 2022, and 2023

Grade	Type	2018	2019	2022	2023
A	TPS	7.2	7.8	5.8	7
	Charter	8.9	10.7	3.6	5.9
B	TPS	27.9	28.9	16.7	19.7
	Charter	32.7	33.7	23.5	21.8
C	TPS	42.7	41.9	35.0	37.7
	Charter	35.7	29.8	33.1	39.6
D	TPS	18.6	18.2	32.3	27.7
	Charter	17.9	19.1	30.1	23.3
F	TPS	3.6	3.2	10.2	7.9
	Charter	4.8	6.7	9.7	9.4

Note. TPS means traditional public schools. Table adapted from the North Carolina Department

of Public Instruction Accountability Report Archive for 2017-2018 through 2012-2022.

https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/testing-and-school-accountability/school-

accountability-and-reporting/accountability-data-sets-and-reports/accountability-report-archive.

Data for 2022-2023 were gathered from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

2022-2023 School Performance Reports. https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/testing-and-

school-accountability/school-accountability-and-reporting/accountability-data-sets-and-reports

　　To further illustrate the letter grades received by traditional public schools and charter

schools, Table 4 shows the combined percentages of traditional public schools and charter

schools receiving a grade of "A" or "B." It also shows the combined percentages of traditional

public schools and charter schools receiving a grade of "D" or "F." The differences for each grade category for each year are also illustrated.

Table 4

Percentages of Traditional Public Schools and Charter Schools Receiving Letter Grades of "A or B" and "D or F" for 2018, 2019, 2022, and 2023

Grade	Type	2018	2019	2022	2023
	TPS	35.1	36.7	22.5	26.7
A or B	Charter	41.6	44.4	27.1	27.7
	Difference	6.5	9.6	4.6	1.0
	TPS	22.2	21.4	42.5	35.6
D or F	Charter	22.7	25.8	39.8	32.7
	Difference	0.5	4.4	2.7	2.9

Note. TPS means traditional public schools. Table adapted from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction Accountability Report Archive for 2017-2018 through 2012-2022. https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/testing-and-school-accountability/school-accountability-and-reporting/accountability-data-sets-and-reports/accountability-report-archive. Data for 2022-2023 were gathered from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction 2022-2023 School Performance Reports. https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/testing-and-school-accountability/school-accountability-and-reporting/accountability-data-sets-and-reports

As illustrated in Table 4, a higher percentage of charter schools had a letter grade of "A" or "B" each year. Charter schools had a higher percentage of schools with a letter grade of "D" or "F" than traditional public schools in 2018 and 2019. Traditional public schools had a higher percentage of schools with a letter grade of "D" or "F" in 2022 and 2023. In 2018, 2019, and 2022, the difference in the percentages of each school type scoring a "D" or "F" was lower than the percentages of each school type scoring an "A" or "B."

North Carolina also measures the academic growth of schools as part of its annual accountability program. Unlike the "A-F" letter grades, these academic growth measures analyze the performance of the same students on the state's annual standardized tests over time. Schools are deemed to have "not met," "met," or "exceeded" growth (N.C.G.S. §115C.83.15).

As illustrated in Table 5, the percentage of North Carolina charter schools meeting or exceeding growth was higher than traditional public schools during the 2014-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. The percentage of schools meeting or exceeding growth was higher for public schools than charter schools for the six years that were measured from the 2016-2017 school year to the 2022-2023 school year. This growth measure was not calculated for the 2019-2020 school year and the 2020-2021 school year because of school closures related to the pandemic.

Table 5

Percentages of North Carolina Traditional Public Schools and Charter Schools Meeting or Exceeding Growth Measures, 2014-2023

School year	Percentage of traditional public schools meeting or exceeding growth	Percentage of charter schools meeting or exceeding growth
2013-2014	75	76
2014-2015	72	73

Table 5

Percentages of North Carolina Traditional Public Schools and Charter Schools Meeting or Exceeding Growth Measures, 2014-2023 (continued)

2015-2016	74	70
2016-2017	76	70
2017-2018	74	69
2018-2019	75	69
2019-2020	NA	NA
2020-2021	NA	NA
2021-2022	71	63
2022-2023	73	71

Note. Growth measures were not calculated for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Table adapted from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction Accountability Report Archive for 2017-2018 through 2012-2022. https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/testing-and-school-accountability/school-accountability-and-reporting/accountability-data-sets-and-reports/accountability-report-archive. Data for 2022-2023 were gathered from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction 2022-2023 School Performance Reports. https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/testing-and-school-accountability/school-accountability-and-reporting/accountability-data-sets-and-reports

Community Perceptions

School choice decisions for families can vary between academic reasons and convenience reasons. Hausman and Goldring (2000) noted that after reviewing studies in Arizona,

Milwaukee, and Minnesota, parents who decide to send their children may do so for nonacademic reasons such as a closer alignment to their family values. Within the Arizona study, academics was the primary motive for transferring. These reasons were further solidified within a Massachusetts study that found parents were choosing schools based on higher indicators of student performance and higher socioeconomic status (Hausman & Goldring, 2000). According to Hausman and Goldring (2000), these factors may contribute to a higher level of connection for parents to their chosen school over their assigned school.

Jenkins (2020) recently examined the perceptions of teachers and administrators at a secondary neighborhood public school in Washington, DC about how school choice affected an important but indirect output, community perception of the school. Jenkins found that the logic of choice as a means for school improvement was inherently flawed. Rather than serving as a catalyst for improvements, choice heightened struggles for teachers in the high-poverty school as the school struggled to maintain student enrollment and overcome the stigma of serving a high-poverty community. The educators thoroughly enjoyed working within a vulnerable neighborhood and their tightly linked relation to the local community. However, negative perceptions of the school that were heightened since the inception of school choice contributed to deficit thinking by external stakeholders, which impacted student enrollment and other aspects of the school.

Vouchers and Student Achievement

The existing body of evidence on the impact of vouchers is growing but incomplete (Egalite et al., 2020). Studies about the effectiveness of vouchers vary in their conclusions as the impact of vouchers may change in magnitude and statistical significance over time (Egalite et al., 2020; Shakeel et al., 2021). Egalite (2020) reported on 17 studies before 2017 that found positive

or no effects associated with voucher use. Specifically, positive overall results for the Washington, DC Opportunity Scholarship Program and the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program were found in studies before 2015. Another set of studies from 2002-2010 found positive results for vouchers for subgroups of voucher students in New York City and Dayton, Ohio. A third set of studies conducted between 2004 and 2014 found no impact on student achievement from vouchers in Washington, DC, New York City, and Toledo, Ohio. However, more recent studies point to potentially negative test score impacts associated with voucher use in the United States (Egalite, 2020).

Webber et al. (2019) studied the Washington, DC Opportunity Scholarship Program, the only federally funded voucher program in the United States. The study included 1,800 student applicants who entered voucher lotteries from 2012 to 2014. Achievement and other outcomes were compared between students who were offered the vouchers and those who applied but did not receive them. The use of random lotteries meant that both student groups in this study were similar when they applied.

According to Webber et al. (2019), the Washington, DC Opportunity Scholarship Program had no effect on student achievement three years after students applied for the vouchers. During the first two years after applying for the scholarships, students who received the vouchers performed worse on tests of reading and mathematics than those who did not. However, between years two and three, students receiving the vouchers had faster growth in mathematics. By year three, the two groups performed similarly in math. By year three, the students not receiving vouchers outperformed those who received vouchers in reading. However, the vouchers did have a positive effect on chronic absenteeism. Also, students receiving vouchers reported better perceptions of school safety than their non-voucher peers after three

years. However, parents' perceptions of safety were very similar between voucher and non-voucher groups, with two-thirds of parents in both groups reporting that their child's school was "very safe" (Webber et al., 2019).

Figlio and Karbownik (2016) examined the Ohio EdChoice Scholarship Program. Using student records from 2004-2013, they reported substantial negative impacts in math and English language arts. The largest negative effects were reported in math.

Waddington and Berends (2017) evaluated the Indiana Choice Scholarship Program by examining the performance of upper elementary and middle school students (grades 3-8) from the 2011-2012 school year until the 2014-2015 school year, the first four years of the program. They found that students receiving a voucher experienced an average annual loss of 0.10 standard deviations in math compared with matched traditional public school students. The largest math losses were during the first two years of the program; math scores improved after that. They also found no meaningful effect of vouchers on student performance in English Language Arts. They found that special education students receiving vouchers had an average annual loss of 0.13 standard deviations in English Language Arts. By contrast, voucher students attending Catholic schools had small gains in English Language Arts. In their examination of scores from voucher students who returned to traditional public schools, they found overall achievement losses during their time in private schools.

Abdulkadiroglu et al. (2018) examined the impact of the Louisiana Scholarship Program in the first year after statewide implementation in 2012. They found large and statistically negative impacts across all subjects examined. The researchers reported that using a voucher to attend a private school reduced student achievement in math, reading, science, and social studies. These results caused the researchers to question the quality of the participating private schools.

Egalite et al. (2020) studied the first-year effects of the North Carolina Opportunity Scholarship program. They recruited 698 students to take a nationally normed standardized test, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Of those, 252 public school scores and 245 scores of private school voucher recipients were included because they met all study criteria. These scores came from 24 private schools and 14 public schools. All of the private schools were religiously affiliated, which aligns with data indicating that the majority of North Carolina vouchers are used in religious schools. Voucher and non-voucher students were matched on baseline achievement and demographic data. Findings included the voucher students having positive estimates of 0.36 standard deviations in mathematics and 0.44 standard deviations in language. Results for voucher students were statistically significant in language only. The vouchers had no effect on reading scores.

Shakeel et al. (2021) recently found overall positive voucher results from a meta-analysis of 21 studies of programs from across the world. In addition to Washington, DC, New York City, Toledo and Dayton, Ohio, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and the state of Louisiana, researchers analyzed studies of voucher programs in Bogota, Columbia, Delhi, India, and Andra Pradesh. Overall, vouchers produced a positive achievement impact of 0.126 standard deviations. While the overall impact was higher in reading than in math, the math impact in the United States was statistically null. Researchers also noted that the vouchers were more cost-effective than traditional public schools. However, the researchers noted that the lower overall costs in private schools were likely affected by less availability of cafeterias, nurses, counselors, and programs for disabled and non-English speaking students in private schools than in public schools.

Impact on Racial Composition of Schools

One of the consequences of school choice, according to Ayscue (2016), is that families may pursue educational options that are based on race and class and not on test scores, school safety, appearance, or poverty rates. Martinez et al. (1995) predicted that the opportunity to choose based on individual preferences would increase the likelihood of segregation for schools due to parents from higher socioeconomic status and rural areas taking advantage of the options to choose their school. Similarly, Glenn (2012), through his research of over 15 years of student population data in numerous states, espoused that there is a consistently significant reduction in diversity in schools impacted by school choice. Primarily, Glenn (2012) found that drastic changes occur over time as traditional public schools lose White students through school choice processes.

Choice movements have not freed lower-income children from high-poverty schools as choice proponents predicted (Billingham & Hunt, 2016). Rather, evidence illuminates increased levels of racial segregation stemming from parental choice (Alcaino & Jenkins, 2020; Frankenberg & Siegel-Hawley, 2013; Monarrez et al., 2022; Wells et al., 2019). Families that attend charter schools tend to enroll in schools that are more racially segregated than the schools they left as charter schools often draw White students away from public school districts, especially in districts with higher levels of racial integration (Billingham & Hunt, 2016). In their survey-based experiment, Billingham and Hunt (2016) found that the proportion of Black students in a school has a consistent and inverse association with the likelihood of White parents enrolling their children in the school. Additionally, while magnet schools were often established with the explicit goal of promoting racial diversity, they struggled to achieve that goal against a diminishing public interest in racially diverse schools (Billingham & Hunt, 2016).

The impact of school choice in North Carolina mimics findings from other studies. Nordstrom (2018) found that most of the state's charter schools contain a higher percentage of White students than the traditional public school system in the county in which the charter school is located. Berry (2020) confirmed Nordstrom's findings that there is a distinct difference in the demographics between schools of choice and traditional public schools when choice is introduced into a school district. At the same time, North Carolina's charter schools have become increasingly segregated, with some charter schools serving primarily students of one racial demographic. In 72% of North Carolina's counties with at least one charter school, charter schools increased the degree of racial segregation in the district as measured by a racial dissimilarity index. While state law allows charter schools to use weighted lotteries to ensure the demographic makeup of their school reflects the makeup of the larger community, as of March 2017, only four of the state's 168 charter schools utilized weighted lotteries to achieve student diversity goals. While state law suggests that charter schools should reasonably attempt to mirror the demographics of the community, there is no penalty for not doing so (Nordstrom, 2018).

To further illustrate the impact of charter school segregation in North Carolina, Nordstrom (2018) pointed out that Franklin and Granville Counties each contain two charter schools. In all four charter schools, approximately 80% of the students are White. However, White students comprise less than 50% of each county's population. At Martin County's lone charter school, Bear Grass, 95% of the students are White, compared to just 37% of students in the county's traditional public schools. In Rowan County, the traditional public school district's recent merger of Faith Elementary School (which had a majority of White students) and Koontz Elementary School (which had a majority of students of color) was met by the Faith community establishing Faith Academy, a charter school that could serve students who previously attended

Faith Elementary School. In fact, Faith Academy is on the exact location that was previously used by Faith Elementary School (Blankenship, 2021).

History of City High School

The city where City High School is located started its first public school in 1891 (Watt, 1992). The desire for a public school originated in 1883 with the local city voting on a special tax to purchase bonds to start the school (Watt, 1992). Initially, the residents were not in favor of the special tax; the sentiment at the time was that the residents were not interested in paying for students to take Latin or mathematics courses (Watt, 1992). Additionally, families with no children were also not interested in paying taxes for the creation of a graded school. Finally, after eight years of trying to get the tax passed, the Chamber of Commerce, wanting to bring mills and factories to the area, backed the bill and the start of the graded schools began. The graded school system was the beginning of the modern government-operated and tax-supported schools that we see today (Reese, 2022).

In September of 1891, the city hired the first principal and teachers to serve their first 170 students (Watt, 1992). At the time, there was not a formal building for the students to attend (Watt, 1992). Finally, in 1892, ground was broken for the first official school for the city. With a $10,000 allocation, the building finally opened to receive students in January of 1893 (Watt, 1992). At this time, the school served grades first through seventh (Watt, 1992). It wasn't until 1907 that an actual high school was introduced into the city with the addition of eighth and ninth grades. In 1910, the tenth grade was added. It would take five more years until the 11th grade was added, and then not until the state took over schools during the depression was a twelfth grade included to create the high school at the heart of this study. During this time, City High School

was known for its academic excellence, consistently outperforming the state on standardized

testing (Watt, 1992).

City High School has occupied several different facilities. The first facility served

students from 1891-1921. The school then moved to a new location from 1922 – 1941 (Watt,

1992). During this time, only two superintendents served during the 50 years of existence. In

1942, the current location of the school opened for students. The school was a three-story

building with a dedicated gym and auditorium. There was also a minor league baseball stadium

on the property. In 2006, the original building was razed and a new modern building was built on

site, opening in 2009, with a new three-story building and improved athletic facilities. The

school still sits in the heart of the downtown area, serving the local community's students (Watt,

1992).

Desegregation of City High School

City High School was initially created to serve the White students of the city. A separate

high school serving Black students was opened in the city in 1891, the same year that City High

School opened. On July 19, 1963, the local school board voted to allow nine Black students to

enroll in the city's White schools for the coming school year (Spencer, 2013). At that local board

meeting, only one resident requested that the city's schools remain segregated. However, the

board chairman stated that the place to fight society's problems was in law and politics and not

the schools (Spencer, 2013). On September 3, 1963, the city schools welcomed eight Black

students into their school system; four attended the local elementary school, and four attended

the high school. In total, seven female students and one male student led the integration of the

city school system. These students were met with varying degrees of intimidation, with several

having to take taxis to school instead of riding the bus (Spencer, 2013).

Prior to 1968, the city operated numerous Black and White schools that were financially supported by their surrounding communities (Reese, 2022). Although the city school system elected to integrate the city schools in 1963, the high school for Black students still operated until May of 1968, educating the city's Black students for approximately 77 years. With the closing of the Black high school in 1968, the students that had not graduated were integrated into City High School (Fuller, 2009). Starting with the fall of 1968, there was only one high school for all students, both Black and White, to attend. With this merger, many of the traditions of the formerly Black high school were lost, replaced with the traditions of the White high school. In addition to the change in school colors and extracurricular offerings, student integration was likened to assimilation since much of the culture and identity of the formerly Black High School were lost (Spencer, 2013). The process of integration was not an easy one for the students involved, but over time, both Black and White students were able to reap the same educational benefits.

School Choice and City High School

A variety of school choice options have arisen in close proximity to City High School over the past two decades. Two of the largest charter schools in North Carolina opened in 2007 and are within the county where City High School is located. To minimize the loss of students to the charter schools, the public school district began creating additional intradistrict choice options to accompany the early college it opened in 2005 (Fofaira, 2019). Over the next 12 years, the traditional public school district opened two more early colleges, one of which is located on the campus of City High School. In 2011, the district also provided an additional choice program for students in the county by opening an International Baccalaureate (IB) high school only six miles from City High School. Much like the magnet school concept, these intradistrict choice

options were marketed to higher-achieving students with the promise of niche programs that were not available at every high school in the county (Cookson et al., 2018). These school choice developments mean that students who currently live in the City High School attendance zone have two large charter schools, an IB high school, and three early college schools that they might choose to attend instead of City High School. All of these choice options are within reasonable proximity to City High School.

The school district has also utilized busing to further enable students to attend the schools of their choice within the district. While there are no traditional bus routes for students at the early colleges or IB high school, the district does provide several "shuttle" stops to facilitate transportation. These shuttle stops allow students from all over the county to attend any of the specialty schools within the district. The busing option assists in making these choice options more accessible to all students and are not solely based on a neighborhood school model (Ladd, 2019). This access has contributed to a shift in demographics at City High School (Holme et al., 2013).

With these new options, the free market education system has provided both students and parents with choices when it comes to their educational options (Fofaira, 2019). Families are no longer confined to the school that is within their neighborhood or busing zone (Danns, 2018; Ladd, 2019). These school options, whether charter schools or non-traditional settings operated by the district, have created demographic imbalances due to the competition for students. Many times, this competition is driven by the community's perceptions about student achievement, further widening the gap in both demographics and socioeconomics at City High School (Danns, 2018). Some schools have been left with less racial and economic diversity among students and with little resemblance to their surrounding communities (Holme et al., 2013).

As previously noted, when families have the option of choice, White families often choose schools that have less racial diversity and higher academic achievement (Wells et al., 2019). This has been the experience for City High School. Unlike a few decades ago, families in the area served by City High School now have the option to attend one of two charter schools, an IB program at a neighboring high school, or one of several early college magnet programs. All of these choice programs target high-achieving students. This influx of choice may have contributed to changes in the racial demographics of the school, a loss of enrollment, and more difficult staffing. As the demographics of City High School have changed, so have the experience levels of the teaching staff. As Kahlenberg (2006) noted, the change in demographics can lead to an inexperienced staff due to increased turnover and fewer supports for students. A more detailed analysis of the changes at City High Schools following the introduction of school choice options will be provided in Chapter 4.

Conceptual Framework

The expansion of school choice, led by charter school development in the 1990s, has changed the educational system to more closely resemble a free market. The assumption is that promoting competition and a free market system of schools will improve the quality of education (Frontier & Rickabaugh, 2014). The market theory of choice is based on the economic principles of a competitive market where parents act as consumers and select a school for their children that best meets their needs and interests (Ayscue et al., 2018). This approach assumes that the traditional public school system has become unresponsive to pressures for change and that the expansion of educational choices from outside of the traditional public school system will lead to innovation (Frontier & Rickabaugh, 2014). Market theory works from the assumption that a government monopoly in education interferes with the beneficial market forces of maximizing

individual self-interest and competition. This ideology is a change from previous theories which viewed education as a means to prioritize the common good while advancing community goals. The market theory of choice further prioritizes individual goals, competition, and privatization.

Jenkins (2020) noted that in an arena of competition, a school's reputation will impact the school's position in the marketplace as an option for parents and their students. The market theory of choice, as it relates to school choice, began to give families options both within and outside of their assigned school attendance zones. The combination of open enrollment, school choice, and voucher programs allowed parents to access educational opportunities outside their normal attendance zones. The perception of those options within the educational market can drive the choice of which school a student will attend. Jenkins (2020) again noted that in a highly competitive market with many choices, the perception of each school has a significant impact on families' decisions.

The market theory of choice provides the framework for analyzing how the existence of school choice has affected the demographics and achievement of City High School. The theory of choice provides the lens through which this current study was developed.

Summary

A review of the literature has highlighted the struggle of schools throughout the United States to resemble the neighborhoods they serve following the *Brown 1* and *Brown 2* decisions. The neighborhood school, originally conceived by Horace Mann, was based on the idea that all students would be educated under one roof for the betterment of their local community (Warren, 1988). While Mann's dream was not initially realized due to racial prejudices and discriminatory actions, court actions eventually mandated that all students should be afforded the same educational opportunities. As a result, school districts have utilized several methods to ensure

schools were integrated, from busing to socioeconomic plans to provide diverse learning environments for students. Unfortunately, many districts have abandoned those plans to racially balance schools for fear of families leaving the district (Chapman, 2018; Cookson et al., 2018; Ladd, 2019).

One driver of resegregation is the option to choose the school a student attends (Gleason, 2019). The school choice movement, originally designed to create educational innovation, has created a free-market educational system driven by competition. This competition, with the promise of improved educational achievement, has changed the demographics of neighborhood schools with minimal impact on achievement (McClellan, 2023; Public Schools First NC, 2021).

The free-market education system has changed the traditional neighborhood school, which was an integral part of the community it served (Han & Keefe, 2020). As state legislatures continue to increase the number of charter schools and the funding for voucher programs, the achievement and socioeconomic gap continues to widen at affected traditional public schools (Goa & Semykina, 2020; Han & Keefe, 2020; Shakeel et al., 2021). This competition continues to alter the perception of the traditional neighborhood school, diminishing it as a viable educational choice. Therefore, further research is necessary to gain a greater understanding of the potential effects of school choice on racial demographics and student achievement at City High School. The following chapter will describe the methodology for conducting this study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The number of school choice options continues to increase in North Carolina. In 2021, approximately 8% of students in North Carolina attended a public charter school (Public Schools First NC, 2021). Nordstrom (2018) noted that in 72% of counties with at least one charter school, the charter school increases the level of racial segregation within the county. Nordstrom added that the impact of racial segregation can be noticed in the perception of the school's academic profile. This change in a school's perception also increased the number of families attending private schools using vouchers by more than 4,000 in North Carolina alone (Public Schools First NC, 2021).

Families are leaving traditional public schools to attend charter schools or voucher-funded private schools (Wells et al., 2019). Additionally, intradistrict choice options are drawing students away from traditional public schools. Wells et al. (2019) noted these choice options often result in families selecting less diverse educational settings in search of higher academic achievement.

The purpose of this study is to explore the changes that have occurred at an inner-city high school that is being referred to as City High School during a heightened era of school choice from 2010-2023. In addition to further developing the literature around school choice and its relationship to traditional public schools, knowledge gained from this study may be utilized by local school districts to guide policy decisions regarding intradistrict school choice options. This study can also be utilized to spark conversations about the equity of resources among schools within the district where both internal and external choice options are available. The methodology used in this study is outlined in the sections that follow.

Research Design

Qualitative research attempts to explore a variety of factors that influence a situation to deepen the knowledge base around an issue (Houston et al., 2021). Yazan (2015) noted that qualitative research is an art because the research is exploring, playful, metaphorical, insightful, and creative. The human element and the ability of the researcher to allow the participants to tell their stories are among the strengths of the qualitative research design. Therefore, a qualitative design was chosen for this study as it sought to explore the perceptions of changes at City High School through the lens of former employees and alumni of the school. Additionally, the study utilized public data from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and the North Carolina Teachers Working Conditions survey to further explore these changes. Document analysis of school yearbooks also occurred to triangulate findings. Due to examining data from multiple sources to fully examine the impact of school choice, a qualitative design is best suited to represent the issue being studied (Houston et al., 2021).

This qualitative research used a case study design. Houston et al. (2021) characterized case study research as an intensive analysis and a description of a single unit or system bounded by space and time. The case study design was further supported by Yin (2009) in that the design allows for an in-depth understanding of real-life phenomena that are impacted by contextual decisions. Yin (2009) also noted that within the case study design, there is the opportunity to utilize both qualitative and quantitative evidence. The blending of qualitative and quantitative data allows for the triangulating of findings (Houston et al., 2021). Both Yin (2009) and Houston et al. (2021) noted that case study research allows the researcher to identify the topic or questions of interest, determine the appropriate units to represent it, and to define what is known based on careful analysis of multiple sources of information about the case.

Because this study explored the changes at an inner-city high school during an era of school choice and the perceptions of individuals connected to City High School, a single-case study design was chosen. A single-case study design was also appropriate due to the longitudinal data from one school that will be collected within this study. In addition to interviews, the researcher used historical data from NCDPI and NCTWC. Finally, historical document analysis was used to examine changes at City High School during school choice over a defined time period (Houston et al., 2021; Yin, 2009).

Research Questions

As the number of school choice options continues to increase, it is important to examine the impact of school choice on traditional public schools. To accomplish this purpose, this study sought to answer three research questions. These research questions are listed below:

1. How has racial and economic diversity changed in an inner-city high school during the 2010-2023 era of school choice?

2. How has school achievement changed in an inner-city high school during the 2010-2023 era of school choice?

3. How have stakeholder perceptions of an inner-city high school changed during the 2010- 2023 era of school choice?

Setting

The setting for the present study is an inner-city high school in southwestern North Carolina, which is referred to as City High School throughout this dissertation. The county where City High School is located has approximately 190,000 residents, of whom 82% are White, 8% are Hispanic, and 12% are Black (U.S. Census, 2021). The city in which City High School is located has approximately 28,419 residents, of whom 54% are White, 29.9% are Black, and

15.1% are Hispanic (U.S. Census, 2021). The city that is served by the school gained approximately 3,800 residents during the time period of the study. The demographics of the city at the beginning of the study were: 31.87% Black, 7.11% Hispanic, and 59.94% White. Based on U.S. Census (2021) data, the percentage of White and Black residents declined by 5% and 2% respectively, while the percentage of Hispanic residents more than doubled during the time period of the study.

City High School was selected as the research site for several reasons. First, City High School is an inner-city high school where the city demographics differ from the overall county demographics. Specifically, the city is significantly more racially diverse than the county. Second, City High School is a medium-sized school with approximately 890 students. Changes in enrollment have decreased the amount of racial and economic diversity within the school over the years examined in the study. Third, the number of eligible participants accessible to the researcher simplified the process of recruitment and selection for this study. The number of former employees and alumni allowed for a variety of backgrounds to provide a comprehensive understanding of the changes at City High School during the years for this study. Finally, City High School was selected because it is familiar to the researcher. As a district administrator, the researcher is knowledgeable about shifts in enrollment and academic profile, which will be advantageous for this study. The researcher acknowledges the potential dangers of this familiarity within the study and will take appropriate actions, which are described later in this chapter, to temper biases.

Participants

The number of participants for a particular study is dependent on the nature of the study (Ajagbe et al., 2015). Some qualitative studies examine one case in depth while others may take

on a broader approach, thus dictating the number of participants needed. The present study involved five persons with direct knowledge of City High School. Specifically, the researcher interviewed one former student who attended City High School during integration, two former administrators who served before and during the time period of the study, and one current employee who also taught at City High School during the time period examined in the study. The number of participants was selected to fully explore their understandings and perceptions of changes at City High School. The participants were chosen in an attempt by the researcher to strike a balance in demographics, relationship to the school, and proximity to the researcher.

The purposive sampling technique was used to select the five participants for this study. Purposive sampling, also known as judgment sampling, is a deliberate choice of participants due to the qualities the participant possesses (Etikan et al., 2016). Participants for this study were selected because their historical knowledge and experiences with City High School will allow them to provide deeper insights regarding the research questions (Hancock et al., 2021). The identified participants allowed for diverse perspectives by having either attended or worked at City High School.

The researcher recruited each participant through individual conversations. The individual conversations outlined the topic of the study, the participants' relationship to the study, and their ability to contribute their perceptions of the changes in the school. Appendix A provides a detailed script that was used to initially approach participants. A detailed participant summary and individual participant profiles is provided in Chapter 4.

Data Collection

A major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources (Yin, 2009). Yin (2009) outlines six commonly used sources of potential evidence in

case studies that include: (a) physical artifacts, (b) participant observation, (c) direct observations, (d) interviews, (e) archival records, and (f) documentation. Data in this study was collected through participant interviews, analysis of public data from NCDPI and the NCTWC, and archival records such as school yearbooks. Participant interviews and documentation were the primary sources of data collection. Observations were not used as the study participants were not currently attending or employed at City High School.

Each participant engaged in an interview lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. Interviews followed a semi-structured protocol (see Appendix B) that examined their initial experiences at City High School and their perceptions of changes at the school since the inception of school choice. Each participant completed a short demographic survey to provide further detail about the participants selected for this study (see Appendix C). Interviews were audio recorded so that transcripts were made for further analysis. Interviews took place at a time and location that was convenient for participants. The researcher conducted the interviews during the fall of 2023.

Additional evidence was gathered from multiple non-participant sources. These non-participant sources provided additional insight into the research questions, and they allowed for the participant data to be triangulated with the non-participant data (Yin, 2009). To further analyze the changes at City High School following the introduction of school choice, data were retrieved from the NCDPI. Student accounting data for enrollment, racial demographics, and student achievement for the school year 2010-2011 through the 2022-2023 school year was analyzed. Data was also retrieved from the NCTWC survey public database for the same school years. This survey is given every two years to education professionals throughout the state of North Carolina. The NCTWC data was reviewed to gather perception data from teachers and other professionals at City High School who completed the survey for the identified school

years. Non-participant data was also gathered through document analysis of City High School's yearbooks and newspapers during the identified school years to analyze changes since the inception of school choice. The changes specifically under investigation are the number of club options available to students and the number of participants over time in each specific club. The data collected from NCDPI and NCTWC are quantitative and differ from the qualitative nature of the study. However, case study research allows the researcher to determine the appropriate unit to represent the topic based on careful analysis of multiple sources of information about the case (Hancock et al., 2021). Non-participant data was collected during the spring and summer of 2023.

Data Analysis

Yin (2009) noted that the analysis of case study evidence is one of the most difficult and least developed aspects of case studies. Hancock et al. (2021) indicated that the researcher interacts with the data through a recursive process throughout the investigative process. Due to the vast amounts of data that can be generated within a case study, both Yin (2009) and Hancock et al. (2021) indicated that a clear strategy is needed for the analysis of the collected data to ensure the researcher is not overwhelmed. For this study and its exploratory nature, the general strategy was to derive meaning that is grounded in the data (Hancock et al., 2021). The manipulation of the data to gain meaning will allow for a grounded theory approach to this research (Hancock et al., 2021; Yin, 2009).

Following the case study approach, data analysis in this study occurred in three phases. First, non-interview data (e.g., document analysis, NCDPI data, and NCTWC survey data) was reviewed in the late spring and summer of 2023. Descriptive statistics and document summaries were used during this process to begin developing the context of the case study and

later triangulated with interview findings. Second, interview transcripts were analyzed. The constant comparative method (Mertens, 2020) guided this process. Each transcript was read closely and coded in its entirety to create unique codes. The constant comparative method involves an inductive process of constantly testing and comparing emerging theory with collected data, taking data from raw words to codes, categories, and concepts (Mertens, 2020). Researchers engaging in this process read the data multiple times and look for associations between the raw words to develop open codes and ultimately to form open and axial codes (Dey, 1993). The axial codes can then be compared to the research question and developed into selective codes or themes. This study used open, axial, and selective coding processes to arrive at several themes. The final phase of data analysis included writing a thorough description of the entire case that included the context of City High School, identified themes and supporting quotes (Hancock et al., 2021; Yin, 2009). The study's findings will be presented in Chapter 4.

Trustworthiness

The researcher utilized several strategies to maintain the quality of this case study. A subjectivity statement is included in this chapter to acknowledge any potential researcher bias (Hancock et al., 2021). To minimize the impact of any potential bias, data analysis began with complete interview transcription and several uninterrupted readings before the coding processes began. The participants' words rather than the researcher's perceptions formed the basis for assertions made from the findings. Additionally, data was gathered and triangulated from several sources. Hancock et al. (2021) noted that this process allows the information presented to reflect all aspects of the investigative process and limits the impact of bias.

Houston's et al. (2021) recommendations were also used to enhance the trustworthiness of the study. First, data was synthesized or triangulated by comparing the many pieces of

information gathered during the research process. Second, member checks were conducted to allow participants to review key findings from their interviews for accuracy and palatability. Third, the ongoing review of accumulated information occurred to identify recurrent patterns, themes, or categories. Finally, a description of the case study design was included within this chapter to increase reliability. While case studies are criticized for lacking generalizability, Houston et al. (2021) suggested that the insights gleaned from a case study can directly influence policies, procedures, and future research.

Finally, because this study was conducted by a novice researcher, direction was sought throughout the design, implementation, and analysis process from a team of supervising faculty members with expertise in case study research.

Ethical Consideration

This study posed nominal risks for the participants. The intent of the study, minimal time commitment, voluntary nature of participation, and the ability to withdraw at any time were explained in writing to participants before they agreed to participate and during the interview process (see Appendix D). Also, interview questions were centered on participants' perspectives and do not involve sensitive topics. As a precaution, the researcher was prepared to refer participants to counseling resources if needed. Additionally, only the researcher had access to the data collected, which was stored on a password-protected network. Before any findings were shared, the names of all participants and places in this study were replaced with pseudonyms. Additionally, the study protocol was vetted and approved by UNC Charlotte's Institutional Review Board process before data collection began. The research procedures will not vary from those that were approved.

Subjectivity Statement

I attended a private school for elementary, middle, and high school that primarily served White students. Upon graduation, I earned my bachelor's degree in mathematics from a liberal arts college in Virginia that was just beginning to offer residential options. While working towards my bachelor's degree, I worked multiple jobs to help pay for college. While my family was supportive and encouraged academic success, I was a first-generation college graduate. Upon graduation, my first teaching experience was at a large urban public high school in Virginia. The student population was diverse, which was a vastly different experience from my own high school experience. I taught and coached at this high school for eight years prior to moving to North Carolina. My first teaching position in North Carolina was at City High School. I also coached at City High School. I eventually left City High School and taught in a rural setting for several years. I also taught at a large, suburban high school with an enrollment of over 2,500 students. During my time away from City High School, I completed two master's degrees. The second master's degree was in school administration.

After eight years, I eventually returned to City High School as an assistant principal. I did leave again for one school year to become a principal in a different school district. After being away for one school year, I was recruited to return to City High School as the principal. My experiences as a teacher, coach, assistant principal, and principal at City High School have made me interested in the changes that have occurred at City High School since I first served as a teacher at the school. I include this section on my background to fully disclose to the reader the lens through which I view this study. I acknowledge that my race, gender, and personal and professional background may influence the way I interpreted the perceptions of study participants. I relied on participants' responses and other data to minimize this issue.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the methodology proposed by the researcher to conduct this study of the perceptions of the impact of school choice on an inner-city high school. The qualitative nature of the study and the case study design were explained in addition to a description of the setting, participant selection process, data collection and analysis, and strategies for ensuring the quality of the study. Efforts to minimize risks to the participants and other ethical considerations were also noted. Finally, a subjectivity statement was included to provide the reader the lens through which the researcher will approach this study and the findings presented in the following chapter. Findings from this research will be presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this single case study was to investigate the changes at City High School over the 13-year period from 2010 to 2023, as school choice options increased for the families within the City High School attendance zone. The following questions guided the research:

1. How has racial and economic diversity changed in an inner-city high school during the 2010 through 2023 era of school choice?

2. How has school achievement changed in an inner-city high school during the 2010 through 2023 era of school choice?

3. How have stakeholder perceptions of an inner-city high school changed during the 2010 through 2023 era of school choice?

In this chapter, the researcher provides the participants' demographic information, their connection to the research site, and the major findings for each research question. The findings are presented through a combination of interpretive thematic descriptions and quantitative data linked to each research question. The researcher used pseudonyms for the study site and the research participants to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. Once the researcher completed the five semi-structured interviews, the interviews were transcribed using the voice-to-text feature in Microsoft Office 365. The transcriptions were first read through without annotations and then read a second time to determine codes. A third reading was used to categorize codes and determine themes within each research question. These themes were paired with participants' narratives to provide the essence of their lived experiences and current perceptions of City High School. Major findings and evidence are presented with multiple layers of open-source data to triangulate the participants' responses. Additionally, a document review of City

High School's yearbooks for the 13-year period and results from an anonymous teacher survey

have been added to provide further insight into the findings presented in this chapter.

<div align="center">**Participants**</div>

Five participants were identified and interviewed for the primary data set. All participants

were directly affiliated with City High School both prior to and during the time period of the

study. Three of the participants are former City High School students, while two were former

administrators at the school. One of the participants, a former student, also taught at the school

for over twenty years, only recently retiring. Participant demographics are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Education	Marital Status	Employment Status	Connection to the School
Tim	Male	50+	Black	Trade School	Married	Retired	Graduate
Donna	Female	50+	White	Masters	Single	Retired	Graduate/Employee
Sean	Male	50+	White	Masters	Married	Retired	Former Administrator
Terry	Male	50+	Black	Masters	Married	Employed	Former Administrator
Laura	Female	30-40	Black	Trade School	Single	Employed	Graduate/Volunteer

Note. n = 5

Many of the participants still have a vested interest in City High School. Two of the

participants currently have relatives attending City High School. All participants reported living

in the same city as City High School when they were directly affiliated with the school. At the

time of each interview, all the participants still reside in the same city as City High School. Due

to their proximity to the school, two participants volunteer at the school weekly. Finally, all

participants continue to follow the school on social media to stay updated on events at the school.

<div align="center">

Research Question One:
How has racial and economic diversity changed in an inner-city high school during the 2010 through 2023 era of school choice?

</div>

The first area of investigation in this study was to understand the changes in student demographics and economic diversity at City High School. This question helped to bring understanding about the student demographics during the period of the participants' direct affiliation with the school and their perceptions about the current demographics. The participants' responses showed that the demographics and any subsequent changes fell under two prominent themes: diverse demographics and choice options.

Diverse Demographics

When describing the student demographics at City High School, participants indicated that the school had always been racially diverse. Throughout the examination of this narrative, a change in the demographics of the school was noted throughout the responses. The initial racial balance of the school and the subsequent shift to an increased population of students of color were noted throughout the participants' responses.

Racially Balanced

All participants described the student population as racially balanced during their initial connections with the school. By racially balanced, the participants indicated that the school had a ratio of approximately 50% White students and 50% Black students. All participants noted that during their time at City High School, there were very few Hispanic students attending the school. Tim, a City High School graduate, described the school's demographics; "I went to City High School, graduated from it. It was about 50-50 minority to White students back then. There

were also less Hispanics going to high school back then." This narrative prevailed throughout the interviews. Sean, a former administrator at the school, shared:

I can't give you exact percentages, but what people don't realize is that you must take out the Hispanics because that demographic didn't exist at that time. During my time at the school, we were somewhere around 55% White and 45% Black and it would fluctuate up and down both ways. Suffice it to say, we were roughly half and half at that time.

Terry, another former administrator, shared a similar view of the demographics during his time at the school, sharing;

The school…when I was connected to it was about 52% White and 40% Black. Whatever the percentages are left fill in with Hispanic and Asian. I remember having quite a few Asian students during the time I was connected to the school.

Donna and Laura, two participants who were also former students, recounted similar experiences during their time at the school, noting a balanced student body with approximately the same number of White and Black students with small subsections of other demographic groups. Their narratives provided insight into the racial balance that City High School experienced when they were affiliated with the school.

Students of Color

While the participants experienced a student population that was largely balanced between Black and White students during their affiliation with the school, all participants indicated that there had been a shift in student demographics since their time there. Terry, a former administrator at the school whose departure coincides with the start of the time period of the study, indicated that the shift in demographics started shortly after his tenure at the school ended. Sean, another former administrator at the school, indicated that his perception of the

current demographics was that the school was currently "a third White students, a third Black students, and a third Hispanic students." The shift in demographics was also noted by Laura and Donna, both former students. They both described a perceived shift in the demographics from a formerly balanced population to a larger percentage of students of color. Tim, expanded on the previous participants' perceptions, sharing:

> I would say City High School is more diverse. There's a lot more Hispanics, so really a minority school now. I would probably say that there is more, I don't want to say poverty, but families not making as much money (…) therefore, probably more kids getting reduced lunch or something like that at City High School.

All participants described a noticeable shift in the demographics at City High School from the time they attended or worked at the school until the time of the current study. The demographics for City High School during the time period of the study are displayed in Table 7.

Table 7

Student Demographics at City High School

School Year	Total Enrollment	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	White	Two or More Races
2010-2011	1151	6	37	517	162	0	429	0
2011-2012	1096	6	30	455	190	0	391	24
2012-2013	1136	5	32	472	201	0	413	13
2013-2014	1098	2	37	439	201	0	397	22
2014-2015	1061	2	34	408	210	0	377	30
2015-2016	1029	2	39	398	204	0	359	27

Table 7

Student Demographics at City High School (continued)

2016-2017	989	1	32	433	191	0	300	32
2017-2018	973	1	26	435	191	0	280	40
2018-2019	980	3	22	459	204	0	250	42
2019-2020	931	2	16	443	209	0	216	45
2020-2021	874	2	17	396	203	0	201	55
2021-2022	854	0	13	409	199	0	193	40
2022-2023	845	0	15	406	209	0	168	47

Note. This table shows the City High School enrollment by demographic for each school year.

The data in Table 7 align with the participants' perceptions of the demographic shift from a racially balanced school to an unbalanced school. Not only did the overall school enrollment decrease, but the number of White students decreased while the Hispanic population, once discounted by earlier participants, was the only demographic that grew during this time period. In Table 8, the percentage of enrollment with each demographic is displayed.

Table 8

Percentage of Enrollment by Demographic

School Year	Total Enrollment	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	White	Two or More Races
2010-2011	1151	0.52	3.21	44.92	14.07	0.0	37.27	0.0
2011-2012	1096	0.55	2.74	41.51	17.34	0.0	35.68	2.19

Table 8

Percentage of Enrollment by Demographic (continued)

2012-2013	1136	0.44	2.82	41.55	17.69	0.0	36.36	1.14
2013-2014	1098	0.18	3.37	39.98	18.31	0.0	36.16	2.00
2014-2015	1061	0.19	3.20	38.45	19.79	0.0	35.53	2.83
2015-2016	1029	0.19	3.79	38.68	19.83	0.0	34.89	2.62
2016-2017	989	0.10	3.24	43.78	19.31	0.0	30.33	3.24
2017-2018	973	0.10	2.67	44.71	19.63	0.0	28.78	4.11
2018-2019	980	0.31	2.24	46.84	20.82	0.0	25.51	4.29
2019-2020	931	0.21	1.72	47.58	22.45	0.0	23.20	4.83
2020-2021	874	0.23	1.95	45.31	23.23	0.0	23.00	6.29
2021-2022	854	0.0	1.52	47.89	23.30	0.0	22.60	4.68
2022-2023	845	0.0	1.77	48	24.7	0.0	19.8	5.5

Note. This table lists the percentage of enrollment by demographic at City High School for each school year.

The number of White and Black students was within 100 total students of each other during the 2010-2011 school year. The actual balance in the percentage of each demographic at that time aligns with the significant theme of racial balance from all participants during their direct affiliation with City High School. However, during the time period of the study, the total enrollment decreased by approximately 300 students, and the number and percentage of White students also declined. The rate of decline was almost two White students for every Black student lost in the total enrollment.

The demographic that has grown is the Hispanic student population. While there was an increase of only 47 Hispanic students in the last 13 school years, the percentage of enrollment of Hispanic students almost doubled. According to the participants, the Hispanic population was not very large or almost nonexistent during their time at the school. However, the Hispanic population currently outnumbers the White population in both the number of students and the percentage of enrollment during the last three years.

The changes in City High School's demographics occurred in the context of changes in the demographics of the city it serves. The data in Table 9 illustrate changes in the population and demographics of the city the school serves during the period of the study.

Table 9

Population and Racial Demographics of the City Served by City High School

Year	2010	2020
Total population	24,532	28,419
Percentage of Black residents	31.87	29.9
Percentage of Hispanic residents	7.11	15.1
Percentage of White residents	59.94	54

Note. This table reflects the total population and demographics for the city served by City High School. Source *(U.S. Census, 2021).*

The population of the surrounding city increased by approximately 3,800 residents during the time period of the study. Despite the city's growing population, the school's population declined. Like City High School, the city's Hispanic population was the only one to increase, more than doubling over the period of the study. The percentages of Black and White residents

declined. Except for the Hispanic population, the racial demographics of the school do not mirror those of the city it serves.

Choice Options

During their time at City High School, the participants noted that the primary option for families was to attend City High School if they resided in the attendance zone. However, the door has been opened for students to attend different schools within the school district. The participants indicated that the shift in demographics and socioeconomics was largely due to the choice options offered by the district.

School Choice

All participants indicated that during their time at City High School, most students attended the school in their attendance zone. Participants indicated that is no longer the case because the school district offers multiple options for students and their families to consider for their secondary education. There are currently three early colleges and one International Baccalaureate (IB) programme that students can choose to attend, even while living within the City High School attendance zone. The first early college opened prior to the start of the time period of this study. However, two additional early colleges, with one on the same campus as City High School, were established during the time period of the study. Terry shared:

> The early college killed us too early…. when we did the early colleges, it siphoned off students. Yeah, they killed me when they opened. A lot of students left for the early colleges. That changed the demographics of the school tremendously.

Participants also believed that the fourth program, the IB program, has also had an impact. Donna shared:

The IB program changed it (demographics) quite a bit. We were able to keep a lot of kids

with the AP Academy that we had here for a while. We did draw in a lot of kids from the

magnet programs with the dance program. So, it was kind of balanced there for a while,

but then numbers change… I think the biggest pull away from here was the IB itself.

Pulling from our students … because numbers decreased in a lot of those different areas.

Participants shared that the educational options available to families within the City High

The choice options have impacted not only the total enrollment but also the demographics of the

students still attending the school. Sean, a former administrator, indicated that the choice options

and the effects on the student body at City High School have contributed to more families

considering their options. He shared:

It used to be if I lived in the city then I went to City High School. Now to choose to go to

school was not necessarily City High School. Now you and I know that's the perception.

That's perception because you and I both know that a kid can be successful in any

environment that they want to be. So, I don't have a problem with the demographics that

you have. It does make it tougher, I think, on teachers, the staff with the changes in

demographics.

The perception and reality of the changes in the demographics, according to Sean, are helping to

increase the number of families making the choice not to send their students to City High School.

This perception was also shared by Laura, who said "I'm not sure of the numbers, but I'm pretty

sure that they have the option to send their children to (other schools) or somewhere other than

City High School."

All participants acknowledged that the expanded choice options have created avenues for

students living within the City High School attendance zone to attend a different school. While

Donna noted that the school district worked to implement several internal programs to entice students to stay at City High School, those initiatives were largely unsuccessful in their ability to retain students. The inability to retain students, however, has had minimal impact on the socioeconomics of City High School.

District data support participants' perceptions about the loss of students to magnet programs. Using unpublished school district enrollment data, Table 10 illustrates the number of students living in the City High School attendance zone who attend one of the intradistrict choice options offered by the district.

Table 10

Students Attending Magnet Schools While Residing in the City High School Attendance Zone

School	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Magnet School A	39	46	48
Magnet School B	59	52	51
Magnet School C	85	88	80
Magnet School D	134	137	137
Total Reduction in Enrollment	317	323	316

Note. This table lists the number of students residing within the City High School attendance zone who attend one of the four available intradistrict choice options. Source: Unpublished internal school district enrollment data.

Over the last three school years, there has been an average of 318 students each year in the City High School attendance zone who chose to attend one of the district's choice options. Unpublished data from the district of study showed that during the 2022-2023 school year, 50% of these students were White. Twenty-one percent were Black, and 20% were Hispanic.

The racial makeup of the student populations in the magnet options is noticeably different from City High. As displayed in Table 11, the percentage of students of color was far higher at City High School than in the choice options during the 2022-2023 school year. Slightly more than 19% of the population at City High School consisted of White students, compared to 58% of White students at Magnet School C (the next lowest percentage of White students). In stark contrast with City High, White students comprised approximately 60-70% of the population of the magnet options.

Table 11

2022 – 2023 Enrollment and Demographic Data for the Magnet School Options

School	Total Enrollment	% of Black Students	% of Hispanic Students	% of White Students
Magnet School A	269	8.9%	17.8%	69.5%
Magnet School B	231	6.4%	22%	60%
Magnet School C	267	14.6%	14.9%	58%
Magnet School D	1711	9.4%	15.1%	66.9%
City High School	845	48%	24.7%	19.8%

Note. This table displays the total enrollment data and the percentage of each demographic for the 2022-2023 school year.

Despite declining and shifting enrollment, there has been minimal change in the percentage of students qualifying for Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) since 2010 (Table 12).

Table 12

Percentage of Students Receiving Free and Reduced Lunch by Year

Year	Percentage of Students Receiving FRL
2010-2011	56
2011-2012	58.2
2012-2013	59.2
2013-2014	61.2
2014-2015	58.6
2015-2016	59
2016-2017	60.7
2017-2018	56.8
2018-2019	62.6
2019-2020	62.9
2020-2021	62.6
2021-2022	58.9
2022-2023	56.2

Note. This table lists the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch at City High School for each year.

While there have been changes in the total enrollment and demographics at City High School, the change in racial demographics has not equated to a sizeable shift in socioeconomics. The percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch is approximately the same for the 2010-2011 school year and the 2022-2023 school year. Compared to total enrollment, approximately 644 students qualified for FRL in 2010-2011, while only 479 students qualified

for FRL in the 2022-2023 school year. The decrease in the number of students qualifying for FRL is consistent with the changes in total enrollment.

<div align="center">

Research Question Two:
How has school achievement changed in an inner-city high school during the 2010 through 2023 era of school choice?

</div>

The second area of investigation in this study was to understand the changes in academic achievement at City High School. This question helped to bring understanding to the perceptions of student achievement during the period of the participants' direct affiliation with the school and their perceptions about the current level of student achievement. The participants' responses showed that student achievement and any subsequent changes fell under two prominent themes: participant experience and current perceptions.

Participant Experiences

The participants' perceptions of City High School during their time at the school were that the academic achievement was as strong as any other school in the system. Throughout the examination of this narrative, a high level of student achievement was noted throughout the responses. The participants continually noted that City High School was known for its strong academics and the positive perception of the school's academic profile by the community.

Strong Academics

The prevailing narrative from all participants was that City High School was generally known as a strong academic school. Both the former students and employees continually noted the strength of the academic program during their direct affiliation with City High School. Both former administrators, Terry and Sean, noted that City High School was traditionally known as an academic high school. Terry noted that the school consistently met or exceeded the state's growth measures, with the faculty receiving bonus compensation for academic growth during his

tenure. Terry also indicated that City High School was recognized by *U.S. News and World Report* as a top high school, receiving the silver recognition on several occasions during his tenure. Tim, a graduate, noted that student achievement at City High School was great when he attended. This aligns with his experience as a successful student who was supported and encouraged to stretch himself academically. He also indicated that most students, regardless of race, went to college and were generally successful after high school. Both Tim and Laura indicated that there were classes available to students at all achievement levels to ensure success. They also noted that there were several Parks Scholarship and Morehead-Cain Scholarship award winners during their time at City High School. Laura further noted:

> Achievement was a big thing. We had a lot of educators that were, as they say, vested in the kids during my era. We were encouraged to go to college because of a lot of my family or my parents' generation they were not privy to college….so we were really encouraged to go to college. The teachers helped us and kind of motivated us to go to college. As a student, I was president of my class for three out of the four years I was at City High School. I was very active in student council, was very active in athletics. My high school years were very good, I have no complaints about them.

Donna, a former employee and graduate, described her time as a student at City High School:

> Was an amazing experience. I enjoyed the subject matter and the different classes that I was able to take. A lot of the teachers that I had when I was here were veteran teachers and it was just a good learning environment for me.

The narrative from all participants, whether as a student or as an employee, was that City High School was generally considered, by the former students and staff, an academic school that

produced graduates that were on par with the graduates from any other high school in the district. It was also consistently noted that despite being considered an at-risk school because of its student demographics, City High School had been recognized at both the state and national levels for its student achievement.

Positive Perception

When the participants were directly connected to City High School as either students or staff members, the community's perception of academics at City High School was largely positive. As stated earlier, the former students and staff viewed City High School as an academic high school. The community shared a similar view of academics in that the community largely supported City High School based on the perceived quality of education the students were receiving. Donna noted:

> I think the perception of City High School (academically) was pretty high up there. People always talked highly of it. So, I think the perception of City High School was we were the high school, back then in the county. We were the place that people wanted to send their kids.

Tim shared the community perception that City High School had strong academics. He stated that City High School was "perceived to be the top school not just within the county, but the state as well." Sean, a former administrator, concurred with Tim's assessment that the perception of City High School was that it was traditionally known as an academic high school. The idea that City High School was perceived, by the community as a strong academic school was further supported by Terry, who noted that the parents felt "that we were on the right track… for making it a successful school."

The strength of the academic program brought support for all programs. Donna noted that "the community was very supportive of academics and athletics." The participants consistently pointed out that the community perceived the academics at City High School as the best in the county, which created a greater desire to become involved within the school community. Laura noted:

> When I was a student here…we had great community support. They supported the athletic program and they supported the academic program. There was nothing in the community that we couldn't go out and ask for. We knew they would give it to us. It was great back during that time.

> All the former students noted that City High School was strong academically and athletically during the years of their attendance. Based on the school's academic and athletic pedigree, at the time, the community largely supported the staff and students to ensure City High School was a school that every family wanted their child to attend.

Current Perceptions

The shift in demographics has also been accompanied by a shift in City High School's academic profile. While there has been little impact on the school's socioeconomics, the school's perceived and realized academic profile has changed. The participants noted that there was a noticeable difference in the perceptions of City High School today when compared to their experiences as either a student or an employee at the school. Although the participants indicated that the perceptions of the current academic profile are improving, they noted that a lack of consistency in leadership contributed to some of the academic hardships the school has faced.

Lack of Consistency

A review of yearbooks from the 2010-2011 school year through the 2022-2023 school year revealed that City High School had seven different principals during those 13 years. Of those seven principals, only the most recent has served over 18 months.

The lack of consistent leadership, along with changing demographics, has been accompanied by changes in the real and perceived level of academic achievement. The participants consistently noted that the unstable leadership situation contributed to the diminished community perceptions of student achievement. Donna, a former student and employee, noted that "the turnover in leadership made a big difference" in the level of academic success of the school.

During the 2011-2012 school year, there was a mid-year change in leadership. Prior to that change, the principal had served at City High School for over eight years. As he previously noted, the school had been recognized within the county and nationally for its academic achievement. Since that change, Donna also noted, "It was just kind of a patchwork quilt. After the mid-year change, nothing was really settled or really consistent for the years after that."

Table 13 shows the student achievement data for the 2010-2022 school years. During the 2013-2014 school year, there was a change in the growth measure, the subjects tested, and the switch from the SAT to the ACT for college readiness. The college readiness component also changed from the mean SAT score to the percentage of students meeting the North Carolina average ACT score for college entrance. Starting with the 2014-2015 school year, a numerical measure was assigned to indicate a school's growth measure; prior to that time, a school's growth status was indicated by "met growth" or "high growth." There was also a numerical grade assigned to each school based on student proficiency on the end-of-course testing and the

school's growth measure. The formula to arrive at the school's grade is based on 80%

proficiency and 20% growth. The 80% portion of the high school grade is based upon the

following: (a) Biology EOC proficiency, (b) Math 1 EOC proficiency, (c) Math 3 EOC

proficiency, (d) English II proficiency, (e) ACT/Workkeys, (f) cohort graduation rate, (g) the

percentage of students passing Math 3 prior to graduation, and (h) English Language Learner

progress. It should also be noted that no growth data was reported for the 2019-2020 or the 2020

– 2021 school year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 13

City High School Academic Performance Data

School Year	Growth Status	School Grade	ACT/SAT Composite
2010-2011	Not Met	None	989 (SAT)
2011-2012	Not Met	None	969 (SAT)
2012-2013	Not Met	None	947 (SAT)
2013-2014	Not Met	56 C	None reported
2014-2015	-11.48	51 D	39.4
2015-2016	-12.33	50 D	38.5
2016-2017	-6.29	50 D	27.9
2017-2018	-3.28	54 D	25.6
2018-2019	-4.52	50 D	19.8
2019-2020	No Data	No Data	No Data
2020-2021	No Data	No Data	17.1
2021-2022	-2.49	51 D	9.6
2022-2023	-4.38	48 D	9.0

Note: This table lists the school performance data for City High School.

The academic performance data in Table 13 aligns with the participants' perceptions

about City High School's academic profile. The inconsistent leadership noted above corresponds

with a decline in achievement data. The school grade has been consistent over the last 12 school

years, while the growth status has slowly improved each year, with the exception of the 2015-

2016 and 2016-2017 school year. However, the 2016-2017 still showed significant improvement

by improving the growth percentage by approximately 50%. The metric that has seen the largest

decline is the percentage of students scoring at least the minimum score needed for enrollment in a North Carolina college or university. During the 2014-2015 school year, roughly four out of every ten students met the minimum ACT requirement. By the 2021-2022 school year, less than one out of ten students met the requirement. This publicly reported data may have affected the perceptions of City High School's academic achievement due to the declining number of students meeting the minimum ACT requirement and the "not met" growth status.

With approximately 317 students in the City High School zone attending one of the four intradistrict choice options, the academic performance of these options should be explored. In Table 14, the 2022-2023 academic achievement data are shared for the four magnet schools compared to City High School.

Table 14

2022-2023 Academic Achievement Data for the Magnet Schools Compared to City High School

School	Grade	Met Growth Status	Growth Index
Magnet School A	A (85)	Met	-.20
Magnet School B	A (94)	Exceeded	4.59
Magnet School C	A (95)	Exceeded	4.12
Magnet School D	C (65)	Not Met	-11.31
City High School	D (48)	Not Met	-4.38

Note. This table displays the academic achievement data for the four district choice options compared to City High School for the 2022-2023 school year.

The academic achievement of the four magnet schools was substantially better than that of City High School. Magnet schools A, B, and C had letter grades of "A" with high levels of proficiency on state exams. Even though its letter grade was lower than the other choice options,

Magnet School D had a much higher proficiency rating than City High School. The only metric in which City High School outperformed any of the magnet schools was the growth index when compared to Magnet School D. The students at City High School, on average, progressed at a higher rate than those at Magnet School D. However, students at City High School did not meet the same levels of proficiency as the students at any of the magnet school options.

Academic Improvement

The data in Table 13 show a downward trend in the percentage of students meeting the minimum ACT score. However, the school's growth data have shown improvement over the last three years. While City High School has not earned a school grade above a "D" for the last eight school years or met growth since the 2010-2011 school year, some improvements have been made to the perception of the school's academic program. The participants collectively expressed that their perception of the school's academic performance has been improving. Sean, a former administrator at the school, shared his perception:

> The current principal and staff have worked extremely hard to maintain a high academic standard for those who want that and to maintain a good career program for those that want that. However, is the public willing to give you (the school) a chance? I truly believe they are, and it is up to the school to continue to promote the high academic standards and the career programs.

Terry, another former administrator, shared his experience that there has been a change in student achievement with each administrative change. His experience was that it took several years to get the staff in place to improve student achievement. When asked about the current achievement data, he indicated:

I've been looking at the school's data, so here's my perspective on it. I think that during

some transition, you know the academic data went down. But I think in looking at it now,

I think it's on the right track.

The three participants who were former students at City High School noted a perceived upward

trend recently in the perception of academics at the school. The improved perceptions, Donna

and Tim indicated, were due to the use of social media and the local paper to help the school

promote its success. The use of social media, which was not available during their time as

students, has been critical in City High School telling the true story of academics at the school,

thus altering the community's perceptions. Donna further noted:

I think currently the perceptions have gotten a lot better. We have, you know, because we

have social media that we really didn't have back when I was a student. We are able to

really shout out and compliment kids that are achieving both academically and

athletically, and I think that's important because if people don't know what goes on

inside the walls, and they won't know unless we share it. I think we are very transparent

about what goes on here and I think that's very important. And I think it's been very

positive for the school.

As a former student and employee, Donna has a unique perspective about how City High School

has worked to share its story to improve the surrounding community's perceptions of the

academics at the school. However, Tim also indicated that social media can be used to foster

negative perceptions. He said, "All it takes is one person who's never visited the school, never

came over to the school, never talked to a teacher, never came to a meeting to downgrade the

school." Community perception is an area that Donna and Tim acknowledged is a concern.

However, they continue to work within the community to convey an accurate message.

The overall data indicates that the academic profile of City High School has declined since the 2010-2011 school year. This contrasts to the participants' experiences of City High School being known throughout the surrounding communities for its academic achievements. Overwhelmingly, they noted that while student achievement had suffered in recent school years, there were visible improvements. Participants pointed out that the school has done well in promoting its current successes and that some of the previously positive perceptions around student achievement were beginning to return.

<div align="center">

Research Question Three:
How have stakeholder perceptions of an inner-city high school changed during the 2010 through 2023 era of school choice?

</div>

The third area of investigation in this study was to explore how the overall perceptions of City High School have changed during the time period studied. This question examined the historical reputation of City High School and how that reputation has been impacted during an increase in choice options both within and outside of the school district where City High School resides. The participants highlighted their experiences at City High School and their current perspectives on the changes at the school.

Previous Perceptions

Participants indicated that City High School, prior to the time of this study, was viewed as the flagship high school of the district. They recalled that students excelled both academically and athletically. The school's culture was also robust, with opportunities for students to get actively involved through participation in student government or one of the clubs offered by the school.

Participants talked about how academic achievement, athletic success, and student engagement created a strong sense of tradition where several generations of families continued to

attend City High School and remained engaged with the school even after graduation. That sense of tradition and connection with families helped to solidify the school's legacy for many families and each generation that attended City High School. Although a strong tradition of academic and athletic excellence created the flagship aura, there were still perceived discipline issues at City High School. Both former administrators discussed how they worked to dispel that perception during their time at the school.

Flagship High School

According to participants, City High School was viewed as the top high school within the district. Whether zoned for the school or not, students wanted to attend City High School. The students excelled in all areas, creating an environment that was enticing to students and their families. Tim shared his perception of City High School, during the time of his attendance:

> It was awesome. It was awesome academically and we were awesome in sports. Our band was going to DC to bowl games. So, all around, I mean, people wanted to come to the school that lived in the city. Students wanted to come the school but they couldn't because they were out of district. So as much as they could, they came to our games or they tried to get over here to our school, so everyone was wanting to come to City High School.

All of the participants shared Tim's narrative, whether they were graduates or former employees. City High School was viewed favorably across the county as the school families wanted to attend to ensure their children received the best education and extracurricular experience. Laura, a graduate, agrees with Tim's assessment:

> When I was a student here, we were the big dogs. We had the best high school in our county. We achieved in academics. We were also successful in athletics, and back then,

that brought the community to a point where they were ready to engage with us, and they

were willing to give anything we want.

 Participants' perceptions suggested that City High School set the academic and athletic standard within the school district. The community viewed student achievement positively and was actively engaged with the school's academic and athletic programs. Laura explained best what it meant to attend City High School, saying, "It's a culture if you didn't go there, you didn't go nowhere."

Discipline Issues

While City High School was historically considered a strong academic school, there were still negative perceptions related to student discipline. These perceptions were not shared by the graduates but by both former administrators. Terry and Sean acknowledged that there were discipline issues or at least perceived discipline issues within the school that created a negative perception of the school in some parts of the community. Terry shared:

We still had that reputation that we were a thug school. That reputation stuck with us, that

we had a lot of troubled kids, and as we traveled through the years, some of that kind of

went away. However, the perception remained. The perception that City High School

was, you know, a bunch of Black folks that don't know how to act and they tear up stuff.

The perception of the racially diverse student body at City High School as "thugs" differed from the strong academic reputation. These two perceptions contrasted with each other in the community. While the academic and athletic accomplishments sometimes overshadowed the discipline, the perception of discipline problems remained. Sean shared:

A lot of (our issues) came from outside (the school). It wasn't a school issue, but they are

bringing it inside the school. And the way it's presented is that it is a school issue. In the

public's eye, through the press or whatever, is that you have a problem. They (students) are bringing whatever is happening in the community into the school. It's not that they don't like the school, it is the only place they will see each other, so issues happen. The administrators at other schools would share that they were dealing with the same issues.

Both former administrators noted that City High School dealt with many of the same student behavioral problems that the other high schools in the district faced. However, through the press or community conversations, the administrators believed the issues at City High School were overstated. Despite the school's academic success, these negative perceptions about student discipline were a consistent narrative for the school to combat.

Current Perceptions

City High School, during the time period of this study, has seen a 30% decline in enrollment. There were several perceptions from participants about why students in the City High School attendance zone attend City High School or select another alternative. The participants indicated that a strong sense of tradition that continues to draw families back to the school. However, participants also said that there are some community perceptions that City High School has some discipline issues that create a negative school environment. Participants noted that this causes some families to be reluctant to send their children to City High School.

The expanded choice program alternatives have provided families with educational options within the school district. The increased ability to choose has been accompanied by decreased enrollment and changes in perceptions of the school.

Tradition

While there has been a decline in total enrollment, some families continue to attend City High School. The participants indicated that the sense of tradition and pride of being a City High School graduate had kept families attending the school. Terry's perception of why families continue to attend City High School was, "I think they (families) believe in the school, and I do believe that. You still have dedicated people, community people who graduated from City High School. I think that has a great effect." This sense of belief has worked to keep families engaged with the school.

There is also a growing trend of graduates returning to work at the school. Donna's perceptions illustrated this dynamic:

> I think some of it has to do with being former graduates. If anybody goes and looks at the teachers that are there, they'll find that there's a pretty large majority that are City High School graduates. A lot of these parents are coming back. And I think they feel the sense of pride, you know, and they want their kids to be able to feel the pride they had when they were here. I would absolutely want them (my kids) to be here and experience the high school like I did.

There is a strong connection to the school amongst the graduates who participated in this study. Both the families and teachers who are returning to the school out of a sense of tradition are working to ensure that current students have a similar experience as the students had during their time at the school. Sean shared that perspective: "There is a sense of loyalty to the school, a real feel about it. This is where you draw on their memories and get your staff to provide those memories for the kids that are here."

One area that has shifted when working to create similar memories for current students is the availability of extra-curricular activities such as clubs. While Laura indicated that part of her positive experiences as a student included school clubs and student council, there has been a measurable reduction in the number of school-sponsored student clubs during the time period of this study. From 2011 to 2021, the number of school-sponsored student clubs dropped from 12 to 4, a loss of two-thirds of the clubs. Table 15 displays the number of clubs offered each school year.

Table 15

City High School Club Offerings per year

School Year	Number of Clubs Offered
2010-2011	12
2011-2012	12
2012-2013	13
2013-2014	14
2014-2015	13
2015-2016	12
2016-2017	12
2017-2018	12
2018-2019	12
2019-2020	12
2020-2021	4
2021-2022	5
2022-2023	8

Note. This figure lists the number of clubs offered at City High School.

While the current staff is working to recreate that tradition, progress has been slow in revitalizing school-sponsored student clubs over the past two years.

Discipline Issues

The participants' perceptions of troubled students and discipline problems at City High School remain a challenge. Whether the narrative is accurate or not, it is a perception that all participants discussed. Laura described some current perceptions:

The high school has gotten a reputation of being a crime-ridden school, which is not fair

because that's not the case. We're getting better with the community perception of people

wanting to actually help the high school from previous years. I can see a big change.

Tim shared a similar thought: "It only takes one, one person to say it's bad, and it's just carried

throughout the neighborhood and city. People don't know what they are talking about."

All participants said that City High School deals with the same student discipline issues

that the other high schools in the district face. However, participants shared that a false or

exaggerated narrative is often shared instead of the truth. Donna explained that the damaging

information concerning the school has altered the families' perception of City High School,

causing them to be less willing to send their children.

Data from the NCTWC survey were examined to further explore City High School

teachers' perceptions of student discipline. In Table 16, NCTWC survey results surrounding the

perception of discipline are shared. The table displays the percentage of City High School

teachers who indicated "agree" in response to each of the seven parts of the NCTWC survey

question five: "Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements

about managing student conduct in your school." The question includes the following seven

prompts for teachers: (a) students at this school understand expectations for their conduct, (b)

students at this school follow rules of conduct, (c) policies and procedures about student conduct

are clearly understood by the faculty, (d) school administrators consistently enforce rules for

student conduct, (e) school administrators support teacher's efforts to maintain discipline in the

classroom, (f) teachers consistently enforce rules for student conduct, and (g) the faculty work in

a school environment that is safe.

Table 16

Teacher Working Conditions Survey Data for City High School

Q 5.1	2014	2016	2018	2020	2022
5.1a	35.3	57.9	58.1	46.0	62.75
5.1b	24.0	29.8	31.7	12.0	19.61
5.1c	36.0	64.3	74.2	50.0	60.78
5.1d	29.4	46.4	51.6	19.0	49.02
5.1e	60.0	61.8	67.7	40.0	66.67
5.1f	28.0	46.4	55.7	46.0	47.06
5.1g	78.0	66.1	80.6	58.0	60.78

Note. This table displays the percentages of City High School teachers who indicated

"agree" for each part of Question 5 of the NCTWC survey.

The NCTWC survey data supports the participants' narrative that there is a perception of

discipline problems within the school. In 2022, only approximately 20% of the survey

respondents indicated that the students follow the school's code of conduct. While that is up

from 12% the previous year, it is over a 10% decrease from just four years prior. Another

alarming trend is the perception that City High School is not a safe place to work. In 2022, only

60% of respondents believed that the school provides a safe environment. While this data point

increased by 2% from the previous year, it is 20% lower than in 2018. While five of the seven

indicators related to student discipline showed improvement since 2014, there was a distinct

decline in the perception of a safe school environment from 2014 to 2022. One positive trend

that is supported by participant perceptions and NCTWC survey data is that consistent leadership

has started to stabilize the school over the last few years. For example, NCTWC survey data

showed improvements in teachers' responses from 2014 to 2022 to each of the prompts: (a)

students' understanding expectations for conduct, (b) teachers' perceptions of policies being

clearly understood by faculty, (c) administrators consistently enforcing rules, (d) teachers

enforcing rules, and (e) working in a safe environment. Sean's responses aligned with the

NCTWC survey data. He said, "I think truly the school is on the way up, but you've got a hell of a lot of work to do to keep it where you are and to keep promoting it, but the people in this city will support the school."

One notable area from the NCTWC survey that aligned with Sean's perception is that currently, 62% of students understand the expectations for their conduct. This is the highest percentage of teachers responding with "agree" to this prompt and aligns with Sean's perception that the students understand expectations.

While participants said that consistent leadership has enacted positive change over the last several years, they also noted that just one event or rumor from the school could derail any gains in positive perceptions of the school's learning environment.

School Choice

The participants noted that several alternatives to City High School have been implemented within the school district. Specifically, the district opened three early colleges and one IB program over the period from 2010-2023. Terry, a former administrator, noted that school choice "siphoned off the top students, they killed me when they came on board."

The school choice programs took not only students away from City High School but their parents as well. A new perception of the school accompanied the expanded choice options as more families chose educational options other than City High School. When describing the relationship of school choice to City High School, Sean responded:

> Parent perception is that their child can maybe get a better education. And I'm sorry, but there is still a racial component in a lot of people's perceptions. That is not just in this city, but everywhere, and that my child should go to a school, if I'm a White person, to a school that is not minority populated.

The choice options within the school district have been accompanied by changes in the student demographics of the school. According to participants, the changes in demographics contributed to a change in the community's perception of the school. As Tim described, "Sometimes they (families) are afraid because it's minorities here, more minorities than the average schools around here, so they are afraid and it's a culture shock for them." Tim noted that this culture shock for families may lead to some families choosing a school other than City High School.

Terry noted that the decision not to attend City High School may be due to several reasons. He explained:

> They do that (choose a different option) fear of safety. Safety is number one, and you know the other thing this is that families follow families. If one family decides to pull their child out, then you get some other people doing that, and then there are people who just believe their child deserve more and are smarter so they make that choice. It's not always something negative towards City High School. Sometimes they are looking for something else a little bit more than what's offered at City High School.

The enhanced ability to choose their child's educational setting within the school district has also been accompanied by changes in community support for City High School. Using NCTWCS data in Table 17, the support of the community during the time period of the study is examined. Specifically, Table 17 displays data from question 4.1 of the survey. In question 4.1, respondents are asked to rate how strongly they agree or disagree with the statement about community support and involvement in the school. Specific prompts include the following: (a) parents/guardians are influential decision makers in this school, (f) parents/guardians support

teachers, contributing to their success with students, and (g) community members support teachers contributing to their success with students.

Table 17

Teacher Working Conditions Survey Data for City High School

Q.4	2014	2016	2018	2020	2022
Q4.1a	56.9	64.7	45.8	25.0	37.25
Q4.1f	44.9	48.1	41.0	27.0	33
Q4.1g	59.2	76.4	63.3	47.0	49.02

Note. This table displays the "Agree" percentages for City High School from the NCTWCS.

The data in Table 17 align with the participant responses about how parent involvement has decreased over the time period of the study. For example, Laura noted that the choices provided to families in the City High School attendance zone by the school district have lessened the community's connection to the school. Similarly, teacher responses to the NCTWC survey suggest that parents were much less involved in decision making at the school from 2014 to 2022. Responses also suggested that parent and community support for teachers has decreased.

The ability to attend a school of choice, including the Early College on City High School's campus, based on academic and demographic perceptions of City High School has created an atmosphere where students can engage in the extra-curricular aspects of City High School while limiting their academic engagement with the school. The data from the NCTWC survey and participants align; the perception of City High School during the era before school choice was much more positive than after school choice expanded.

Summary

This chapter describes the major thematic findings of the singular case study that investigated the participant perceptions of the changes in enrollment, student achievement, and community perceptions of City High School during an era of expanded school choice.

Qualitative interviews with five participants combined with data from multiple sources provided insights into the participants' experiences during their direct involvement with the school. The combination of participant interviews and factual data provided a narrative of how City High School transformed from a school that many students in the city wanted to attend to a school that has become an afterthought for some with other choice options.

Participants consistently described changes in enrollment, academics, leadership, and community perceptions. Quantitative data supported their perceptions. Additionally, document analysis provided evidence of the instability in leadership and reduced extracurricular options available for students. While participants described negative perceptions about the school, they also noted that recent stability in leadership was enhancing the school's reputation.

The findings outlined in Chapter 4 provided thorough and rich descriptions of the major themes and participant experiences during their direct involvement with City High School. The combination of thematic presentation and factual data was guided by the case study methodology as outlined by Yin (2009). The following chapter will discuss the application of theoretical frameworks and literature to major findings, which is essential to drawing deeper and richer interpretations of the outcomes of this study.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of findings, discusses the case study and the grounded theory to the interpretive analysis of major findings, outlines limitations of the current study, and suggests implications for professional practice and future research.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

The Chapter 5 discussion includes a review of the research study problem, purpose, methods, and ethical considerations that were followed and completed. A detailed discussion of the findings by each research question is also outlined, with connections made to existing literature. The chapter concludes with research study implications and recommendations for future practice, policy, and research related to the changes at an inner-city school during an era of expanded school choice options.

With the increasing number of school choice options available for families, there has been an impact on traditional public schools (Cookson et al., 2018; Holme et al., 2013). While the impact on individual schools varies, school choice has often created tension and debate within local districts (Baker et al., 2015; Egalite, 2020; Gleason, 2019; Ladd, 2019).

The premise of schools of choice began as a promise to reimagine the educational system by matching students' educational goals with curricular offerings. Proponents argued that doing so would benefit individual students and families while positively affecting the overall educational system (Ayscue et al., 2018; Gleason, 2019; Ladd, 2019). By contrast, critics have argued that increased choice harms traditional public schools. For example, some studies have found a negative impact on funding for traditional public schools, sometimes resulting in larger classes and reduced curricular offerings (Ladd, 2019). Another consequence bemoaned by critics is the potential to resegregate individual schools by race and economic status, thus changing the overall socioeconomic status of the student body (Dee & Fu, 2003; Nordstrom, 2018).

Therefore, this study sought to further understand changes in the racial diversity, academic achievement, and community perceptions of an inner-city high school during an era of

heightened school choice. The setting of this study, City High School, was once considered by some to be the "flagship" school within the school district. This study also sought to further investigate how that perception changed during heightened choice.

The purpose of this single case study was to investigate the changes in an inner-city high school, starting with the 2010-2011 school year and continuing through the 2022-2023 school year. The purpose of Chapter 5 is to discuss the study's findings regarding changes in racial diversity, academic achievement, and community perceptions of City High School.

The primary data for this study were collected through in-person semi-structured interviews. The researcher identified five participants with direct connections to City High School. Specifically, the participants had either worked at the school or previously attended the school. One of the participants was both a graduate and a former employee. All participants agreed, when approached, to participate in the study. The researcher had each participant complete a short *Google Form* demographic survey prior to starting the interview. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant, and interview transcriptions were shared with participants as part of a member-checking protocol.

Publicly available, non-participant data were also collected from NCDPI and NCTWC web pages. Specifically, the NCDPI site houses the historical enrollment and achievement data for City High School. The NCTWCS site stores historical data on teachers' perceptions of the school. Finally, City High School yearbooks were reviewed to uncover any changes in extracurricular programs while also noting any other significant changes during the period of the study.

The survey information, interview transcripts, data from NCDPI and NCTWC, document review of school yearbooks, and member checking protocol responses provided multiple data sources to triangulate, which assisted the researcher in the development of findings.

According to Yin (2009), the most important step to complete before proceeding with any case study is to gain approval through an institutional review board (IRB). IRBs are charged with reviewing and approving all human subjects research before it can begin. The board will review how the researcher will interact with those being studied, to protocols or data collection instruments, and how you will ensure such protections as informed consent and confidentiality.

This study was conducted in full compliance with the IRB review process at UNC Charlotte and protected human subjects in multiple ways. The researcher informed the participants verbally and in writing of the intent of the study, time commitment, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the ability to withdraw from the study at any time. There were minimal risks to the participants as the questions centered on their perspectives and did not involve any sensitive topics. Throughout the study, participants had the opportunity to withdraw from or not participate in portions of the study without penalty. Furthermore, participants were given a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality, and no information was shared with the participants' current places of work, if employed, or with any other professional organizations. Finally, all study data were stored in secure cloud storage through UNC Charlotte.

The researcher followed Houtson et al.'s (2021) recommendations to support the trustworthiness of the study. First, the researcher worked with the dissertation chair to consider the trustworthiness throughout the research process. Next, the interview protocol involved the use of a predetermined set of semi-structured questions that were aligned with the research questions. The predetermined questions went through multiple iterations with the dissertation

chair's consultation to ensure the trustworthiness of the interview protocol. The researcher also conducted member checks to allow participants to review key findings from their interviews for accuracy. Finally, the researcher conducted an ongoing review of the accumulated information to identify recurrent patterns, themes, or categories. The ongoing review allowed the data to be triangulated to further ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

This study sought to provide insights into the changes at an inner-city school during an era of expanded school choice. Specifically, this study examined the changes in student demographics, academic achievement, and community perceptions that occurred during the expansion of school choice and nontraditional school options, such as magnet schools operated by the public school district. While previous studies have explored the impact on both students and the resources that follow them when choice options increase (Bruno, 2019; Cook, 2017; Fitzgerald, 2015; Han & Keefe, 2020; Jones, 2018; Lee, 2016; Mamo, 2022), this study sought to focus on changes and perceptions at one school. The research on the changes at traditional public schools due to the expansion of school choice warranted the examination of one inner-city high school. Therefore, the changes to the school's demographics, academic achievement, and community perceptions were all significant issues investigated throughout this study.

The conceptual framework for this study was developed around Jenkins' market theory of choice, which is based on the notion that the perceptions of available educational options will drive which school a family chooses (Jenkins, 2020). Jenkins' market theory of choice guided the development and consummation of the research and interview questions, as the available choice options were referenced to shape the participants' understanding of the changes at City High School. Finally, findings guided through inductive and deductive analysis were analyzed in conjunction with the market theory of choice to strengthen the identified themes.

The results of this study indicated that City High School has undergone noteworthy changes. In addition to a 36% decline in enrollment over the period of the study, there has also been a distinct change in the racial demographics within the school. Specifically, a noticeable loss of White students and an increase in the number of Hispanic students has resulted in much less racial balance than in the past. The changing demographics have also been accompanied by changes in academic achievement metrics at the school. Additionally, this study's participants suggested that the changes in demographics and academic achievement have negatively affected the community's perception of the school. However, participants added that more stable leadership in recent years has contributed to some improvement in the school's perception. Finally, this study illuminated a strong sense of tradition at City High School, and the participants revealed that they are hopeful about restoring that tradition based on current academic and athletic achievements.

Discussion of Findings

RQ1: How Has Racial and Economic Diversity Changed in an Inner-City High School During the 2010 through 2023 Era of School Choice?

This study found that City High School historically had a racially diverse student body, with roughly 50% White students and 50% Black students. The participants consistently recounted this racial balance within the school during their time there. The school's former administrators also recalled an approximately equal balance of Black and White students with few Hispanic students. Finally, approaching the beginning period of the study, City High School still maintained a racially diverse student body with approximately equal numbers of Black and White students and a small but growing Asian and Hispanic population.

The school's total enrollment and level of racial diversity have drastically changed over the period from 2010-2023. Specifically, the total enrollment has decreased by 36%, and the percentage of enrollment of students of color has increased from 62% to 80%. Additionally, while the former administrators recalled that the Hispanic population was almost non-existent during the time they served, the Hispanic population is currently the only one growing in total enrollment and percentage of enrollment. Overwhelmingly, participants noted the drastic increase in the percentage of enrollment of students of color.

According to participants, City High School historically followed the common school model envisioned by Horace Mann in that the school served most of the students from the surrounding community. Mann envisioned that the local school would be open to all and good enough to educate all students (Warren, 1988). However, when looking at the school's enrollment shifts over the period of the study, it is clear that City High School is no longer the only option available to families. The participants perceived that the changes in enrollment were related to the increased choice options the district offers to families (such as early colleges and International Baccalaureate programs) for their high school education.

The increased percentage of students of color at City High School and the loss of White students were consistently noted by this study's participants and illustrated by the enrollment data from NCDPI. The participants' perceptions of the enrollment changes at City High School, particularly the loss of White students, aligned with Ayscue's (2016) findings that families may pursue educational options based on race and class. These changes also appear to align with Martinez et al. (1995) and Glenn's (2012) suggestion that the opportunity to choose would increase the likelihood of racial segregation in schools.

However, as the racial diversity of City High School has shifted, the socioeconomic status has changed very little over the period of the study. This finding contrasts with some of the relevant literature on the impacts of school choice. Again, both Glenn (2012) and Ayscue (2016) noted that many families looking at their choice options will often make their educational choices based on race and class. While the participants noted the differing demographics, they did not indicate any drastic shifts in the school's socioeconomic diversity. In fact, there has been little change to the FRL percentage over the period of the study. Even with the percentage of students of color increasing and the loss of White students, the FRL percentage has remained relatively constant.

While the percentages of students qualifying for FRL did not change during the period of this study, it is worth considering the changes in the actual numbers of students who did and did not qualify for FRL because it is a commonly used measure of poverty, and the school is now significantly smaller. Specifically, City High School had a total enrollment of 1151 students in 2011. Fifty-six percent of these students qualified for FRL, meaning 645 students qualified and 506 did not. Years later, enrollment dropped to 845 students, with 56.2% qualifying for FRL. That means that 473 students qualified and 372 did not. The number of students who did not qualify for FRL decreased by 134 students. While the school also has 172 fewer students in poverty, losing 134 students (the equivalent of about five classrooms of students) who are not in poverty may have impacted City High School because research and experience have demonstrated that students not in poverty tend to have higher academic achievement and parental engagement with school (Hausman & Golding, 2000; Jenkins, 2020).

The study's findings also directly connect to the market theory of choice conceptual framework suggested by Ayscue et al. (2018). The market theory of choice prioritizes individual

goals, competition, and privatization by allowing parents to access educational opportunities both within and outside of their attendance zone. The theory was furthered by Jenkins' (2020) assertion that within an arena of competition, a school's reputation will impact its position in the marketplace and may influence each family's decision about their student's education. The participants in this study believed that the declining enrollment at City High School stemmed from families in the City High School attendance zone opting for other choice options. They also believed that these choices were influenced by City High School's reputation and racial profile.

RQ2: How Has School Achievement Changed in an Inner-City High School During the 2010 through 2023 Era of School Choice?

This study found that City High School was consistently recognized for its academic achievements prior to the period of this study. City High School was recognized in national publications for its students' academic success on multiple occasions. One participant, a former administrator, also noted that the school consistently "met" the growth measures as specified by the state at that time. The participants who were former students overwhelmingly acknowledged the strength of the education they had received while attending City High School. They further recognized the staff at the school who ensured they were successful within the classroom. The level of involvement from the staff helped to shape the future trajectory of numerous graduates not included in the study but referenced by the participants.

Participants' perceptions of these historical academic results are consistent with the literature regarding academic achievement for students in an integrated setting. George et al. (2021) noted that Black student achievement is improved with no adverse effects on White students while attending an integrated school. City High School, according to participants'

responses, epitomized this description. The participants' perspectives also align with Kahlenburg et al.'s (2019) findings that an integrated classroom can close achievement gaps for all students.

During the time period of this study, the academic profile of City High School has negatively shifted. Based on current NCDPI metrics, the school has consistently earned a "D" grade and has not achieved "met growth" status since the years prior to this study. The data collected from NCDPI also indicate a notable drop in the percentage of students meeting the state minimum ACT score. The data collected also indicated that the schools' growth status had shown signs of improvement until the most recent reporting year. Based on current metrics, City High School had recently been on the verge of meeting growth for the first time within the period of this study.

The participants attributed the decline in academic performance to two causes. First, a lack of consistency in leadership was cited by participants as one potential root cause of the decline in academic performance at City High School. During the time period of the study, there were seven different principals at the school. Of those seven, only one had served more than 18 months. Additionally, participants suggested that some higher-achieving students may have left to seek educational programming offered through intradistrict choice programs such as early colleges or International Baccalaureate.

The participants overwhelmingly indicated that the current perception of academics at City High School is mostly positive. While the school still is not meeting state metrics regarding the school grade and growth status, the current stability in leadership and staff has worked to improve the educational outcomes for students. The participants also noted that the school has worked to promote its achievements through social media outlets to ensure its story is accurately shared.

While it is impossible to know why individual families left City High School, Jenkins' (2020) assertion that a community's perception of a school's academic achievements affects families' choices should be considered. According to participants, the school was nationally recognized for academic accomplishments and enjoyed a great deal of community support before the period of this study. However, the academic profile worsened during the period of the study even as educational choices other than City High School became more available. The reduced academic profile may have altered City High School's perception in the educational marketplace, potentially making it a less desirable choice option even within its own attendance zone.

RQ3: How Have Stakeholder Perceptions of an Inner-City High School Changed During the 2010 through 2023 Era of School Choice?

This study found that the community considered City High School the "flagship" school of the school district prior to the time period of the study. The participants consistently noted that City High School was the school that students both within and outside of the attendance zone wanted to attend. The academic and athletic programs were as strong, if not stronger than any other school in the district. According to participants, these perceptions drew students and their families to City High School during the time when the participants were directly connected to the school.

Again, the historical perceptions of City High School and the success of the academic and athletic programs align with the relevant literature from Warren (1998) concerning Horace Mann's vision for the community school. City High School was viewed as the center of the community, and it was celebrated and supported. With the school as the centerpiece of the community, a strong sense of tradition surrounding attending and graduating from City High School was born. The participants overwhelmingly acknowledged the sentiment that if "you

didn't attend City High School, you did not attend anywhere." This sense of tradition helped to solidify community support for the school during the time the participants were directly connected to City High School.

This study found that the community's perception of City High School worsened during the period of this study. While participants suggested that the school's image has improved some in recent years, they also suggested that negative perceptions of student behavior and academic achievements had adversely affected support for the school. It was even suggested that the changing racial profile may have negatively affected the perceptions of the school.

This study found one consistent finding regarding the discipline issues faced by the school before and during the period of the study: Discipline issues have been an ongoing concern at City High School. Both former administrators indicated that there were discipline issues, many times originating outside the school, that found their way into the school. These discipline issues have continued to shape the community's perception of the school as a "thug" school.

The current NCTWC survey data also show that the school continues to face discipline issues. The overwhelming perception of the staff at City High School is that students do not follow the code of conduct. While the NCTWC survey does indicate some improvement over the last two years, this perception aligns with Jenkin's (2020) notion that the information parents use to make an informed educational decision for their student is partly based on student behavior and the community's perception of the culture within the school. Unfortunately for City High School, the negative perceptions about student behavior and safety have provided families with additional data points to consider when choosing whether or not to attend City High School.

The participants perceived that the demographics of City High School may also influence the community's perception and influence some families to not attend the school. Both former

administrators acknowledged that the school's racial diversity may be a culture shock for some and one more point to consider when making educational decisions. The relevant literature solidifies this point around demographics in that families, when they have the option, often choose schools with less diversity (Wells et al., 2019).

With the increase in choice options, this current community perception of City High School may impact enrollment. According to participants, the previous perception of being the "flagship" school has been replaced for some by the notion that City High School is undesirable. The choice options currently available to families within the City High School attendance zone may have become more attractive for some families based on the current perceptions surrounding the school.

The participants also acknowledged that the negative perception surrounding City High School may cause some families to seek other programming options that are not available at City High School. Participants indicated that this may be due to the belief that their student can get a better educational experience elsewhere due to the available choice options having a different educational focus.

Fortunately for City High School, many graduates are re-engaging with the school and sending their children to the school. Their engagement comes despite the choice options available to families within their current attendance zone. According to the participants, there is a connection to the school that is unlike any other. According to Hausman and Goldring (2000), this level of connection may have allowed City High School to remain the choice for families that were graduates of the school.

A school's image is essential to attracting families in a highly competitive market for students (Jenkins, 2020). The perception of City High School has provided some families with

additional data points to consider when making educational choices in the current education market. Although the participants noted that the perceptions surrounding City High School are improving, the school's ability to compete in the educational marketplace as an option for students is still hampered by some of the adverse narratives of the school and its students.

Implications

Qualitative case study methodologies used in this study do not establish causality. Therefore, this study makes no definitive claims of causality between the changes that occurred at City High School and heightened choice options. Nonetheless, exploring the changes at City High School during an era when families could choose other educational options more readily and considering the implications of the findings is worthy of consideration. The findings from this study provided numerous implications and recommendations for policy, practice, and future research when considering school choice options and the implications of school districts starting new programs.

The changes at City High School raise questions about school choice and the role it should play in the district. The historical decision to place magnet programs that tend to appeal to high-achieving students in already high-achieving high schools that were serving large numbers of middle-class students may have created a dynamic in which it was likely that at least some of City High Schools academically motivated students would choose to leave. This decision happened even though the school had a solid academic reputation. It also occurred in a school with challenges associated with having the majority of its students in poverty. This leads to the first implication and recommendation of the study.

The first implication and recommendation pertain to the number and proximity of internal choice options offered by a traditional public school district in relation to existing schools.

Clearly, creating choice options means that some students will leave existing schools. Therefore, a specific focus for boards of education should be on how choice options, such as early colleges or magnet programs, could alter the demographics of affected schools. Boards of education should be very deliberate about what they want the outcome to be for those who pursue the choice option. They should also be deliberate about the intended outcomes for the schools from which students would depart.

This first recommendation is supported by the changes in total enrollment and the percentage of each demographic group enrolled at City High School. The need to carefully consider the number of choice options and their potential impact on existing schools was expressed by Terry when he said, "A lot of students left for the early colleges, that changed the demographics of the school tremendously." Donna indicated that a different choice program also affected City High School's' demographics, saying, "The IB program changed it (demographics) quite a bit." Therefore, a review of the number and proximity of intradistrict choice options to an existing school and how their presence may alter the school's demographics should be considered before adding additional choice programs. Doing so would require districts to closely examine the criteria for students to attend a school outside of their attendance zone, ensuring the criteria align with the intended outcomes.

In the case of City High School, there is a need for an ongoing review of the impact of existing intradistrict choice programs on student demographics. Policymakers should consider what the demographics of City High School would look like if one or more of the choice options were not available for students. Again, this recommendation is supported by this study's finding that the percentage of each demographic group enrolled at City High School has changed over the span of this study, with the school becoming more racially segregated than before 2010. This

review would provide school district officials and policymakers with a representation of the total potential enrollment and student demographics based on the students zoned for City High School. It would also illuminate the degree of segregation or integration in the school.

As this case study found that academic achievement at City High School declined, another recommendation for practice and further study is to empirically analyze the impact of magnet programs on the academic achievement outcomes at City High School. Doing so would require analyzing the achievement of students in the City High School attendance zone who opt to attend the magnet options available to students in the City High School attendance zone. The analysis could determine what the achievement results, such as the state letter grades for schools and growth measures for schools, would likely be at City High School if it served all of the children in its attendance zone. Additionally, doing so would provide additional feedback about the relationship between choice programs and achievement at City High School. This would be important for the district to consider as it monitors its educational programming. It would also add to the narrative about City High School as families consider their educational choices.

Within the market theory of choice, it is suggested that families consider the academic profile of schools when deciding which school to attend. This has implications for City High School as the changes in student achievement occurred during a period when choice options increased within the district. While various factors impact student achievement, participants in this study believed that the rigorous and high-profile academic programs offered through intradistrict choice may have lured high-achieving students away from City High School. If this study's participants are correct, this phenomenon may have contributed to the academic decline, which may have influenced additional families not to attend City High School. Again, additional empirical analysis would be beneficial.

This study's findings also have implications for principal leadership in inner-city schools. It was discovered that City High School experienced seven principals during the period of the study, with participants suggesting that this seemingly constant turnover in leadership contributed to instability in the school. Studies have shown the essential link between effective principal leadership and school outcomes (Hitt et al., 2018; Hitt & Tucker, 2018; Meyers & Hitt, 2017). This leads to another implication and recommendation for practice and further research. School districts must ensure that qualified and effective principals are in all schools, particularly those with demands associated with higher levels of poverty. These principals must receive mentoring, resources, and professional development to ensure their success and professional longevity.

Conclusions

Exploring the changes in an inner-city high school during an era of increased school choice was an area of concern for the researcher based on his experiences. Therefore, this study sought to understand the changes in the demographics, academic achievement, and community perceptions of City High School during a heightened school choice era. This examination also sought to understand how the competition for students based on the changes in demographics, academic achievement, and community perceptions influences families to choose City High School or other options. Thus, the purpose of this single case study was to investigate the changes at City High School by exploring past and current student demographics, academic achievement, and community perceptions.

Participant data, non-participant data, and findings were all guided by and analyzed through the lens of the market theory of choice. Participants in this study shared their personal experiences and their current perceptions of City High School. They, to a degree, still have some

level of connection with the school. The participants acknowledged the changes from their time directly connected to the school to the present day. However, participants indicated that there is an improving perception of the school due to the recent consistency in leadership.

The findings from this study revealed several implications and recommendations. These include the need for the school district to examine the number and types of choice options and their proximity to City High School. The need to examine the districts' out-of-district application process to ensure it creates the desired results is warranted. Additionally, the district should empirically analyze the impact of its magnet options on student achievement at City High School. This analysis would provide additional information for the district to examine its educational programming and for families to consider when choosing their child's school.

There should be consideration given to the challenges presented by these recommendations. With the increase in funding for charter schools and state-sponsored voucher programs, local school districts may choose to increase intradistrict choice options to maintain their enrollment while simultaneously combatting encroachment. The ability to compete in the educational marketplace is critical for school districts to ensure student retention and the funding that follows the students. Local school districts need to be aware of the policy changes made by state legislatures while also being made aware of the findings related to the changes at an inner-city high school when choice options are expanded. The decisions facing local school district leaders pose a challenge when looking to maintain a school's tradition while also retaining students within the school district. However, if we are going to have an educational system that meets the needs of all children and all families, it is imperative that leaders are strategic with choice opportunities to avoid unintended and adverse outcomes.

Through studies such as the current one, additional information is added to the field of the changes to inner-city high schools during expanded school choice options. Through the expansion of the scope of this study, additional inner-city schools can be examined, and a diverse group of participants connected to the schools can be interviewed. Additional empirical studies that explore the relationship between choice options and traditional public schools are also warranted. This expansion of study could eventually lead to additional data points to further shed light on the changes at inner-city schools during an era of expanded school choice.

REFERENCES

Abdulkadiroglu, A., Pathak, P. A., & Waters, C. R. (2018). Free to choose:

Can school choice reduce student achievement? *American Economic Journal*,

10(1), 175-206. https://doi.org/10.1257/app.20160634

Adamson, F., & Galloway, M. (2019). Education Privatization in the United States:

Increasing Saturation and Segregation. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*,

27(129).

Alciano, M., & Jennings, J. L. (2020). *How increased school choice affects public school

enrollment and school segregation*. (EdWorkingPaper No. 20-258). Annenberg Institute

at Brown University. https://www.edworkingpapers.com/ai20-258

Arcia, E. (2006). Comparison of the Enrollment Percentages of Magnet and Non-Magnet

Schools in a Large Urban School District. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*,

14(33), 1–16.

Ayscue, J., Nelson, A. H., Mickelson, R. A., Giersch, J., Bottia, M. C., Civil Rights

Project, P. D. C. C. for C. R. R. (CCRR), & University of North Carolina at

Charlotte. (2018). *Charters as a Driver of Resegregation*. Civil Rights Project Proyecto

Derechos Civiles.

Ayscue, J. B., Siegel-Hawley, G., Kucsera, J., & Woodward, B. (2018). School

Segregation and Resegregation in Charlotte and Raleigh, 1989-2010. *Educational Policy*,

32(1), 3–54.

Ayscue, J. B., Siegel-Hawley, G., Woodward, B., & Orfield, G. (2016). When choice

Fosters inequality: Can research help? *Phi Delta Kappan, 98*(4), 49-54.

Ayscue, J. B. (2016). Promising or potentially harmful? Suburban school responses to

Racial change. *Peabody Journal of Education*, *91*(3), 326-347.

Baines, L., & Foster, H. (2006). A School for the Common Good. *Educational Horizons, 84*(4).

Baker, B. D., & Economic Policy Institute. (2016). *Exploring the Consequences of Charter School Expansion in U.S. Cities. In Economic Policy Institute*. Economic Policy Institute.

Baker, B. D., Libby, K., & Wiley, K. (2015). Charter School Expansion and within District Equity: Confluence or Conflict? *Education Finance and Policy, 10*(3), 423–465.

Barnes, C. (2013). A Personal Memoir of Plaintiffs' Co-Counsel in Keyes V. School District No. 1. *Denver University Law Review, 90*(5), 1059–1081.

Beese, J., & Martin, J. (2020). Misrepresenting "Brown": Are Ohio Schools Lost in the Free Market? General Implications for Urban Education. *Urban Education, 55*(8–9), 1203-1223.

Belfield, C. R., & Levin, H. M. (2007). *The economic losses from high school dropouts In California* (Vol. 1). California Dropout Research Project.

Berry, B. W. (2020). *The Impact of Racial Segregation on School Performance in Charter Schools*. (Doctoral dissertation, Liberty University).

Bifulco, R. & Ladd, H.F. (2007). School choice, racial segregation and test score gaps: Evidence from North Carolina's charter school program. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 26*(1), 31-56.

Billingham, C. M., & Hunt, M. O. (2016). School racial composition and parental choice:

New evidence on the preferences of white parents in the United States. *Sociology of education*, *89*(2), 99-117.

Blankenship, C. (2021, August 3). *Back to School: From public to charter, Faith Elementary Won't miss a beat.* Salisbury Post. https://www.salisburypost.com/2021/08/03/back-to school-from-public-to-charter-faith-elementary-wont-miss-a-beat/

Bruno, P. (2019). Charter competition and district finances: Evidence from California. *Journal of Education Finance*, *44*(4), 361-384. https://www.jstor.org/stable/45213898

Carnoy, M. (2017). *School vouchers are not a proven strategy for improving student achievement.* Economic Policy Institute. epi.org/publication/school-vouchers-are-not-a-proven-strategy-for-improving-student-achievement/

Chapman, T. K. (2018). Segregation, desegregation, segregation: Charter school options as return to separate and unequal schools for urban families. *Peabody Journal of Education, 93*(1), 38–51.

Cook, J. B. (2018). The effect of charter competition on unionized district revenues and resource allocation. *Journal of Public Economics*, *158*, 48-62. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2017.12.003

Cookson, P. W., Jr., Darling-Hammond, L., Rothman, R., Shields, P. M. (2018) *The tapestry of American public education: How can we create a system of schools worth choosing for all?* Learning Policy Institute.https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED606616.pdf

Cullen, J. B., Jacob, B. A., & Levitt, S. D. (2005). The impact of school choice on student

outcomes: An analysis of the Chicago Public Schools. *Journal of Public Economics*, *89*(56), 729-760.

Culverhouse, R. (2018). *How School Choice Can Affect Academic Success: A Study of Two Virginia Inner-City Magnet Middle School Sixth-Grade Students' Reading and Math Scores* (Doctoral dissertation, Regent University).

Dalane, K., & Marcotte, D.E. (2019). Socioeconomic segregation and school choice in American public schools. *Educational Researcher, 48*(8), 493–503.

Danns, D. (2008). Racial Ideology and the Sanctity of the Neighborhood School in Chicago. *Urban Review: Issues and Ideas in Public Education, 40*(1), 64–75.

Danns, D. (2018). Policy Implications for School Desegregation and School Choice in Chicago. *Urban Review: Issues and Ideas in Public Education, 50*(4), 584–603. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11256-018-0457-x

Darling-Hammond, L., Rothman, R., Cookson, P. W., Jr., & Learning Policy Institute. (2017). *Expanding High-Quality Educational Options for All Students: How States Can Create a System of Schools Worth Choosing. In Learning Policy Institute*. Learning Policy Institute.

Dee, T. S., & Fu, H. (2004). Do charter schools skim students or drain resources? *Economics of Education Review, 23*(3), 259–271.

Dey, I. (1993) *Qualitative data analysis: A user friendly guide for social scientists.* Routledge.

Diem, S., Frankenberg, E., Cleary, C., & Ali, N. (2014). The Politics of Maintaining Diversity Policies in Demographically Changing Urban-Suburban School Districts. *American Journal of Education, 120*(3), 351–389.

Egalite, A. J., Stallings, D. T., & Porter, S. R. (2020). An analysis of the effects of North

Carolina's Opportunity Scholarship Program on student achievement. *AERA Open, 6*(1), 1-15. https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858420912347

Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American journal of theoretical and applied statistics*, *5*(1), 1-4.

Figlio, D. N., & Karbownik, K. (2016). *Evaluation of Ohio's EdChoice Scholarship Program: Selection, competition, and performance effects.* Thomas B. Fordham Institute. https://edex.s3_us-west-2.amazonaws.com/publication/pdfs/FORDHAM%20Ed%20Choice%20Evaluation%20Report_online%20edition.pdf

Fiske, E.B. & Ladd, H.F. (2000). *When schools compete: A cautionary tale.* Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Fitzgerald, T. (2015). White Racial Framing Related to Public School Financing. *Forum on Public Policy Online, 2015*(1).

Fowler-Finn, T. (2002). I Think I Can. *American School Board Journal, 189*(10), 36-39.

Forfaria, R. (2019, December 19). *This school district's three early colleges meet local needs and share community bond.* EdNc.org. https://www.ednc.org/this-school districts-three-early-colleges-meet-local-needs-and-share-community-bond/

Frankenberg, E., & Siegel-Hawley, G. (2013). A segregating choice? An overview of charter school policy, enrollment trends, and segregation. *In Educational delusions? Why choice can deepen inequality and how to make schools fair* (pp. 129-144). University of California Press.

Frey, A., & Wilson, M. (2009). The Resegregation of Public Schools. *Children & Schools, 31*(2), 79–86.

Frontier, T., & Rickabaugh, J. (2014). *Five levers to improve learning: How to prioritize for powerful results in your school*. ASCD.

Fuller, B. (2009, September 6). *Morningside students bond reborn with reunion*. Statesville Record and Landmark. https://statesville.com/news/morningside-students-bond-reborn with-reunion/article_3864ac85-5c4b-5120-8e4d-7f700a205dfa.html

Gao, N., & Semykina, A. (2021). Competition effects of charter schools: New evidence from North Carolina. *Journal of School Choice*, *15*(3), 393-416.

George, J., Darling-Hammond, L., & Learning Policy Institute. (2021). *Advancing Integration and Equity through Magnet Schools. In Learning Policy Institute*. Learning Policy Institute.

Gleason, P. M. (2019). Charter Schools' Systemic Effects. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 38*(4), 1071–1074.

Glenn, W. J. (2012). School Resegregation: A Synthesis of the Evidence. *Educational Forum, 76*(3), 282–298.

Goldring, E., & Smrekar, C. (2002). Magnet Schools: Reform and Race in Urban Education. *Clearing House, 76*(1), 13–15.

Han, E., & Keefe, J. H. (2020). The impact of charter school competition on student achievement of traditional public schools: Evidence from national district-level panel data. *Journal of School Choice, 14*(3), 429-467. https://doi.org/10.1080/15582159.2020.1746621

Hancock, D. R., Algozzine, B., & Lim, J. H. (2021). *Doing case study research: A practical guide for beginning researchers* (4th ed.)*. Teachers College Press.

Harris, D. N., & Larsen, M. F. (2018). What effect did the New Orleans school reforms have on

student achievement, high school graduation, and college outcomes. *Education Research Alliance Policy Brief*.

Hausman, C., & Goldring, E. (2000). Parent Involvement, Influence, and Satisfaction in Magnet Schools: Do Reasons for Choice Matter? *Urban Review, 32*(2), 105–121.

Hitt, D. H., & Tucker, P. D. (2016). Systematic review of key leader practices found to influence student achievement: A unified framework. *Review of Educational Research*, *86*(2), 531–569. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654315614911

Hitt, D. H., Woodruff, D., Meyers, C. V., & Zhu, G. (2018). Principal competencies that make a difference: Identifying a model for leaders of school turnaround. *Journal Of School Leadership*, *28*(1), 56–81. https://doi.org/10.1177/105268461802800103

Holme, J. J., Frankenberg, E., Diem, S., & Welton, A. D. (2013). School Choice in Suburbia: The impact of choice policies on the potential for suburban integration. *Journal of School Choice, 7*(2), 113-141. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15582159.2013.789293

Houck, E. A. (2010). Teacher Quality and School Resegregation: A Resource Allocation Case Study. *Leadership and Policy in Schools, 9*(1), 49–77.

House Bill 259. *2023 Appropriations Act*. https://www.ncleg.gov/Sessions/2023/Bills/House/PDF/H259v6.pdf

Howell, W. G., Wolf, P. J., Campbell, D. E., & Peterson, P. E. (2002). School vouchers and academic performance: Results from three randomized field trials. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 21*(2), 191-217.

Hui, T. K. (2023, September 23). Every North Carolina family can soon get private school vouchers. How will that work? *The News & Observer*.

https://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/education/article279557739.html

Jenkins, D. A. (2020). School reputation as a site of struggle: An investigation of the

impact of school choice in Washington, DC on a neighborhood public school. *The Urban*

Review, *52*(5), 904-923.

Jimenez-Castellanos, O., & Martinez, D. G. (2016). Financing Education in a Climate of

Change, by Vern Brimley, Deborah A. Verstegen, and Rulon R. Garfield. *Journal*

of Education Finance, *41*(3), 382-386.

Jones, P. A. (2018). The influence of charter school competition on public school district

revenues across the US. *Journal of Education Finance*, *43*(3)327-359.

https://www.jstor.org/stable/45093700

Kahlenberg, R. D. (2000). The New Economic School Desegregation. *Educational*

Leadership, 57(7), 16–19.

Kahlenberg, R. D., Potter, H., & Quick, K. (2019). School Integration: How It Can

Promote Social Cohesion and Combat Racism. *American Educator, 43*(3), 26–30.

Kahlenberg, R. D. (2006). The New Integration. *Educational Leadership, 63*(8), 22-26.

Kemerer, F. R., & Godwin, R. K. (2002). *School Choice Tradeoffs: Liberty, Equity, and*

Diversity. University of Texas Press.

Kitmitto, S., Levin, J., Betts, J., Bos, J., Eaton, M., & Society for Research on

Educational Effectiveness (SREE). (2016). *What Happens When Schools Become*

Magnet Schools? A Longitudinal Study of Diversity and Achievement. Society

for Research on Educational Effectiveness.

Ladd, H. F. (2019). How charter schools threaten the public interest. *Journal of Policy*

Analysis and Management, 38(4), 1063–1071. https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.22163

Lee, J. (2016). Paying for School Choice: Availability Differences among Local

    Education Markets. *International Journal of Education Policy and Leadership, 11*(5).

Mamo, M. (2022). Fiscal and Competitive Externalities of Charter Schools: Evidence

    from Utah. *Journal of Education Finance*, *47*(4), 450-475.

    https://gale.com/ps?i.do?p=AONE&u=char69915&id=GALEJA731529075&v=2.1&it=r

Martinez, V. J., & And Others. (1995). The Consequences of School Choice: Who

    Leaves and Who Stays in the Inner City. *Social Science Quarterly, 76*(3), 485–501.

McClellan, H. (2023, June 8). *Academic performance of charters and traditional schools*

    is similar, DPI report says. Ednc.org*.* https://www.ednc.org/academic

    performance-of-charters-and-traditional-schools-is-similar-dpi-report

    https://www.ednc.org/academic-performance-of-charters-and-traditional-schools-is-

    similar-dpi-report-says/#:~:text=for%20this%20content.-

    ,Fifty%2Dthree%20of%20195%20charter%20schools%20(27.2%25)%20received%20a,

    model%20to%20include%20more%20metrics.says/#:~:text=for%20this%20content.,Fift

    y%2Dthree%20of%20195%20charter%20schools%20(27.2%25)%20received%20a,mod

    el%20to%20include%20more%20metrics.

McPherson, E. (2011). Moving from Separate, to Equal, to Equitable Schooling:

    Revisiting School Desegregation Policies. *Urban Education, 46*(3), 465–483.

McWilliams, J. A. (2017). The Neighborhood School Stigma: School Choice,

    Stratification, and Shame*. Policy Futures in Education, 15*(2), 221–238.

Mead, J. F., & Green, P. C., III (2012). (2012).

    Chartering Equity: Using Charter School Legislation and Policy to Advance

Equal Educational Opportunity. National Education Policy Center.

https://nepc.colorado.edu/sites/default/files/LB-CharterEquity.pdf

Mertens, D. M. (2020). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology.* (5th ed.).

Sage.

Meyers, C. V., & Hambrick Hitt, D. (2017). School turnaround principals: What does initial

research literature suggest they are doing to be successful? *Journal of Education for*

Students Placed at Risk, *22*(1), 38–56. https://doi.org/10.1080/10824669.2016.1242070

Miner, B. (1998). Why I Don't Vouch for Vouchers. *Educational Leadership, 56*(2), 40

42.

Monarrez, T., Kisida, B., & Chingos, M. (2019). Do Charter Schools Increase

Segregation? First National Analysis Reveals a Modest Impact, Depending on Where

You Look. *Education Next, 19*(4), 66–74.

Monarrez, T., Kisida, B., and Chingos, M. (2022). The effect of charter schools on school

segregation. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy, 14*(1), 301-340.

https://doi.org/10.1257/pol.20190682

National Center for Education Statistics. https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=30

Nordstrom, K. (2018). *Stymied by segregation: How integration can transform North*

Carolina schools and the lives of its students. North Carolina Justice Center.

North Carolina History Project. https://northcarolinahistory.org/encyclopedia/charter-

schools/

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts

schools/testing-and-school-accountability/school-accountability-and

reporting/accountability-data-sets-and-reports

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts

   schools/testing-and-school-accountability/school-accountability-and

   reporting/accountability-data-sets-and-reports/accountability-report-archive.

North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority.

   https://www.ncseaa.edu/opportunityscholarship-summary-of-data/

North Carolina General Statute 115C-85.15.

   https://www.ncleg.gov/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/PDF/BySection/Chapter_115

   /GS_115C-83.15.pdf

Oaks, J., Cookson Jr, P. W., Levin, S., Carver-Thomas, D., Frelow, F., Berry, B., ... &

   Guin, S. (2019). Providing an Equal Opportunity for a Sound Basic Education in North

   Carolina's High-Poverty Schools: Assessing Needs and Opportunities. Sound Basic

   Education for All: An Action Plan for North Carolina. *WestEd*.

Provinzano, K. T., Sondergeld, T. A., & Knaggs, C. M. (2020). Community Schools as a

   Sustainable Comprehensive School Reform Strategy: A Transformative Mixed

   Methods Perspective. *Mid-Western Educational Researcher, 32*(1), 3–30.

Public Schools First North Carolina. https://www.publicschoolsfirstnc.org/resources/fact

   sheets/quick-facts-on-charter-schools/ - :~:text=Recent Facts on Charter Schools,

   school children attend charter schools.

Public Schools First North Carolina. https://www.publicschoolsfirstnc.org/wp

   content/uploads/2022/03/12.10.21-The-Facts-on-School-Vouchers.final_2.pdf

Reardon, S. F., Grewal, E. T., Kalogrides, D., & Greenberg, E. (2012). Brown Fades: The

   End of Court-Ordered School Desegregation and the Resegregation of American Public

   Schools. *Journal of Policy Analysis & Management, 31*(4), 876–904.

Raymond, M. E., Woodoworth, J. L., Lee, W. F., Bachefor, S. (2023). *As a matter of fact: The national charter school study III 2023*. Center for Research on Educational Outcomes. https://credo.stanford.edu

Reese, J. (2022, February 6). *Black History Month: Morningside, Unity schools have storied history.* Statesville Record and Landmark. https://statesville.com/news/local/black history-month-morningside-unity-schools-have-storied-history/article_be2d5700- 86c511ec-af80-5758b454e4e8.html

Russo, Charles J. "One Step Forward, Half a Step Backward?." *Journal of Negro Education* (2004): 174-181.

Shakeel, M. D., Anderson, K. P., & Wolf, P. (2021). The participant effects of private school vouchers around the globe: a meta-analytic and systematic review. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 32*(4), 509-542. http://doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2021.1906283

Shakeel, M. D., & Peterson, P. E. (2021). Charter schools show steeper upward trend in student achievement than district schools: First nationwide study of trends shows large gains for African Americans at charters. *Education Next*, *21*(1), 40-48.

Smith, S. S. (1996). Boom for Whom? Desegregation, Redistribution, and Development in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Spencer, P. (2013, September 1). *Bravery of first students to integrate Statesville schools honored*. Statesville Record and Landmark. https://statesville.com/news/bravery of-first students-to-integrate-statesville-schools-honored/article_fc0ab2da-128d-11e3- ab21001a4bcf6878.html#tncms-source=login

Thompson Dorsey, D. N. (2013). Segregation 2.0: The New Generation of School

    Segregation in the 21st Century. *Education and Urban Society, 45*(5), 533–547.

United States Census Bureau. https://www.census.gov/

Waddington, J. & Berends, M. (2017). *Vouchers in the crossroads: Heterogeneous*

    impacts on student achievement and attendance across private schools in Indiana.

    Future*Ed.* https://www.future-ed.org/vouchers-in-the-crossroads-heterogeneous-

    impacts-on-student-achievement-and-attendance-across-private-schools-in-

    indiana/

Warren, D. (1988). Original Intents: Public Schools as Civic Education. *Theory into*

    Practice, 27(4), 243–249.

Warkentien, S., & Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness (SREE). (2016).

    Trajectories of Exposure to Racial School Segregation and the Transition to

    College. In Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness. Society for Research on

    Educational Effectiveness.

Watt, W. N. (1992). *An Early History of Statesville High School and the Athletic Teams.*

    Iredell Friends of the Library.

Webber, A., Rui, N., Garrison-Mogren, R., Olsen, R. B., and Gutmann, B. (2019).

    Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: Impacts three years

    after students applied. National Center for Educational Evaluation and Regional

    Assistance. https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20194006/pdf/20194006.pdf

Wells, A. S., Keener, A., Cabral, L., & Cordova-Cobo, D. (2019). The More Things

    Change, the More They Stay the Same: The Resegregation of Public Schools via Charter

    School Reform. *Peabody Journal of Education, 94*(5), 471–492.

Williams, S. M., & Houck, E. A. (2013). The Life and Death of Desegregation Policy in
Wake County Public School System and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. *Education and
Urban Society, 45*(5), 571–588.

Willie, C. V. (2005). The Continuing Spirit of the Brown Decision of the Supreme Court.
The Negro Educational Review, 56(1), 11–17.

Yazan, B. (2015). Three approaches to case study methods in education: Yin, Merriam,
and Stake. *The qualitative report*, *20*(2), 134-152.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th Ed.). Thousand Oaks,
CA: Sage.

APPENDIX A: CONTACT PROTOCOL

"A Single Case Study of an Inner City High School in an Era of School Choice"

Stephen C. Parker / UNC Charlotte / Educational Leadership Department

Hello…. this is Chad Parker and I am completing a research project entitled "*A Single Case Study on the Impact of School Choice on an Inner-City High School.*" The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the impact of school choice on an inner-city high school.

In your role as a former student or employee of City High School, I would like to ask you to participate in an audio-recorded interview on this subject. You have been selected due to your connection to City High School and your unique perspective on the school.

Your participation in this project will take approximately one hour to complete a brief demographic survey along with the interview itself. You will also have the opportunity to verify your comments as they appear in the final product or the opportunity to follow up on any details. If you decide to participate, you will be one of five participants in this study. I am happy to arrange the interview at a time and place that is convenient for you.

Any information in regard to your participation, including but not limited to your identity, will remain confidential. The data collected by the investigator will not contain any identifying information or provide a link to your participation in this study. Also, you are asked to not use any identifying information about current or former students or employees of City High School during the interview.

Are there any questions?

At this point, you have several options. If you are ready to agree to participate in the study, you can tell me that now. If you would prefer not to participate in the study, you can tell me that now as well. Or, if you would like additional time to consider participating, that is another option. I can e-mail you the consent form that describes participation in the study so that you may review it as you determine whether or not to participate. You will have the opportunity to follow up by phone or e-mail to inform me of your intent to participate or not.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Project Title
A Single Case Study of an Inner-City High School During an Era of School Choice

Structure
This is a semi-structured one-on-one interview with five (8) open-ended warm up questions and twelve (16) open-ended interview questions linked directly to the applicable research questions. The interviewer will probably ask some probing questions depending on the responses of the interviewee during the interview process.

Procedure
1. The researcher will find and secure an appropriate area outside of City High's school's premises and outside of working hours to conduct the interview.
2. The researcher will ask the interviewee to complete a seven question demographic survey (see Appendix D)
3. The researcher will ask if the interview may be audio recorded
4. If the participant verbally provides his/her consent (paperwork has already been collected), the recording will begin.
5. The researcher will ask the interviewee questions.

Interview Guidelines
Thank you for agreeing to an interview as part of this project. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the impact of school choice on an inner-city high school. I am going to ask you a series of questions. Your name will not be reported. There are no incorrect answers so, please answer as freely and completely as you can. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. You may decline to participate in this study, decline to participate in this study once the interview session has begun, decline to answer certain questions during the course of the interview, or voluntarily withdraw from the study. Later I will transcribe the interview. We will review your answers prior to transcription. If there is anything that you are embarrassed about during the course of the interview, you may tell me at the end of the interview and it will not be part of the transcript. You may stop at any time for any reason. Would you like to proceed?
- If no, the researcher will stop the interview and ask whether the participant is willing to be interviewed at another time.
- If yes, the researcher will continue with the interview.

Research Questions

1. How has racial and economic diversity changed in an inner-city high school

   during the 2010-2023 era of school choice?

2. How has school achievement changed in an inner-city high school during the

   2010-2023 of school choice?

3. How have stakeholder perceptions of an inner-city high school changed during the 2010-2023 era of school choice?

Interview Questions

Warm-Up Questions

1. Describe any roles or positions you held at City High School?

2. During what years did you hold these roles or positions?

3. Have you ever lived in the same city as City High School? During what years?

4. Describe your current involvement with the city that City High School serves?

5. Describe your current involvement with City High School?

6. Describe how you currently learn about City High School?

7. Describe the school choice options that are available to students living in the City High School attendance zone

8. Describe how the school choice alternatives to City High School have changed over the last 12 years.

RQ1. How has racial and economic diversity changed in an inner-city high school during the 2010-2023 era of school choice?

1. Describe the student demographics (i.e., race, economic status) during the time you were directly connected to City High School as an employee or student?

2. Describe any changes to the student demographics (i.e., race, economic status) during the time you were an employee or student at City High School.

3. Describe the current student demographics (i.e., race, economic status) of City High School?

4. What do you think contributed to the changes in demographics at City High School?

RQ2. How has school achievement changed in an inner-city high school during the 2010-2023 era of school choice?

1. Describe student academic achievement at City High School during the time that you were directly involved with the school.

2. (for former students) Describe your personal academic experiences at City High School during the time you were directly involved with the school.

3. Describe the community's perceptions of student academic achievement at City High School during the time you were directly connected to the school.

4. Describe your perceptions of the current levels of student academic achievement at City High School. How do your current perceptions compare to the perceptions you previously formed when you were directly connected to the school?

RQ3. How have stakeholder perceptions of an inner-city high school changed during the 2010-2023 era of school choice?

1. Describe the community's current perceptions of student academic achievement at City High School?

2. Describe the overall reputation of City High School during the time you were directly connected to the school.

3. Describe the current reputation of City High School.

4. Have school choice alternatives affected the reputation of City High School? If so, how?

5. Why do some families choose to remain at City High School even though school choice alternatives are available?

6. Why do some families choose the school choice alternatives rather than attending City High School?

7. Describe the impact of school choice alternatives on the community's support for City High School.

8. Describe the impact of school choice alternatives on the level of financial support for City High School.

APPENDIX C: DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

1. What is your gender?
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. _____ (short answer)
   d. Prefer not to answer

2. What is your age?
   a. 15 – 30 years old
   b. 30 – 40 years old
   c. 40 – 50 years old
   d. 50+ years old
   e. Prefer not to answer

3. Ethnicity
   a. Caucasian
   b. African-American
   c. Latino or Hispanic
   d. Asian
   e. Native American
   f. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
   g. Two or More
   h. Other/Unknown
   i. Prefer not to answer

4. Where do you currently reside? (Short answer)

5. Highest Level of Education
   a. Some High School
   b. High School
   c. Bachelor's Degree
   d. Master's Degree
   e. PhD. Or higher
   f. Trade School

g. Prefer not to say

6. Are you married?

    a. Yes

    b. No

    c. Prefer not to say

7. What is your current employment status?

    a. Employed full time (40+ hours per week)

    b. Employed part time (Less than 40 hours per week)

    c. Unemployed (currently looking for work)

    d. Unemployed (not currently looking for work)

    e. Retired

    f. Student

    g. Self-employed

    h. Prefer not to say

APPENDIX D: CONSTENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Title of the Project: *A Single Case Study of an Inner-City High School During an Era of School Choice*
Principal Investigator: Mr. Stephen C. Parker, UNC Charlotte
Co-investigator: N/A
Study Sponsor: N/A

You are invited to participate in a research study. Participation in this research study is voluntary. The information provided is to help you decide whether to participate. If you have any questions, please ask.

Important Information You Need to Know
- The purpose of this study is to study the impact of school choice on an inner-city high school.
- I am asking former students and employees who are aged 20 and older to complete a simple demographic survey, a 1 – on – 1 interview about the respective topic.
- Some of the questions I'll ask you may be construed as personal and sensitive given your relationship to City High School. For example, I will ask you about your experiences at City High School and how those perceived experiences have changed over time. These questions are personal, and you may experience some mild discomfort. You may choose to skip a question you do not want to answer. You will not personally benefit from taking part in this research, but our study results may help in better understanding the impact of school choice on City High School.
- Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before you decide whether to participate in this research study.

Why are we doing this study?
The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of school choice on City High School.

Why are you being asked to be in this research study?
You are being asked to participate in this study because you are aged 20 and older and are a former student or employee of City High School.

What will happen if I take part in this study?
If you choose to participate you will complete a simple demographic questionnaire followed by a 1 on 1 interview about the respective topic. The demographic questionnaire will ask you general demographic questions (gender, age, marital status, ethnicity, highest level of education, current employment status) and the 1 on 1 interview will ask you questions about your perceptions on the impact of school choice on the demographics, and level of achievement at City High School. If at any time during our interviews you felt uncomfortable answering a question, you would let me know, and you wouldn't need to answer the question. Or, if you wanted to answer a question but did not want your answer recorded, you would let me know, and I would turn off the recorder. If at any time you wanted to withdraw from the study, you would let me know, and I would erase the recordings of our conversations. Your total time

commitment if you participate in this study will be approximately one (1) hour to an hour and a half.

What benefits might I experience?

You will not benefit directly from being in this study beyond contributing to the perceptions of the impact of school choice options on City High School.

What risks might I experience?

The questions I'll ask you might be construed as personal or sensitive, as they pertain to your experiences at City High School. For example, I'll ask you about your personal experiences at City High School and your perceptions about the current state of City High School. These questions are personal, and you might experience some mild discomfort. You may choose to skip a question you do not want to answer. I do not expect this risk to be common and you may choose to skip questions you do not want to answer.

How will my information be protected?

You are asked to provide your personal e-mail address as part of this study. I will use your personal e-mail address to deliver to you the Informed Consent Form. Additionally, I will use your personal e-mail to send you your completed interview transcript. To protect your privacy (identity), I'll assign a study ID code to your questionnaire responses. Once I do this, I'll delete the e-mail address from the questionnaire responses so the responses will only have the study ID code. I will use a digital audio recorder to record our interviews. Immediately following each interview, I will transfer the audio file from the digital recorder to university password-protected cloud data storage, and I will delete the audio file from the recorder. After the research project is completed, I will delete the audio files from the password-protected data storage. I will transcribe each interview using word processing software. The transcriptions will be stored in password-protected data storage and will be deleted after the research project is completed. While the study is active, all data will be stored in a password-protected data base that can be accessed by the primary researcher. Only the researcher will have routine access to the study data. Other people, with approval from the Investigator, may need to see the information I collect about you including people who work for UNC Charlotte and other agencies as required by law or allowed by federal regulations; however, that information will be coded for anonymity.

How will my information be used after the study is over?

After this study is complete, study data may be shared with other researchers for use in other studies without asking for your consent again or as may be needed as part of publishing our results. The data we share will NOT include information that could identify you.

Will I receive an incentive for taking part in this study?

You will not receive a financial incentive for taking part in this study.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

It is up to you to decide to be in this research study. Participating in this study is voluntary. Even if you decide to be part of the study now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

Who can answer my questions about this study and my rights as a participant?
      For questions about this research, you may contact:
           Mr. Stephen C. Parker
           [CONTACT INFORMATION REMOVED]
           Dr. Walter Hart
           [CONTACT INFORMATION REMOVED]

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the Office of Research Protections and Integrity at 704–687–1871 or uncc-irb@uncc.edu.

<div align="center">Consent to Participate</div>

      By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will receive a copy of this document for your records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.
I understand what the study is about, and my questions so far have been answered. I agree to take part in this study.

_____
Name (PRINT)

_____
Signature   Date

_____
Name & Signature of person obtaining consent   Date

APPENDIX E: MEMBER CHECKING PROTOCOL

This study has three research questions that are listed below. Each of these questions is accompanied by initial findings from the research process. At your convenience, please read through this document as well as your attached personal interview transcript that was transcribed using voice-to-text through *Microsoft 360*. You can reply directly to verify and confirm your responses and follow up with any details, if applicable. If you have any questions, concerns, or ideas that may assist with clarifying the research questions and the study as a whole, please let me know. While the member checking protocol step is optional, your feedback as a participant in this study is appreciated. Thank you!

RQ1. How have racial and economic diversity changed in an inner-city high school during the 2010-2023 era of school choice?

Insert text here

RQ2. How has school achievement changed in an inner-city high school during the 2010-2023 era of school choice?

Insert text here

RQ3. How have stakeholder perceptions of an inner-city high school changed during the 2010-2023 era of school choice?

Insert text here