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A Case Study Focused on the Level of Satisfaction of Select Stakeholders: Parents, Teachers, and Community Members on Identified Variables to Improve Academic Performance in One Urban Charter School

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ABSTRACT

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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M.ED. AUBURN UNIVERSITY, 2011.

A CASE STUDY FOCUSED ON THE LEVEL OF SATISFACTION OF SELECT STAKEHOLDERS: PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS ON IDENTIFIED VARIABLES TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN ONE URBAN CHARTER SCHOOL

Committee Chair: Barbara Hill, Ed.D.
Dissertation dated May 2017

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate identified variables satisfaction from select stakeholders to improve academic performance in a charter school. The researcher sought to understand the qualities of successful schools by examining the following variables: communication, curriculum, governance process, governance structure, instructional resources, maintenance of facility, school culture, school life, and quality of instruction. School administrators, teachers, parents, and community members were interviewed. A survey by AdvancED was used to determine satisfaction level of school practices. Standardized testing data were analyzed to inquire information on academic performance.

The qualitative approach is one in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case), or multiple bounded systems (cases), over time, through detailed,
in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based-theme (Creswell, 2009). The results in the study yielded successful practices and procedures schools can employ to increase academic achievement and reduce the likelihood of school closings based on academic performance. The research focused on a charter school that has been consistently exceeding district and state standardized test scores. The findings of the research can be used by school leaders, principals, school board members, and school districts to improve overall school effectiveness. The findings also provided a framework of research-based practices to meet the needs of all students. The school used in the study serves K through eighth-grade students and is a startup charter school. The school has 744 students and over 250 students on its waiting list. Nearby schools are all Title-1 schools with a high percentage of children from low-income families. The school demographics included a 99% African-American population. The findings of this study certainly added supporting research to the effective schools’ movement and replication for future charter schools. The results of the study produced themes that were apparent through the interviews, survey, and document analysis. High expectations, consistent communication, parental involvement, supportive environment, and purposeful engagement were the common themes that supported variables that affected the level of satisfaction of stakeholders in improving academic achievement.
A CASE STUDY FOCUSED ON THE LEVEL OF SATISFACTION OF SELECT STAKEHOLDERS: PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS ON IDENTIFIED VARIABLES TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN ONE URBAN CHARTER SCHOOL

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

BY
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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Today, charter schools are beneficial in giving students viable options in regards to choosing a quality education. According to the National Education Association (NEA), “…charter schools are privately managed, taxpayer-funded schools exempted from some rules applicable to all other taxpayer-funded schools” (NEA, 2016, para. 2). Charter schools offer public education with an increased ability for innovation and flexibility. According to the Georgia Charter School Association, “A charter school’s value includes innovation, school choice, parental involvement, student achievement, accountability, communication, and collaboration” (Georgia Department of Education [GADOE], 2015, p. 2). These values advocate the importance of stakeholder involvement in expanding and bolstering charter schools for promising students. However, much of the extant research did not examine the perceptions of stakeholders in successful charter schools. According to Frumkin (2003), stakeholders must be the focal point in building strong relationships for overall school success. In many lower-income communities, charter schools are challenged with improving academic achievement in these schools. According to the National Charter School Resource Center (2015), charter school students, especially low-income ones, performed as well as or better than the comparison group in math and reading. The Center for Research Education Outcomes’ (CREDO) studies indicated that
charter schools are outperforming traditional schools in academic performance, particularly in urban areas for African-American students nationwide (CREDO, 2015).

Charter schools are now offering better educational options (i.e., charter schools) to typically disadvantaged African-American students. Stakeholder involvement helped to increase student attendance and, therefore, had an impact on the charter school’s academic learning time. Another study completed by the Center for Research Education Outcomes showed positive rates of attendance for students attending charter schools (CREDO, 2015). African-American students gained more days of learning than their traditional public school counterparts: an additional 29 days of learning in reading and 36 days in math in one school year. In another study conducted by Stanford University’s Center for Research on Education Outcomes (2015), it was reported that students in charter schools learned significantly more than their peers attending traditional public schools—40 more days of learning in math, and 28 more in reading.

One benefit of charter schools is the school choice option, which allows and fosters a more diverse landscape. Diversity, religion, economics, and racial disparity are the rationale for creating social economically diverse charter schools. These charter schools begin and end by creating lifelong learners who become model adult citizens. The diversity in which some charter schools employ curriculum diversity helps to foster different beliefs and helps students become more socially conscience to the environment surrounding them. These values for creating such charters can also bring equity to public education. According to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS), education equity is a major concern plaguing inner city students. The NAPCS stated, “If
we assign students to schools based on their zip codes, true opportunity will not be realized” (Kingsland, 2015, p. 3).

**Startup Charter Schools versus Privately Owned Charter Schools**

The charter school movement has spread throughout many states and counties in a mixture of models. Some of the models have been developed for nonprofit and for profit purposes to compete with traditional and private schools. Independent or startup charter schools are schools that acquire their own facilities and can have attendance boundaries for students. Startup charter schools are usually founded by parents or community members who want alternatives to traditional schooling. An example of a startup charter school in Georgia is Globe Academy. At Globe Academy, students are taught English in half their classers and another language in the others. According to research done by Scott Iberman (2009), “Startup charters are schools which begin as charters and enrollment is voluntary” (p. 4). The main focal point of startup charters was the opportunity for the school to be freestanding and have complete control and responsibility.

There are currently 115 charter schools in Georgia, and 97 are startup charter schools. Research conducted by Zimmer and Buddin (2006) indicated that startup charters outperform conversions. Because startups tend to be more radical than their conversion counterparts, there is a greater expected difference between startup charters and public schools than conversions and public schools.
Charter Management Organizations (CMOs)

Charter management organizations (CMOs)—privately owned charter schools—are non-profit management systems that provide support to charter schools. The CMOs often “hire, evaluate, and provide professional development for the teaching staff, while fulfilling reporting and financial oversight responsibilities” (National Resource Center, 2008, para. 1). CMOs are focused on reproducing schools to create networks of schools. Charter school governance sets the policies and laws schools abide by. According to Franzini (2016), “CMOs are able to overcome issues of stand-alone charter schools, such as allowing for a governance unit and the ability to generate more funding” (p. 5). One of the prominent CMOs across the United States is the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP). KIPP’s network of schools is located in 20 states, using distinct features of high academic expectations, parental commitment, and more academic learning time as a charter school operator.

Educational Management Organizations (EMOs)

Educational management organizations (EMOs) are usually for-profit companies that operate several charter schools across different states. EMOs are focused on managing all aspects of the school operations and usually provide an individualized model with growth and expansion. In the EMOs, the organization reaches out to the charter school to provide a host of services. According to Berman (2008), “Educational Management Organizations (EMO) may partner with charter school operators and/or boards of directors to assist in providing educational and/or financial support” (p. 3). An example is Charter School USA, which operates over 77 schools in seven states. These
EMO schools helped with phases of design, curriculum, development, finance, and construction. According to the Center of Education Reform, in 2015-2016, approximately sixty percent of charter schools across the U.S. were independent charter schools, while 26% were managed by CMOs and 15% from EMOs (CREDO, 2015)

**Conversion Charter School**

A conversion charter school is one in which the traditional school converts to a charter school status dependent of the charter agreement. Iberman (2009) stated that conversion charters generally “keep the same staff, location, and attendance zones; thus, most of their students are assigned based on location of residence like any normal school” (p. 4). In a conversion charter school, the school gains more flexibility in exchange for more accountability. The conversion charter school is still district-afflicted in the conversion, but has intended to fully separate in governance, leadership, and organization operations. Currently in Georgia, there are 31 conversion charter schools (GADOE, 2015).

**Charter School Districts**

A growing number of school districts across the U.S. have seen a rapid growth in expansion of charter school districts. This demand for a charter district was first established in New Orleans, after Hurricane Katrina. The education system in New Orleans believed in creating higher academic expectations throughout the districts. The New Orleans district also believed it needed more flexibility to become creative and innovative with rules and guidelines pertaining to academic success.
In Georgia, there are three types of charter school authorizers. Each authorizer has the ability to make decisions based on charter applications and reinforce all standards based upon the terms of the charter. As of June 2015, Georgia authorized a flexibility option for all school districts. The flexibility option operated in three sections: Investing in Educational Excellence School System (IE2), Charter System, or Status Quo School System. In the IE2 system, the district has a performance contract granting district freedoms from specific Title 20 provisions, rules, and guidelines, but still must comply with federal laws and regulations. In the Charter System, the district executes a charter granting freedom from all Title 20 provisions, rules, and guidelines, but still must comply with federal laws and regulations. The last option for districts was the Status Quo System. The Status Quo System grants a local district the option to elect whether or not to increase flexibility, in exchange for accountability, and opted to remain under all current regulations.

In Georgia, several metro-Atlanta school districts are charter systems. These districts include Atlanta, Fulton, and Marietta. According to the Georgia Charter School Association, “Charter systems represent almost sixty percent of all charter types” (GADOE, 2015, para. 4). In each local school district, the overall goal is improving student academic results for all students to be successful.

**College and Career Academies**

Many charter schools often have a focus or theme in the school’s name attached to academic standards. This focus can either be pragmatic or specialized for the student population the school is serving. Frequently, charter schools focus on S.T.E.M.
disciplines or other career readiness academies to build upon the current school’s moniker. Currently, Georgia has 17 pathways that students can choose with local Georgia Business. A pathway is a sequence of courses for students to review and follow through high school to prepare for postsecondary schools. Each independent charter school has its own distinct model of strategies that it uses for a customized school to be effective in meeting the academic needs of students.

**Introduction of Successful Charter School**

The issue of “what is charter success” is the main concern when discussing how well charter schools are doing compared to traditional public-funded schools. In 2011, 48% of American schools did not meet the standards set out by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Usher, 2011). Adam Ozimek (2015), a contributor and economist for *Forbes*, wrote, “Conventional wisdom would like everyone to believe that charter schools do no better and no worse than public schools” (para. 2). However, the research from CREDO (2013) dispels that “on average, some charter schools do better at educating poor African-American students” (para. 3). The true question is if the effectiveness of charter schools is up to certain standards all of schools. Most charter school advocates believe that charter schools on average are more effective than public schools. In a target approach, the aim is to increase achievement in charter schools as a determinant of academic success.

The mission of charter school innovation has a variety of needs, goals, and standards to make it successful. Depending on the charter, the school mission may have a very specific statement to appeal to parents choosing the school. Typically, charter
schools have an in-depth component of serving students in more challenging academic settings, along with an extensive amount of parental involvement. According to the National Center for Education Evaluation, the mission of charter schools combines stakeholders’ opinions, along with school officials, in creating goals for school success (CREDO, 2013). The school’s success is predicated on fulfilling the mission in all areas of curriculum, instruction, and administrative procedures.

Charter schools are evaluated on a variety of different methods, depending on the state’s or district’s legislation governing them. Most charter school evaluations are based on similar credentials across the country. The charter school’s criteria mainly include nondiscrimination laws, fiscal responsibility, conversion tactics, equal opportunities and access, and a functional governing board. Each charter school’s funding, charter laws, and populations are factors in helping to determine the quality of charter school.

Successful Charter Schools’ Strategies

Charter schools have evolved as parents have wanted an alternative to traditional public schools. The “charter,” or legally binding document a charter school imposes, holds precedence over advancing student achievement. Research indicates charter school growth is increasing tremendously each year. In 1999, there were 1,542 charter schools with 349,642 students; by 2008, there were 4,618 charter schools with 1,407,817 students (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2013). Today, nearly 6,000 charter schools exist, educating almost two million students (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2013). As charter schools continue to grow, it is inevitable that additional accountability will ensue to ensure academic performance is the top priority.
Strategies

The curriculum of charter schools often varies dependent on the focus of the school. Often, this curriculum is very innovative and sets to meet the needs of the student. Within the charter document, the charter school can devise an individualized structured curriculum to be taught with instructional strategies. The curriculum is generally specific and often more rigorous than traditional school standards. As a result, teachers are often able to be creative in their teaching methods. For many charter teachers, they welcome their role as facilitators and feel empowered in aspects of school options. It is necessary for the administration to support a curriculum that allows for the creation and maintenance of relationships between teachers and students, as well as activities that promote critical thinking.

The school culture of the charter school is another advantage of a charter’s school flexibility. According to Deal and Peterson (1998), “School culture comprises the underlying set of norms and values, rituals and traditions, ceremonies and stories that have been built up over time as people work and learn together” (p. 28). The emersion of themes or career readiness programs requires a great amount of forethought and preparation to promote the success of the student. The culture of the charter school is often based on expectations, norms, protocols, and procedures from administration. These charter schools help to develop this culture where students, teachers, and parents believe in what the schools are doing to meet the school’s mission. A positive school culture is one in which students feel safe and able to respect and care for one another. Many school leader and principals of charter schools believe the culture is vital for success. Harvard
Professor Roland Barth (2002) provided additional analysis stating that, “A school’s culture has far more influence on life and learning in the schoolhouse than the state department of education, superintendent, the school board, or even the principal can have” (p. 6). Charter schools that engrave their culture help to build consensus, foster motivations, and encourage learning.

Learning Models in charter schools is another major tool in the success of any school. A charter school’s ability to use *out of the box* teaching methods or best practices to increase student performance is another advantage over traditional schools. These unorthodox models help students remain more engaged, as well as enhance student learning. One particular model, Expeditionary Learning, allows students’ natural curiosity to lead them to developing the courage, skills, and knowledge to work towards achieving goals. Former U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan said, “Expeditionary Learning … this is how kids want to learn” (Expeditionary Learning, 2013, para. 4). The effectiveness of the models based on research can help lead to higher achievement. This will also aid teachers in utilizing different research-based methods throughout the classroom. Professors Izumi and Yan (2005) of the Center of Innovation and Improvement found a large majority of the highly improving charter schools used some type of direct instruction teaching method. Focusing on directly meeting student’s needs, cross-discipline, and integrated lessons will help students strive for academic achievement.
Statement of the Problem

Many charter schools are being predicated on one form of success—academic achievement. This practice heavily influences schools and continues to affect the almost 2,500 closed charter schools since 2001 (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). The selected strategies and practices being employed to measure the success of charter schools, especially African-American-centered charter schools, are all critical elements to determine student growth. Charter schools should be rated based on primary characteristics of school quality in order to determine successful outcomes. The level of satisfaction by stakeholders can help shine a great deal of knowledge on the positive and negative attributes of the school as it relates to academic performance.

In researching the current evaluation model, the College and Career Ready Performance Index or (CCRPI) is the comprehensive school improvement, accountability, and communication measure to determine the success of schools. The CCRPI replaces the measures outlined under the No Child Left Behind Act and Adequate Yearly Progress previously used in Georgia. The CCRPI is based on a 100-point scale, where schools are measured based on performance. The CCRPI is made up of three areas: Student Achievement, Academic Progress, and Academic Growth. Other facets of the CCRPI include its teacher/staff survey, school climate, student discipline, and school attendance. Schools also review Challenge Points based on Economically Disadvantaged students, and English Learner students, and Students with Disabilities. The average scores for Georgia’s elementary schools were 83.4, for middle schools 81.4, and for high
The stakeholders must be committed to the success of charter school for the school to continuously surpass established goals. Due to many charter schools being unregulated, oversight is often an issue, which leads to troubling areas that may include the curriculum, instruction, leadership, finances, support, or student achievement. More research needs to be completed to ensure that students are benefiting from the values and evaluations of the American education charter system.

**Purpose of the Study**

Previous research has attempted to define and characterize successful school practices that improve charter school effectiveness in terms of academic performance and evaluation. This case study examined the satisfaction levels of targeted stakeholders (teachers, parents, and community members) in an effort to improve academic performance in a startup charter school. The primary purpose of the case study is three fold: examine stakeholders’ level of satisfaction of academic achievement; explore stakeholders’ experiences with the variables that impact achievement; examine academic achievement in students based on John Dewey’s (1972) progressive education theory and Herbert Walberg’s (1981) educational productivity theory. In the research overview, the study further expands on the effectiveness of a charter school, which was created and founded by a group of parents. These parents sought other avenues for quality, equitable education and explored alternative options in education reform. To address their dissatisfaction with current traditional school systems, parents sought to create a school
founded on principles and fundamental standards. Thus, with the great support of parents, the charter school began its initial steps toward charter creation. The charter school pursued a board of directors to oversee school operations and hire an effective leader. The board chooses a leader to operate and maintain those high standards in creating a climate and culture unlike any other. The school leader sought to create an effective school by reforming and organizing cultural characteristics to successfully educate all students. Many of the principles adopted were derivatives of Ron Edmonds “Effective School Movement.” In 1982, the “Effective School Movement” publication highlighted five key principles that were founded and correlated to include instructional focus, quality instruction, safe and orderly climate, teacher expectation, and student evaluation (Edmonds, 1984). This framework, along with others, has provided the organizational structure for schools to be successful. In looking at specific practices, curriculum, assessment, instruction, supportive learning environment, profession development, and leadership have been indicated as domains that lead to school effectiveness. The curriculum is important for the direction and content in which it is being taught. The assessment is important for monitoring student progress. The instruction is vital for increasing student depth of knowledge. The supportive learning environment is the basis for creating a climate and culture conducive to learning. The professional development is necessary for continuously learning improvements for student learning. Lastly, the leadership is key to being strategic and carrying out the mission for growth goals. By ensuring excellent teaching and learning is consistently taking place, a high-performing
school can manifest. To date, many research studies only value data from few sources, but this study encompasses all factors of school alacrity.

**Research Questions**

The research questions in the study were intended to guide the researcher into aligning the framework with the quality of stakeholder satisfaction in urban charter school. One research framework was used to develop questions for guided responses. In looking at best practices for schools to employ, quality of school, strategic plan, and measuring student progress are on the pathway for effective school improvement.

RQ1: What is the level of satisfaction that stakeholders have on identified variables as it relates to academic performance of the charter school used in this study?

RQ2: How do the identified variables impact stakeholders’ satisfaction with academic achievement?

RQ3: Based on the theory of Dewey, how do the identified variables affect student achievement?

RQ4: Based on the theory of Walberg, how do the identified variables affect student achievement?

RQ5: What aspects of school practices are stakeholders most concerned about in improving academic performance?

**Significance of the Study**

According to the Georgia Charter School Association, 60% of Georgia charter schools are in metro Atlanta (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). Therefore,
education reform is important for the student population in the metro Atlanta area. Ray Budde, known as the originator of “charter concept,” began education reform in the 1970s (Kolderie, 2005). At the time, the measure of success was primarily based on the essential factors of student achievement. As school evaluation has become more scrutinized and effective, the measures of school success have developed and reformed. According to reports by the Wallace Foundation (2011), the measures should include school environment and student performance. In measuring school success, the school environment is a determining factor on overall school effectiveness. Articles from the Wallace Foundation indicate that the school environment should be measured in three categories. The categories include school culture, school connectivity, and teacher/effectiveness/engagement. Equally as important in measuring school success is the achievement of student performance. The case-method study is beneficial to charter schools as it allows for the evaluation to be based on the school’s environment and academic performance.

**Summary**

Charter schools and charter school systems are expanding throughout the state of Georgia. With 65% of charter schools being located in charter districts, it is evident that growth will continue throughout the state; therefore, all elements of conversion charters, startup charters, or charter districts are important as ever to academic success (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). The more charter school systems or charter schools become prevalent, the more the level of governance will become pivotal for school operations such as curriculum, resources, and student achievement. With the emergence
of more charter schools and districts, clusters are now on the merge of being formed
where students matriculate to certain schools. In a local Atlanta district, parents
petitioned for a Druid Hill Cluster of schools. The petitioned was denied, but opened up
segments of different approaches such as lower class sizes, additional enrollment,
increased teacher pay and the use of pathways for academic success. These pathways in
charter school clusters or college and career academies give students options not typical
in traditional schools. As parents continue to push educational reform, the areas of
autonomy, flexibility, and educational programs will continue to be at the forefront. The
researcher of the study examined stakeholders’ perceptions based on level of satisfaction
with school practices to improve academic performance using the following variables:
Governance Structure, Governance Processes in School Life, Communication,
Curriculum Emphases, Instruction, School Climate, Instructional Resources, and
Maintenance of Facilities. The study is significant to educational leaders to help
contribute to the driving factor of improving academic performance in areas where
parents have the option to choose their child’s educational preparation.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of the review of literature is to critically analyze a segment of published body of knowledge through summary, classification, and comparison of prior research studies, reviews of literature, and theoretical articles. It is conducted to establish research findings on the grounds of stakeholder satisfaction on the methods of improving academic performance.

Overview

Research on school choice concluded that “researchers should seek to distinguish among schools of choice in terms of effectiveness, and to distinguish the reasons for those differences” (Betts & Hill, 2006, p. 24). The research indicates that frameworks for the curriculum, practices, characteristics, and qualifications help to organize and decipher which funds are allocated for school improvement. Many charter school advocates believe that charter schools can not only compete, but also drive traditional public schools to improve quality. According to the report done by the U.S. Department of Education, “Educational theorists suggest that charter schools will induce systemic change by providing more educational choices, creating competitive market forces, and serving as examples from which other public schools can learn” (Ericson, 2005, para. 1).
The report also alluded to the imperative benefits that arise from having the option of school choice in a district. The parents had the assignment of determining which and what type of school their child would attend. This option for families often can provide vouchers to students to attend not only charter schools, but also magnet and private schools as well. The benefits of school choice vastly outweigh detractors by offering equitable services to all students and creative nontraditional models of teaching and learning.

**Dependent Variables**

The study’s dependent variable is the level of satisfaction that stakeholders (parents, teachers, and community members) have on various school practices to improve the extent of academic performance.

**Stakeholders**

A stakeholder is considered an individual or a group of individuals in the community who have a vested interest in what is occurring for overall success. Stakeholders can be anyone actively involved in welfare and success of the school. Stakeholders are key to the success of the students, school, board, or any other school entity. Therefore, stakeholders consist of students, parents, school staff, district staff, school board, taxpayers, business community, and other community members. The internal and external stakeholders have different roles, but are both key to long-term success of the school. The internal stakeholders are those who work directly within the school. The external stakeholders are outside the school and generally have a vested interest, but are not affiliated with school.
**Academic Performance**

For the purposes of this study, academic performance was the 2015 standardized testing score in reading, English, math, science, and social studies in grades 3-5. Charter schools serve the same students from the district in which the charter was approved. Students attending charter schools live in the identical communities as those students who attend the traditional neighborhood schools. The general synopsis is that students in charter schools perform equally or slightly better in standardized achievement test.

Charter schools should be held just as responsible as traditional public schools in areas of instruction and accountability. One study compared gains of individual students before and after their enrollment in a charter school. Consequently, it showed that overall, there is a positive and significant effect of charter schools on both reading and math achievement (Betts & Tang, 2011).

Di Carlo (2011) suggested that charter schools get no worse test results than comparable regular public schools. Di Carlo reported that the RAND Corporation analysis of charter schools in five major cities and three states found that, in every location, charter effects were either negative or not discernibly different from regular public schools. Another report by Mathematics Policy Research showed that the majority of students in these charters did no better and no worse than their counterparts in regular public schools in terms of both math and reading scores, as well as virtually all the 35 other outcomes studied (Gleason, Clark, Tuttle & Dwoyer, 2010). According to further research done by Di Carlo (2011), few studies find substantial effects on academic performance in charter schools.
Another article, published in *U.S. News* regarding Milwaukee Public Schools, found that charter schools outperform traditional public schools in mathematics and they perform about as well as traditional public schools in reading (CREDO, 2015). The article also examined how significant attending was to the effects of student performance. Another factor that played an impact on the performance was student stability. Students who continued throughout charter schools outperformed students who switched schools.

Research by Solomon and Goldschmidt (2004) supported evidence comparing traditional schools and charter school academic achievement. Positive effects of elementary school students attending charter schools began with lower test scores than students in traditional public schools, but showed faster achievement growth. This article embodies how important it is to build the foundation for intense instruction and consistent learning for early development.

**Independent Variables**

**Communication**

Communication is a key element for any charter school to succeed. The importance of direct and indirect communication is apparent to affect student achievement in any school. Clear communication can create meaningful involvement for stakeholders in charter schools. Parental involvement is one of the factors in effective communication. In a research study by Barnard (2004), effective parent involvement included “differentiating among home-based involvement, school-based involvement and home-school communication” (p. 44).
Another important characteristic of communication is the school’s lines of communication. Certain schools, especially charters, use innovative methods to expand important messages to parents. Most traditional schools primarily rely on parent-teacher conferences, open houses, and report cards, whereas many charter schools have curriculum nights, home visits, newsletters, orientations, web pages, email blast, and a host of other strategies to communicate with parents. These charter schools often are heavily influenced by social media forms such Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. For stakeholders, two-way communication helps to strengthen collaborative partnerships. These partnerships can eventually be very beneficial for student academic success. The main emphasis is placed on providing relevant timely information to external stakeholders.

In an attempt to strengthen communication among stakeholders and the school, feedback with surveys is also utilized in many charter schools. These charters schools often ask stakeholders for key feedback during the charter renewal process and on areas of collaboration with the school. In keeping the open lines of communications, many charter schools have instituted policies on teacher–parent communication. A policy can include a time frame in which communication must be returned.

**Curriculum**

The unique characteristics that allow charter schools to choose their own curriculum is a major factor for student success. As long as the charter school curriculum is aligned with state standards, the district and state can approve the curriculum for each grade. Most charter curriculums are based on state academic content standards; however,
the instructional approach and structure are also key aspects of school programs. According to a report conducted by the United States Department of Education (2004), charter school administrators linked the design and development of curriculum directly to addressing student issues head-on. Many charter school curriculums offer confined career and college-focused programs, Advanced Placement, and International Baccalaureate. Charter school models must still accommodate the state’s standards and maintain an innovative curriculum. Two common curriculum guides for charters are the inquiry-based and core-curriculum model. The inquiry-based curriculum allows students to choose specific things that they want to learn in-depth, and teachers serve as facilitators in allowing the students to build on their inquiry (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996). Carroll (2008) stated, “The core curriculum, electives and learning laboratory provide a space in which cognitive thinking is promoted and incorporated, resulting in dialogue as well as experiences allowing students to grow together and see themselves in others shoes” (para. 12). The author also expunged on the importance of a progressive curriculum, especially in the modern times. The curriculum has a strong impact on student outcomes, which lends itself to the school becoming elite or successful.

Many charter schools are now instituting Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (S.T.E.M.) Education throughout the charter landscape to enhance engagement and learning (Robelen, 2011). S.T.E.M. Education has grown significantly since its introduction in the 1990s. Schools across the United States are now integrating and implementing S.T.E.M. programs in their curriculums. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce (2011), the influx is due to S.T.E.M. graduates who “will
become workers who drive the nation’s innovation and generate new ideas” (para. 1).

S.T.E.M. education is considered a means to help individuals develop different strategies in order to solve interdisciplinary problems and gain skills and knowledge in order to sustain scientific leadership and economic growth in the United States (Lacey & Wright, 2009).

Another facet of charter schools is the high level of student inquiry and engagement. Schools must actively merge meaningful activities for continuously development to positively affect student engagement. Newmann and Wehlage (1993) constructed school engagement into the cognitive realm. They believed that student engagement meaning should be in “order to produce knowledge and aiming work toward products and performances that have meaning beyond success in school” (p. 8). The end result will create students demonstrating intrinsic motivation and a passion for learning.

**Rationale**

As for a charter school choosing the curriculum, the charter outlines how the school will be evaluated. Most charter schools have more freedom and autonomy regarding curriculum choices. Current research suggests that that principals and teachers in “effective schools are not only dedicated to high standards and expectations, but they spend considerable effort on aligning curriculum content with standards and assessments” (Berends, Stein, & Smithson, 2009, p. 2).

Most charter schools choose curriculum in the beginning stages of writing their charter petition. For a district to approve a charter, the curriculum is one of the main features. In Georgia, developing a high-quality charter school starts with five steps: (a)
identify needs within community of possible solutions; (b) identify strong group of committed individuals; (c) form a vision; (d) have the individuals meet with local district and submit a letter of intent; and (e) give the individuals the option to decide if a founding group is necessary to contract with management and develop a high-quality petition (GADOE, 2016).

The charter school curriculum must be completely object-oriented and mundane. A well-balanced charter curriculum helps to create complete and compliance from stakeholders. When choosing charter, the board must undergo several verdicts and arrangements to garner a consistent ruling. According to the Center for Education Reform (2009), the toughest challenge of the board is aligning with the mission with the standards and charter that has been embraced.

**Governance Structure**

The governance structure heavily influences student academic performance in charter schools. Charter Board Partners believe the board has the direct obligation to … “acts strategically, recruits an exceptional school leader, raises and uses resources wisely, and fulfills all compliance expectations …” (Charter School Partners, 2012, p. 2). The governance structure is critical to overall makeup in working with the school leader to build an effective school. Charter Board Partners consider a board to be made up of three key elements, which include commitment, focus, and teamwork (Charter School Partners, 2012). Gary Gruber (1999), a nationally known consultant for public charter schools said, “No other singular variable is more important for the health and vitality of a school than the way it is governed” (para. 3). Often, the structure has a distinct relationship with
success and also of the failure of many charter schools. According to Education Reform, 41% of U.S. charter schools closed as a result of financial deficiencies, 27% closed because of mismanagement, and 14% closed because of students’ poor academic performance (Allen, Consoletti, & Kerwin, 2009). Major concerns face building effective boards such as ineffective nominating, replacing unproductive members, and not having a clear strategic plan.

In a charter school governance structure, the board members are generally elected volunteers who have a vested interest in the school. According to the National Association of Charter School Authorities (NACSA), charter school board members must be effective in communicating the school’s mission and vision; planning for the future; setting sound policy; modeling professionalism; overseeing finances, program evaluation, building sustainable relationships with the community; amongst other key operational aspects (NACSA, 2007). The board members should have members with a multitude of skills in different areas to bring and share to create a successful school. The charter school board is generally made up of a board chair that oversees and ensures practices are established and maintained. The board enacts and authorizes policies and procedures affecting student achievement, while working with school leader for implementation.

The governance structure in many charter schools obtains shared governance of charter objectives. These charter schools must have independent board meetings to discuss budget objectives, action plan, and academic performance. Most board enthusiasts believe that board stability with members is a major facet for growth and
maturity. Charter school board structure is critical in understanding the school’s academic performance and progress toward goals.

**Government Processes**

The government processes in a functioning charter school relies heavily on the belief that the board is committed to the school mission of educating students. The processes and practices that the board uses help to lay the foundation of staying on track with its mission. According to an article by Dehoff (2008), “Highly functioning charter school boards have a firm understanding of the school’s short- and long-term goals as well as a clear, consistent ways to measure them” (para. 13). The board must develop the guidelines for constant micromanaging of the academic progress of all students. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2016) believes, “high functioning boards ask for regular progress reports on current student academic measures, education program effectiveness, teacher and staff development, and systems and procedures to ensure academic growth” (para. 14).

The specific practices are instrumental for the school board in regards to board meetings and functions. Each board member should be devoted and engaged in student achievement through board composition. For the board’s sake, most charter schools were initiated for alternatives to increasing student performances. The board meetings and closed sessions should be purposeful and also centered around accountability. The committee structure should be able to work efficiently and focus on the important matters. Amidst the board’s responsibility, the board is able to create a core foundation
and synergy that allow the board to advance on mission and ensure high student achievement.

The government process for appointment, resignation, removal, vacancies, and compensation should all be outlined in the charter’s bylaws. The charter school board must also advocate for specific meetings and advocate for adopting all regulations when conducting school affairs. The specific procedures located in the charter’s bylaws must adequately address all facets to be effective. According to Lorentzen (2013), school boards have significant impact on student achievement in their district.

**Instructional Resources**

For a charter school to be successful, it must be organized around instructional effectiveness. The flexibility in charter schools allows for innovation when configuring how instruction will be structured and delivered. According to research by Gross and Pochop (2008), three examples of instructional approaches that many charter school use are special instruction, interdisciplinary, and team teaching. Each of these approaches offers a different approach to a student’s matriculation in a charter school.

Many charter schools offer a variety of different instructional designs. These instructional designs include smaller class sizes, longer days, and department configurations. With smaller class sizes, students are able to get more attention from teachers, more individualized learning, and less disruption. With longer school days, charter schools are able to increase the time on task for students in all subject areas. According to Gross and Pochop (2008) who wrote about charter school instruction, “At the elementary and middle school levels, the average charter school day was almost 20
minutes longer than the average day in traditional public schools” (p. 14). Department configurations are another added bonus of a charter school. Charter schools are able to “loop” students; this allows students to keep the same teacher for multiple years. Another department configuration is the ability for charter schools to schedule students for classes. The autonomy gives charter leaders the ability to create unique schedules that include block or rotating schedules.

Another facet of many charter schools are the specialized resources and materials that are focused on a comprehensive program curriculum. Specialized training, hands-on activities are a few strategies that schools implement to teach students with a high level of engagement. These charter schools are sometimes leading the way in areas of technological resources, such as iPads, mobile devices, chrome books, Mac books and a host of other devices that help to facilitate learning and selecting appropriate resources. These resources have been linked to fundamental principles of enhancing and understanding the complex curriculums of many charter schools.

**Maintenance of Facilities**

Maintenance and management of the facility in which the charter school is located is a major concern of all stakeholders. The most evident is the safety and security of the facility. Due to many charter schools not being equally funded, access to facilities is a major issue. However, at all times, it is expected that the facility be safe for students to be inside and outside the premises. In Building Educational Success Together (BEST) (2006), some states want to “…establish educational facility standards for instructional and support programs and services, including minimum square footages, environmental
conditions, and health and safety requirements” (p. 6). Having an adequate learning facility is a challenge that many charter schools face, which can affect the education environment for students.

More important aspects of maintenance of facilities include the school’s appearance, lighting, comfort, and efficiency of the buildings. The facility is very important as it has the ability to,

…provide additional benefits that include: better student performance, increased average daily attendance, increased teacher satisfaction and retention, reduced operating costs, reduced liability exposure, increased opportunities to utilize the school building itself as a teaching tool, and educate students about the importance of caring for the environment. (Building Education Success Together, 2006, p. 8)

The maintenance of the school facility should be a direct focus and major priority in providing the foundation for physical, educational, and financial aspects of charter schools.

**School Climate**

The school climate in a charter school is important to the academic, behavioral, social-emotional outcomes for a successful school. According to the National School Climate Council (2007), school climate “fosters youth development and learning … the school climate includes norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally and physically safe” (p. 2). Looking at U.S. Departments of Safe and Supportive School Models, there are three main aspects of school climate that
include engagement, safety, and environment. The engagement includes relationships, respect for diversity, and school participation. The safety includes emotional safety, physical safety, and freedom from substance abuse. Lastly, the environment comprises the physical environment, academic environment, wellness, and disciplinary environment.

A positive school climate has been linked to higher student achievement because students feel more encouraged to be engaged and have more positive social skills. Students must feel welcomed and respected to meet their full academic potential. Another characteristic of a positive school climate is its effect on faculty and staff. According to Bradshaw, Waasdorp, and O’Brennan (2010), “A positive school climate also has benefits for teachers and education support professionals” (para. 5). Therefore, when teachers feel respected, they are more likely to devote additional time to teaching and learning, consequently affecting student outcomes.

A positive school climate must be consistently promoted by the school leader in order for the school to achieve success. Character education is often initiated in many charter schools to help stakeholders understand, care, and provide ethical values. These values often include respect, responsibility, honesty, courage, perseverance, and fairness. The leader must advocate and sustain a rigorous and safe learning climate so that students can be successful.

School Life

The charter school life is composed of complex beliefs, values, attitudes, expectations, ideas, and behaviors that must be in line for the school to be successful.
Educational theorist Watson (2001), “Warned us that if the culture is not hospitable to learning, then student achievement can suffer” (p. 5). The culture of the school is very powerful; it shapes how people feel, think, and act in schools. According to Deal and Peterson (1998), “Culture influences everything that goes on in schools: how staff dress, what they talk about, their willingness to change, the practice of instruction, and the emphasis given student and faculty learning” (p. 29). Elements in successful school culture support high student achievement. A study done by Education Evolving (2003) reported the following:

Factors that seem to produce this positive school culture are factors like the small size of the schools and classes, the familiarity and regular contact between fewer numbers of students and teachers and other adults, the individualized instructional methods, the school’s mission or focus, more flexibility in scheduling and in the pacing of student learning, teachers’ increased role in school-level decision-making, and, overall, a more positive and welcoming environment for students and their families. (p. 4)

The effect on student achievement is evident in a positive school culture environment. The underlying norms are where all stakeholders are committed to the success of the school and share a commitment to help students improve. In the positive school culture environments, teachers are more willing to give more and also have the support of parents and stakeholders.

Researchers have found that two of the key foundations of an effective school are a culturally responsive culture and responsive pedagogy. Successful charter schools must
be on leading edge of producing a positive school culture throughout the learning environment. The uniqueness of the charter school framework must be based on the belief that the school culture is based on effective teacher, student, and class relationships. In looking at research, the school culture must have high expectations for student achievement. The expectations should be entrenched in the ways lessons are taught, comments to students by teachers, and the expectations students have for themselves. The result of these efforts creates a culture of achievement. The culture of achievement, which is based upon the context of a challenging environment with culturally responsiveness, is becoming the norm and measure in creating an enjoyable learning experience for students.

**Quality of Instruction**

The quality of instruction is the particular behaviors or actions that the teacher displays during instruction in schools. Heimlich and Norland (2002) believed that, “teaching behaviors reflect the beliefs and values that teachers hold about the learner’s role in the exchange” (p. 22). According to Anthony Grasha (1990), the Executive Editor of College Teaching, there are five different teaching styles. These styles include expert, formal authority, personal model, facilitator, and delegator. Dr. Grasha stated the following:

The expert teachers possess the knowledge and expertise that students need… The formal authority teachers possess status among students because of knowledge and role as a faculty member…. The personal model teacher believes in teaching by personal example and establishes a prototype for how to think and behave…
The facilitator emphasizes the personal nature of teacher student interaction. The delegator teacher is concerned with developing student’s capacity to function autonomously. (p. 154)

Teachers have been said to teach the style that typically yields the greatest success. According to research by Stitt-Gohdes (2001), “Research supports the concept that most teachers teach the way they learned.” (p. 136). Therefore, teachers are more likely to resort to what has worked and infuse it into their teaching style. Teacher quality and input impact and influence student achievement. The effect that teaching has on academic performance is paramount. Research suggests that students learn more from engaging activities, rather than dull lecture and presentations. Therefore, it is imperative that a charter school use effective teacher inputs to help students retain, remember, and formulate information for problem solving.

Summary

School effectiveness is dependent on numerous factors affecting student achievement. Some researchers believe the background characteristics of school operations are more important to determining student achievement than school factors. Other researchers believe that successful schools have been predicated to have certain intangibles such as school goals, assessment, management, leadership, social skills, and professional development. With the overall goal of improving school effectiveness, the study provides a basis to indicate practical applications for increasing student achievement.
CHAPTER III
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The theoretical framework is the overall structure of the study as it supports and
guides the study. The framework provides the key ideas to connect all aspects of inquiry.
The theoretical framework of this study is comprised of researcher questions based on
parental satisfaction on academic performance in a charter school. The questions, along
with components of conversation, help to foster an in-depth breakdown of the case study.
The case study provided the inquiry for school inputs, analysis of school practices,
extoration of overall school performance with indicators, and research on academic
achievement.

Theory of Variables

The different analysis on quantifying a successful charter school entails factors
that undoubtedly have an impact on student achievement, climate and culture,
government structure and process, policies and procedures, teacher style, and
instructional strategies. According to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools
[NAPCS] (2013), “Charter schools are successful because they foster innovation and
increase achievement in underserved communities” (para. 5). By fostering innovation and
increasing student achievement in underserved communities, charter schools provide a
quality environment to parents, students, teachers, and stakeholders in nurturing an
attitude towards continuous learning. The research focused on how the independent variables relate to dependent variables factors of stakeholder satisfaction in a charter school. Table 1 lists the factors that affect stakeholder satisfaction in charter schools based on the theories of John Dewey (1972) and Herbert Walberg (1981).

Table 1

Factors that Affect Stakeholder Satisfaction in Charter Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dewey’s Progressive Education Theory</th>
<th>Walberg’s Theory of Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>School Climate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities Maintenance</td>
<td>School Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance Processes</td>
<td>School Communication</td>
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<td>Governance Structure</td>
<td>Quality of Instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instructional Resources</td>
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Theoretical Framework

The three main factors that affect student achievement are the school, teacher, and student. Therefore, the study is to be guided on two theorist frameworks, John Dewey’s (1972) Progressive Education Theory and Herbert Walberg’s (1981) Theory of Achievement. John Dewey’s Progressive Education theory was driven by concept of hand-on learning, collaboration, and challenging students to meet their needs. Walberg’s Theory of Achievement believed that education outcomes were based on environmental, self-concept, and activities that influence interest for performance.

John Dewey’s Progressive Education Theory (1972) used inquiry-based learning to form a balance between the student and learning. According to Jackson and Simpson
“Dewey connects both the educative process and educational theory with the student’s interaction or involvement with particular societal aims, meanings, and values that emerge from adult experiences” (p. 23). The adult’s experiences have a huge impact in what and how the information will be shared with others. Also, Dewey valued in experience and education, he believed that “… experience is one of the core concepts of his pedagogical outlook, especially his curriculum theory” (Berding, 1997, p. 24).

Dewey’s (1972) concept of the curriculum has heavily influenced the school used in the study. According to the school’s charter, curriculum is implemented through a hands-on, minds-on, problem-solving, inquiry-based, integrated model that contextualizes learning and provides students with a foundation for understanding the world (Charter Petition, 2006). The curriculum carefully infuses both technology and environmental concerns throughout all subject matters. Not only does the curriculum meet all state and local curricular standards and include technology and environmental concerns, it does all of that seamlessly and in a way that demonstrates the interconnectedness of the core academic subjects and technology and a concern for the effects of that technology on the local and global environment (Charter Petition, 2006).

Dewey’s progressive education also has had major implications for seeking additional academic rigor based on personal development. The school surveyed in the study is also seeking full authorization for the International Baccalaureate (IB). The school’s aim is in providing “a broad and balanced education with the integration of technology and the environment, we are also creating a framework that encourages
students to make practical connection between their real world and their students at the academy” (Charter Petition, 2006, p. 35).

Another aspect of the Dewey’s (1972) progressive education theory is the emphasis on meeting students’ needs with personalized learning. The school used in the study uses the Motto of Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships to meet the needs of the students. The personalized learning is embedded in the school’s culture and climate through a social learning program called Second Step. Second Step is a program used to help students understand and manage their feelings to meet their personal goals. In addition, Dewey’s progressive education theory (1972) deemphasized the use textbooks, in favor of other instructional resources (see Figure 1). The school in the study uses an abundance of teaching and learning resources such as curriculum materials, frameworks, flip-learning, and a host of other approaches for effective learning.

Figure 1. John Dewey’s Inquiry Model.
Walberg’s Theory of Educational Productivity (1981) was created to counterbalance the shortfall in strength of education variables. According to Reynolds and Walberg (1992), “Walberg’s theory of academic achievement post that psychological characteristics of individual students and their immediate psychological environments influence educational outcomes (cognitive, behavioral, and attitudinal)” (p. 67) (see Figure 2).

![Figure 2. Walberg’s Theory of Educational Productivity (simplified).](image-url)
According to Walberg, Fraser, and Welch (1986), Walberg’s model was later elaborated as it,

…[c]onsidered achievement as a four-phase sequence beginning with the home-environment, followed by the student aptitude-attributes, mediated by the social psychological environment and the quantity and quality of instruction. Though Walberg’s research, he … identified nine key variables that influence educational outcomes as: “student ability/prior achievement, motivation, age/developmental level, quantity of instruction, quality of instruction, classroom climate, home environment, peer group, and exposure to mass media outside of school. (p. 134)

These fundamental principles help to lay the groundwork for the school used in this study. The school’s charter identifies three unifying principles that ground this curriculum: place-based education, educating for sustainability, and making connections. Each of these three principles is one leg of a tripod, a tripod which supports the school’s curriculum; each is essential to maintaining the curriculum’s integrity and balance. The school used in the study also believes in study-generated inquiry. Each grade is required to be engaged in projects of varying lengths throughout the year based on the themes of placed-based education. The projects exemplify the type of integrated, interdisciplinary, project-based curriculum teaching staff will implement during the school year.

Definition of Variables

Dependent Variable

Level of satisfaction is defined as stakeholder satisfaction with variables affecting school academic performance that meet or exceed expectation.
Independent Variable

**Communication:** For this study, communication is defined as how often stakeholders are conveyed information through emails, online portals, newsletters, school website, and telephone messaging system regarding school practices related to academic performance.

**Curriculum:** For this study, curriculum is defined as how stakeholders perceive the level of rigor of various courses and the alignment to academic performance.

**Governance processes:** For this study, governance processes are how satisfied stakeholders are with current administrative decisions affecting academic performance.

**Governance structure:** For this study, governance structure is defined as how stakeholders are satisfied with the school board of directors’ effectiveness with its practices.

**Instructional resources:** For this study, instructional resources are defined as the level of satisfaction with the school’s current and previous instructional designs.

**Maintenance of facilities:** For this study, maintenance of facilities is defined as the stakeholder satisfaction with buildings, green spaces, and structures on school campus.

**Quality of instruction:** For this study, the quality of instruction is defined as the stakeholder satisfaction with the teacher’s methods and approaches to teaching.

**School climate:** For this study, the school climate is defined as stakeholder satisfaction with quality and character of the school.
School life: For this study, school life is defined as stakeholder satisfaction with the school’s norms, values, rituals, and beliefs.

Relationship among the Variables

Figure 3 illustrates the relationship among the dependent and independent variables.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES
- Communication
- Curriculum
- Governance Processes
- Governance Structure
- Instructional Resources
- Maintenance of Facilities
- School Life
- School Climate
- Quality of Instruction

DEPENDENT VARIABLE
- Stakeholders’ Satisfaction on Student Academic Performance

Figure 3. Relationship among the variables.
Definition of Terms

Academic growth is the overall comparison of student’s academic progress in elementary school (3-4) and middle school (5) measured by GA Milestone scores.

Charter school is the extent to which the public school has established an approved charter process and is operating under laws and regulations set forth from district, state, and national level. Public school that is granted a charter petition to establish alternative education practices, mission, and vision that also offers school choice within public schools.

Georgia Milestones Assessment System is defined as the extent to which the Georgia Milestones Assessment System (Georgia Milestones) is a comprehensive summative assessment program spanning grades 3 through high school. Georgia Milestones measures how well students have learned the knowledge and skills outlined in the state-adopted content standards in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies (Georgia Department of Education, 2015).

Parental Involvement is the extent to which the stakeholder’s student is in grades 3-5, and the parent is committed and actively involvement in part of the student’s education.

Parents are defined as the extent to which a guardian has a child or children in grades 3-5 currently enrolled in the public charter school.

Perceptions are the extent to which parents think, notice, or understand the charter school.
Renweb is defined as the school’s management system where school staff members communicate through group email on information such as attendance, policy and procedures, school functions, and grades.

Satisfactions are the extent to which school services meet or surpass stakeholders’ expectations in Milestone performance in grades 3-5

School Stakeholders are defined as individuals who are involved or concerned in the welfare of school or school characteristics.

Students are individuals that are currently enrolled in grades 3-5 in the public charter school.

Teachers are defined as certified instructors in grades 3-5 who work at the public charter school.

Title One is defined as the extent to which federal funds are distributed to schools with high numbers or percentages of poor children to help ensure that all children meet challenging State academic content and student academic achievement standards

Limitations of the Study

This case study is limited to the perceptions of effectiveness and satisfaction of one charter school. There are few studies based on a dynamic atypical school such as the one used in the study. This atypical school has distinct characteristics and practices in place that heavily influence academic performance. This study sought to understand how successful schools are evaluated and sometimes rated poorly. The first limitation is that the researcher works and is an administrator at the school. Although this case study aims at providing insight into the characteristics of a successful charter school, it is limited to a
sample of 250 students in grades 3-5 at a predominately African-American school. The study is also limited in the areas of stakeholder honesty and sincerity. Being a school official, stakeholder’s judgment could be clouded. Suggestion for further research includes using a wider sample size and looking at these factors over a number of years.

Summary

This case study examined stakeholder perception of what a successful charter school encompasses. The researcher will conduct a study based on impressions and viewpoints of the stakeholder. The participant’s understandings and judgment will be used as the data to quantifiably explain aspects of a successful charter school. The theoretical framework provided “the rationale for conducting research to investigate problem” (Creswell, 1994). It has clearly defined the structure and framework for which the context is used.
CHAPTER IV
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

According to a research paper by the University of Southern California (2016), “The methods section describes the rationale for the application of specific procedures or techniques used to identify, select, and analyze information applied to understanding the research problem, thereby, allowing the reader to critically evaluate a study’s overall validity and reliability” (para. 1). As the methodology continues, it discloses the methods in which the data were collected and investigated for the study. The case study discovered the satisfaction of stakeholders on academic performance of students in grades 3-5 in a charter school setting. The target focus was to examine school practices (communication, curriculum, governance process, governance structure, instructional resources, maintenance of facility, school culture, school life, and teacher style), to improve and replicate for existing and future charter schools. The methods used included intense qualitative data. In this chapter, research methodology exhibited applicable and relevant information in which the research case study was conducted.

Research Design

The purpose for the study’s design was to “…fit into the whole research process from framing the question to finally analyzing and reporting data” (De Vaus, 2001, p. 45).
The case study used the qualitative approach in recording in-depth analysis of the charter school academic achievement. The research outlined several appropriate questions used to obtain the satisfaction of all stakeholders. The focus was to collect substantial information to quantify accurate accounts and impressions of communication, curriculum, governance process, governance structure, instructional resources, and maintenance of facility, school culture, school life, and quality of instruction. The data collected certainly enhanced and is beneficial for school governing boards and administration, but also provide valuable feedback on current policies and procedures that impact charter school satisfactory. The charter school in determination was the researcher’s primary focus when conducting the study. In this case study, the researcher collected and analyzed the data as well as presented and reported the results collected during the study.

The design of the study was to examine perceptions of stakeholders’ satisfaction in current policies, procedures, and protocols. The researcher’s objective sought to explore all facets of satisfaction in school environment, culture, climate, instruction, and involvement. Case studies are used across many different disciplines and landscapes. Robert Stake states case studies are defined by “individual cases, not by the methods of inquiry used” (Stake, 1994, p. 236). For qualitative research, this case study was focused on examining stakeholder viewpoints and opinions in grades 3-5. In this study, an analysis was rendered to identify how the independent variables influenced the dependent variable. In addition, the research provided understanding of the complexity of each case using a variety of methods to obtain authentic data. The methods included:
• Individual Interviews – Stakeholders in grades (3-5)
• Stakeholder Surveys – (AdvancEd)
• School Standardized Testing Documents (State Documents)

The general interview guide was used as the method to ask questions and obtain answers from the participants in the study. Particularly, the use of face-to-face interviews classified under the structured interview window. Cohen and Crabtree (2006) defined structured interviews as, “…well-developed understanding of a topic…” (para. 2) to meaningful and appropriate response categories to choose for each question. In structured interviews, each respondent received the same series of questions clear to the topic’s focus. The answers to interview questions gave perspicacity in all facets of environment, culture, climate, instruction, and involvement.

**Research Questions**

**RQ1:** What is the level of satisfaction that stakeholders have on identified variables as it relates to academic performance of the charter school used in this study?

**RQ2:** How do the identified variables impact stakeholders’ satisfaction with academic achievement?

**RQ3:** Based on the theory of Dewey, how do the identified variables affect student achievement?

**RQ4:** Based on the theory of Walberg, how do the identified variables affect student achievement?
RQ5: What aspects of school practices are stakeholders most concerned about in improving academic performance?

Description of the Setting

The research study took place in a startup charter school. The time frame for completion is three months. For the purposes of study, the school pseudo name was Clark Charter School.

School Makeup

Clark Charter School serves K through eighth-grade) students and has been in existence for 11 years. Clark Charter School began as a startup charter school, created by parents to offer nontraditional learning to students. The school has 744 students and over 250 students on its waiting list. The school is departmentalized in grades 1-8, and has three homerooms per grade. The elementary configuration is grades K-4 and the middle school configuration is grades 5-8. The school currently has 5 administrators, 35 teachers, and 5 paraprofessionals. The average age for faculty and staff is 35 years. Nearby schools are all Title-1 schools with a high percentage of children from low-income families. The school demographics included a 99% African-American population. The Charter School’s Elementary CCRPI was 68.3 and the middle school CCRPI was 75.6.

Figure 4 shows the organizational structure of Clark Charter School and clearly outlines how the school was governed.
School Organizational Chart

Figure 4: Organizational chart of Clark Charter School.
Notable Achievements

- Recognized by former State Superintendent as one of the top-ten schools in the State with the highest standardized test scores.

- Clark Charter School has also been featured in the *Business Chronicle* in being named among the best charter schools in the State (2009).

- With our combined and innovative uniqueness of technology and recycling efforts, the school has received local and national attention in implementing city-wide recycling program converting cooking oil into biodiesel and producing a byproduct of soap. As highlighted on the local news station, all students are involved in this process. From collecting the grease, converting and producing byproducts of soap to developing the design and packaging product, the students are heavily involved using advances in technology environmental conservation and recycling skills. In addition to this school-wide recycling/conservation project, the school has been active in maintaining our focus on the environmental curriculum.

- Clark Charter School has been featured on NBC Nightly News for Charter School Lottery and success of test scores and charter school culture.

Academic Achievement

The Clark Charter School has achieved nine consecutive years as “Performance Empowerment School” according to Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). The Georgia Charter School students have exceeded over 95% of state and 100% local district standards in Criterion Referenced Tests (GCRT).
Academic Program and Organizational Innovation

Clark Charter School seeks to take an approach to teaching and learning with the motto of *Learning with Relationships, Relevance, and Rigor!* The motto is vital in engaging teachers and students in the process of being academically successful. There are many initiatives that have been addressed to improve the educational processes for children, such as engaging students in meaningful tasks that address various learning styles, exposing students to various challenging learning opportunities, and increasing students’ motivation to learn. While the academic program and structure of the school is indeed in the public interest, our initiatives have proven to be even more effective with the school’s in-depth instructional focus on technology and the environment.

Clark Charter School has been evolving into a family-oriented and world-class school, with an increase in friends and families. For example, during the three-term renewal period academic years, 99% of student population was promoted to the next grade, verifying that students have met promotional standards of the district. Moreover, the student enrollment at Clark Charter School has continued to increase with over 98% of the student body returning, reaffirming their commitment to the school and its mission. A team-oriented structure provides a cooperative and collaborative model for teachers, parents, and the community.

Building Layout

The Clark Charter School facility is an existing facility that was constructed in 1985 as an office building and remodeled in 2009. The school began leasing the facility and then purchased it in 2011. This nearly 70,000-square-foot building encompasses enough space to allow for maximized instruction to take place with a variety of learning
centers, explorations, and continuous engagement. In addition, the site allows students to truly focus on its theme of technology with the opportunities to have a multitude of computer labs customized for grade levels. There is also ample room to provide a multitude of science labs with fully middle school accredited science rooms, study halls, libraries and media centers, conference rooms, and rooms identified for specials (music, art, health, Spanish, technology) and a cafeteria of over 3,000 feet, which can accommodate up to six classrooms at a time, meets the state guidelines, and esthetically serves elementary and middle school lunches. Even more exciting, there are several restrooms located on each of the three floors to dramatically increase capacity! The site allows full embracement the fine arts, with a separate space for the auditorium/gymnasium with 4,000 to 5,000 square feet and a band hall of 2,000 to 3,000 square feet. With five acres, there are many opportunities to focus on the environment, employing a variety of activities and taking advantage of the acreage with an aquaponics area, vegetable gardens spaces, chicken coops, natural flower and butterfly gardens, and an outdoor amphitheater learning classroom with native Georgia habitat and animals alive and present. At this time, the facility meets current capacity of student enrollment and is accommodating to the educational needs.

**Board of Directors**

The Charter School operates under the authority and governance of its Board of Directors. The Board of Directors consists of nine members, at least six of whom are parents or guardians of students enrolled in the Charter School. One member shall be an educator who is elected by the Board of Directors. One member represents and
symbolizes the statewide technology industry/sector, in recognition of the preeminent role of technology in our society and in the work of the school. The technology member has established a connection with the technology community and has been elected/selected by the Board of Directors. One member represents and symbolizes that sector of our community that furthers the goal of preserving the environment, in recognition of the supreme importance of that goal in society and in the work of the school. The technology member has an established connection with the technology community and has been selected/elected by the Board of Directors. The remaining five Board members are elected by the parent/guardian constituency of the school community at the first annual meeting of the PTO, which will occur on or before June 1 of each school year. The membership designations and their terms will be as follows. Terms are to be staggered and the board, after the election held, and are imposed as a method of staggering terms going forward:

- Member 1 – Representative of the PTO
- Member 2 – An Educator
- Member 3 – The Technology Member
- Member 4 – The Environment
- Member 5 – Parent
- Member 6 – Parent
- Member 7 – Parent
- Member 8 – Parent
- Member 9 – Parent
All board members must be residents of the school’s state. All candidates for board of directors will be given an opportunity to present their qualifications and credentials to the school community. Board composition should include individuals with the requisite skills and experience to govern and give direction to a multi-million-dollar educational enterprise, as well as individuals with specific experience in accounting or financial management. It is the responsibility of the Board of Directors to carry out the terms of this Charter and to create policies and guidelines necessary for the smooth operation of the School.

Communication

The school utilizes various modes of communication throughout school year to relay or convey messages to all stakeholders. The most prominent form that the school uses is called Renweb. Renweb is a tool used by school to convey messages consisting of procedural changes, school events, school news, grades, and a variety of other messages. Faculty and staff have access to stakeholders’ emails, family information, sibling information, and other features. Another tool the school employs is email for one-to-one personal communication. Faculty and staff are able to use this form to send specific questions to staff members for effective two-way communication. Another technique that the school uses is known as Fireside Chats. Firesides Chats are monthly events that take place at stakeholders’ homes to discuss school programs, relay school information, answer questions, and discuss parental expectations. The school also communicates through its website and bi-monthly school newsletter. The school consistently updates its websites to include teachers, email addresses, school calendars, lunch menus, and many
other important forms. On the school’s website, there is also a link to each teacher’s personal grade website for further notifications. Additionally, each staff member in the school has digital telephone inside the classroom or office. Any messages left on digital telephone are sent directly to the staff member’s email. Teachers are required to communicate with parents within 24-48 hours of receiving any voice mail. Social media is another tool the Clark Charter School uses to communicate with stakeholders. Clark Charter School has a Twitter page, Facebook page, and also several blog pages. These pages help to share content such as videos, photos, and news to engage stakeholders in school communication.

Community Support

Not only does Clark Charter School set out to serve its students and families, it has been instrumental in reaching out to the community. Clark Charter School serves as a recycling and conservation hub for the local neighborhood, offering a site on school grounds where the dropping off clothing, cardboard, plastics, paper, metal, and much more are at a significant level of convenience for neighbors. Teachers and parents have been vital components to the success of Clark Charter School. Teachers have been engaged in the process of receiving ongoing professional learning in the areas of differentiating instruction and assessment, recognizing student learning styles, and promoting engaging and meaningful tasks that are purposeful and relative to effective learning, and understanding the constructivist approach to teaching and learning. Parents have been highly involved and interested in the cognitive process of their children to enhance learning activities and programs.
Community participation has been measured by charitable contributions, involvement in classroom activities, partnerships with businesses, and assistance and encouragement from government officials. The school has also continued its established relationships with the Environmental Advocacy Group and the Environmental Protection Agency. These partnerships, in existence with previous partnerships, have benefited not only the students and faculty and staff, but also the parents.

Parental Involvement

Parents play an active role and pivotal role at Clark Charter School, from service on its board, to participation as volunteers in and out of the classroom, to membership in a parent-teacher organization, to service on various committees as may be established by its Board. In fact, the schools bylaws require that six of the nine members of the Board of Directors are parents or guardians of one or more students who currently attend the school. Parents also play a day-to-day role in actively supervising the progress of their children, by participating in required at-home projects, by attending school performances and events, and by transporting them to and from school. Parents also assist in the process by which the school’s performance is also assessed on an annual basis via annual stakeholder surveys.

S.T.E.M Focus

The school researched in the study is an accredited S.T.E.M. school recognized by SACS AdvancED. The school seeks to have strong S.T.E.M. education, to help diversify and create a workforce of highly skilled S.T.E.M educators. The school wants to continue to provide quality training, immerse the faculty and staff into quality performances based
S.T.E.M. initiatives, and drive S.T.E.M. home to students and school stakeholders. The S.T.E.M. curriculum integrated can connect information in its proper manner. In the context of real-world issues, it can make the S.T.E.M. subjects more relevant to students and teachers. This in turn can enhance motivation for learning and improve student interest, achievement, and persistence. These outcomes, advocates assert, help address calls for greater workplace and college readiness as well as increase the number of students who consider a career in a S.T.E.M. field.

**Data-Collection Strategies and Information Sources**

This section details the methods in which the data was collected for the qualitative research. The researcher used survey questions based on Stakeholder Survey responses and SACS responses in accreditation efforts. The most prominent method was interviews, which were mainly open-ended questions. The researcher used the tape recorder in face-to-face interviews to transcribe answers from participants. In structured interviews, each respondent received the same series of questions clear to the topical focus.

To obtain the rights on the conduct of research, an approval form was submitted to the charter school’s governing board. The governing board of the school received the form to approve, modify, or deny access to conduct research on participants at the school. The participants included teachers and students in the first through eighth grades. The teachers and students were informed during faculty meetings and other school functions. The parents and other stakeholders were also informed through PTO meetings, school newsletters, emails, and other school functions. All participants were given consent forms to be completed before the research study began. In the first week in October, the
researcher disbursed the forms to stakeholders in the research study. Once consent forms were distributed, the researcher assigned dates and times to conduct interviews.

**Interviews**

The interviews consisted of devised questions for parents, teachers, and community members (connected to school) for grades 3-5. Each interview encompassed questions from research questions. Other questions asked for further clarification. The interviews took approximately 7-10 minutes to administer. Teachers were selected from grades 3-5, as well as other staff and school stakeholders. Parents with student(s) in grades 3-5 were selected to participate in the interview. The school’s board members and school’s secretary randomly selected participants for the study. The participants’ interviews were held individually during and after school hours, in an effort to fit the participants’ schedules. The interviews were then transcribed using Iphone app (REV) and analyzed for common themes.

**Participants**

The total number of participants interviewed was 20 stakeholders. The participants interviewed were ten parents/guardians, five faculty/staff members, and five community members. Tables 2, 3, and 4 show a census of the participants.
Table 2

*Description of Faculty and Staff Interview Respondents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Faculty and Staff</th>
<th>Administrators</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<th>Administrators</th>
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<th>Administrators</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<table>
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<th>Administrators</th>
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</tr>
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<td>Sixth Grade</td>
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<td>Seventh Grade</td>
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Table 3

Description of Parent Interview Respondents

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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
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</table>

Age

<table>
<thead>
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Years Affiliated with School

<table>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
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Table 4

Description of Parent Community Respondents

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>

Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>21-30</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
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Table 4 (continued)

<table>
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<th>Years Affiliated with School</th>
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</thead>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey

To examine the relationship between variables, the researcher used the results from the surveys done by the Advanced Ed for Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accreditation recognized by the United States Department of Education. The SACS accreditation surveyed stakeholders (parents, faculty, staff, and community members) on elements of teaching and learning, purpose, and continuous improvement. The survey responses and statistics sought to provide evidence of the level of satisfaction on the identified variables in grades 3-5.

Sampling Method

Sampling in qualitative research refers to the sampling strategy utilized to provide an unbiased and robust frame to gather results. The sampling method focused on stakeholders who are currently active in the school in grades 3-5. In order to get valid findings, the study’s sample size only included a population based on research questions. Preparing for data review is vital while conducting the experiment as it promotes the success of the study. James Potter (1996) also noted, “Purposive sampling is therefore most successful when data review and analysis are done in conjunction with data
collection” (p. 136). The aim of the sampling for this research study focuses primarily on the convenience and representatives to get the most accurate and valid findings.

**Case Study**

Descriptive case studies are defined to describe the natural phenomena which occurs within the data in question, allowing the researcher to obtain a thorough and in-depth analysis of the study. According to Creswell (2013),

> In a qualitative approach… the investigator explores a bounded system (a case), or multiple bounded systems (cases), over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based-themes. (p. 73)

For this case study, the researcher collected and analyzed the data as well as presented and reported the results collected during the study. In looking at case study research by Yin (2012), “All case study research starts from the same compelling feature: the desire to derive an up-close or otherwise in-depth understanding of a single or small number of ‘cases,’ set in their real-world contexts” (p. 4). The case study method is exerted to explain the phenomenon in which matters are occurring in a natural setting. The researcher’s intention was to analyze the responses and questionnaires in the survey on the satisfaction of school procedures and policies, practices, and scores. Baxter and Jack (2008) stated, “Qualitative case study methodology provides tools for researchers to study complex phenomena within their contexts. When the approach is applied correctly,
it becomes a valuable method for health science research to develop theory, evaluate programs, and develop interventions” (p. 17).

In his book, *International Handbook*, Stenhouse (1988) believed cases studies are important to use “to enrich the thinking and discourse of educators either by the development of educational theory or by the refinement of prudence through the systematic and reflective documentation of experience” (p. 49). The researcher conducted interviews on their level of satisfaction of school practices (communication, curriculum, governance process, governance structure, instructional resources, maintenance of facility, school culture, school life, and teacher style) in an urban charter school. The data from each of the items was analyzed and used in the context of education as a discipline.

**Instrumentation**

Data collection instruments are tools researchers use for measurement. John Creswell’s (2009) research design book states the process of developing, testing, and using the device is the main course of action in instrumentation. Creswell also stated, “The most common sources of data collection in qualitative research are interviews, observations, and review of documents” (p. 57). The instruments used in the study helps to reflect the school’s instructional organizational, strategic, and community satisfaction by stakeholders. The instruments provided consistency across the questions of interviews/surveys. The guide to questions was based on research protocol involving the different aspects of: school practices (communication, curriculum, governance process, governance structure, instructional resources, maintenance of facility, school culture, school life, and teacher style) in an urban charter school.
Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability were used in this study to determine the stability and quality of the data received. The stakeholder’s questions and responses were the main concern for all stakeholders in coding the data. For research, statistical methods were developed to design “trustworthiness” for the findings. According to Noble and Smith (2015), these strategies include the following:

1. Acknowledging biases in sampling and ongoing critical reflection of methods to ensure sufficient depth relevance of data collection and analysis;
2. Meticulous record keeping, demonstrating a clear decision trail and ensuring interpretations of data are consistent and transparent;
3. Establishing a comparison case/seeking out similarities and differences across accounts to ensure different perspectives are represented;
4. Including rich and thick verbatim descriptions of participants; accounts to support findings;
5. Demonstrating clarity in terms of thought processes during data analysis and subsequent interpretations;
6. Engaging with other researchers to reduce research bias;
7. Respondent validation: Includes inviting participants to comment on the interview transcript and whether the final themes and concepts created adequately reflect the phenomena being investigated; and
8. Data triangulation, whereby different methods and perspectives help produce a more comprehensive of findings. (p. 3)
All participants were informed participation was completely voluntary and there was no obligation to participate in the study. All participants were fully aware of the significance and gave consent regarding questions in the interview. In addition, participants were able to get full disclosure and did not feel coerced to participate in the study.

**Data Analysis**

The data from interviews were collected and identified for features of themes in the interview responses. The University of Huddersfield defines themes as “features of participants’ accounts characterizing particular perceptions and/or experiences that the researcher sees as relevant to the research question” (University of Huddersfield, 2016, para. 1). These themes kept recurring throughout the research and became important to data sets. Eventually, the themes metamorphose in the categories for analysis.

**Data Coding**

The coding of the data is an important part in compiling and organizing the information. University of Huddersfield defined this as “the process of identifying themes in accounts and attaching labels (codes) to index them” (University of Huddersfield, 2016, para. 2). The assignment of words and phrases into categories and/or different segments is completed in the coding. These categories were designated by commonalities and coded with specific segments. All of the data was segmented and completed during initial coding. Table 5 shows the instruments used to document the case study.
Table 5

Instruments Used to Document the Case Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Review</th>
<th>Stakeholder Interviews</th>
<th>Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Academic Growth Score on Standardized Test</td>
<td>• Communication</td>
<td>• Advanced ED Stakeholder Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Curriculum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Governance process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Governance structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Instructional resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Maintenance of facility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• School culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• School life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Quality of instruction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stakeholder Interview Questions (Community Members and Parents)

1. What is your level of satisfaction with the school’s curriculum, and how do you feel it has impacted student performance in urban charter school?

2. What is your level of satisfaction with the school’s communication, and how do you feel it has impacted student performance in urban charter school?

3. What is your level of satisfaction with the school’s governance processes, and how do you feel it has impacted student performance in urban charter school?

4. What is your level of satisfaction with the school’s governance structure, and how do you feel it has impacted student performance in urban charter school?

5. What is your level of satisfaction with the school’s instructional resources, and how do you feel it has impacted student performance in urban charter school?
6. How satisfied with the school’s maintenance of facilities, and how do you feel it has impacted student performance in urban charter school?

7. What is your level of satisfaction with the school’s culture, and how do you feel it has impacted student performance in urban charter school?

8. What is your level of satisfaction with the school life, and how do you feel it has impacted student performance in urban charter school?

9. What is your level of satisfaction with the teacher’s quality of teaching, and how do you feel it has impacted student performance in urban charter school?

**Administrator/Teacher Interview Questions**

1. As a school facilitator, how do you support the curriculum and ensure it is at a level of satisfaction for all stakeholders to improve academic performance?

2. Are you satisfied with the current communication methods that the school employs, and how do you think it impacts student performance?

3. What is your level of satisfaction with the school governance processes, and how do you think it has impacted academic performance?

4. What is your level of satisfaction with the school’s board of director’s structure and decisions that are made regarding academic performance?

5. What is your level of satisfaction with the school’s instructional resources acquired and utilized to improve academic performance?

6. What is your level of satisfaction with the school’s facility maintenance, and what impact does it have on academic performance?
7. What is your level of satisfaction with the school climate, and what impact does it have academic performance in the school?

8. What is your level of satisfaction with the school life, and how do you feel it has impacted student performance in urban charter school?

9. How is the quality of teaching supported to be at a level of satisfaction for all stakeholders to improve academic performance?

**Scope and Limitations**

The limitations in the study were the characteristics that impacted or influenced the interpretations of findings in the research (Price & Murnan, 2004).

1. The perceptions of stakeholders were limited to a small sample size.

2. The perceptions of stakeholders could have exercised dishonest/false responses.

3. The researcher was also an administrator at the school.

4. Only current stakeholders were used, not including previous stakeholders.

**Summary**

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), “A qualitative approach emphasizes the qualities of entities, processes, and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency” (p. 8). The researcher understood the overall content and context of the study during the research process. The data were collected and analyzed to illustrate the findings on successful charter schools. The findings helped to exhibit overall improvement for improving and enhancing the quality of charter schools. The success or failure of the charter schools provided evidence
of consistent behaviors and practices to produce positive achievements and outcomes for effective school reform. This chapter allowed the researcher the opportunity to use valid and reliable research methods to collect and analyze data.
CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the stakeholders’ satisfaction with academic performance in grades (3-5) in a select charter school. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) defined qualitative data analysis as “working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others” (p. 145). The identified variables included curriculum, communication, board structure, board processes, instructional resources, facility maintenance, school climate, school life, and quality of teaching. There were four themes that were obtained from interviews, school climate surveys, and documentation analysis. The data sources that were collected provided distinct evidence to the research questions and established a profound relationship between the variables. Once the themes were discovered, an in-depth analysis was executed. This chapter outlines the results of the analysis of data.

Background

The researcher sought to examine the stakeholders’ satisfaction with school practices that relate to improving academic performance in an urban charter school. The researcher conducted twenty interviews at the charter school. The participants in
The interview consisted of teachers, administrators, parents, and community members. The age range of the participants was 24-46 years of age. All participants in this research have been affiliated with charter school for at least two years. During the study, progress reports were being provided to students. The school’s governing board held meetings concerning improving school programs and ensuring the charter school was taking steps to overcome its challenges. The school’s PTO has held several successful events and helped strengthen relationship amongst the school and families. The charter school also offered other initiatives that included weekly incentives and being innovative with special programming. As students’ academic outcomes become more complex, it is crucial that the school continue to evolve to meet students growing needs.

**Qualitative Data Analysis**

The participants in the study were asked a series of scripted open-ended questions. During the interview phase, sessions were held with a total of nine questions for each participant. The document analysis of data included reviewing the latest standardized testing scores. The survey analysis of Advanced ED was also used as an indicator for research. Once all of the data sources were accounted for, the researcher was able to identify four major themes that were consistent throughout the interviews, survey analysis, and document analysis. The intent of the interview questions was the driving force in determining the level of satisfaction with current stakeholders on identified variables that affect academic performance. The research was conducted over a two-month time frame. The researcher was able to use Rev Voice on application, recorder, and Google typing as valuable tools in conducting this research. During the research
analysis process, the themes that became evident included the following: parental involvement, high expectations, consistent communication, and teacher/student engagement (see Table 6).

Table 6

*Analysis Matrix*

<table>
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<th>Themes</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Number of Times Themes Emerged</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Expectations</td>
<td>Interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consistent Communication</td>
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<td>Purposeful Engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supportive Environment</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Analysis of Interviews*

The responses from the interview questions helped to justify the research questions. The administrator interview consisted of two administrators. The teacher interviews consisted of three teachers from the third to fifth grades. For the parent interviews, parents from the third to fifth grades were solicited for participation. The interview questions for community members were solicited from active individuals in the community. Table 7 shows the dates and titles of the interviews.
Table 7  
*Dates of Interviews and Participants’ Titles, 2016*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Interview Dates</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>November 1</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>November 1</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>November 2</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>November 2</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>November 3</td>
<td>Parent</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>November 3</td>
<td>Parent</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>November 4</td>
<td>Parent</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
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<td>Parent</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>November 9</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>November 10</td>
<td>Community Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>November 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>November 11</td>
<td>Community Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>15</td>
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<td>Community Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>November 16</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>November 17</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>November 17</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Related Interview Responses

Refer to Table 7 for dates of interviews and participants’ titles.

**Question 1:** What is the level of satisfaction with the curriculum as it relates to improving academic performance?

**Responses**

**Parent 1:** I think the curriculum lesson about the technology gave my children a good opportunity to be a little more advanced in understanding the future of America. It allows them to understand the use of computers, tablets, phones, etc. while completing their homework.

**Parent 2:** Yes, I think that it challenges my children and I like the rigor. I am very satisfied with the engagement.

**Parent 6:** Yes, the standards are always challenging, but never overbearing.

**Parent 8:** I like the way they teach everything, especially when it comes to technology and the environmental things. I’ve learned a lot from helping my children complete homework assignments.

**Parent 10:** Yes, I feel the curriculum meets the students’ needs in subject areas. My answer is based on the fact of what’s done in the classroom, like the homework. I feel last semester or last year was very an abundant amount of homework. I felt like my children were in college at one point but that’s based off the amount of homework received, projects they are responsible for doing and classroom participation. I do feel that the curriculum meets their academic needs.
Community Member 3: The school curriculum causes them to reach out to my job and ask for me to speak during career day. I think it’s great to see how the school starts kids off young in looking toward majors later at the college level.

Question 2: What is your level of satisfaction with communication as it relates to school events and news as it relates to academic performance?

Responses

Parent 2: I think the school communicates very well. However, on classroom level, it is very unstable. Sometimes, my child doesn’t do as well as he should but the teachers do not communicate as early as they could to prevent him from making the same mistakes.

Parent 3: I think the avenue is like a blanket. I think it’s like that because you get an email when you get a text message about major events. It’s fair, comprehensive and consistent.

Parent 4: The communication is an issue because we get over informed with information. I wish there were a way to communicate based on grade level or specific to middle or elementary school. It can be overkill at times, especially when you have multiple students at the school. However, it is definitely consistent with board meetings and newsletters.

Parent 5: I think the communication is frequent and consistent enough. It could be a little much for some parents because the email frequency is high. As an active parent I like it, but the average parent thinks it’s just another email.
**Parent 7:** I think that the school communication is good but could be better. I think we need more consistency as far as emails going out during the same time each week or send emails specific to the child’s grade level. Organization is key; with consistency, it works for me.

**Parent 8:** I think that that school communication is good but could be better. I think we need more consistently as far emails going out same time each week. Or send emails specific to my child grade level. Organization is key, with consistently it works for me.

**Community Member 5:** I’ve had communication with administrators for the last five years. They make themselves available to address any issues or concerns I may have within a timely manner. I can definitely say I have been satisfied.

**Question 3:** What is level of satisfaction with the board process as it relates to academic performance?

**Responses**

**Parent 4:** Yes, I feel that as active as we as parents have to be in that process we are totally allowed to doing so. Now if every parent takes opportunity, I cannot speak on, but parents do have the availability to be a parent of the process.

**Parent 6:** Definitely, I think probably because I spend some time out of school I try to work hand-in-hand with the board of directors having a relationship by giving opinions and input when they ask questions. That relationship really helps out each year and getting informed on activities that are occurring.
Parent 9: The parents do have the availability to be an active parent in the process of school operation.

Question 4: What is your level of satisfaction with the school’s board of directors’ structure, and decisions as it relates to academic performance?

Responses

Parent 1: It seems to be very sincere regards to the effort and I appreciate the willingness to explain things that others may have a tough time comprehending.

Parent 4: That goes back to the last question. We definitely need more parental involvement to do away with the repetitiveness and nepotism as to the board, but that reverts back to parents participating in the process.

Question 5: What is your level of satisfaction with schools instructional resources, and do they offer adequate resources for your child(s) to be successful on standardized testing?

Responses

Parent 3: The level of rigor and expectations in the classroom are different for my daughter. Where my daughter and son are now, I think my son is learning at a higher level academically. I am very pleased with instructional resources.

Question 6: What is your level of satisfaction with the facility maintenance at the school as it relates to academic performance?
Responses

**Parent 1:** I think it’s great. I think you can always find somebody walking around cleaning something.

**Parent 10:** I am pleased with both, especially compared to where we originally came from. I’m very happy to see this is taken care of. The students are able to participate with painting of the rocks and creating bird feeders. So, I am very pleased and proud.

**Community Member 2:** On my way to work, I always notice that there is a gentleman cleaning every morning to make sure it is clean and trash is picked up.

**Question 7:** What is your level of satisfaction with the school climate as it relates to improving academic performance?

Responses

**Parent 2:** I think the school climate is great. I love the standards and high expectations. I think the standards are high academically, so I am very pleased with that.

**Parent 6:** Overall, I give that 10 out of 10. It creates a home atmosphere and also I’ve noticed the instructors have time to listen to the kids, as well as the parents. The atmosphere is a great learning place.

**Question 8:** What is your level of satisfaction with the school life, and how do you feel it has impacted student performance in urban charter school?
Responses

Parent 1: You see the importance, even academically, when you walk into the school. There is a real attempt in regards to education and their children basically love the school and atmosphere.

Parent 2: I am huge fan of the school. When I look at the activities and diversity, I think it places standards on all students to meet their own potential. The organization demands a lot and the environment is conducive to learning.

Community Member 3: They have a lot of parent involvement.

Question 9: What is your level of satisfaction with the quality of teaching as it relates to improving academic performance in the charter school?

Responses

Parent 2: The level of teaching is good. I haven’t had any concerns; the rigor and expectations is performing very well. In comparison to other schools, the methods in which teachers use helps my child learn and become focused.

Parent 3: The administrators hold the teachers to a high standard. I have been at this school for four years, and have witnessed teachers being asked to improve performance. The administration is definitely in tune with what the students are being taught and what teachers are bringing to the table.

Parent 9: I am 100% pleased with the quality of teaching. I think the instructors have high expectations, and overall the teachers are fair with the children.
Questions for School Teachers and Administrators

**Question 1:** As a school facilitator, how do you support the curriculum and ensure it is at a level of satisfaction for all stakeholders to improve academic performance?

**Response**

**Teacher 3:** I believe the curriculum is being used extremely well. Each individual gets all the materials and resources needed to teach subjects pertaining to their grade level. We are not obligated to use one resource; we have flexibility to use any resource.

**Question 2:** Are you satisfied with the current communication methods that the school employs and how do you think it impacts student performance?

**Response**

**Administrator 1:** I think the communication efforts are most vital to the effectiveness components of a school. I think it’s very important that parents, students, stakeholders, and community members are always informed. We have various means and modes of communication; for example, we have communication via technology such as RenWeb. RenWeb is a software assistant tool that our teachers use and have used in terms of reporting grades, communicating messages, as well as other components. Also, our teachers have created grade level websites to make sure parents receive important information and are up to date on what is going on in the classroom. There are just so many
forms of communication that is important to the development of our children in the role of advanced technology.

Question 3: What is your level of satisfaction with the school governance processes, and how do you think it impacted student performance?

Response

Administrator 2: I have to think about that… seven. I think that they are involved as they should be. I think you should have a level of the separation between the board of directors and the school. Also but as far as level of satisfaction, I guess that’s a yes; it’s a trick question because they are involved but they don’t need to be about him I didn’t need any more in me the policy making and not the decision-making processes

Question 4: What is your level of satisfaction with the school governance structure, and how do you think it impacted student performance?

Responses

Teacher 1: I am very pleased with structure. It is organized, and they are constantly communicating. I stress that more parental involvement should occur, so our school can be more successful.

Teacher 2: I think ultimately the board structure is an extension of the classroom. I think they help with school community relations and also help to build school morale. The structure is always consistent in the minutes.

Teacher 3: I would say I am satisfied with the school governance structure. There is a good process in electing the board member’s, term wise. They have a specific
and strict agenda that they go by. When I attended meetings they discussed ways

to improve and grow in areas such as financially and academically.

**Question 5:** What is your level of satisfaction with the school's instructional

resources used to improve academic performance?

**Responses**

**Teacher 1:** I’m pretty satisfied with the school's instructional resources and

whatever is lacking or requested, they make sure it happens. I believe we should

you use different methods, such as differentiation and time on task for our

students to be successful.

**Teacher 2:** I think the level of engagement is higher now with the different

methods that we use in the classroom. The project-based learning with the

S.T.E.M. integration with the Georgia performance standards gives the teachers

enough tools to make all students successful.

**Administrator 1:** I am satisfied with instructional resources that the school

offers. I think the school’s instructional resources are as good as the achievement

for which students are attaining. The quality of teachers is relative to quality of

resources the teachers have at their disposable. We look at staff, support, as

resources to support our students in having a level of high expectation. All of

these resources held aid our students to advance with success.

**Question 6:** What is your level of satisfaction with the school facility

maintenance, and what impact does it have on improving academic

performance?
Responses

**Teacher 2:** I would give the school facility maintenance an eight. It has gotten better this year and the campus is kept clean. I know sometimes students make a mess, but overall classes and hallways are decent.

**Teacher 3:** The custodians have a high level of energy and enthusiasm to help keep the school up to par. The head custodian has high expectations inside and outside of the school. I know that they make an effort to make sure that school is clean, well-kept and inviting.

**Administrator 1:** I would say probably satisfactory. I am pleased with the level of support that I have in those areas. I think the maintenance and grounds department play a very important role in supporting the efficacy and the aesthetics in terms of ensuring that they feel good about being in a building in a facility that is neat and clean. A lot of times children’s learning environment and sometimes subjected to the opposite but, in this school we are subjected to what we are actually teaching which is excellence, environmental consciousness, sustainability and as well as recycling. Our employees actually utilize these practices as well and do what they can to promote a very clean and safe building. It is important that what we teach in the classroom coincides to the standard in which are a part of.

**Question 7:** What is your level of satisfaction with the school climate, and what impact does it have on academic performance?
Responses

Administrator 1: I think the climate is up to a level that meets the expectations for students in order for them to be successful. I think we promote a climate of achievement and climate of expectations as well as the climate of nurturing and loving.

Administrator 2: Yes, I think the culture is one of the strongest points of the school and you have to adjust to the way we do things around here. New teachers, students, and administrators kind of struggle at the beginning and adapt to culture. I think it helps build teacher morale, student morale, and helps with our overall performance.

Question 8: What is your level of satisfaction with the school life, and how do you feel it has impacted student performance in the charter school?

Responses

Teacher 1: I am satisfied with the school life. When I look at my students doing things like standing up asking questions, I know the expectations are high; therefore, students are prepared for real world.

Teacher 3: I’m highly satisfied with our procedures. We really want to take those procedures and take them to another level. In other words, how do our children act when they leave the campus, and how do they interact with other people when they’re not at the school. Our procedures are top-notch and our kids take ownership. We have an abundance of parental support, which a lot of schools don’t, and we understand that academics are number one.
**Question 9:** How is the quality of teaching supported to be at a level of satisfaction for all stakeholders to improve academic performance?

**Responses**

**Teacher 2:** I am satisfied. As for any educator, I think we must have a don’t-quit attitude. Regardless of struggles, we use our teaching philosophy and methods to give each student a quality educational experience each day.

**Teacher 3:** I definitely try to make sure the children are able to be self-made learners. I give them just enough information to get started then they force themselves to learn all the information they need to learn the standard. Ideally, I’m just there to be a facilitator pushing them to find information on their own. I feel as if this is the best way to learn and retain information. Students should have to go and search the information as opposed to being spoon-fed the information. The school allows me the flexibility to align standards with the curriculum to teach using my philosophy.

**Administrator 1:** I think in order to support the teachers and the parents, as well as for most students, you have to have a very clear understanding of the educational policies and procedures. You have to have a track record of success, which will bring trust. I think at the school we have exemplified relationships with the community, and I think it is very vital that you get to know the folks that you work with and students you teach.

**Administrator 2:** One of the things that I do is talk to teachers about those students who are struggling, because the students who are struggling are going to
be ones who will hurt you in academic performance. I always try and provide support for those students. Each student’s previous academic data and history and background information is important. One of things we use is called a Snap Shot, where we look back three years of student history with their scores and medical history. Regardless the students support, 504, SST, or IEP, it must be tied into the students history. I think it very important to understand where students are and advocate for student levels to be pushed.

**Brief Variable Synopsis**

**Communication:** The school’s communication is extremely critical element in engaging stakeholders with ongoing consistent electronic communication. These effective and efficient communication efforts take place throughout the school year through various media forms such as websites, newsletters, emails (Renweb), social media, home visits, and much more.

**Curriculum:** The school curriculum is a major indicator of the school’s direction and an important part of the school choice. The school’s unique curriculum sets precedence on engaging stakeholders and being innovative on the practices and procedures.

**Governance Processes:** The school’s governance processes should be committed to ensuring the school is operating effectively and efficient. Each board member should have a clearly defined role. The policies and decisions rendered should continually be based on improving academic performance.
Governance Structure: The school’s governance structure is critical and should be governed by a set of bylaws. These bylaws entail elections, meetings, responsibilities, and other operational concerns to benefit the organization.

Maintenance of Facilities: The facility maintenance is pivotal to the physical and emotional foundation in which schools operate. All students want to learn in a clean, aesthetically pleasing, and safe environment.

Instructional Resources: The instructional resources are the key components in teaching and learning. Finding resources that meet students’ needs drives quality instruction. Example of materials can include books, websites, tools, instructional content, and services to help support the learning environment.

School Climate: The quality of a positive school climate is a key factor in schools educating students. The feeling and attitudes that stakeholders have about the school help to explain how the school climate affects academic performance.

School Life: The culture of a school includes the values, norms, and experiences that affect student learning. The school life environment helps to shape the mind-set and provide focus to achieve outcomes.

Quality of Instruction: Highly effective teachers have a direct influence on student learning. Highly effective teachers have verbal ability, content knowledge, pedagogical training, and classroom strategies, which all contribute to student achievement.
Themes

The study presented several themes that became evident throughout the research. The themes emerged as a representation of the level of satisfaction with the charter school’s academic achievement.

**Parental Involvement:** Parental involvement refers to the active participation to the school and as it relates to the student. At the charter school, most stakeholders believe that it is quintessential for the school to successful. The school has mandated a goal for each parent to volunteer at the school for at least 20 hours a month. According to Parent 9 on involvement with governance processes, “The parents do have the availability to be active parent in the process of school operation.” In reference to parental involvement with governance structure, Parent 8 said, “We definitely need more parental involvement to do away with the repetitiveness and nepotism as to the board but that reverts back to parents participating in the process.”

**High Expectations:** High expectations refer to the school having standards for the students, teachers, and educational system. Establishing high expectations has been at the forefront since the school’s inception. Setting those high expectations is a defining characteristic of school success. In reference to the maintenance facility, Teacher 3 stated, “The custodians have a high level of energy and enthusiasm to help keep the school up to par. The head custodian has high expectations inside and outside of the school. I know that they make an effort to make sure that school is clean, well-kept and inviting. The school climate is also vital; Administrator 1 stated, “I think the climate is up to a level that meets the expectations for students in order for them to be successful. I
think we promote a climate of achievement and climate of expectations as well as the climate of nurturing and loving”. The school life is also a conveyer of high academic success. Teacher 1 stated, “…when I look at my students, doing things like standing up asking questions, I know the expectations are high; therefore, students are prepared for real world.”

**Consistent Communication:** Consistent communication refers to how the school communicates any type of school news, the type of communication, and how often stakeholders are communicated with. Effective communication is crucial to the success of any school. Parent 3 stated, “It’s fair, comprehensive and consistent.” Parent 8 had another opinion which was,

I think that that school communication is good but could be better. I think we need more consistently as far emails going out same time each week. Or send emails specific to my child grade level. Organization is key, with consistently it works for me.

**Purposeful Engagement:** Purposeful engagement refers to the degree in which students are interested in learning or connected in being taught to learn. Purposeful engagement with students promotes learning and school success. Teacher 3 discussed the classroom engagement strategy by stating the following:

I definitely try to make sure the children are able to be self-made learners. I give them just enough information to get started then they force themselves to learn all the information they need to learn the standard. Ideally, I’m just there to be a facilitator pushing them to find information on their own. I feel as if this is the
best way to learn and retain information. Students should have to go and search the information as opposed to being spoon-fed the information. The school allows me the flexibility to align standards with the curriculum to teach using my philosophy.

As far as input from the community, community member 1 stated, “School curriculum causes them to reach out my job and ask for me to speak during career day.”

**Supportive Environment:** Supportive environment is a learning environment where all stakeholders feel valued, included, and empowered. Having a supportive environment is a key principle in each student’s well-being for academic success. Administrator 1 referred to one aspect of the learning environment: “I think we promote a climate of achievement and climate of expectations as well as the climate of nurturing and loving.” Parent 8, who believes in the environment in which the curriculum is utilized stated, “I do feel that the curriculum meets their academic needs.” The instructional resources help support the learning environment to increase student success. In regards to support, Administrator 1 stated, “We look at staff, support, as resources to support our students in having a level of high expectation.”

**Document Analysis**

The two documents analyzed contributed information to the research questions. Document Analysis One (see Appendix A) was a survey done by Advanced ED on stakeholder satisfaction levels. Document Analysis One recorded survey responses in all areas of identified variables that include communication, curriculum, governance structure, governance process, facility maintenance, school climate, culture, and quality
of teaching. The survey placed each question into categories, which included purpose and direction, governance and leadership, teaching and assessing learning, resources and support system, and using results for continuous improvement. The survey demographic surveyed used included teachers, support staff, administrators, and parents. The survey was completed using a five-point likert scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The percentage that agreed are: communication (80.4%), curriculum (71.7%), governance structure (62.3%), governance processes (76.4%), instructional resources (80.1%), maintenance of facilities (87.2%), school climate (91.2%), school life (89.3%), quality of instruction (66.3%). The document served as verification of stakeholder satisfaction in each of the identified variables in the Likert scale.

Document Analysis Two was the standardized test scores from third through fifth grades. The document illustrates the average scores in subject areas of English, math, science, and social studies (see Appendix B). The standardized test scores illustrated is the charter school compared to the district and state in growth levels of Developing, Proficient, and Distinguished. The charter school outperformed the district by 80% and outperformed the state by 60% on grade specific content in grades 3-5. In subjects of English, math, science, and social studies (grades 3-5), the charter exceeded both district and state in reading, English, social studies, science in grade 3. In grade 4, the school exceeded in reading and English. In grade 5, the charter school outperformed the school in reading, English, and social studies. Figure 5 illustrates average standardized testing results from 2011-2014.
Figure 5: Academic achievement average.

In the latest 2015 state standardized test scores, Clark Charter School exceeded district scores and state scores. Table 8 illustrates Clark Charter School’s grade levels and subjects that were exceeded.

Table 8

Clark Charter School’s Subjects that were Exceeded

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The District and State in 2015 Standardized Scores</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
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<td>Grade 5</td>
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The table shows the subject areas in which the charter school exceeded the district and state in standardized testing scores. It includes the percentage of students at Learner Level, Proficient Level, and Distinguished Level in comparison to exceeding the district and state standardized testing.
Summary

The analysis of the data exposed the independent variables of curriculum, communication, governance structure, governance processes, instructional resources, facility maintenance, school climate, school life, and quality of teaching. The researcher was able to use the REV-On APP to record and transcribe 20 interviews (10 parents, 5 community members, 3 teachers, and 2 administrators). Once all of the data sources were compiled, the researcher was able to identify five main themes. Two other document reviews were also analyzed relative to the research questions. The five themes that emerged include parental involvement, high expectations, consistent communications, levels of engagement, and supportive learning environment. The document analysis was used to answer all of the research questions. This chapter showed research strategies from the different data sources to validate the association to the research questions.
CHAPTER VI

FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The purpose of the chapter is to divulge the findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations acquired from the study. This chapter focuses on the information obtained from the satisfaction of stakeholders, which included parents, teachers, and community members. The qualitative study utilized interviews and document analysis to determine the factors that a successful charter school employs to improve academic performance. After examining the data, the researcher was able to establish that parental involvement, high expectations, consistent communication, and purposeful engagement were the major themes that contribute to school success. This chapter targets the major findings of the study. The conclusions from this chapter are primarily based on the level of stakeholder satisfaction.

Findings

The researcher collected data from various participants. The first method was interviews with 2 principals, 3 teachers, 5 community members, and 10 parents. Through the process, common themes emerged related to the research questions.

RQ1: What is the level of satisfaction that stakeholders have on identified variables as it relates to academic performance of the charter school used in this study?
• Stakeholders were highly satisfied with identified variables as it relates to improve academic performance in the charter school. According to survey results, all variables achieved at-least a 62% approval rating.

• The participating parents really enjoyed the culture and climate that the school employs. On the survey, the parents rated the school its highest performance at 90% percentage.

• Four of the parents stated that they were over communicated with and wanted the methods to be specific to each grade level.

• During the interviews, all five surveyed community members stated that the administration moved quickly and swiftly to handle their problems and concerns.

• During the interviews, four Community members really like efficacy of structure and building and events that take place at the school.

• Of the three teachers interviewed, 100% were satisfied with identified variables in the school.

• During the interviews two teachers stated that the school had a unique culture, which allowed teachers to bring their individual personality into the classroom.

• The two administrators interviewed focused on improving instruction throughout the school.

• The two administrators interviewed both stated they believed the school’s governing board was doing a good job and emphasized how crucial they were
in policy making decisions that positively affected school organization and management.

- According to all responses, stakeholders generally agreed that 78% of all items were identifiable variables that impacted student academic achievement.
- Zero percent of all stakeholders had any negative remarks indicating that the select variables impact the school’s academic performance.

RQ2: How do the identified variables impact stakeholder’s satisfaction with academic achievement?

- All three surveyed teachers were adamant about the flexibility they were afforded in the classroom to promote student engagement and differentiate in lesson planning.
- One teacher felt that the curriculum was meeting student’s needs and they had been given the necessary resources to improve academic achievement.
- One hundred percent of administrators interviewed discussed the schools’ high level of expectations as a major contributor of improving academic achievement.

RQ3: Based on Dewey’s Education Theory, which is driven by meeting student’s needs, how do the identified variables affect student achievement?

- Surveyed parents mentioned that parental involvement was a key contributor in holding parents responsible for learning outcomes outside of the school and
for consistent collaboration with the school especially in areas of student
deficiencies.

- Teachers stated they were able to use the curriculum to be innovative in their
  approach to teaching students utilizing various instructional strategies.

- Administrators continually strived to push middle school students to become
college and career ready.

- The school received a three out five on annual school climate rating, based on
discipline, attendance, and stakeholder survey (GA DOE, 2015).

RQ4: Based on Walberg’s Progressive Education Theory, which is based on
how influences affect outcomes, how do the identified variables affect
student achievement?

- Parents were held responsible for activities outside of the school that
  influenced or motivated students for improved academic achievement.

- Teachers were able to affect student’s academic achievement with many of
  the factors in Walberg’s Progressive Education Theory: educational
  productivity, specifically culture and communication.

- Teachers’ engagement with various stakeholders also directly affected
  communication, classroom morale, and quality instruction.

- The school’s curriculum mantra is based on relevance, rigor, and relationships
to improve achievement. This a major driving force in the school’s mission.

RQ5: What aspects of school practices are stakeholders most concerned about in
improving academic performance?
• Eight out of 10 interviewed parents voiced as their major concern more effort in parental involvement in the school.

• According to four parents, and one administrator, teacher quality is also a concern in overall improvement of academic performance.

• One hundred percent of administrators believed that governance must be involved in daily procedures matters.

• One major theme that surfaced during the interview process was that administrators and school officials must be actively involved in instruction matters, (time on task, engagement, teacher observation, etc.). Administrator two-stated data-driven instruction drives school effectiveness.

• During the interview process, all parents’ stakeholders were satisfied with content of the curriculum. Eight parents interviewed states it was a major factor in school choice.

**Charter School Implications**

The study was done to discover the level of satisfaction with specific factors that a charter school employs to be successful in improving academic achievement. The level of satisfaction has occurred when perceived performance or expectation meets or exceeds the expectation. High levels of satisfaction from stakeholders help charter schools indicate elements for satisfaction for approval. The stakeholder satisfaction indicated that school practices hold the school accountable and the variables help support overall effectiveness. Charter school advocates now can use the school in this research as a model in the replication of various elements for academic success. Key principles of
effective charter schools include strong leadership and a solid curriculum, a distinct focus on data-driven instruction and student achievement, sound fiscal and board governance, support for teachers and students, and a successful climate and culture focused on responsibility and empathy. Stakeholder satisfaction has been influenced by involvement in the process, feeling valued, and students’ success.

**Limitations**

The researcher collected and analyzed the data. During the process, several limitations occurred.

- The study took place in only one charter school.
- The researcher only collected data from a limited number of individuals who had vested interest in the school and were available during the established time frame.
- The research could have been more specific on school practices as it relates to the interview questions.
- The researcher could have looked at how the variables affected achievement for a substantial period of time.
- The research was employed at the school where the study was conducted.

Although limitations are evident, the researcher believes it did not have any bearing on the findings of the study.
Recommendations

Recommendations for School Leaders

- Effective school leaders of charter schools should be highly skilled in the instructional program, committed to organization leadership, and invested in building parental relationships.
- The school leader must also have a positive and constructive relationship with the school’s governing board.
- School leaders must consistently research and implement best practices (instructional techniques and strategies, creative positive culture and climate, and having a supportive academic environment) for students to be successful.
- In charter schools, a school leader must be effective in human resource development and allocation of supporting funds, policy decisions, and school management.

Parents/Community Members

- Parents must be actively involved and monitor classroom activities, school governance, and track student progress.
- Charter schools must find alternatives strategies to promote parental involvements such as planner nights, home visits, conferences, volunteering, and other events.
- Parents and community members should continue to remain active with two-way communication with school officials and treat the school as a partner with shared values for education.
Recommendations for Teachers

- Teachers should commit to creating a classroom that has a supportive environment to promote student engagement as well as high expectations for all learners.
- Teachers should be consistent in implementing instructional practices that must be engaging and interactive for student learning.
- Teachers must continue to demonstrate the understanding of the curriculum, subject content, pedagogical knowledge, and the individual needs of all students in preparing daily lesson plans.
- Teachers should focus on learning standards within the curriculum and understand the diverse learning styles needed to ensure successful student achievement.

Recommendations for Charter School Contract Policy

- Provide professional development for start-up charter leaders, which will include organizational structures and working in partnership with governing boards.
- Implement governance training to any approved charter school within the first three years of existence.
- Equip all charter schools with a technology, resource, and facility grant assistance.
- Create a series of trainings for a Charter School Teacher Preparation Program in developing skills and core competencies for charter teachers.
Recommendations for Further Research

In this section, additional research is intended to improve the capabilities of the study to improve charter school satisfaction. Further research could be conducted to determine the effectiveness of satisfaction in high-performing charter schools and low-performing charter schools. The level of satisfaction could be compared in each of the schools used to determine if the identified variables correlate to successful academic achievement. The following topics are additional suggestions for researchers contributing to charter school achievement:

- Dissect the each parental communication in the charter school and find strategies to make it more centralized and consistent per grade level.
- Research independently how the relationship with charter school leader and governance board affects student achievement.
- Examine how charter school leaders need continuous trainings on standardized test scores/state performance test to improve academic achievement.
- Determine the rate in which school leaders’ strategies and school initiatives are effective in improving academic performance.

Conclusions

Due to the result of the identified variables utilized by the charter school, the school has been able to educate and serve as an example for the charter school movement for several years. This study has the ability for influence students, parents, teachers, community members, and school leaders to understand how these factors impact student
achievement. What emerged from the study were five themes that included parental involvement, high expectations, consistent communication, supportive environment, and purposeful engagement. Each of the five themes is an indicator that a school must promote and exercise these themes to the highest standard for school academic success. As a result, parental involvement is necessary for the school, but also for the student to be successful.

Knowing what our stakeholders believe is important can only benefit those who have a profound relationship with giving students the best educational experience possible. The study is important to education enthusiasts, but also to business economics and universal affairs. Charter school success is more than test scores; it is an inherited need to give stakeholders viable options to meet all students’ needs.
APPENDIX A

Document Review One

Survey done by Advanced ED on stakeholder satisfaction levels. The Strongly Agree and Agree tab was combined for overall satisfaction percentage per 100%.

Communication: Satisfaction= 80.4
Our school communicates effectively about the school's goals/activities/and student progress.
Strongly Agree 45.9; Agree 34.5; Neutral 8.1; Disagree 8.1; Strongly Disagree 2.70.

Curriculum: Satisfaction= 71.7
All my child’s teachers provide an equitable curriculum that meets his/her learning needs.
Strongly Agree 47.8; Agree 23.9; Neutral 14.1; Disagree 11.2; Strongly Disagree 3.0

Governance Structure: Satisfaction= 62.3
Our school’s governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.
Strongly Agree 20.9; Agree 41.9; Neutral 25.0; Disagree 9.5; Strongly Disagree 0.68

Governance Processes: Satisfaction= 76.4
Our school provides opportunities for stakeholders to be involved in the school.
Strongly Agree 44.6; Agree 31.8; Neutral 16.0; Disagree 4.1; Strongly Disagree 0.68

Instructional Resources: Satisfaction= 80.1
Our school provides an adequate supply of learning resources that are current and in good condition.
Strongly Agree 48.9; Agree 31.2; Neutral 8.8; Disagree 9.5; Strongly Disagree 1.60

Maintenance of Facilities: Satisfaction= 87.2
Our school ensures that the facilities support student learning.
Strongly Agree 47.2; Agree 40.0; Neutral 8.0; Disagree 3.2; Strongly Disagree 0.80

School Climate: Satisfaction= 91.2
Our school provides a safe and positive learning environment.
Strongly Agree 48.0; Agree 43.2; Neutral 5.6; Disagree 2.4; Strongly Disagree 0.80
School Life: Satisfaction= 89.3
Our school has high expectations for students in all classes.
Strongly Agree 54.8; Agree 34.5.; Neutral 5.4; Disagree 4.7.; Strongly Disagree .068

Quality of Instruction: 66.3
All my child’s teachers use a variety of teaching strategies and learning activities.
Strongly Agree 43.2; Agree 23.1; Neutral 21.7; Disagree- 8.9; Strongly Disagree 1.49
Document Review Two

Document Analysis Two is the standardized test scores from third through fifth grade. The document illustrates the average scores in subject areas of reading, English, math, science, and social studies.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>3rd – Math</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd – Social Studies</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>3rd – Science</td>
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<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>4th – Reading</td>
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<td>51</td>
<td>59</td>
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<tr>
<td>4th – English</td>
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<td>5th – Science</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2015 Standardized Scores - Charter vs District vs GEORGIA
APPENDIX C

Interview Questions Parent/Community Members

1. What is your level of satisfaction with the school’s curriculum, and how do you feel it has impacted student performance in urban charter school?

2. What is your level of satisfaction with the school’s communication, and how do you feel it has impacted student performance in urban charter school?

3. What is your level of satisfaction with the school’s governance processes, and how do you feel it has impacted student performance in urban charter school?

4. What is your level of satisfaction with the school's governance’s structure, and how do you feel it has impacted student performance in urban charter school?

5. What is your level of satisfaction with the school's instructional resources, and how do you feel it has impact student performance in urban charter school?

6. How satisfied with the school’s maintenance of facilities, and how do you feel it has impacted student performance in urban charter school?

7. What is your level of satisfaction with the school’s culture, and how do you feel it has impacted student performance in urban charter school?

8. What is your level of satisfaction with the school life, and how do you feel it has impacted student performance in urban charter school?

9. What is your level of satisfaction with the teacher’s quality of teaching, and how do you feel it has impacted student performance in urban charter school?
Administrator/Teacher Interview Questions

1. As a school facilitator, how do you support the curriculum and ensure it is at a level of satisfaction for all stakeholders to improve academic performance?

2. Are you satisfied with the current communication methods that the school employs, and how do you think it impacts student performance?

3. What is your level of satisfaction with the school governance processes, and how do you think it has impacted academic performance?

4. What is your level of satisfaction with the school’s board of directors’ structure and decisions that are made regarding academic performance?

5. What is your level of satisfaction with the school’s instructional resources acquired and utilized to improve academic performance?

6. What is your level of satisfaction with the school’s facility maintenance, and what impact does it have on academic performance?

7. What is your level of satisfaction with the school climate, and what impact does it have academic performance in the school?

8. What is your level of satisfaction with the school life, and how do you feel it has impacted student performance in urban charter school?

9. How is the quality of teaching supported to be level of satisfaction all stakeholders to improve academic performance?
APPENDIX D

Site Letter

A Case Study Focused on the Level of Satisfaction of Select Stakeholders; Parents, Teachers, and Community Members on Identified Variables to Improve Academic Performance in One Urban Charter School.

The purpose of this letter is to seek permission to have your school participate in a research study. A Case Study Focused on the Level of Satisfaction of Select Stakeholders; Parents, Teachers, and Community Members on Identified Variables to Improve Academic Performance in One Urban Charter School. The case study doctoral dissertation is required for completion of Doctor of Education in the Department of Educational Leadership at Clark Atlanta University. The study will be conducted through parents, teachers, administrators, and community members. The study will examine the perceived level of satisfaction on school practices that affect standardized testing scores. The population will include students in the third through fifth grades. Participants will be interviewed in a one-on-one format. The information collected in this will be completely confidential and the names or likeness will not be comprised. Results from the data will be transcribed in generic letters to guarantee extensive confidentiality. I truly appreciate DeKalb Academy of Technology allowing me the opportunity to complete a study at your school.

Henry McCladdie
Department of Educational Leadership
Clark Atlanta University

Dr. Barbara Hill
Department of Educational Leadership
Clark Atlanta University

I have read the statements above and agree to have my school participate in the study regarding the level of satisfaction of stakeholders on variables to improve Academic Performance.

C.E.O. Signature          Date

[Signature]
10/14/10
APPENDIX E

Parent/Community Members Informed Consent

Clark Atlanta University
Department of Educational Leadership

A Case Study Focused on the Level of Satisfaction of Select Stakeholders: Parents, Teachers, and Community Members on Identified Variables to Improve Academic Performance in One Urban Charter School.

This letter is an open invitation to consider participating in a study as part of the Doctoral degree in Educational Leadership from Clark Atlanta University. I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement will entail if you decide to participate.

I am being invited to participate in a research study conducted by Henry McCladdie, a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Leadership at Clark Atlanta University, as part of his dissertation. The title is A Case Study Focused on the Level of Satisfaction of Select Stakeholders: Parents, Teachers, and Community Members on Identified Variables to Improve Academic Performance in One Urban Charter School. My participation will involve the completion of a one-on-one interview. I will be one among many other parents, teachers, and community members asked to participate.

- I understand my participation is voluntary.
- I understand there are no risks involved.
- I understand I will be asked to participate in an interview.
- I understand that non-participation will not have an impact on my child’s performances, and there will be no consequences for not participating.
- I understand that I will not be compensated for participation.
- I understand that there will not be any form of identification of me during the interview.

You can sign and return this letter to Henry McCladdie at 3397 Desoto Road, Snellville, GA, or henry.mccladdie@gmail.com. If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me (Henry McCladdie) at 706231-9580 or by e-mail at henry.mccladdie@gmail.com. You can also contact my dissertation chairperson, Dr. Barbara Hill at 404-880-6015 or e-mail BHill@cau.edu.

I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Sincerely,

Henry McCladdie
Participant’s Signature

________________________________________
Doctoral Student
Department of Educational Leadership
Clark Atlanta University
APPENDIX F

Administrator/Teacher Informed Consent

Clark Atlanta University
Department of Educational Leadership

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Sincerely,

Henry McCladdie
Participant’s Signature

Doctoral Student
Department of Educational Leadership
Clark Atlanta University
REFERENCES


