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EXAMINING EFFECTIVE CHARTER SCHOOL METHODS AND PRACTICES
OF SELECTED HOUSTON-AREA CHARTER SCHOOLS THAT SUPPORT
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT TO REESTABLISH TRADITIONAL PUBLIC
SCHOOLS AS THE SCHOOL OF CHOICE: A CONSTRUCTIVIST GROUNDED
THEORY

A Dissertation

by

MONEA R. BEENE

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies
of Prairie View A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2023

Major Subject: Educational Leadership

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Dean of Graduate Studies

May 2023

Major Subject: Educational Leadership

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Examining Effective Charter School Methods and Practices of Selected Houston-
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Schools as the School of Choice: A Constructivist Grounded Theory

Monea R. Beene

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ABSTRACT

Examining Effective Charter School Methods and Practices of Selected Houston-area Charter Schools that Support Academic Achievement to Reestablish Traditional Public Schools as the School of Choice: A Constructivist Grounded Theory
(May 2013)

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Committee: Dr. Dewayne McGary, Dr. Arthur Petterway, and Dr. William Parker

The public education sector is currently in turmoil (Calimeris, 2016; Meckler, 2022). In the early 90s, Fortune Magazine (1990) labeled the United States' school system as "our most endangered institution, one in need of progressive work to support reform" (p 114).

Thus, this study examined, addressed, and identified effective systemic and organizational practices among public charters that would yield high academic performance annually for TPS. This research approach explored the collection and analysis of qualitative data using a constructivist grounded theory design supported by a case study for data collection. This research aimed to address the organization of charter schools and the systemic impact on academic success in the educational sector compared to traditional public schools to identify and evaluate the differences in an instructional and organizational approach to outcomes. Collected data helped the researcher identify

which systems and practices TPSs should emulate to achieve consistent academic progress. This study focused on parents', teachers', and campus administration's lived experiences, serving in Texas charter school settings. For this study, charter schools examined were located in Houston, Texas, namely the KIPP Public Schools, YES Prep Public Schools and Harmony Public Schools and were not inclusive of all charter schools represented in Houston or the state of Texas, for that matter.

This study determined the organizational structures of successful charter schools and their corresponding systems through a semi-structured interview process. Data from nine participants was explored to identify supportive strategies from their lived experiences as leaders, teachers, and parents serving or supporting selected Houston-area charter schools.

The results of the study affirmed the anticipated outcome that academic successes of selected-Houston area charter schools hinge upon the organizational intent and systemic development of its campuses and delineates while many charter schools are successful academically, there are contributing factors to their success that have yet to be explored. The results of this study are likely to provide valuable information and outline considerable next steps for the successes of TPS leaders, campuses, and districts, respectively, to support individual success and streamline district processes that yield a common goal.

Keywords: TPS charter schools, organizational structure, systemic structure, charter schools, achievement

DEDICATION

Humbly, I dedicate this dissertation to myself. A lifelong dream of mine has finally come to fruition as a Doctor of Philosophy, the highest terminal degree offered. Further, my mom, dad, and brother have been influential, encouraging, and supporting in your unique way throughout this process. I committed to myself as a child that I wanted to obtain this degree. I am so excited that I am here and have the honor of my parents witnessing this work.

And, this is also dedicated to the remarkable young professional women of color, a reflection of my journey and the collective resilience we share. To those who, like me, have tirelessly forged their paths, climbing the professional ladder with grace, excellence, and intellect – this is for us. May these pages serve as a tribute to our undeniable worth. You are not just good enough; you are exceptional. Let this dedication stand as a reminder: we possess the wisdom and strength to resist silence and to keep our lights shining brightly. Together, may we continue inspiring others and breaking barriers, proving that our narratives are powerful, valid, and indispensable.

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I am deeply grateful to all those who made this journey with me and thus, acknowledge your unwavering support. I would like to acknowledge my family and friends who gave me moral support while I pursued this doctoral journey and wrote this dissertation. I pay tribute to the late Connie Hamilton, who, in all, has been my greatest and most consistent supporter besides my mother.

Additionally, I would like to thank all the participants who found it profitable to participate in my study and share their experiences with me in the most transparent and vulnerable manner. Thank you to my friends, family members, and colleagues who cheered, encouraged, and championed me. Mom, Dad, and Keith, thank you for loving and supporting me. Mom, I appreciate you for cheering me on, encouraging me, and reminding me of the jewel that I have within. Dad, I appreciate all the times you picked up your “favorite guy”, Myles, my firstborn, and you and mom’s first grand fur baby. I appreciate you, Dad, for watching him during my late work nights and when I needed to focus on writing. Keith, I appreciate you for being you for encouraging me, believing in me, watching me, and looking up to me as a role model. For those reasons, I want to make sure I set the very best example as a big sister, lifelong learner, and educator, even now in my adulthood.

Thank you, Village. I am appreciative of my friends and family who have pushed me, supported me, and rallied with me. I am grateful for my best friend, Rianca Cauley, who even before beginning this degree has known the desires of my heart and has supported me through and through. I appreciate her prayers, thoughts, calls and texts, and her undying understanding of me being busy into the work.

I want to thank one of the program coordinators at Prairie View A&M University and my chair, Dr. Stella Smith. Your positive approach, endless dedication, and listening ear have been what many students and I have needed as we matriculated through this journey. I am so grateful for who you are, what you are, and all you have been to me in my learning efforts. I thank you for your encouragement, kind words, transparency, and intellect in every capacity.

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I am grateful to my colleagues and cohort members at Prairie View A&M University for their encouragement and thought-provoking conversations, which positively affected the outcomes of this dissertation.

Finally, without the grace of God and my spiritual family I would not have been able to make it through this process. I am grateful for your thoughts and prayers. I acknowledge God's eternal encouragement, Him providing strength and blessing me through the easy times as well as the difficult moments; I am eternally grateful. I will continue to hold on to His unwavering promises and steadfast love, holding onto his unchanging hand as the effectual fervent prayers of the righteous availeth much in this degree has truly availed much.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The public education sector is currently in turmoil (Calimeris, 2016; Meckler, 2022). In the early 90s, Fortune Magazine (1990) labeled the United States' school system as "our most endangered institution" (p. 114). That label remains attached today through the publications of analytical literature such as *A Nation at Risk* (1983) and *A Nation Accountable* (2008) targeting the work the teaching staff and the educational system at-large. While the service role of the educator is rewarding in the metamorphic transformations that take place among scholars, it also has difficulties in substantial growth and progression among all, particularly its most at-risk learners and students of color. Anderson et al. (1999) shared that today's teachers must possess the desire to face the wrath of America's thoughts and opinions regarding educational approaches, instruction, and achievement outcomes. As perceived through the eyes of public citizens, any ills of the educational society often fall on the shoulders of teachers and educators, leaving them to bear all the responsibilities. Through the review of literature, one finds that leaders, teachers, parents, and community stakeholders note three obstacles in the nation's educational system that impacts consistent progressive efforts:

1. There is a lack of confidence in the ability of the traditional public school setting to support students' instructional needs (Deangelis, 2020; de Talancé, 2020; Plank, 2005).

This dissertation follows the style of the *American Psychological Association, 7th Ed.*

2. Teachers are leaving the public school setting, and parents are uprooting their children in search of more promising academic results (Barden & Lassmann, 2016; Deangelis, 2020; Morris, 2021).
3. There is a lack of consistent systemic direction in reaching the most challenging learners (Joyce & Cartwright, 2018; Lodge et al., 2018; Sun & Henderson, 2017).

To this end, the educational sector has seen an increased charter school presence as enrollment in charters seem to provide a solution to the obstacles outlined (Barden & Lassmann, 2016; Meckler, 2022; Rapa et al., 2018).

Nationwide and in neighboring Texas traditional public school arenas, the implementation of charter schools has helped support educational reform and has provided competitive progression where academic progress has not met standards (Eden, 2020). Charter schools were first sighted in 1993 in Minnesota and later welcomed to Texas in 1995. Since, charter schools have exponentially grown and become the school of choice in many Houston (Texas' largest city) neighborhoods, successfully ensuring consistent student progress and achievement with at-risk and students of color (Betts, 2009; Texas Demographics by Cubit, 2022). What remains a mystery is how charter schools consistently produce favorable achievement scores as demonstrated by their STAAR (State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness) assessment data, college curriculum breadth index (CCBI), college, career, and military readiness (CCMR) rank, success rates on Advanced Placement coursework and exams, and college acceptance rating with a large number of at-risk learners (KIPP Texas Education Results, 2021; Petrilli & Griffith, 2022). This research approach explored the how.

Charter schools are instructional institutions that operate like traditional public schools (TPS) but with more autonomy. Their charter allows sovereignty over decisions regarding staffing, curriculum, budgeting, and their instructional calendar (Jha & Buckingham, 2015). As a result, charter schools have become increasingly popular due to their impact on improving school effectiveness and academic achievement (Cohodes, 2018; Griffith, 2019). And, while this information is known, what one desires to identify is what has or is taking place in the schools that results in the increased demand for charter schools among not just parents but teachers and students alike.

Charter schools are no different from traditional public schools (in that they are tuition-free public educational institutions that provide educational opportunities to all students). However, while similar, research supports that substantial academic gains exist for at-risk students and students of color attending charter schools (Griffith, 2019; Petrilli & Griffith, 2022). These substantial academic gains allude to clear systemic and structural differences worth exploring, to provide considerable recommendations to the TPS sector.

With the success and flexibility of charter schools, it is believed charter schools impede neighborhood schools (or TPS) from being the school of choice for students and parents of zoned campuses (Baude et al., 2020). In exploring the why behind the arrival charter school systems, it is important to note three essential reasons that facilitate a charter school's creation: to birth the realization of an educational and academic need or vision, to elicit autonomy of the community, or to serve a specific population and its

academic need (Raise Your Hand Texas, 2021). Such reasons support TPS families' rationale to exit.

Charter schools are perceived to bring to the public school sector what literature reveals as missing in TPS settings: educational systems and structure. Similar to a successful business, systems and a structural process support the success of a school or instructional organization in educating students. Like corporations, each school and district should have a defined structure to regulate the building's expectations, operations, functions, and instructional efforts. In exploring the inequality of teaching, schooling, and how individuals ration opportunities for students of color, Darling-Hammond (2001) revealed a lack of a structural definition in the nation's public schools that serve at-risk learners and students of color.

Education is part of the foundation of all progress and growth, both for individuals and for society. It is a basic human responsibility that all societies must undertake to support community and cultural advancement (Tell, 2008). In the simplest terms, presented by the United States Department of Education, the goal of a public school education serves to establish a quality education that will enable all children or learner to achieve their highest potential as individuals, serve effectively as citizens of a free society, and successfully compete in a changing global marketplace (Powers & Wong, 2022). To support this effort, society has a responsibility to provide all its learners with the highest level of education commensurate with the level of social development (Tell, 2008).

The approach to achieving the nation's educational goal may take place in several ways, and given the environment, resources, and leadership, it may or may not be attainable. Reflectively, as a nation once at risk and now a nation informed, the nation's initial goal and approach to education lacked specificity. *Quality* is subjective and excludes equitable outcomes for all, which is imperative in leveraging and supporting reform that yields better academic results for all (A Nation Accountable, 2008). There needs to be a defined understanding of what effectively serving students entails.

In attaining this goal, public school expectations should reflect the educational priorities and concerns of the national and local communities served. Bell, former Secretary of Education, during the Reagan Administration presented such priorities and concerns in *A Nation at Risk* (1983) and later reemphasized them in varying publications recommending and supporting the need for systemic educational reform for the nation's traditional public schools through the National Commission on Excellence in Education. He and others shared when employed, these researched considerations should positively impact the day-to-day operations to support student and campus success. Instead, nationwide, statewide, and locally, the mission to promote student achievement in the public education setting is decentralized as outlined in the federal Constitution (Article 4), but without consideration of the learners, leadership, and strategic need of the organization (Douglas-McNab, 2013). Further, the federal law does not have direct authority over education in the nation. That power rests with the states. This is echoed in the state of Texas Constitution.

What charter schools present to the public school setting is a centralized led curricula structure defined that considers all levels succinctly, one that is communicated to all stakeholders to support the knowledge, investment, and implementation of expectations that yield favorable outcomes (Adminmatt, 2021; KIPP Academy ReDesigned, n.d.; Curriculum Overview: Texas, 2021). These straightforward structural systems are employed through a systems thinking approach, that is, (the realization that a whole or large system is more efficient than working in individual parts, to leadership and organizational development (Shaked & Schechter, 2019)

Effective charter school leaders approach the management of their organization by employing systems thinking strategies as they are aware of how systems interconnect to varied aspects of the school system and how such interactions are affected by each other (Shaked & Schechter, 2019). When applied, a system is a product of the interaction of its parts and is not solely all the parts, collectively, working individually. As charter schools work to improve education, they have identified essential systems by analyzing the successes and areas of opportunity of traditional public schools' systemic parts.

In approaching an educational organization that is considerate of all levels of leadership, and individuals from multiple backgrounds, charter schools have successfully and continuously been able to replace piecemeal and siloed approaches to implementing policies with an organized and systemic approach that yields success overall. Further, researchers have aided in developing prominent commentary, feedback, and data supporting the success of charter school systems. However, there remains a lack of research that identifies, justifies, and focuses on the leadership approach and techniques

deployed in the charter school setting and how those characteristics impact the potential academic success of the overall organization (Zimmer & Buddin, 2007).

Most research on charter school success focuses on charter school student achievement measured by performance on standardized tests and correlational teacher development (Bluestone et al., 2016). As previously stated, little research exists on the impact of the organizational structure and processes charter school campuses might have on the continued academic successes of at-risk learners and students of color. Thus, the crucial need to explore the characteristics of and approach to effective outcome-driven leadership and teaching practices is vital in adding value to the educational sector. As the charge of charter schools is to meet high expectations over a short period, ineffective leaders and teachers are subject to removal, and campus closures are often at risk. Consistent success is critical in such institutions. Consequently, charter school leaders and the approaches to organizational development can immensely impact and affect a school's ability to keep an active charter, validating the need to explore how one mediates achievement gains in charter schools by organizational and instructional conditions (Berends et al., 2010).

American teachers and the American public school system aim to provide the incentive, motivation, and learning experiences to engage all learners throughout their P-12 educational journey. To assess the nation's advancement in meeting America's educational goals Brown (2012), a prominent educational author posed the question, "Do parents of public school students think their children are progressing academically by attending their local traditional public school" (TPS) (p. 4)? The endless flow of negative

responses supports the nation's increased construction of neighborhood charters. Through their formation charter schools have increasingly become associated with high hopes and a lingering notion that children are ill-served by their TPS and are better served in local charter schools (Buckley & Schneider, 2009).

Further, data reveals that TPS students' parents do not believe their children are making consistent academic progress as students in other schools (Sahin et al., 2017). Specifically, charter school systems have more academic gains than their peers, especially those in underserved areas (Gulosino & Leibert, 2020). Such data supports why parents may appear unsatisfied with TPS's instructional efforts and the work necessary in traditional public schools to remain competitive (Brown, 2012).

Conclusively, suppose public school education aims to serve all students effectively and in a manner to ensure a meaningful impact on the academic gaps? In that case, there is a need to consider implementing proven effective, exemplary charter school systems and practices within the traditional public school setting. This research aimed to address the organizational structure of charter schools and the systemic impact on academic success in the educational sector compared to traditional public schools to identify and evaluate how the differences might impact approaches to outcomes. Collected information helped the researcher identify which systems and practices TPS can emulate to achieve consistent academic progress.

Statement of the Problem

In 2017, Texas ranked as the second most populous state in the nation. Texas also ranks as the second-largest state by land area, measured at over 268,000 miles (How

Big is Texas, n.d). In examining the public school sector, Texas ranks as having the seventh-largest school district in the United States, Houston Independent School District (HISD) (Kennedy, 2022).

The state of Texas determines campus and district enrollment by a school's population. It determines the enrollment count by the number of students within a given school, district, or area. Enrollment or enrollment count is the number of students registered in a school at a designated time in the school year. Campuses identify the enrollment count on the state's snapshot date. The snapshot typically is the last Friday in October and is often calculated by the (Public Education Information Management System) (PEIMS). Organizations use this collected data to support progress monitoring, educational planning, and decision making efforts to ensure accuracy in enrollment counts.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) (2019) reported grows more students in Texas schools (2019). The Texas Education Agency (TEA) (2019) reported that Texas experienced the third-largest increase in school enrollment between 2007 and 2017 and projects a continued substantial increase between 2017 and 2029. The enrollment in Texas in the 2019-2020 school year, prior to the impacts of COVID-19, was slightly over 5 million. As of 2022, the most recent census for enrollment is 5,371,586 students enrolled in Texas public schools (Texas Education Agency, 2019). Comparative census data reveals that overall public school enrollment has increased by over 13% in the last 10 years.

While enrollment in Texas public schools has increased, it is now where one may think. TPS public school has shown a decrease in incremental growth however, charter school enrollment has persistently increased annually. Texas charter school campuses collectively and effectively serve over 365,00 students in many cities around the state. This data displays significant gains from the 2,000 students served initially in the 1996-1997 school year of charter school, the first full school year of operation (Texas Education Agency, 2019).

The increased charter school enrollment exhibits heightened parental and student desire to move students to an educational institution that supports their immediate needs. The institutions of choice are continuously selected by families of at-risk learners and students of color are charter schools. The selection of charter schools over traditional public schools has increased and become a problem as the annual enrollment has plateaued in traditional public schools over the last 20 years, compared to the enrollment increase that public schools have typically made over the years (Texas Education Agency, 2003; Texas Education Agency, 2022).

From the 2000-2001 school year until 2021-2022, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) data displayed an 861% increase in Texas charter school enrollment. While many factors may place a role in the decrease, one looming factor is the population of charter schools in neighboring communities. Much of the states' population of learners choose popular named charter schools as such school publicize, widely their program offerings and results. This study examined three of those campuses: KIPP Public Schools, Harmony Public Schools, and YES Prep Public Schools all which are long-standing

public charter schools that receive students from Independent School District (ISD) communities.

KIPP Public Schools

KIPP Public Schools, founded by Mike Feinberg and Dave Kevin in 1994, began in Houston, Texas launching as a program of 47 fifth graders with a Houston public elementary school. KIPP, which stands for Knowledge Is Power Program, in their founding were among the highest performing schools in their learning communities (KIPP Public Schools, n.d.). What began in 1994 as a program within a school quickly emerged to become the nation's largest charter school network which serves thousands of students and successfully produces college bound learners annually. KIPP, through its *a no excuses motto* and by expecting 100% from students and staff every day to the learning environment, has been able to assure success daily and annually since its beginning.

Today, KIPP Texas Public Schools stands as a charter school network of over 55 schools with more than 34,000 students in grades pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. KIPP Houston educates thousands of students among 34 campuses. KIPP Houston supports primary students by instilling care and cultivating a love for learning through their foundational literacy, conceptual math, and STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) programs. Its middle schools support instructional development that inform and engage all students. The intentionality and rigor of the work support building prepared citizens. Lastly, KIPP Houston's high schools work to build upon students' intellectual experience through a rigorous and safe learning environment.

Curricula is based upon applicable, real-world experiences that supports preparation for student pursuit after high school.

Harmony Public Schools

Harmony Public Schools opened its doors in 2000 in Houston, Texas where its central office continues to remain operable. Harmony Public Schools is a system of 60 Texas public charter schools that provide rigorous, high-quality education focused on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. Through its dedication to living out the established core values, Harmony provides students from traditionally underserved communities the opportunity to excel through project-based learning where they learn the skills necessary to become a contributing global citizen. As Harmony has grown through the years, schools have moved into all major areas of Texas, forming seven distinct regions (or districts). Its core values center around high student expectations, a dedicated staff, a commitment to working together, instilling, and emphasizing strong character, and employing STEM for all students.

Harmony has 24 operable campuses in the Houston-area. Together, all campuses share the same mission, vision, and core values: high expectations, dedicated staff, working together, character matters, and STEM for all.

YES Prep Public Schools

Established in 1997 at Rusk Elementary in the Houston Independent School District, YES Prep Public Schools, Incorporated is a network of public, open-enrollment charter schools now located throughout all the Greater Houston area. Its headquarters (or district office) is housed at YES Prep's Southside campus. YES Prep is

known as a university-preparatory (or college preparatory) program for grades K-12 which prepares students for success in their higher education pursuits.

YES Prep Houston serves thousands of students amid six elementary campuses and 18 secondary campuses. All YES Prep Houston's elementary schools share the same core values, (to be self-aware, passionate, achievers, relentless, kind, and safe, and standards to ensure alignment in organizational success and expectations among all campuses. Each primary school begins with college readiness curriculum foci, personalized instruction, and reading supports.

YES Prep Houston's secondary schools highlight the opportunities provided to students to achieve more from learning. The work of all YES Prep stakeholders' centers around the mission which aims to empower Houston students to "succeed in college and pursue lives of opportunity" (YES Prep Public Schools, 2022 p. 2). Students enrolled in YES middle schools (grades 6-8) can enroll in smaller, college-ready courses with support and elective classes built into their day. There is additional instructional time provided for English Language Arts (ELA) and math to strengthen foundational competency. There is also an opportunity for middle school students to obtain initial high school credit, among other rigorous opportunities.

Students enrolled in YES high schools, grades 9-12, are "held to a higher academic standard than most TPS peers" aiming to prepare students for a successful life beyond their high school career (YES Prep Public Schools, 2022 p. 2). High school students are afforded socio-emotional learning opportunities (SEL), advanced placement

course credit, science lab simulation and career and technical educational opportunities as well as summer internships, summer programs, and study abroad opportunities.

Additively, because the researcher is located in Houston, a metropolitan city in Texas, these schools are most ideal. KIPP Public Schools, Harmony Public Schools, and YES Prep Public Schools are located within many Houston-area districts including Aldine, Alief, Houston, Cypress Fairbanks, Katy, and Spring Branch and are detailed below.

Aldine Independent School District. Aldine ISD, established in 1935, serves nearly 80,000 students among 82 schools. Over the years, Aldine ISD has grown immensely, and so has the community served. The Aldine community has led the city in its growing Hispanic population. The population of minority majority learners Aldine now serves is Hispanic at 72%, African American at 23% with the White population at two percent. Today, the district spans about 222 square miles along Northern Harris County. The Aldine community has five charter schools associated with this study.

Alief Independent School District. Alief ISD, located in Southwest Houston, Texas, was founded in 1911 but officially became a district in 1917. From its humble beginning from a two-teacher school as early as 1906 to the 46 campuses it now holds, Alief ISD has grown immensely, and so has the community. Alief is an urban community encompassed of 36.6 square miles. Today, Alief, Texas, is a residential suburb of Houston, instructing more than 41,000 students among its 48 public school campuses. Like neighboring districts, Alief has a growing Hispanic and African American population of learners. 57% of its learners are Hispanic, and 27% are African American,

compared to the three percent White and 10% Asian among other races and ethnicities served. To that end, Alief is one of the most ethnically diverse districts in Texas, with 80 primary languages currently on record. The Alief community houses over three dozen charter schools and is growing. Seven of those schools are associated with study.

Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District. Cypress-Fairbanks ISD, also known as CyFair, was established in 1939. Today, CyFair ISD serves near 120,000 students among 92 schools stretching across 186 square miles of land. CyFair reports an 80% minority enrollment with a student body of less than three percent White, 19.3% Black, and 44.7% Hispanic/Latino. The Cypress Fairbanks community has five charter schools associated with this study.

Houston Independent School District. Houston ISD was established in 1923 after the Texas Legislature voted to separate the city's schools from the municipal government. Less than four years after the district's founding, the number of students in public schools increased from 5500 to near 9000 students. From its beginning, Houston Independent School district served a huge population of the city's learners. Houston ISD, the largest school district in the state, covers nine municipalities and some unincorporated areas in Houston much like other school districts. Houston ISD also takes some of its students from neighboring Houston area cities such as Missouri City and Pearland. Houston ISD serves over 200,000 students among its 279 campuses. Stretching 312 square miles, the student population served consist of 62% Hispanic, 27% African American, and eight percent White. The Houston ISD community has 35 charter schools associated with this study.

Katy Independent School District. Katy ISD, located right outside of Houston, was established in 1919 extracting some students from Harris Waller and Fort Bend counties. Katy ISD has an enrollment of over 85,000 students among 74 schools. Katy ISD serves a population of 36% Hispanic, 32% White, 16% Asian and 13% African American. The Katy community has one charter school associated with this study.

Spring Branch Independent School District. Spring Branch ISD, established in 1856, stemmed from the Spring Branch School Society which was sponsored by St. Peter's Church. Its first school opened in 1889. Spring Branch ISD serves over 35,000 students over 40 square miles, with much of the population served within the city limits. 58% of its students are Hispanic, 27% White, and five percent are African American. The Spring Branch community has four charter schools associated with this study.

Through the exodus of families from TPS, and increased establishment of charter schools in neighboring communities, there is a growing perception that traditional public schools cannot meet the immediate needs of diverse learners with specific learning needs. For this reason, the topic of study is more relevant to identifying characteristics of successful selected Houston-area public charters and their organization. The intent of this study was to identify what, if any, pivotal charter school practices and characteristics traditional public schools can emulate to ensure adequate success and academic achievement among their at-risk learners and children of color.

When parents, stakeholders, and constituents speak about schools of choice, they often reference magnet, private, and charter schools as such schools provide student specific programs that highlight and provide student success opportunities. As a result,

state enrollment data displays increased enrollment among magnet schools, private schools, and state and district-authorized charter schools. Each year, parents of struggling TPS students who desire to see academic success in students select these schools of choice with the hope of better educational outcomes (Texas Education Agency, 2022).

State data reveals a challenge in traditional public school's preparation to academically support at-risk students and students of color. Consequently, public school systems are seeing a movement of students of color to charter schools, where students achieve successful academic outcomes (Baude et al., 2020). Therefore, this study aimed to examine, address, and identify the effective systemic and structural practices among public charters that yield high academic performance annually and work to emulate those practices in the TPS setting. As a result, traditional public schools will embody positive characteristics to support the critical need of learners enrolled on their campuses by producing high academic achievement in at-risk students and students of color through reformed systems and structures.

Purpose of the Study

As noted, charter school systems are positively impacting public school education. It is thus essential to acknowledge Texas charter schools' progressive work, examining what charter school characteristics contribute to success to support traditional public school reform. Identifying the systemic and structural systems and processes are essential in pinpointing the contributing factors to charter school academic success trends. Although the studies surrounding experiences that yield academic achievement through instructional approaches and strategies inform the literature, this study examined

Texas charter schools' operative structural and systemic conditions and how it promotes student achievement. This exploration will provide insight into what organizational structures and systems support academic success in charter schools to mimic those in the TPS setting.

Research Questions

1. How does the structure of the organization impact consistent academic achievement?
2. What communicated and implemented systems attribute to the consistent academic achievement of the organization?
3. How do the communicated and implemented systems attribute to the consistent academic achievement of the organization?

Brief Overview of Methodology

This research explored the collection and analysis of qualitative data using a constructivist grounded theory design supported by a case study for data collection. The constructivist grounded theory approach seeks to understand and explore an educational area of need where there lacks adequate theory. This approach allows the researcher to formulate new theories based on exhaustive collection and analysis of real-world data.

Case studies suitably remove the assumptions and capture the accuracies of the organization's perspective and the work's applicability to TPS institutions. They also provide a unique collection of rich data from multiple sources which shows the constructivist grounded theory researcher the opportunity to generate conceptual models. Reviewing the literature reveals opportunities for discovery in research concerning the

public-school educational organization of pre-kindergarten to 12th-grade students enrolled among public charters and the characteristics such institutions hold that cause a family to retreat from TPS to seek enrollment at charters.

This research aimed to delineate the distinction in success indicators in selected Houston-area charter schools related to systemic and organizational structure among charters and traditional public schools. While there is adequate research regarding the state assessment's academic success and achievement, research fails to reveal how organizational structure and systemic processes influence the overall success of the charter school sector. Through a constructivist grounded theory approach, this research sought to provide closure to the educational gap to support all students.

Definition of Terms

The following key terms are defined to promote clarity and consistency within this study. These terms are prevalent throughout the study.

At-risk: at-risk students are identified as at-risk of dropping out of school using state-defined criteria. Texas students at-risk of dropping out are students under the age of 21. There are 13 at-risk qualifying codes (Texas Education Agency, 2011).

Authorizer: an entity authorized under this Act to review applications, decide whether to approve or reject applications, enter charter contracts with applicants, oversee public charter schools, and decide whether to renew, not renew, or revoke charter contracts (American Legislative Exchange Council, 2015).

Campus (program) charters: charters authorized to allow a campus or campus program to operate free of most state and district requirements, including district instructional and academic provisions (Ausbrooks et al., 2005).

Charter Management Organization (CMO): operators who run multiple schools. They can be nonprofit or for-profit (Cohodes, 2018).

Charter school: public schools released from many state education regulations that exist separately from local independent school districts (ISDs) (Clark, 2000).

Common schools: originated in the 19th century as an effort to fund schools located in communities with public citizen monies (Kober, 2020). These schools are “common to all children of proper age and capacity, free, and subject to and under the control of the qualified voters of the district” (Green et al., 2013, p. 308).

Constituent: students, teachers, campus leaders, administrators, principals, district leaders, and board members (lawinsider.com).

Education Management Organization (EMO): an organization that manages or supports at least one school that receives public funding and operates the public school it manages under the same admission and regulatory rules as traditional public schools (Murphy & Izraeli, 2019).

Enrollment: The number of students registered in a school at a designated time in the school year (Texas Education Agency, 2022).

Home-rule district charters: charters that allow existing school districts to reconstitute themselves as locally controlled systems free from most state requirements, including curriculum, employment, and student discipline (Ausbrooks et al., 2005).

Magnet school: a public school designed to attract a more diverse student body by offering specialized instruction and programs (Penning & Slate, n.d; Riel et al., 2018).

Matching: a statistical technique used to compare students' academic trajectories in charter schools to students in traditional public schools with similar characteristics and levels of academic achievement (Griffith & Petrilli, 2021).

Minority: those who do not belong to a region or nation's majority racial or ethnic group. For this study, minorities are considered African American and Hispanic students (Minority students, 2022).

No excuses school: these schools emphasize high expectations for academics and behavior, longer school days and years, and frequent observations of teachers to give feedback, tutoring, and data-driven instruction that uses assessment to update teachers frequently (Cohodes, 2018).

Open-enrollment: a tuition-free public school option for students and their families. Such charter schools in Texas are sponsored by institutions of higher education nonprofit organizations as set out in the Internal Revenue Code or government entities (Penning & Slate, n.d).

Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS): this information includes all data requested or received by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) about public education, not limited to student demographics, academic performance, campus and organizational personnel, financial, and other impactful information (Texas Education Agency).

Private school: unlike public schools, private schools are supported by private organizations or private individuals instead of the local, state, or federal governments (Riley et al., 1997).

Snapshot Date: the last Friday in October, whether it is an instructional day or not, where data of all students served, and staff employed are reported to the state (Texas Education Agency, 2022).

Stakeholder: any individual who is interested in the success of a school or school system, whether directly or indirectly affected by the success of the educational system (Bryson, 2004).

Students (children or learners) of color: a student that does not identify as white based upon the racial identification of the parents (Moffett, 2021).

Traditional public schools (TPS): open-enrollment schools that are divided into grades and governed by school districts (National School Choice Week, 2022).

Delimitations

This study focused on parents, teachers, and leaders' lived experiences, serving in Texas charter school settings. The study did not include students or varied community members who associate with the local organizations. Also, the study did not include information inclusive of a traditional public school case study exploration. For this study, the charter schools examined were in Houston, Texas, namely the KIPP Public Schools, YES Prep Public Schools, and Harmony Public Schools which are CMOs and are not inclusive of all charter schools represented in Houston or the state of Texas, for that matter.

Due to the qualitative research design used in the study as the focus on the systemic and structural approach to the achievement of charter schools' scholars at KIPP Public Schools, YES Prep Public Schools and Harmony Public Schools, the results are not generalized for all charter schools in Texas and beyond. Further, as participation in this study was not mandated, the results and insight only reflect the parents, teachers, and leaders who chose to participate.

Assumptions

In conducting this study, the researcher made several assumptions. The first assumption was that the information on the success of charter school systems would be easily accessible, as are traditional public schools, and easy to define. Second, the researcher assumed that all systems implemented at charter schools warranted academic achievement. Finally, the researcher assumed that all staff members who bought into the systemic model in charter school settings shared the same viewpoints and expectations of the campus and were previously high-performing educators who supported the successful efforts in the TPS setting.

Significance of the Study

Given the need to provide quality education, academic achievement, and the capacity to produce college and career-ready students in the secondary public-school setting and the notably heightened success in those efforts, there is an apparent need to investigate the recent experiences of parents, teachers, and leaders. This research enhances the educational sector as it highlights the work of selected Houston-area charter schools and provides the TPS organizations, leaders, and teachers with specific systems

to consider, strategies to implement, and approaches to teach to support increased student success.

Summary of the Study

In this chapter, the researcher revealed the context for the research study, which aimed to support TPS in its approach to increasing achievement and academic success by examining systemic practices and organizational structures in selected charter school systems, specifically KIPP, YES Prep, and Harmony Public Schools in the Houston-area. The qualitative research design used a grounded theory perspective to address the research study through a case study. Data collection took place through interviews with current KIPP, YES Prep, and Harmony Public Schools stakeholders.

In Chapter II, the reader will review previous research related to this study. The literature will include an overview of the charter school system, its current status, and a comparative analysis of TPS concerning understanding and emulating best practices.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher presents literature that emphasizes and explores the systemic and organizational structure of three Houston-area charter schools CMOs. Each of these charter schools support high achievement efforts of scholars who are at-risk or who are children of color. The researcher provides a comprehensive review of the available literature regarding student achievement, educational funding, organizational systems, organizational processes and structures, and the relationship of these factors among charter and traditional public schools and examines their impact in this chapter. The researcher organized the literature review to address the research questions indicated in the study.

This chapter corresponds with the significance of the study which aimed to provide its audience solutions to a comparable quality education in the traditional public school setting to that received in the selected charter schools examined in this study. For this review, the researcher examines several topics concerning charter schools' influence specifically in Texas. The first is a broad summation of the history of public education in the United States and more narrowly the concept of education and the impact of the charter school system through its inception in America.

The second area focuses on Texas as it welcomed charter school systems. The third area focuses on highlighting the charter schools of study and characteristics that highlight organizational and systemic processes that impact achievement. The last topic is

crucial because this illustrates the purpose of the presented research questions in this study and provides a context for the approach used to answer this study's research questions.

Additionally, this chapter includes an overview of the progressive school enrollment in Texas charter schools and the systemic development, through a qualitative, constructivist grounded theory case study approach. This chapter concludes with revelations of a research-based effective charter school model that supports achievement championed by communicated organizational and systemic structures that level the playing field for traditional public schools.

Historical Perspective

Literature supports that historically, there has been and continues to be a need for equitable, systemic, and progressive public-school efforts in the United States (Semuels, 2021). As one examines the history of public education in the United States, findings reveal inconsistencies necessary to overcome national and statewide deficits among at-risk students and students of color. One imminent example yields from the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). Over seven decades after the historic *Brown* decision, there still remains inequities in the educational system for students of color and those disadvantaged (Gardner & Miranda, 2001). In its infant stages, the evolution of public-school education is categorized into three sectors: the pre-American Revolution period (the early to mid-1700s), the American Revolution period (1775-1783), and the post-American Revolution period.

During the pre-American Revolution era, schooling and the implementation of instructional efforts were very haphazard (Kober, 2020). Schooling lacked a succinct system of expectations, and educational offerings varied. Such offerings included: churches and religious institutions, tutoring and private homeschooling, work apprenticeships, charities for poor and underserved students, boarding schools for children to increase positive behavior, or all-girls or all-boys living quarters (Kober, 2020).

During the American Revolution, as schools began to populate in cities and towns among northeastern states, citizens experienced limited, free educational opportunities for students that was paid for by the town residents (Kober, 2020). This was the first attempt at free public schooling, utilizing charitable contributions and property taxes.

Following the American Revolution, American leaders engaged in discourse surrounding the progression and preservation of the nation's democracy. The belief was to preserve the nation's democracy, citizens needed to become educated on political and social issues that would impact their entry into and ability to sustain a progressive life (Hochschild, 1969). Further, citizens would learn to become more morally sound and strengthen their character through educational efforts. Soon after the American Revolution, leaders proposed creating a formal and unified system of publicly funded schools and decreed that states would need to set aside monies and land to support the establishment of public schools (Kober, 2020).

In the mid-1800s, leaders began to aggressively advocate for creating public schools and the desire to make them universally available to all students. This resulted in

states funding schools free of charge. As the 19th century progressed, public schools began to populate faster in many states, cities, and communities nationwide. Public schools were widespread in the northeastern part of the country and less common in communities that housed children of color, underserved populations, and children with special needs (Kober, 2020). The locale of schools hindered adequate, equitable access to free public-school education to all students, specifically those from underserved communities.

The First Established Public School in the United States

17th-century citizens welcomed the need for public education. In 1635, the first public school opened in Boston, Massachusetts, which is still operative today. Boston Latin School, an all-boys secondary school, opened as a college preparatory school that centered its instructional efforts around the humanities: focusing on basic academic skills, the Latin language, and core aspects of religion (Chen, 2022; Society, 2020). During this time, education was offered to boys only, with very few viable options for schooling girls. The Boston Latin School, established as a grammar school, held a mission to provide quality education to young men seeking collegiate-level education following their grade-level schooling (Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., n.d.).

As the American Revolution passed, education became of higher priority with the establishment of public schools in the states. Much of the initial esteem for education is due to Horace Mann, an American educational reformer, slave apologist, and politician, as his efforts aided in establishing public school systems. Mann's beliefs in promoting public education emphasized that everyone was entitled to the same content in education

through teaching students and preparing teachers (Cremin, n.d.). As a result, in 1837, Mann was named the Secretary of Education for the state of Massachusetts (Chen, 2022). Following this, Mann launched the first State Board of Education for the state of Massachusetts. Mann presented to the world a visionary approach to educational professionalism, supporting the education reform movement to remedy the state's education deterioration (Cremin, n.d.). In seeing immediate results, states quickly followed Mann's practices for systemic school implementation.

The First Established Public School in Texas

Public education has always been a primary goal of early Texas settlers and continues to serve as a habitually communicative topic of discussion (Texas Almanac, 2021). Texas law reveals that while Texans have long been concerned about their children's education, there has been a communicative lag in the systems implemented to support the progressive nature of education compared to other states (Texas Education Agency, 2019). In the mid-1800s, the "Father of Education" in Texas, politician, and President of the Republic of Texas, Mirabeau Lamar expressed the importance of and advocated for a legislature to designate revenue for schools. In 1840, Congress passed a legislation that led to a signing of a bill in 1854 to initiate the Texas public school system in elementary to collegiate school arenas (Texas Almanac, 2021). This bill aided in the establishment of the first Texas public school in New Braunfels, Texas, nearly 200 years after the first public school opened in Boston, Massachusetts. Texas' first public school, New Braunfels Academy, now New Braunfels High school, was founded in 1845 and was later rebuilt in 1913 (New Braunfels High School, 2011).

The state of Texas has an extensive timeline concerning educational reform efforts. The earliest efforts date back to 1866 when the state's constitution required public school teachers to obtain a teaching certificate (Texas Education Timeline, n.d). Soon after, in 1869, the Texas educational system moved to a centralized approach to the state's educational organization. This approach instilled an administrative framework, the state superintendency, and the institution of local taxes (Texas Education Timeline, n.d). Later, in 1875, the state of Texas' legislature created the Independent School System, which organized educational efforts among an incorporated city or residential locale of zones (Texas Education Agency, 2019).

Decades later, in 1928, Texas began initiating policies for public schools through a State Board of Education. Over the next 50 years, Texas considered many additions to its educational systems such as the implementation of a standardized testing system in 1979 to support tracking academic achievement through instructional efforts. This system assessed student knowledge and competency, teacher instructional efforts, mandated state curriculum, and initiated the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) to support and inform student data collection among Texas schools (Texas Education Timeline n.d.).

A Shift in Education

To meet the individual growing needs of schooling, differentiated schooling opportunities (schools of choice) were created to support learners and community need. The most populous opportunities for schooling created, still utilized today are private, magnet, and charter schools.

Private schools are schools owned, funded, and operated without the financial assistance of local, state, or federal programs. As a result, parents or guardians pay tuition to fund their student's education. The oldest accounted private school in Texas was established in 1852. Operating as an all-male non-boarding college preparatory school located in San Antonio, and one of the largest all-male private schools in the state of Texas, Central Catholic High School is an independent, private school that has dedicated its educational practices to developing young men of character through faith, leadership, and academics (Central Catholic High School, n.d.). To date, Texas has nearly 2000 private schools within the state (Public School Participation Statistics, n.d).

Magnet schools are public schools that offer specialized instruction and programs that are not available in traditional public schools and welcomes students through a lottery or application process. Magnet schools were initiated in the 1970s with the mission to desegregate learning and have now become focused on "carving out a niche for students" (Waldrip, 2021, par. 7). Such schools are seen as the "competitors for the traditional public school alongside charter schools" for enrollment (Judson, 2014, p. 256). In 1971, Dallas opened the first magnet school in the state. Skyline High School was designed to focus on career strands to attract students from all over the city while also providing flexible full-day and half-day instructional opportunities, and adult programs to ensure educational opportunities of choice were made available to every type of learner (Waldrip, 2021).

Together, such choice in schooling has impacted the nature and functionality of public schools and has added increased competition for the public-school sector. Private

schools and magnet schools bring to the educational sector a tiered level of educational access, prominence, and choice through the availability of desired resources and programs. As the United States is known for its array of choices in food, fashion, and careers, among many more, schooling is no different. While other countries approach options from a simplistic approach, even considering education, the United States avails a menu of selection. Hence, with options in other realms of the world's operation, schools, too should display similarities in quality of teaching, academic and social reputation, resources, curriculum, instruction, and structure, even among neighboring public schools in the same districts who differ from one another in its organizational implementation and outcomes (Ben-Porath, 2021).

Hundreds of years after creating the first public school, public school systems, Independent School Districts, and other specialized schools, a very chilling and appropriate piece of literature surfaced. This publication pushed politicians, educational leaders, teachers, and parents to intently examine the quality of education in the United States. Today, this publication has become widely cited as it relevantly provided recommendations for educational improvement and highlighted educational inadequacies with the hopes of remedying public school education efforts. The report, *A Nation at Risk*, published in 1983 during the Reagan administration, harshly delivered to the nation action items of work that needed to take place to advance and sustain positive and progressive academic achievement that supported the educational system. In 1983, the nation was educationally at risk. Today the examination of educational data and events presents the nation is still at risk. Nearly four decades later, the data indicates the:

... nation's educational foundations of our society are presently eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our future as a nation in people... we have squandered the gains in student achievement, and our society and its educational institutions have lost the basic purposes of schooling and of the high expectations and disciplined effort needed to attain them. (A Nation at Risk, 1983, p. 9)

Thus, to move the nation forward from the negative academic and functional perception of the public-school sector arose the creation of charter schools.

The First Established Charter School in the United States

Charter schools' arrival in 1991 provided a unique blend to public, private, and varied choice schooling. Charter schools are independently operated, tuition-free public schools of choice. Such schools are independent public schools of choice, freed from rules due to their autonomy, but accountable for favorable results (Finn et al., 2000). These instructional institutions operate like traditional public schools (TPS) but with more autonomy to support a more efficient systemic operation and academic achievement efforts (Buckley & Fisler, 2022). Most charter schools aid underserved, academically underachieving communities who desire additional educational opportunities outside of their traditional neighborhood school through providing varied levels of choice (Almond, 2012).

The notion of charter schooling was first introduced in 1974 by Ray Budde, a professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. During this time, the *New York Times* first presented Budde's idea of charter schools in its nationally reviewed publication. In the publication, *The New York Times* reported that the American

Federation of Teachers (AFT) supported the idea of teachers instating independent schools to support restructuring education in communities of need (Kolderie, 2005). A decade later, in 1988, Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, a union of professionals that champions educators, educational efforts, and the families and communities of those served, embraced the concept of charter school systems, resurfacing Budde's work, and called for a reform of public schools by establishing "charter schools" or "schools of choice" (AFT Union, 2014; Kolderie, 2005).

The idea of schools of choice was not immediately favorable among educational politicians and decision makers. Just as Budde's initial notion took the right advocate to review and support what institutions of charter schools entailed, so did Shanker's. From the 1980s to the early 1990s, senators and state representatives explored the need to consider the implementation of charter schools in the educational sector and the impact it might hold with the public school sector. During that time, while operable schools embodied characteristics like charter schools, Shanker became known as the first person to publicly propose the operational idea of charter schools (Kolderie, 2005).

Budde and Shanker's work resulted in the implementation of the nation's first charter school law in the state of Minnesota in 1991 after United States Senator Dave Durenberger presented the charter idea to Washington (Kolderie, 2005). The law of 1991 declared that charter schools should focus on educational and operational innovation and accountability in exchange for the possessed autonomy to support academic improvement and address parental dissatisfaction with TPS (Advocacy: Minnesota's Charter School

Story, n.d.; Gawlick, 2016). Subsequently, the first charter school was issued in 1991 in Winona, Minnesota to Bluffview Montessori School.

While Bluffview Montessori School in Winona received the first charter in the state, the first charter school to officially open its doors was City Academy in St. Paul, Minnesota, on September 7, 1992 (Advocacy: Minnesota's Charter School Story, n.d.). City Academy is also known as City Academy High School. As the third proposed charter school in the state, yet the first charter to open, City Academy's institutional design focused on supporting students who once experienced challenges in the traditional high school setting. Such challenges included but were not limited to students who were high school dropouts, students living in poverty, or who were succumb to environments of substance abuse (City Academy, 2021).

What began as City Academy High School serving 30 students in 1991 has expanded today while staying true to small class sizes to support individualized learning. As of January 2020, 45 states and the District of Columbia have adopted charter schools to support increased academic improvement opportunities (Gawlick, 2016). The states without public charter school legislation are Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Vermont (How States Fund Charter Schools 2021).

The establishment of charter schools provided the public-school environment more freedom and opportunity to lead innovative classrooms to benefit students in a non-traditional setting. In creating charter schools, the United States moved toward restructuring school districts in a manner that aimed to put students first and at the center

of all decision-making. This restructuring supported choice to new and established public schools based on the students served in the community.

With the birth of charter schools came reform toward public school policies to yield high quality public school educational opportunities for all. In examining charter schools' enrollment and students of color nationally, the rate in which students of color were choosing charter schools nearly doubled in comparison the rate of those choosing traditional public schools (Almond, 2012). John Walton (1986) once shared, in America, it was a tragedy to have a country where everyone was equal under the law, but everyone did not have equal opportunities to secure the most important asset ever, which was a good education. Thus, the intent and contribution to the educational movement stands to help people who do not have access to a quality education by making available more broad, high quality educational opportunities to all.

The First Established Charter School in Texas

With the movement to establish charter school systems across other states, Texas, too, joined in efforts to expand educational opportunities for its disadvantaged and underperforming students. As a result of the progressive state changes, significant reforms to the Texas education system were made to support improved public education momentum efforts. One significant reform to the Texas education system occurred in 1991, as the birthing of charter schools took place in Minnesota. During this time, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) introduced the *Partnership School Initiative* to its public schools. The *Partnership School Initiative* provided public schools the opportunity to participate in programs aimed to support schools in achieving educational excellence and

equity through freeing approved campuses from specific regulations (Ausbrooks et al., 2005). Nearly 100 campuses participated in this program.

The next reform, which impacted the Texas education code, took place a few years later during the state's next legislative session. In this session, the Texas education code of 1995 passed the 74th Legislature as Senate Bill 1. It was influenced by the Partnership School Initiative which granted open-enrollment charter schools the autonomy to move into Texas school systems and districts, instituting their operation to support progressive educational efforts (Texas Education Agency, 2019). In exchange for assured efforts of improving student academic achievement took precedence in Texas schools, three types of charters were authorized:

1. home-rule district charters,
2. campus (program) charters, and
3. open-enrollment charters.

Home-rule district charters allow existing school districts to reconstitute themselves as locally controlled systems free from most state requirements, including curriculum, employment, and student discipline (Ausbrooks et al., 2005). Such home-rule charters exist in Houston-area cities such as Katy, Texas. *Campus, or program charters* were authorized to allow a campus or campus program to operate free of most state and district requirements, including district, instructional, and academic provisions (Ausbrooks et al., 2005). Campus charters, currently, are not operable in the state. Texas *open-enrollment charter schools* operate under the governance structure stipulated in their charter and operate in their own newly constructed buildings (Ausbrooks et al.,

2005). Open-enrollment charters, such as KIPP Public Schools, YES Prep, and Harmony Public Schools are tuition-free public-school options for students and their families. Such charter schools in Texas are sponsored by institutions of higher education nonprofit organizations as set out in the Internal Revenue Code or government entities (Penning & Slate, n.d). This study focused on open-enrollment charters.

The Texas charter school movement initiated as instructional efforts of traditional public schools were under attack. Like much of the world, Texas experienced differing educational opportunities among its learners as it identified a new approach to learning based on memorization and application skills rather than learning solely focused on results (Hood, 1993). Additionally, traditional public schools were noted to have failed to both hold students and the school system accountable for overall performance expectations and results.

These educational inadequacies endured as early as the 1930s and became increasingly recognizable in the 1960s. Even in the mid-1900s, when the state legislature was aware of the inadequacies of the state's educational system, it was not until decades later those revelations were considered to support posing questions to identify how to prepare students more adequately for the world. As a result, a major reform occurred, impacting the Texas Education system. Through the passing of Senate Bill 1 in 1995, authority returned to local school districts which supported their decision making. Following the 1995 declaration, a year later, the state board approved the creation of 20 charter schools, the first of which was KIPP (Knowledge is Power) CMO in Houston, Texas (Texas Charter Schools Association, 2016).

Established to improve student learning and learning outcomes, bring choice to learning in public schools, encourage innovative teaching and learning efforts, and attract new teachers, Texas welcomed charter schools to many neighborhoods where traditional public schools were fixated (Texas Charter Schools Association, 2016). KIPP Houston, the first KIPP campus in the state, benefited fifth-grade Houston-area students within the public elementary school, with the primary belief to “do whatever it takes to help each and every student to develop the character and academic skills necessary for them to lead self-sufficient, successful, and happy lives” (KIPP Public Schools, n.d., paragraph 3).

In its infancy, the first-generation charter schools targeted students who were not well served in the TPS sector (Garrison, 2013). Since the opening of Texas charter schools, research studies have worked to identify the observable differences between traditional public schools and open-enrollment charter schools. Research reveals there is an academic difference in the data yielded.

Since implanting their presence and introducing their results-oriented nature, charter schools have become an increasingly ostentatious topic of discussion among other charter and public-school arenas. School board members, educational leaders, teachers, and parents often questioned what occurs in public schools that call for parents and students’ to pursue charter schools. They even more intensely question what takes place that yields such excellent academic outcomes for the same TPS students (namely at-risk students and students of color) who struggle in a traditional public school institution.

Texas charter schools, on average, embody the same proportion of economically disadvantaged students as their neighboring traditional public schools and in many cases

a higher number. Demographic data also reports that charter schools typically have a larger African American student population while the Hispanic and Latino populations mirror traditional public school; such learners continue to reign as a growing population of learners within the state. In the 2020-2021 school year the Hispanic population accounted for the largest percentage of the total enrollment in state charter schools followed by African American students (Division of Research and Analysis Office of Governance and Accountability, 2021). Critics often highlight the idea that charter schools appear segregated based on demographic data and reports an enrollment of mainly low-achieving children of color. However, one finds that research about the idea that parents of children of color enrolled in TPS do not believe their children are progressing academically as non-children of color in other TPS and ISD systems. Thus, the growing number of charter schools benefits academically disadvantaged students of color who once attended traditional public schools.

Moreover, as stakeholders have continued to forego TPS due to their right to choose in their academic endeavors for their learners, whether public or private, the neighborhood school should also stand as an option in those choices. Therefore, the general problem examined is the idea that traditional public schools (TPS) "are failing to provide the equal [instructional] opportunities that every kid needs," resulting in an influx of such schools opening of charter schools to bring competition and quality to the public education system (Sahin et al., 2017, p. 6). The more specific area of focus is in addition to the claim that TPS fail to provide equitable educational opportunities, there is the influx of such school systems opening and establishing public charter schools in the local

communities, resulting in an annual increased withdrawal from TPS to the local charter schools (Buckley & Schneider, 2009). Families worldwide are fleeing from TPS in search of a more sound, supportive, and successful source of education. This fleet has led to increased charter school enrollment as charter schools are affirmed to have a positive effect on academic achievement for students “left behind” in Texas and Houston-area traditional public schools (Eden, 2020).

Booker et al. (2008) detailed Texas has been an important player in the emergence of the charter school industry. Particularly, the rapid growth of charters in the state exemplifies an indicator of charter viability in the educational arena for the state’s students, operating in the five Texas metropolitan areas, that is, Houston, Dallas- Fort Worth, San Antonio, Austin, and McAllen. With their presence, Texas charter schools’ function to offer an improved focus to student learning while also providing student choice that empowers the parental and community voice in educational decision making. As charter schools create opportunities for the stakeholder voice and presence in the educational environment and among learning opportunities, they attract new students and teachers. This approach aided in awakening the call for more accountability for the public-school sector.

Charter School Funding: Federal, State, and Local

Charter school discourse has become populous nationally and locally concerning educational needs and policies surrounding reform (DeAngelis et al., 2018). As studies have examined the achievements of charter schools and their organizational output, researchers have also explored claims pertaining to funding disparities and inequities

among schools. As described, public charter schools operate by a charter or contract, between those responsible for making educational choices and supporting accountability at the school level and the governmental entity designated by statute who approved the charter (Wall, 1998). Public charter schools operate with increased operational autonomy in exchange for increased accountability for positive student outcomes. Wall (1998) shared the essence of the charter school reform effort was to place the control over decision-making concerning curriculum, supplies, and teaching methods in the hands of its stakeholders. In exchange, these individuals are required to account for the success of their school, as outlined by the specific terms of their charter.

A huge part of a charter's ability to live out the established contract is impacted by its funding. Educational funding supports staffing, resources, and instructional programs that directly impact the students the organization serves (School of Education Online Programs, 2020). Charter schools have funding opportunities at the federal, state, and local level.

To support funding at the federal level, the National Charter School Resource Center (NCSRC) provides a funding opportunity database. The database includes frequently updated one-time and ongoing national grants, fellowships, and scholarships available for charter schools and charter "districts." Similarly, the Charter School Program (CSP), an affiliate of the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS) is a federal program that provides financial assistance for the planning, program design, and initial implementation of charter schools and the replication of high-quality charter schools (Federal Policy, 2021).

While both charters schools and school districts receive federal funding, the National Association of Charter School authorizers reveal charter schools receive federal funding through grant money from a variety of federal programs and are responsible for using that federal funding appropriately to meet the organizational needs (Federal Policy, 2021). Additionally, charter schools must outline the responsibilities for the dissemination of federal funds. This oversight takes place through a network of entities consisting of the authorizer who holds contractual accountability to the individual charter school, the United States Department of Education, the State Education Agency, and the Local Education Agency (Federal Policy, 2021). A participant revealed funding for charter schools is split, explaining, "...[the] funding budget is split between state funding and private funding that. The use of private funding is an additive to support operational and instructional efforts" (J. Brooks personal communication, April 26, 2023).

In reviewing the allocation of state funding, generally states fund charter schools based on one or more of the following criteria:

1. per-pupil revenue of districts in which their students reside (Copeland et al., 2020),
2. per-pupil revenue or different funding sources based on authorizers or types of charter schools (Copeland et al., 2020; National School Boards Association, 2021),
3. statewide per-pupil allocation (Copeland et al., 2020), or the
4. calculation methods that differ from distributing funds for traditional public schools (National School Boards Association, 2021).

Of the 45 states and the District of Columbia, about 61% (28 states) have charter schools that allocate federal and state funds to charter schools in the same manner as the TPS sector, such as in Texas (National School Boards Association, 2021). Texas funds their charter schools through a two-tier system.

The National School Board Association (NSBA) (2021) shared Tier I allocations are determined by substituting the statewide average adjusted allotment in place of the district's calculated adjusted allotment. This ensures the base level funding is appropriately distributed among schools. Tier II allocations are determined by substituting a statewide average enrichment tax rate in place of the district's calculated enrichment tax rate (National School Boards Association, 2021). Examining the state of Texas' funding specifically, Texas funds its charter schools through a charter school law, equal federal and state funding, and by A3 facilities funding, funding programs offered by various banks and lending institutions also known as private funding (Knight & Toenjes, 2020; National School Boards Association, 2021).

Public charter schools may also receive their funding locally or directly. The California Department of Education, which is not indicative of all charter school sectors, but informative, implies the decision to receive local or direct funding impacts the method of funds allocated and the recipients of such funds (Charter School Funding Types, 2021). In the state of Texas, public charters are funded by the Foundation School Program (FSP) where most of their funds generate from student average daily attendance (ADA) or the number of students who attend the public school each day (Knight & Toenjes, 2020). Texas law entitles a basic allotment per student to support the funding of

each students' education (Knight & Toenjes, 2020). Wood (2019) detailed of the 45 states that currently have charter schools, Texas has the most regulated operational definition of what a charter school system.

Across 14 of the United States most populous metropolitan areas, research has shown charter schools receive on average \$5,828 per pupil, equating to about 27% less than the TPS per-pupil (DeAngelis et al., 2020). In 2019, charters in Texas received about \$10,824 per pupil. During the same year, TPS received about \$11,637 per pupil (Campbell et al., 2021).

This depicts a near \$1k funding disadvantage which adds to the funding gaps that has grown over the last five years. The Reason Foundation examined the Texas charter school funding analysis and found “public charters receive about 5.4% of state and local education dollars — this equates to \$3.138 billion out of about \$58.156 billion” (Campbell et al., 2021, paragraph 7). Since its beginning, the proportion of state funds for charter schools out of the total state funds for public education has increased by over 700% (about \$200 million to over \$2 billion) from 2000 to present.

Texas Independent School Districts (ISDs) receive federal, local, and state funding. About six percent of Texas funding comes from the federal government and supports educational programming. State funding comes from state revenue sources and supports hiring staff, buying supplies, and supporting disadvantages students (Whitley & Mattison, n.d). Local funding comes from property taxes and supports building and maintaining schools and funding resources (Whitley & Mattison, n.d).

Public charter school systems, on the other hand, receive a limited base of funding as most of their funding source comes from the state. The Texas Education Code 100.1041, Regulation 47 outlines state funding presents the funding formula elements for state public charter school systems. Funding for charter schools in Texas is similar to traditional public schools using a tiered system (State Funding, 2022). There are Tier I allocations which are determined by substituting the statewide average adjusted allotment in place of the district's calculated adjusted allotment and Tier II allocations which are determined by substituting a statewide average enrichment tax rate in place of the district's calculated enrichment tax rate (Education Commission of the States, 2020). Tier I allocations are funds that operate as if the charter school systems were school districts who are not required to contribute a portion to the whole entitlement. Such schools receive a small or mid-sized financial allotment based on adjustments in the weighted average of the funds allocated to school districts in the state. Tier I allocations fund most of the school district and the charter system's entitlement (Education Commission of the States, 2020).

The Texas Education Agency shares all public schools, including open-enrollment public charter schools receive state funds based on the ADA of its students. Charters are eligible for state funding once they hold the adequate contract and approval for the charter. The funding sources for these funds is the Foundation School Program (FSP). Additionally, charters are eligible for grant funding supplied at the federal and state level (Texas Association of School Boards, 2022).

Given the main source of charter school funding results from ADA, enrollment is important. The 2020 state per pupil allotment for charter school students was \$1,030 per student (Texas Charter Schools Association, 2020). All Texas charter schools received that allotment, regardless of their enrollment. That same year, the per pupil basic allotment for traditional public schools was \$6,160 (Texas Charter Schools Association, 2020). State law provides additional funding allotments in TPSs for low income, economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and emergent bilingual students, formerly known as English language learners. Even though charter schools overall receive less government funding than TPS on a per-pupil scale, they are expected to do more with less to ensure continued operation each year. Thus, the high expectations and exceptional required output of all invested in charter school student success.

As students leave TPS and enroll in charter schools, studies show there are higher expectations centered around the success outcomes for students enrolled in charter schools. Parents hope through uprooting their children from the TPS setting, their students will receive a better education and will successfully complete their schooling journey with increased post-secondary opportunities (Cerra, 2021). While many charter schools live up to the outcomes of parents, the inequitable funding makes it difficult, but the expectation of the charter ensures it happens. As funding to support the operation of charter schools comes mainly from the FSP as does TPS and Independent School Districts, the amount of funding for charter schools is significantly less than TPS as additional funding allotment sources are limited. Further, charters do not receive monies from local tax revenue as do the TPS. Therefore, charter schools are expected from

families and community members to do and produce more, academically, while operating with less.

Charters are expected to use the monies they receive from FSP, and any donations or grants received to fund staff salaries, instructional resources, staff development, academic programs, and operational needs not limited to facilities and facility upgrades. Further, charters are expected to do this in alliance with creating opportunities of choice and increasing academic advancement among at-risk learners, children of color, and other high-need students. Wood's (2019) theoretical framework posits all public-school funding rates should account for the financial spending expenditures needed to pursue quality educational opportunities that meet the goals and mission of the organization, charters included (Knight & Toenjes, 2020).

The Charter School's Impact on Traditional Public Schools (TPS)

In an intentional attempt to implement innovatively focused schools, charter schools emerged. Since their 1991 arrival, charter schools have existed as a strategy to reform the nation's educational system supporting academic success for all, including our most underserved learners. No matter the perspective of whether charter schools are the right approach to education or not, the charter school presence has increased immensely since its arrival over 25 years ago and continues to attract attention, providing an advent of choice and allowing for more efficient and effective schools for children (Smith, 2005). The Center for Education Reform (2006) presented that approximately 300 to 400 charter schools come into existence each year.

Villanueva and the Center for Public Policy Priorities, (2019) reported that education is the bedrock of an informed democracy and the bridge to lifelong learning. Similarly, John Walton (year) shared, it is their belief that to ensure all students receive equal educational opportunities that elevate them to their maximum potential, a high-quality education is necessary. As charter schools have moved into communities to support academic advancement, traditional public schools have felt the impact of their residence, specifically in enrollment, funding, and by academic comparison. As a result, charter schools continue to pressurize neighboring TPS. Traditional public-school leaders daily compete among one another as campuses desire to have the most growth and superior annual ratings. Amid the internal competition, campuses and districts must now compete with neighboring charter schools not only in achievement measured by standardized test scores, but to keep its students, teachers, and community support.

Enrollment

Texas charter schools serve a high number of students of color as traditional schools slowly advance practices to meet the growing transformations of its regional educational makeup (Penning & Slate, n.d.; Smedley et al., 2001). The enrollment data for Texas public-schools for the 2020-2021 school year presented the traditional public-school enrollment for students of color decreased from the 2019-2020 to the 2020-2021 school year (Texas Education Agency, 2021). Students of color in the state of Texas include but are not limited to African American and Hispanic students.

Texas data incited the growing desire of students and families for specialized educational opportunities through public charter school systems. Supporting this desire,

2020-2021 data indicates there were 184 state-authorized charter schools and 835 state-authorized charter school campuses that served 365,930 students (Division of Research and Analysis Office of Governance and Accountability, 2021). For the 2020-2021 school year, students enrolled in state-authorized charter schools accounted for 6.8 percent of the total Texas public school population which increased the statewide enrollment by over two percent (Division of Research and Analysis Office of Governance and Accountability, 2021). This revealed an overall increase from previous years' charter school enrollment while the statewide traditional public-school enrollment continues to decline.

In review of the 2009-2010 school year, the state of Texas began collecting data on the race and ethnicity of students enrolled in its state schools. This data proves indicative when reviewing data of enrollment of students of color compared to students of other racial and ethnic backgrounds. In their enrollment, the TEA report assisted in defining the racial and ethnic categories of its learners. As time progressed, in reviewing the total number of TPS students enrolled in the 2019-2020 school year compared to the 2020-2021 school year, every enrollment indicator examined showed a decrease except for students served who were coded as 504 or special education learners (Division of Research and Analysis Office of Governance and Accountability, 2021).

Region 4, used to categorize schools in the Houston area, serves seven counties in Houston, Texas, including its surrounding cities. It is the most populous region in the state. The 2019-2020 school year snapshot captured 1,248,425 students enrolled in Houston public schools (Division of Research and Analysis Office of Governance and

Accountability, 2020). The following school year's snapshot captured 1,217,905 students enrolled in public schools in the Region 4 area (Division of Research and Analysis Office of Governance and Accountability, 2021). Comparative to charter school enrollment in the 2019-2020 school year, there were 336,900 students for the 2020-2021 school year. The following school year showed an increase in enrollment totaling 365,930 students served (Division of Research and Analysis Office of Governance and Accountability, 2021).

The TEA data exposed a 122,354-student decrease or 2.2% decrease from the 5,371,586 students who were previously enrolled in Texas traditional public schools prior to the 2020-2021 school year. While the total public-school enrollment over a three-decade span beginning with the 1987-1988 school year, increased by 2 million or 66%, there are specific indicators that are impacting the overall public-school number, specifically, the development and growth of the public charter system. As enrollment is examined more closely by race and ethnicity, the data is indicative of an enrollment decrease from the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years among at-risk students and children of color. While such students are less academically successful in traditional public schools, they are more represented and positively more successful in the state's charter school enrollment data. Through identifying structural characteristics that facilitate increased student achievement among at-risk students and students of color enrolled in charter schools, research aims to identify reasoning to support students of color and their enrollment movement from traditional public schools to these charter schools.

Funding

Today, over 2 million students are enrolled in a charter school among more than 6,000 charter schools within urban communities throughout the United States (Gawlick, 2016). As a result, public schools have begun to suffer beyond achievement. Annually, public school enrollment takes a loss to neighboring charter school systems whose specialized learning promises growth and yields results. In understanding and analyzing the conditions under which selected Houston-area charter schools are effective, this research will help inform traditional public schools (TPS) to push policy and systems forward, assessing organizational strengths and weaknesses to support increased student success for all (Gawlick, 2016).

Of the five populous states that hold charter schools, Texas ranks as the third largest, right behind California and Arizona (Ausbrooks et al., 2005). Moreover, while the state's charter school enrollment only makes up a small proportion of the over 4 million students in the state, academic achievement produced from charter school education has captured the attention of parents, researchers, and the community.

Economically, Texas charter schools serve some of the state's lowest-income students and with limited funding resources (Linan, 2022). As more and more TPS at-risk learners and children of color transition to charters schools for educational opportunities, the percentage of economically disadvantaged students served decreases in TPS and increases in the public charter system. The Palestine Herald-Press (2022) reported of the 365,000 Texas charter school students served during the 2020-2021 school year, 70.9% were categorized as economically disadvantaged or in the greatest socio-economically

disadvantaged background compared to the 60.2% served in traditional public schools (Texas Education Agency, 2019). It is important to note the difference is even greater in other parts of the Texas region.

Under Texas law, all students are entitled to a basic allotment to fund their public education regardless of school type (Findlaw, 2016). To support Texas charter schools, there are three main funding sources: state, federal, and local. The TEA State Funding Division is responsible for administering the Foundation School Program (FSP) and wealth equalization provisions according to of the Texas Education Code (Texas Education Agency, 2023). The FSP determines the amount of state and local funds distributed to school districts under the state school finance law and disseminates the state share of this funding allotment to its districts (Texas Education Agency, 2023).

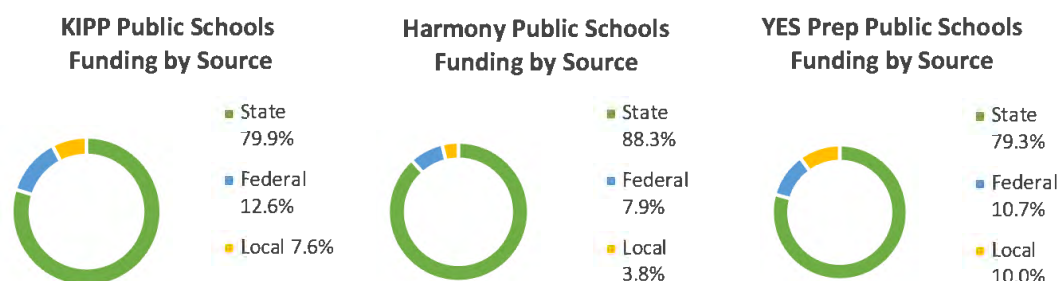
For charter schools to receive funds, the FSP uses the total number of students attending and student program participation. Federal funding, which accounts for about 10-15%, as the amount varies from state to state and can be substantially more or substantially less, of all education funding, tends to target low-income students or other distinct groups (Federal Funding, 2016). Federal funding is distributed to states and school districts through a variety of formulas and competitive grant programs. NewsAmerica (2016) reported the federal government spends nearly \$79 billion, annually, on primary and secondary education programs, set by Congress through an appropriation process. The two largest programs that aide federal funding are the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Title I Grants which are distributed to local school districts and IDEA Special Education Grants. Local funding is sourced from local

communities. Local school budgets are mapped out by elected officials, including mayors and council members, as well as the local board of education (Findlaw, 2016).

Subsequently, Figure 2.1 depicts funding allocations by source for the study's selected Houston-area charter schools Harmony School of Excellence, KIPP Texas Public Schools, and YES Prep Public Schools Inc.

Figure 2.1

Selected Houston-area Charter Schools Funding by Source

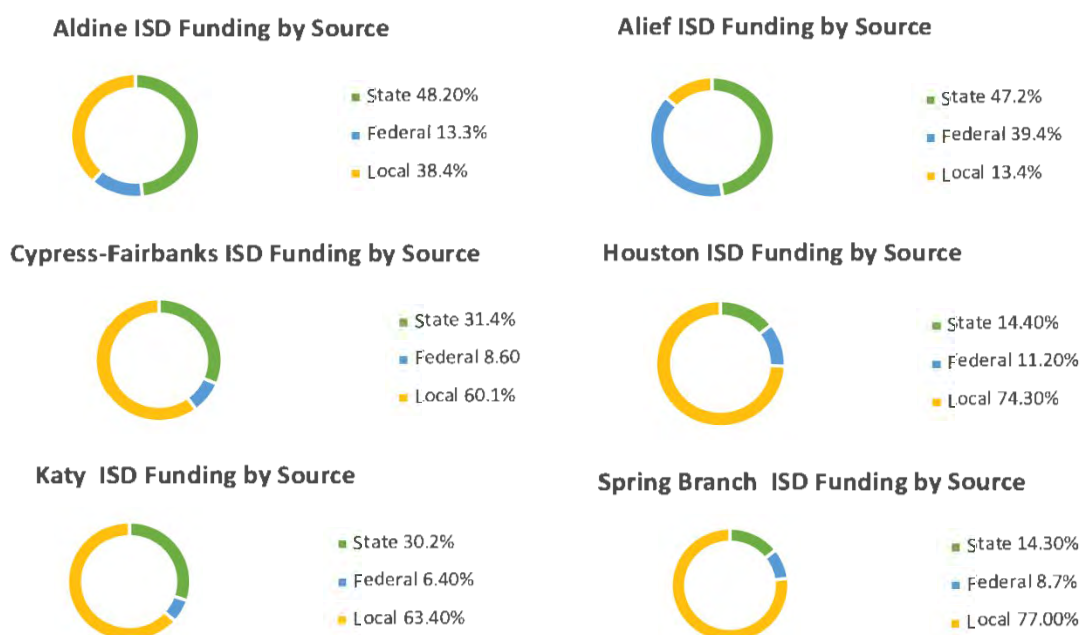


Texas' traditional public schools are funded by the number of students enrolled coupled with the average daily attendance (ADA) on individual campuses. In 2020, schools received a base allocation of \$6,160 per student enrolled each year with school operation at a minimum of 75,600 minutes for the school year (Lopez, 2022). With the rise in neighboring charter schools, the increased loss of students continues to impact the economic state of TPS tremendously. As emphasized, while the process for student allocation is the same for open-enrollment charter schools, the amount received per student is substantially less as charter schools do not receive local taxpayer dollars. In fact, charter schools receive on average anywhere between \$700- \$5,000 less per student than ISDs according to the Texas Public Charter Schools Association (TPCSA) (Texas

Public Charter Schools Association, n.d.). Figure 2.2 details funding allocations by source for the study's traditional public schools that are associated with the selected Houston-area charter schools.

Figure 2.2

ISDs in Houston with Charter Schools Associated with this Study: Funding by Source



Academic Comparison

Much like the rest of the United States in the early to mid-1900s, the state of Texas dealt with its share of inequities and inadequacies for people of color (de León & Calvert, 2020). As the world worked to overcome segregation and racial disparities, it took a Texas native and politician to provoke reform of the national educational inequalities. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, enacted by Congress and signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson, called for a landmark study concerning the lack of available educational opportunities for individuals of color (Mattison, 2020). President Johnson's

efforts led to the publishing of the Coleman Report of 1966, a report produced to describe the severe inequalities present in elementary and secondary educational institutions across the nation for disadvantaged learners and learners of color. The contents of the Coleman Report of 1966 ironically mirror the make-up of the 2023 educational system. When exploring ethnic and racial groups educated, the study revealed African American groups were the most segregated among minority groups especially in southern states, and Whites were the most segregated considering all racial groups (Coleman, 1966).

In the desegregation decision of 1954, the Supreme Court held the idea that separate schools were inherently unequal (National Archives and Records Administration, 2021). However, today American schools continue to remain largely unequal in many regions of the country especially where there resides a large African American population. In the formulation of academic comparisons of schools then and now and the impact of the charter school system, imagine the following:

The 1966 educational environment consisted of the student, the desk in which the student sits at for instruction, the peers that surround the student during instruction, and the teacher who stands in place at the front of the room for instruction. (Coleman, 1966, p. 8)

This 1966 description, too, depicts the 2023 educational environment. From the 1900s to present, public school education and the approach to public school education has not changed much. While the needs of students have varied over the years, the constant that has remained is teachers teaching in the front of the class while students sit with the hope of academic retention. Where innovation, creativity, and differentiation are needed,

research suggest it is not there. Thus, one can see the creation of the charter school system, a public school arena that supports the need for diversified educational opportunities to elicit success for all learners, especially to those who have historically lacked the necessities to excel.

In exploring how TPS and charter schools match up academically, studies show charter schools progressively lead in academic performance. One factor that impacts progressive academic achievement is the quality of instruction (Gardner & Miranda, 2001). Gardner and Miranda's (2001) research revealed in most inner-city schools, the pedagogy used tended to promote low rates of student achievement. Conversely, active student engagement has been found to improve the academic achievement of students which is highly seen in the charter school sector. As charter schools were initially developed to respond to the academic challenges faced in this nation's schools, charters have grown over the years to provide innovative learning experiences intently tailored to meet the community need (Taylor et al., 2010). With smaller than most enrollment and limited funding with more on the line, it is believed that charter schools achieve greater academic success because they operate a smaller and highly responsive system.

Given the increase in charter schools in Texas and across the state, it is essential to understand and evaluate the academic influence they have on education. The researcher intends to build upon what previous researchers have presented concerning student performance and achievement of charter schools, comparable to TPS through structural and systemic examination. For instance, Booker et al. (2004) found that charter schools improved student performance in reading and math while Gustafson (2012)

found that test scores of traditional public-school students declined over time. However, the same test scores for charter school students increased. Currently, the field is saturated with comparative charter school and TPS achievement data. The literature aimed to explore beyond the surface of data to identify how and what impacts favorable charter school achievement.

Charter School Systemic Structure

In identifying the steps that charter schools take to uphold academic and operational excellence with their students of color and at-risk learners, it is noteworthy to evaluate its systemic structure. For this research, *systemic structure* is communicated and implemented procedural processes that impact and affect the general behavior and functionality of the entire system. In the state of Texas, charter schools are public schools that operate under a charter, or a contract issued by a public entity such as a local school board or state board of education (Bulkley & Fisler, 2002). These schools operate how they desire in return for the production of strong performance results within the first few years of operation.

Charter school advocates identify the benefits of charter schools extend well beyond students in non-charter schools, mainly sharing they, too, support impacting traditional public-school offerings. Gawlick (2016) echoed such a study which highlighted charter schools' successes will serve traditional public schools' educational research and development efforts through developing and implementing innovative practices for consideration of adoption. Given the breadth of the current educational system, leaders must evaluate the systemic structures of its educational systems to

identify what works, as the sector currently operates as a 19th-century educational system that functions where students are taught to (Bolick, 2017). While the successes of charters are abundant, it is important to note that no two charters are the same. Even a network of charters, such as KIPP Public Schools, Harmony Public Schools, and YES Prep Public Schools, with multiple campuses, all have a unique set of defined and published goals and methods to implement and achieve their mission of student and academic success.

Since their beginning, charter schools have taken the lead in implementing bold systems that have erupted and impacted the educational system and delivered exceptional educational outcomes (Bolick, 2017). Such bold systems consistent among all public charter systems involve:

1. a clearly defined and communicated mission (Characteristics of Effective Charter Schools, 2019; Maranto & Shakeel, 2022);
2. student-focused and student-centered instruction and planning efforts (Characteristics of Effective Charter Schools, 2019; Turcotte et al., 2022);
3. high levels of parental involvement and engagement (Characteristics of Effective Charter Schools, 2019; Riel, 2022), and
4. equipping employees through building instructional and operational capacity (Nelson, 2017).

Charter school systems that serve large populations of at-risk learners and learners of color have very distinct characteristics that drive the intended success. While the schools may vary from the cultures and practices of traditional public schools, many have

achieved success and continue to achieve success. Among the campuses selected that yield academic success continuously there were commonalities in their systems. The researcher presents such commonalities in three categories: mission management, operations management, and stakeholder management.

Mission Management

Mission management is comprised of an organization led by a clearly defined and communicated mission. Of the over 150 public charter schools in the Houston area, each has a clearly defined mission statement that governs the accountable instructional work and expectations of students, staff, and its community stakeholders. The mission of an organization stands as a public declaration that defines the direction of the campus, drives the organization's decision-making, and stands as the purpose of the organization. Often, the mission statement of charter schools promotes high standards centered around achievement and academic excellence.

Personnel management for charter school success share what sets a charter school apart from the Independent School District (ISD) are their unique mission, vision, and values in all they do to meet a need not yet met in its respective community and its ability to not just have a mission but also manage a mission (Ball, 2020; Frumkin et al., 2011). This supports the creation of the goals. The mission communicates to the campus staff, student body, community, stakeholders, and supporters its purpose and direction. The mission is the criteria by which the organization measures its success and the foundation of its existence (Ball, 2020). The Center for School Change (2012) posed three crucial questions when developing and implementing a mission: (1) Whom do you seek to serve?

(2) What do you seek to accomplish? and (3) How will you proceed? In pursuit to answer these questions, charter schools define their educational approach, and in essence how students will learn and how others will support their learning.

A mission that is clearly communicated and agreed upon supports better opportunities for student organizational success. The creation and communication of such a statement is imperative for the sustainability and success of any public movement or organization depends in large measure on how well the public understands and supports the school's mission and goals (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2008). In a school setting, the goals of the organization most often center around student achievement and how to improve state standardized scores coupled with increasing teacher instructional efforts to complement the vision. The goals derived from the vision provide a showcase of the support for campus' vision and provide stakeholders with an understanding of what organizations want and expect their schools to become. Charter schools live by their mission and utilize the mission to drive the decision making and to monitor progress of goal attainment.

In thinking about how TPS settings can improve in their systemic structure, Ball (2020) highlighted the first step was to have a well-communicated mission that broadcasts the criteria for success for students, staff, and stakeholders. Additionally, any goals would complement the organization's mission. Amid creation, similar to charters, TPS must ensure the expectations set are clearly defined, and clearly communicated to all stakeholders. This supports shared accountability in each student's academic success.

Operations Management

Operations management is comprised of an organization that operates with three core deliverables: to deliver high quality educational opportunities that are student-centered, to ensure safety, and to provide intentional staff development opportunities to build the capacity of all that impact students and campus operational efforts. Charter schools have shown themselves to bring to education change, shift, and opportunities for children of color and at-risk students to thrive through student centered learning and an abundance of support through coaching and professional development. Just as the American economy and industries have changed, so too must systems and thinking regarding public education. Education Evolving (2018) asserted that if one truly wants to reform or “fix” the nation’s public education system so all students can be successful and have their unique needs met, then one must change the design of the system.

In response to the need, charter school systems have approached education with the consideration of students’ interests, learning styles, cultural identities, life experiences, and personal challenges, exercising learner agency (OECD, 2018). The design of education should consist of a system within the structure that not only positions all students for success but that is equitable and meets their unique needs. Thus, the need for a student-centered learning approach to educational decision-making.

On April 30, 1983, President Ronald Reagan addressed the nation professing, “Our education system, once the finest in the world, is in a sorry state of disrepair” (Kaput, 2018, p. 5).

His proclamation was in response to the discoveries published in the 1983 *A Nation at Risk* report, released by the President's National Commission on Excellence in Education. Through revolutionary research, researchers demonstrated that student-centered teaching strategies (such as tutoring, small-group learning, mastery-based learning, and individualized instruction) could positively help students (Barrett, 2018). Working to remedy decades of academic gaps and instructional deficits, selected Houston-area charter schools structure meeting the academic needs of its students through student-centered instructional and planning efforts for strategic support. In endeavoring upon revolutionized education, organizations should ensure the operations of the campus or organization supports the organizational outcomes to yield success. Campuses must have adequate personnel and processes in place to support a safe and functional operation. Without safety and functionality, learning cannot take place and leaders cannot ensure the implementation of processes.

Lastly, the final component to identifying systemically what yields academic success are the resources poured into teachers and staff to build their capacity to fulfill the expectations of their work. Selected Houston-area public charter schools share a commonality of embedding support for staff and providing expedient feedback and coaching to professionals to support a strong foundation for sound instruction and student achievement. To support specialized and focused learning, charter schools elicit frequent training and professional development opportunities implemented to build professional capacity tied to organizational outcomes (Harmony Public Schools 2022; KIPP Public Schools, 2022; Professional Development: YES Prep Houston-area, n.d.). Studies

indicate when teachers have strong knowledge of content and pedagogy and engage in continuous training opportunities, student learning increases as educators know classroom operational expectations (Lewis et al., 1999).

Selected Houston-area charter schools glean on the idea of on-going learning through supporting and collaborating for professional growth through a personalized and teacher driven design. Professional growth opportunities to support charter school professionals include an active learning environment that avails teachers the opportunity to plan for implementation with consistent leadership support. Such opportunities include but are not limited to opportunities for teachers within the same content grade level to work together, in horizontal alignment, opportunities for departmental teachers, in vertical alignment, to collaborate on prerequisite skills and thinking, teachers participating in school wide cross curricular integration, and pacing supports for lesson development and implementation that considers the complexity of the skills being conveyed and includes follow up coaching or administrative instructional coaching (Hammer, 2013). To that end, one must ensure intentional investment in personnel to support the desired outcomes established and communicated in the mission. There is an interconnectedness among the whole operation.

So, in approaching operational reform systems, TPS settings included, leaders and stakeholders should think longitudinally about the impact of availing professional development opportunities. This includes preservice as well as ongoing capacity building opportunities throughout the year to support new learning opportunities as well as strengthening deficits and proficient work to uphold continued progressive progress.

Such opportunities should always center around the mission and intended goal of the organization to support the outcomes.

Stakeholder Management

Sawchuk (2011) explained, teacher home visits are based on a commonsense idea that parents are more likely to be engaged in their son's or daughter's progress through school if they feel that they have a real partner. Thus, an additional factor of success among educational systems is the level of parental and community support toward student educational opportunities and success (Gardner & Miranda, 2001). As charter schools operate as schools of choice, there exists a unique level of parental involvement that parents and guardians are afforded. While TPS settings desire parental involvement at all levels, charter schools emphasize, require, and expect it (Riel, 2022). In hindsight, all parents voice a desire to have their children succeed in school whether exemplified physically or in a more subtle manner. Similarly, urban parents and parents of students of color and at-risk students, like their suburban counterparts, want to see their children thrive successfully in school.

What charter schools have found is consistent parental involvement in a child's education is a positive predictor of academic success. However, in low economic TPS communities, parents are often nonparticipants. As educators and leaders, one must reach out to parents with a clear message that encourages parental participation as an essential role of the educational process. Additionally, not only are parents important in the role of educational and academic success, but the support of the community also plays an important role in the success or failures of its children (Gardner & Miranda, 2001).

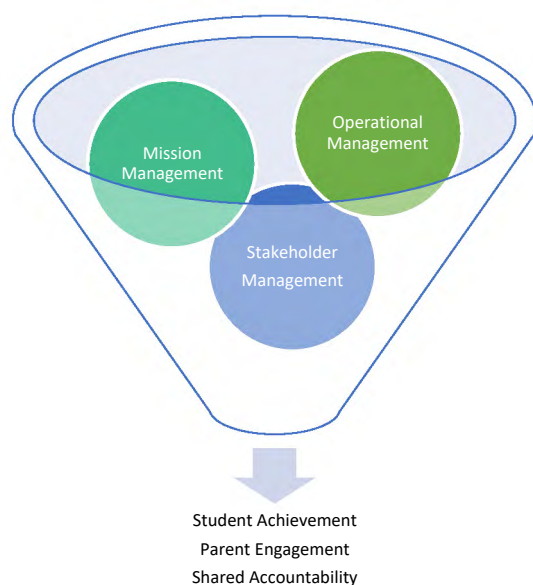
To support systems and accountability, charter schools stress and expect shared parental accountability and visibility (Montefillteo et al., 2017). From first glance on charter school websites, parental involvement is noticeably a major aspect of the schools' goals and operation. Charters can set requirements for involvement prior to and during student enrollment while in K-12 traditional public schools' parental involvement is often strongly encouraged. Riel (2022) alludes that this requirement of parental involvement and active engagement is what aids in the academic success and plays an integral part in the systemic development and the focus on the learning process from kindergarten to graduation.

Through intentional parental involvement, births shared accountability in the learning process and success of the student. Shared accountability invites all stakeholders to *have a seat at the table*. Among scholars and policymakers, there is a consensus that parent engagement, the working together of parents and school staff to support and improve student learning, development, and health strongly related to a host of educational and social outcomes (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018). As research reveals, parent involvement is thought to benefit students by enabling a more sophisticated coordination between parents and teachers, drawing parents into the life of the school, and giving parents and teachers more accountable power to monitor student well-being and learning (Oberfield, 2020). Educational leaders need to identify ways to implement the strategy to support intended outcomes. In doing such, all stakeholders are equally held accountable for monitoring and improving achievement. And as the goal of TPS settings, like charter schools, is to ensure students matriculate towards diplomacy, if

active parental involvement plays a key role in the success of our schools, all organizations, TPS or charter, should work to ensure this is a priority in the operation. Figure 2.3 summarizes student success through a filtered systemic structure. Together, each component yields increased student achievement, shared accountability, and parent engagement, which impacts student academic success.

Figure 2.3

TPS Filtration of Success: Systemic Management Model



Charter School Organizational Structure

Just as much as the systemic structure is important in identifying the steps that charter schools take to ensure academic and operation excellence to support TPS reform, it is noteworthy to evaluate its organizational structure. For this research, the researcher defined *organizational structure* as a structural process that outlines the workflow or hierarchical structure of the organization. In collaboration with others, professor and

researcher Mark Berends (2010), Director of the Center for Research on Educational Opportunity, and the National Center on School Choice focused research on how school organization is related to student achievement specifically for disadvantaged students. Berends' (2010) research supported the analysis and analytical approach to the context surrounding schools and the role those concepts play in the organizational policy implemented to support the academic success of its disadvantaged students. Charter schools, like TPS, have their own organizational flow that governs and directs the managerial chain of command for student and staff success.

In an ISD, employees must hold a bachelor's degree and the state required certification to serve in the employed role. ISDs are made up of campus and district level professionals. At the campus level there are paraprofessionals and support staff who assist teachers or aide in the day-to-day operational flow, teachers, who report to assistant principals or associate principals, assistant principals or associate principals, who in turn report to the building principal, and a building principal, who reports to the area/assistant superintendent or superintendent. At the district level, the school board members are who set all the guiding principles for the schools within the ISD. It is through the leadership of the Board Members that decisions are made and carried out.

The board members oversee the work of the district through the supervision of the superintendent. The superintendent oversees the work of the varied assistant superintendents. The superintendent of schools oversees the work of its assigned campuses working closely with principals as their direct supervisor. Leaders serving at the campus or district level, too, in the state of Texas must hold a valid teaching

certification, a graduate degree, and in many positions hold an appropriate mid-management certification in leadership.

Position management expectations differ greatly in charter school organizations. Like ISDs, charter organizations are made up of campus and district or organizational level professionals. Charter schools, like TPS, have teachers and operational personnel. To serve as a teacher in a Texas charter school, like at a TPS, teachers must hold a bachelor's degree, at minimum, but are not required to hold a teaching certificate. According to the Texas Classroom Teachers Association (TCTA), Texas state law does not require charter schoolteachers and administrators to hold a certification unless they are supporting special programs student such as special education students (Charter Schools, 2022).

Who the teacher reports to differs by the charter management organization (CMO). Some CMOs reference the supervisor of teachers as assistant principals. While in other organizations they are deans or directors. No matter the name, the intended outcome remains the same, to support operational and academic success and uphold accountability.

Outside of the schools lie the operational leaders. Charter school operational leaders consist of a chief executive officer (CEO) which is likened to the TPS superintendent role. They also have other district leadership roles such as the chief program officer, chief advancement officer, chief talent officer, chief financial officer, chief of staff, and chief school's officer. Like TPSs' varied assistant superintendent roles,

each individual chief has a role tied to academic and operational success and accountability expectations.

To hold a position in leadership, individuals must have taught for a minimum of two to five years. The time of service varies by organization. A graduate level degree while preferred is not required. CMOs also have a board of directors. Often, the organization has a local board of directors within the city the charter is located, and a cluster of board of directors that govern the state's schools. Comparable to a TPS system's board, the charter board's work entails the development of goals, policies, and setting expectations to support fulfilling the mission of its schools that support academic success.

As one may observe, within a charter school system, the degree held, prior training received, or experience held is not as important as the desire to work and support students and families who yearn for sound educational opportunities for their students. The existence and welcoming of underprepared or inexperienced teachers in charter schools highlights the educational need to hire professionals with a fresh outlook and unique passion to support learning and the need for strong professional development opportunities within the nation's public schools. As a result, such caliber of professionals impacts teacher professional development programming. Gains in student learning that result from effective, streamlined professional development processes have been studied over the past few decades in traditional public schools and most recently among charter school campuses to support the work needed to produce equitable instructional efforts. Given results from past studies, reports confirm that high quality

professional development does have a significant impact on student achievement (Kimbrel, 2018).

Charter School Impact on Public Schools

Nearly four decades after *A Nation at Risk* publicized the imperative demand for educational reform, many would argue the United States remains a nation at risk. As a result, the educational sectors need to become a nation in action- one that makes up for the lack of progress made in previous educational efforts amidst the many reforms produced and strategized to support educational efforts. In 2008, 25 years after the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, the Bush administration reflected on how far the United States educational system had come, and the challenges that remained. As additional reform efforts took place, such as the No Child Left Behind Act, the nation's researchers realized the standards and accountabilities enacted provided in-depth insight into the weaknesses of public schools. This assessment revealed the need to adopt more rigorous and measurable standards with higher expectations to support positive and progressive academic performance. Among the concerns of academic improvement was the need to identify how the educational system developed leaders to support and run a high performing educational system.

As individuals reflected on the United States as a nation at risk and now a nation to be held accountable, one sees that effort and immediate changes is needed among school districts and across states to ensure improved teaching and educational leadership outcomes. Researchers now see school districts in states making efforts to achieve equity and excellence through standards and accountability but with the minimal idea of what

they need to do and the prescriptions to be implemented to support remedying wide achievement gaps that impact campuses and districts.

A Nation Accountable shares that America transformed itself from a nation at risk of complacency to an accountable nation at work on its educational weaknesses. Today, the educational sector still sees that work in action, however, more prevalent in charter schools rather traditional public schools. Data reveals educational quality occurs in charter schools; thus, the need to identify what educational quality in charter schools looks like and how to emulate those efforts in traditional public schools in the most effective way to reach all students.

Application to Improving Traditional Public School Student Achievement

A school or organization that is focused on student learning and achievement includes characteristics that highlight maximizing instructional time and normalizing a culture that focuses on high expectations for learning. As research expands to distinguish between schools of choice in charter schools and their effectiveness, it is important to identify what establishes them as effective. Research posits that for charter schools to yield such high student achievement there are critical components that support effective systemic and organizational structures to yield successful outcomes.

In identifying whether charter schools have increased overall student achievement, researchers have revealed common characteristics that impact student achievement and how such characteristics, if considered, can improve traditional public school student achievement as well. The first step in identifying the characteristics that support success in student achievement is evaluating the definition of success. Bulkley

and Fislser (2002) provided information that highlighted charter schools and their board of trustees play a critical role in ensuring that students are governed in a manner where learning and achievement yields academic success. Success for this research is defined as:

- ensuring all students have the equitable access to high quality resources services and supports that allow them to set goals for their learning as well as reach the goals that they have defined learning (Ball, 2020; Leaders Building Leaders, 2019)
- showing consistent and progressive growth toward academic and instructional goals to support future endeavors to add to their community and society (Ball, 2020; Booker et al., 2008)
- progressing and passing state exams as well as Advanced Placement exams if applicable to show mastery (Eden, 2020)
- yielding gains that are long-lasting (Finn et al., 2000).

In an effective school, research supports there is a clearly defined and articulated school mission and vision. In doing such, the mission and vision have clear instructional and operational goals that focus on achievement for all but specifically at-risk students and students of color. Additionally effective school systems ensure a climate of positive high expectations in which professionals, community members, and parents expect students to perform and achieve at a high academic level. This can only take place through a student-focused curriculum and a campus wide student focus on instruction and academic achievement. Research supports the notion that in successful schools all

stakeholders have high expectations and see themselves as key players who empower students to succeed. Further, there lies an expectation where progress is monitored and measured frequently among students and staff based campus and grade level or departmental goals.

Further, successful schools have a strong focus centered on the delivery of curriculum, the organization of curriculum, and in supporting teachers with opportunities for continued development. It is imperative to ensure teachers are equipped to support the diverse group of learners they will serve. In these settings, teachers are allowed to go or are sent to training to support both their deficits, or the target area of the campus based on the overall mission and goals for the organization or institution. Additionally, effective schools' partner with parents to ensure parents understand and support the mission of the school and are involved in the success of the school community. Parents in successful schools demonstrate pride and support in the work and development of the schools' and students' success. They also have high expectations for their children. As a result, there is involvement in their day-to-day academics, homework, and overall accountability.

Research suggests, when parents and students choose to enroll or consider enrolling their students in a charter school, the family and student are displaying an intrinsic level of motivation and a potentially higher value placed on education and educational opportunities than families and students who do not enroll and consider staying in traditional public schools. The call of this research is to ensure that traditional public schools are the first choice and by choosing to enroll in the neighborhood school that follows the feeder pattern, students and their families are demonstrating community

value for education and instruction that builds from previous educational encounters and experiences.

How Does this Support TPS?

Cohodes' (2018) research suggested that through the successful expansion of charter schools, traditional public schools (TPS) can adopt practices of charter schools to make large academic gains also. To ensure meaningful academic and instructional achievement impact among at-risk students and students of colors, organizational and structural approaches of charter schools would need to be adopted beyond the charter school sector (Cohodes, 2018). While the presence of charter schools has provoked competition in instructional efforts, the competition has played a vital role for researchers in discovering the needs of TPS. Such needs have revealed what TPS need to consider examining with the excellence of charter school systems for adoption. Such complements the aim of this research, which is to provide insight that will allow TPS to run their academic programs like charter schools and increase consistent, mirroring success.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher presents the design and methodology used to further research using a constructivist grounded theory method to add value to the public-school educational sector. This qualitative constructivist grounded theory study utilized a case study approach to reveal to the educational audience the systemic and organizational characteristics of effective charter schools as expressed by active teachers, leaders, and community stakeholders in the charter school system. Such characteristics will provide what the present research lacks: essential intuition for traditional public schools (TPS) that impacts structural academic success. This chapter provide an overview of the philosophical orientation and rationale for the qualitative exploration and outlines critical characteristics of the constructivist grounded theory research paradigm, including sampling, data collection, data analysis, and rationale of the study.

As presented in Chapter I, TPS and the educational sector have experienced challenges sustaining academic progress and growth among its at-risk students and students of color (Betts, 2009; Eden, 2020). Charter schools, magnet schools, private schools, religious-based schools, and home schools thus created new competition for traditional public schools. Enrollment in Texas' public schools continues to decline, while private, charter, and home schools are experiencing an increase in their student enrollment (Barden & Lassmann, 2016; Meckler, 2022;). Subsequently, parents of at-risk students and students of color have increased concerns with the TPS sector's ability to

adequately support the educational outcomes of this group of learners (Plank, 2005). The influx of charter school systems in many neighborhoods of color has resulted from the vocal academic concerns of community members whose students attend school in the TPS setting. Such schools impact neighborhood TPS enrollment and their economic stature since students withdraw from TPSs and enroll in charter schools of choice, enrollment, funding, and representation drop among TPS campuses (Bloomberg, 2022).

It is important to note that this constructivist grounded theory research aimed not to discredit the work of charter schools or highlight any negative impacts on TPS because of increased charter school enrollment. Further, the contents of this research is not to present information in a manner that sways families, parents, and students away from the pursuit of educational choice. Instead, this research aimed to solve deficit areas of academic success among TPS using proven researched tactics to support at-risk learners and learners of color through the revelation of the work and successes of selected Houston-area charter schools.

This chapter describes the study's research methodology and includes insight into the following areas: (a) the researcher's positionality, (b) the rationale for the research approach, (c) an overview of the research design, (d) a description of the research sample, (e) description of the research setting (f) overview of instruments and measures used within the study, (g) methods of data collection, (h) analysis and synthesis of data, (i) ethical considerations, and (j) limitations of the study. The chapter culminates with a brief concluding summary.

Researcher Positionality

The initial reasoning for research on identifying effective characteristics of charter schools stemmed during the researcher's second year serving as a curator of professional development in their employment district. As the researcher and team reflected on the end-of-year growth and regression to plan for upcoming professional development based on campus and district needs, district data revealed an increased presence of public charter schools entering the school district's neighborhoods. Such public-school charters impacted traditional public-school enrollment and, subsequently, staffing.

With the construction of these specialized schools, local families began to withdraw their students from our schools into the neighboring public charter schools to obtain what they and their students were missing in their zoned traditional public school. The common need was the consistent academic progression that yielded promising outcomes for each student, particularly children of color.

For the work of the researcher, this meant identifying techniques to strengthen professional learning to equip and empower teachers to assist the district's learners academically, socially, and beyond. Amidst completing the professional work, the researcher continued to hold lingering ideas that unremittingly surfaced. These ideas ignited the researcher's posit in deeply evaluating what is unequivocally different concerning the operation of public charters that attracts TPS enrollees. Having an educational journey that began in a private school and later magnet schools, the researcher held an immediate conception of what differed that continues to impede the consistent success of traditional public-school organizations. So, the role of this

qualitative research was to approach research with inquiry and inductively develop theory. This work, thus, extends the researcher's initial wonderings to formally support means to examine public charters to support and reinvent traditional public schools as the school of choice (Creswell, 2013).

Methodology Rationale

This section describes the qualitative research design and the rationale for using the constructivist grounded theory approach. A significant consideration in identifying qualitative research is selecting a methodological design that will (a) answer the research questions, (b) align with the philosophical values and intent of the proposed research, and (c) align with the personal beliefs, values, and goals of educational research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Initially developed by Glasser and Strauss (1967), researchers often approach grounded theory as a methodology that helps researchers understand psychological and social processes. The purpose of grounded theory is not to test theory but to develop theory inductively and to generate a theory that emerges from the derived data (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). The grounded theory method is appropriate when there lies no existing theory on the topic of study or the theories that exist are incomplete, or a different data set is used to derive conclusive information. The objective of grounded theory is to explain the data through a discovery process of constant comparative analysis and not a process that researchers force. Instead of starting with a theory and proving it, its purpose lies in discovering theory from the data examined and analyzed.

Research Design

Constructivist Grounded Theory Approach

Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) presented qualitative research as information that is interesting, relevant, feasible, and worthy of one's time. Tracy (2010) similarly expressed qualitative research as information that is relevant, timely, significant, interesting, or evocative information. Thus, to ensure work that illustrates the thoughts of Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) and Tracy (2010), the researcher utilized constructivist grounded theory techniques developed by Charmaz (2006) to generate a model depicting the systemic and organizational structure of selected Houston-area charter schools that impact overall academic success.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) originally defined *grounded theory* as a methodology for building theory from data. Creswell (2013) revealed that grounded theory is appropriate for studies where exploration of the topic is required, there is no theory to explain the phenomenon, there is a benefit to the study of the phenomenon in a natural setting, and there is a need for a detailed view of the topic. The constructivist grounded theory (CGT) emphasizes concepts constructed, not discovered, through a desire to know more about a substantive area without preconceived questions prior to the study.

Further, Charmaz (2006) detailed that constructivist grounded theory is necessary when the researcher prioritizes the phenomena of study and sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants and other data sources. In this area, the constructivist grounded theory model supports what the educational sector is missing. This type of research involves creating questions and

procedures to elicit information and opinions from a selected group of people as it relates to a specific problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher aimed to produce functional research outcomes through communicative efforts and in-depth conversations regarding the subjects and the impact of the information the subjects provided.

Qualitative research encompasses the inductive and deductive organization of themes from all participants to construct meaningful implementation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As a result, the data collection and qualitative sources from this research include observations, interviews, surveys, written documents or primary text, and sources from the selected participants.

History of Grounded Theory

Grounded theory (GT), proposed in 1967 by Glaser and Strauss, emerged as a new approach to qualitative research that embodies “the discovery of theory from data—systematically obtained and analyzed” (p. 1). As time progressed and Glaser and Strauss continued their work, others began to use their grounded theory methodology, expanding GT research into fields beyond the initial study of sociology. Cooney (2010) unveiled that working with others to define research interests, Glaser and Strauss later split over ideological differences on what is now classic grounded theory. The split led to the deepening of theoretical viewpoints from both Glaser and Strauss regarding their approach to the grounded theory model and data analysis. While apart, Strauss collaborated with Corbin to develop a framework conducting grounded theory research as a philosophical and symbolic interaction.

Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT). Influenced by Glaser and Strauss' approach to developing theories from research grounded in data rather than deducing tested hypotheses from existing theories, Charmaz (2006) formed the constructivist grounded theory (CGT). Grounded theory, birthed by Glaser and Strauss, is a research design aimed at building theory through data. The CGT adds the idea of generating new theories through inductive analysis of the data gathered from participants rather than from pre-existing theoretical frameworks (Chun et al., 2019). Further, Chun et al. (2019) explained that in such an approach to data, the researcher intends to explain a process that supports a phenomenon and seeks to explain it fully to those who perceive and experience it. The use of constructivist grounded theory to conduct research focused on lived experiences from participants once associated with the traditional public school and now associated with the charter school setting, exploring academic successes in relation to systemic and organizational structures could help spark theoretical insights regarding the value charter schools have on educational research and educational practices relative to educational reform.

Hence, grounded theory serves as an appropriate methodological approach, as little relevant research supports the systemic and organizational development that explicates the success of charter schools. The detailed exploration and understanding of the constructivist grounded theory provide significant revelations of charter schools and traditional public schools, as supported by the literature review. Specific techniques of grounded theory research, as specified by theorists Corbin and Strauss, are presented in this research as they apply to the present study. Additionally, the researcher describes

question protocols outlined by Charmaz (2006) and Creswell (2013) as they offer additional structure and guidance for the novice researcher.

Within this constructivist grounded theory approach, a case study is the most suitable method to approach data collection. Case studies allow for depth in understanding and interpretation through lived and explored experiences of all those involved and impacted (Crowe et al., 2011). This CGT approach worked to learn what occurred in the research setting, revealing the research participants' instructional experiences that supported the notion of academic success among selected Houston-area charter schools. Additively, this research approach sought to understand better the systemic and organizational characteristics that support successful charter school systems and how traditional public schools can emulate such characteristics to achieve academic success in the TPS setting. As a result, the researcher used the data collected for this constructivist grounded theory study immediately and in the future by availing theoretical concepts to school and district leaders to support the reformation of systemic and organizational approaches to increase academic, systemic, and organizational achievement in TPS. The constructivist grounded theory approach based on the nature of the research question and the available literature is most appropriate. This type of study:

1. acknowledged that knowing and learning are embedded in the social and lived experiences constructed and shaped around rigorous methodologies through a researcher who is grounded in the context of the study and
2. presented itself as distinctive from other forms of research as the conceptual characteristics will come from the data collected during the research procedure.

A constructivist grounded theory approach is well suited to exploring student perceptions because of its appreciation for and attention to the data. The reliance upon an intensely inductive approach to data assures that the perceptions and experiences of teachers, leaders, and parents will be valued highly.

Research Questions

To support the intent of this work, the study hinged upon the research questions listed below.

1. How does the structure of the organization impact consistent academic achievement?
2. What communicated and implemented systems attribute to the consistent academic achievement of the organization?
3. How does the communicated and implemented systems attribute to the consistent academic achievement of the organization?

Research Setting

This study took place among Texas' top rated charter schools. Of the schools provided in Appendix G, the top rated selected for the study were KIPP Public Schools, Harmony Public Schools, and YES Prep Public Schools all of which are located in the Houston-area. The National Charter School Resource Center outlines there are 927 (89 of which are in Houston) charter schools in Texas. Of the abundance of charter schools in the state, this study focused on three: KIPP Texas, Harmony Public Schools, and YES Prep Public Schools. The campuses selected for this study were considered for two specific reasons:

1. they are the top-rated campuses in the state for academic excellence, and
2. they are in the Houston metropolitan area.

The selection of campuses in Houston played an essential role in this study as Houston is not only the fourth most populous city in the United States, but Houston is the largest city in the state, posturing itself to hold an extensive amount of background on the topics of study and statistical data to support the work that impacts the academic success in charter schools to mimic those in the traditional public school setting (World Population Review, 2022).

KIPP Texas schools were the first public charter in the state of Texas. Chartered in Houston, Texas, KIPP Public Schools have been around for over 25 years and now serve over 30,000 students in the state and over 175,000 nationwide among nearly 300 schools in 21 states (2021). Founded on educating students nationwide, KIPP, which stands for Knowledge is Power Program, is an institution that began in 1994 as a fifth-grade college preparatory program at Garcia Elementary School in Houston, Texas, a campus that continues to advocate and highlight achievement and personalized learning. KIPP's originating Houston campus (KIPP Academy) governs itself by focusing on appreciation, patience, humility, standing up for justice, and doing the right thing. Today, KIPP Houston, the largest Texas KIPP network, and serves over 16,000 students in the city among its 34 tuition-free PK-12 schools.

Harmony Public Schools opened its first school in 2000 in Houston, Texas. Today, Harmony Public School prides itself as the largest charter management organization (CMO) in Texas, with 60 campuses serving over 34,000 kindergarten

through 12-grade students (Harmony Public Schools, 2020). Founded in Houston, their administrative building, likened to a traditional school district's central office, is still in the Houston area. Harmony Public Schools educational mission supports the deficit area of economically disadvantaged students in content areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). Since its beginning in 2000, Harmony has yielded a record of success. Specifically, in 2011 the Texas Education Agency (TEA) rated 21 of the 33 Harmony schools as "Exemplary" or "Recognized." The remaining campuses were deemed "Acceptable."

Additionally, in 2016, Harmony Public Schools received notable highlights as *every* Harmony campus passed or exceeded the state's academic standards. Further, six of its campuses earned all seven available academic distinctions, and two of its districts earned the postsecondary readiness distinction (Texas Public Education Information Resource, 2016). Today, Harmony is known for producing highly equipped college-ready T-STEM (Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) students.

YES Prep Public Schools, like KIPP Texas and Harmony Public Schools, is an open-enrollment public charter school system. YES Prep Public Schools serves students in grades 6-12 in underserved Houston communities. Since its beginning in 1995 at Rusk Elementary School, located in Houston Independent School District, introduced as Project YES, YES Prep, which stands for Youth Engaged in Service, has committed itself to championing all Houston students to succeed in college and to pursue lives of opportunity (YES Prep Public Schools, n.d). YES Prep prides itself on being the highest

performing public school system in the city of Houston. As of the 2021-2022 school year, YES Prep operated 23 schools in the Houston area.

Conducting the study with participants from the charter school systems provided immense value in the data collection process. The data profited from opportunities to note facial expressions, inflection and intonations, any observable uncertainty and explored social interactions within their everyday context. Approaching the research participants by establishing comfort assisted the researcher in one's ability to dig deep in revealing the complexities of their systemic and organizational success.

Research Population and Sample

This grounded theory approach to qualitative research actively examined participants in the field where instructional experiences occurred. Creswell (2018) shared that in such an approach where the researcher is the key instrument, data collection takes place through data examination, observations, and interviewing participants or professional staff.

Study Participants

As such, the researcher sought to locate teachers, leaders, and parents of students at Houston-area KIPP Public Schools, Harmony Public Schools, and YES Prep Public Schools. The criteria of participants were those that were once attendees, professionals, or stakeholders of traditional public schools and now serve or support these charter schools through survey distribution.

Once the researcher received IRB approval, the researcher sought information on the study participants. This approach intended to seek adequate insight into the systemic and

organizational functions that may impact the successes of these charter school systems. To achieve this, the researcher identified nine individuals for participation. The criteria for the selection of participants were as follows:

- Participants were a former TPS teacher now serving as a KIPP Public Schools, Harmony Public Schools, or YES Prep Public Schools content teacher for two years or more consecutively at the same campus.
- Participants were a former TPS administrator now serving as a KIPP Public Schools, Harmony Public Schools, or YES Prep Public Schools administrator for two years or more consecutively at the same campus.
- Participants were former TPS Parent now serving as a KIPP Public Schools, Harmony Public Schools, or YES Prep Public Schools parent of two years or more consecutively at the same campus.

In constructing a theory of how charter schools achieved consistent academic and institutional success through a succinctly defined systemic and organizational structure, the researcher desired to study organizations with exceptionally consistent high-performance indicators. In including a myriad of participants, the researcher wanted each to understand that they are more than a study as they played an integral role in constructing new theories about education and the successes campuses yield. The nature of constructivist grounded theory was participant centered. In conducting the study in an environment familiar to the participants, the hope was to satisfy the goal of rapport and trust among interviewees to engage in concertation about conceptual categories rather than a question-and-answer session.

The total number of participants the researcher desired for this work was nine, not to exceed 12. To achieve this, the researcher identified participants by sending out an all-call via the GroupMe platform. The platform housed over 800 Houston-area educators, some of which were likely to meet the researcher's criteria of study. After Houston-area educators responded, the researcher requested their email to send them the recruitment email (see Appendix A) to participate in this study or suggest appropriate individuals for the intended study. Following acceptance, participants received a participant survey (see Appendix B) which requested school demographic and contact information. The researcher collected this information using a Google Form. The researcher ensured each participant received a copy of the informed consent document (see Appendix C). The researcher collected signatures from each participant and provided them with the Interview Protocol (see Appendix F) to review before conducting the interview.

Research Approvals

The researcher applied to Prairie View A&M University's Institutional Review Board for approval of the human subject's research before the study began via email at researchcompliance@pvamu.edu to conduct the study. The researcher applied in February 2023 for approval and began the study in March 2023.

Data Collection

The primary technique for this study used a semi-structured interview protocol. The goal of interviewing was to gather statements about lived experiences from each participant, how those experiences impacted them, the students, and how those experiences shaped the institution's overall success through student outcomes. In this

approach to interviewing, the protocol guided the interview but did not limit participant responses or follow a predetermined coding scheme as a structured interview protocol might (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 1998). Researchers Corbin and Strauss (2008) shared that the preferred interview protocol for a grounded theory is unstructured. Unstructured interviews allow the researcher opportunity in the exploration to explore the emergence of themes in the data derived from interviews and unpacking interview transcripts. However, as the researcher is a novice, and the study required IRB approval, a semi-structured interview protocol was the most suitable avenue for data collection.

The researcher did not use any district's data that was not accessible online. Therefore, IRB approval was not needed for Houston-area school districts. The researcher, however, sought IRB approval to support the interview process. Once approved, the researcher disseminated a prescreening survey to teachers, administrators, and parents of former TPS students currently supporting KIPP Public Schools, Harmony Public Schools, or YES Prep Public Schools. Following the pre-screener, the researcher selected a case study of participants for interviews.

Data from interviews and relevant policy documents were analyzed using the comparative analysis essential in constructivist grounded theory. This approach to qualitative data collection examined data actively in the field where participants experience instruction. Interviews in a constructivist grounded theory methodological approach allowed the researcher to connect personally with the research participants in their settings. Collecting data for research on participant experiences the condition studied will allow a better understanding of the meaning (Creswell, 2013).

Interview Protocol

To collect the necessary information, Creswell (2013) suggested that the researcher develop an interview protocol to record the data. Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) shared interviews elicit rich, thick descriptions. Marshall and Rossman (2016) stated that a major benefit of collecting data through individual, in-depth interviews is that they offer the potential to capture participants' perspectives of an event or experience. It is also imperative to expect the unexpected. In developing an interview protocol, the researcher meets the need to anticipate field issues that may result from inadequate data collection, lost information, or early departure from the data collection site or interview session. The use of a semi structured interview facilitated a more focused exploration of the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

In addition to data the researcher collected from the prescreening survey and demographic form described above the researcher conducted a semi-structured, open-ended interview with each participant once, between 45-60 minutes in duration. Once participants submitted demographic information, that is, self-identified race/ethnicity, age, gender, length served at the organization, and contact information, the researcher reviewed the submissions to determine eligibility for participation. Once participants were determined, the researcher contacted the participants to request their signature for the IRB informed consent form (see Appendix C) and provided three preferred dates and times to schedule interviews. After scheduling a time for the interview, the researcher invited participants to participate in a semi-unstructured interview by sending them a request to the Google Meet online conference system with audio recording. Suppose

participants did not qualify for the study during the screening survey. In that case, an email message indicated that they did not qualify for the study and thanked them for their desire to participate.

The researcher recorded each interview for notetaking and transcription purposes. If there was a need for additional follow-up interviews, the researcher generated questions from the analysis of the initial interview transcript. Follow-up interviews were planned to not exceed 30 minutes. If the interview required additional clarification for the study, email correspondence took place at the request of the participants. Other data collection efforts included reviews of participants' files or notes (if allowed), teacher and campus notes, and data on operational and student success that will better inform the study.

Following the interview, the researcher transcribed the interview to support immediate data analysis. The researcher used the transcription services of Otter.ai to transcribe the interviews. Once the researcher obtained the transcriptions, the researcher reviewed them for accuracy, masked identifiable information for participants' anonymity and sent transcriptions to each participant for review before analysis. The participants had five days to respond with feedback.

Data Analysis

As a grounded researcher moved through their study, Glaser and Strauss (1999) promoted theoretical sampling to elaborate and refine categories of data. They explained theoretical sampling as, "the data collection process for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes data and decides what data to collect next and

where to find them to develop his theory as it emerges” (p.17). The researcher transcribed the interviews immediately after the data collection, and data analysis began shortly after collection. Data analysis in research aims to bring meaning and purpose to the researcher’s data or information. Thus, the researcher gathered all the qualitative data to support the research approach.

Coding

The coding process is essential to any form of grounded theory (Glaser, 1978). Coding takes on varied approaching considering the grounded theory approach. Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) shared researchers need a systemic procedure for finding, defining, and coding themes. Coding is a system of classification. In a constructivist grounded theory (CGT) approach, the researcher explored initial focused and axial coding. To do this, Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) suggested developing a systemic and manageable system of classification.

Charmaz (2014) highlighted the use of initial coding by identifying actions and processes line-by-line to analyze collected data. Charmaz (2014) explicated the use of gerunds to look at what is happening in the data. In alignment with the characteristics of classic grounded theory research, Glaser (1978), too, postured researchers to reflect on what is happening by tracing out processes and exploring such processes in an analytics sense. This process notes what is of interest or significance, identifying different data segments, and labeling them to organize the information found in the data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Charmaz (2006) further denoted that people’s actions help create research structures. In doing such, one has methods that explicitly guided what

processes were an issue in a particular setting and how to handle those processes in an analytical setting.

Charmaz (2006) presented coding as two main phases of segmenting data to categorize and summarize each entity of the data explicitly collected. Initial coding or “open coding” is the first step of the coding process that involves deconstructing qualitative data into defined phrases to create codes for data labeling and analysis. In grounded theory, this is referenced as in vivo coding. This coding process can only occur after the creation of interview transcripts, which allowed the researcher to conceptualize the data wholly. The researcher engaged in initial coding by creating anchor codes. Anchor coding consisted of defining the main concepts into categories as depicted in the research question and purpose of the study from the interview transcripts.

Following the creation of the anchor codes, the researcher analyzed and sorted the data using focused coding. Focused coding views participant data as evidence, allowing the researcher to separate, sort, and synthesize large amounts of data (Charmaz, 2006). With this approach to data analysis, the researcher examined the data more intently. Through data examination, claims were made that develop into thematic phrases.

Based on the researcher’s review of the literature and review of prior studies relevant to the topic of study, along with interview transcript data, the following key thematic codes were generated regarding the loved experiences relative to the organizational and systemic structure of selected charter school systems.

Table 3.1

Thematic Codes

Academic achievement	Quality of education	Expectation	Success	Difference	Smaller environment
Family	Communication	Structure	Shared accountability	Growth	Support
Intentional	Planning	Invested	Informed	Core values	Consistency

These codes will develop the meaning and actions in the synthesis of the data.

Ethical Considerations

Quality measures

Guba (1981) and Guba and Lincoln (1982, 1985) were among the first theorists to develop a specific criterion for qualitative research and the matter of trustworthiness. According to Guba and Lincoln (1982), each paradigm requires specific criteria to determine the veracity, or truthfulness of the research. Later Lincoln and Guba (1985) redefined these criteria as “credibility”, “transferability,” and “dependability.” Guba and Lincoln subsequently formulated several procedures aimed to increase the credibility of qualitative research. To ensure quality of research the researcher to employed credible, transferable, and dependable procedures.

To ensure credibility, the researcher self-reflected on any biases that may be brought to the study, triangulated by using multiple methods to corroborate evidence obtained, and use peer editing to enhance the accuracy of field notes collected (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). As the goal of qualitative research is not to produce “truths” that can be generalized to other people or settings but to develop descriptive context-relevant findings that can be applicable to broader contexts while still maintaining their

content-specific richness, the researcher utilized transferability (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Implementation of transferability took place by ensuring depth and richness in description of the setting, participants, and experiences that produced the findings that impacted readers' ability to contextualize meaning. Lastly, the researcher achieved dependability through a clearly documented, logical, and traceable research process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). The data collected aligned to answer the posed research questions and the researcher delineated any changes that occurred in the setting and how those changes affect the way the researcher approached the study.

The quality and credibility of a grounded theory can be confirmed using variety of criteria. Charmaz, (2006) shares both the quality and credibility of a researcher's study begins and ends with the data and presents seven conditions for judging the confirmed quality of grounded theory data which the researcher will use in evaluating the quality, credibility, sustainability, and sufficiency:

1. Have I collected enough background data about persons, processes, and settings to have ready recall and to understand and portray the full range of the context of the study?
2. Have I gained detailed descriptions of a range of participants views and actions?
3. Do the data reveal what lies beneath the surface?
4. Are the data sufficient to reveal changes overtime?
5. Have I gained multiple views of the participants range of actions?
6. Have I gathered data that enable me to develop analytic categories?

7. What kinds of comparisons can I make between data? How do these comparisons generate and inform my ideas?

The researcher used the above criteria set forth by Charmaz (2006) coupled with Lincoln and Guba (1985) in the design, analysis, and evaluation of this study to ensure quality and credibility measures.

Use of Technology

The researcher utilized varied technological modalities to conduct this constructivist grounded theory research study. The researcher provided an introductory email among organizations detailing the purpose of data collection and the role of the participant in the study. The researcher paired the email with the initial screener. The initial screener allowed the researcher to identify the quantity of relevant participants for the study, narrowing down to avoid oversaturation of data and to ensure the potential participants met the established criteria. The researcher conducted and recorded the interview using the Google Meet platform. The researcher used the recording to obtain a transcription of the audio exchange between researcher and participants from Otter.ai. The researcher used the Atlas.ti analytical software to code the participants' transcripts. Atlas.ti was most appropriate as it began as a CMQDA platform for grounded theorists. The researcher interviewed participants, transcribed, and backed up researcher field notes to an iCloud drive.

Calendar of Research Activities

This section outlines the researcher's timeline to conduct activities related to the research study.

The researcher's proposal meeting was held in December 2022. The researcher's IRB was approved in March 2023. The researcher will collect data from March 2023 through April 2023, analyzing and coding as each piece is received. The researcher will frame Chapters IV and V in March, complete them at the beginning of April, and hold the defense meeting at the end of April. The researcher intends to graduate in May 2023.

Table 3.2

Calendar of Research Activities

Month, Year	Research Activity
December 2022	Dissertation Proposal
Late January-March 2023	IRB Submission Data Collection
Ongoing March-April 2023	Data Analysis
March-April 2023	Completion of Chapter Four and Five
May 2023	Dissertation Defense
May 2023	Graduation

Summary of Chapter

This chapter provided information about the methodology and design the researcher intends to use for the study. It opened with the researcher's positionality in examining the interaction between teachers, administrators, and parents in the charter school setting and a breakdown of systemic and organizational structures that impact academic progression. The researcher discussed sampling, investigative techniques, and instrumentation for the research. An extensive presentation of data collection and analysis procedures followed as this aspect of any grounded theory study is critical. In this chapter, the researcher detailed assumptions, delimitations, limitations, human subject protections, and ethical considerations. Finally, the researcher disclosed the perspective to temper bias and provide transparency to the IRB. Using codes and concepts generated

via member-checked data, the researcher used theoretical sampling to develop a theory and conceptualize clarity around how charter campuses approach their work to yield consistent achievement outcomes.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

In Chapter IV, the researcher presents the research data analysis and findings. The researcher interviewed nine participants and coded interview transcripts using ATLAS.ti to determine the emergent themes through initial and focused coding. The development of anchor codes in conjunction with initial and focused coding and reviewed literature supported the conception of the conceptual framework for the study. The researcher developed findings from the emergent themes.

As mentioned in Chapter I, it was essential to explore the organizational and systemic structures that support academic success in charter schools through the lived

experiences of teachers, leaders, and community members (parents) once associated with TPS, now associated in charter school arenas. Exploring this information was essential in identifying characteristics worth mimicking to support the advancement and reformation efforts in the traditional public school setting. To address the purpose of the research, the researcher used the following questions to frame the study:

1. How does the structure of the organization impact consistent academic achievement?
2. What communicated and implemented systems contribute to the consistent academic achievement of the organization?
3. How do the communicated and implemented systems contribute to the consistent academic achievement of the organization?

This chapter includes four sections. The first section presents an overview of the implementation of the research study. The second section presents descriptive statistics regarding the participants, including profiles of the participants and their charter school organization. The third section presents the findings and data analysis by research question both thematically through initial coding anchor codes and focused coding and comments based on the constructivist grounded theory framework. The final section of the chapter presents a summary of the chapter.

Implementation of the Research Study

This qualitative study used a constructivist grounded theory method to address the research questions. This approach uniquely supports capturing participants' lived experiences of the systems and organizational structures of selected Houston-area charter

school settings. The research design included a case study approach of selected Houston-area CMOs through semi-structured interviews. The selection criteria for the study participants included:

1. former TPS teachers now serving as a KIPP Public Schools, Harmony Public Schools, or YES Prep Public Schools content teacher for two years or more consecutively at the same campus,
2. former TPS administrators now serving as a KIPP Public Schools, Harmony Public Schools, or YES Prep Public Schools campus administrator for two years or more consecutively at the same campus, and
3. former TPS parents now serving as KIPP Public Schools, Harmony Public Schools, or YES Prep Public Schools parents of two years or more consecutively at the same campus.

The researcher used theoretical sampling techniques to collect data and decipher which data was helpful to support theory development and categories that emerged from the data collected. The researcher transcribed interviews and analyzed data in three ways:

1. using initial (or in vivo) coding created through interview analysis (inductive coding),
2. using anchor codes, or axial coding developed from the constructivist grounded theory approach to research development,
3. using focused coding to identify recurrent patterns within the data.

The researcher used ATLAS.ti to develop and organize emerging themes. As a result, the researcher concluded findings developed from the themes and supported them

with participant quotes. It was important to ensure quotes were exhausted throughout the data analysis to ensure participant voices were heard, as the work of this study is founded on the participants' lived experiences and their reflective knowledge. This section of the chapter provided a synopsis of the implementation of the research. The next section of the chapter provides profiles of the study participants.

Participant Profiles

Nine educational stakeholders agreed to participate in this study. For this study, the educational stakeholders consisted of teachers, leaders, and parents who were once associated with a traditional public school (TPS) and are now associated with selected Houston-area charter schools. Table 4.1 provides details relative to the study participants, the charter school organization they represent, and the type of stakeholder they are for this study. The researcher did not disclose identifying characteristics of the participant's title to protect their identity and locale of employment. All participants live and work in the Houston area. The researcher included brief profiles for each participant in this section of the chapter.

Danni Moore. Danni Moore has nine years of experience in the educational sector as a classroom teacher. Of that time, she has spent five years at KIPP Public Schools. Her responsibility includes leading instructionally in the classroom and coaching extracurricular sports.

Emerson Jones. Emerson Jones has 15 years of experience in the educational sector as a teacher, instructional coach, and now leader. Of that time, he has spent seven years at KIPP Public Schools. His area of responsibility includes leading the school at its

core, ensuring the implementation of instructional practices through coaching cycles, and empowering stakeholders by embracing culture and morale. Prior to this position, he was a TPS campus leader.

Elliot Nichols. Elliot Nichols is a parent associated with KIPP Public Schools, a charter school system associated with this study. Elliot's children have attended charter schools, specifically KIPP, for seven years.

Glen Lewis. Glen Lewis has four years of experience in the educational sector as a classroom teacher. Of that time, he has spent two years at Harmony Public Schools. His responsibility includes leading instructionally in the classroom and building relationships with students to make content comprehensible.

Gabby Iris. Gabby Iris has 21 years of experience in the educational sector as a teacher, assistant principal, and principal in both the TPS and charter school sector. Of that time, she has spent 12 years at Harmony Public Schools. Her area of responsibility includes leading the school at its core, accuracy in safety, security, and instructional operation of the organization. Prior to this position, she was a TPS campus leader.

Sidney Roberts. Sidney Roberts is a parent associated with Harmony Public School, a charter school system associated with this study. He has experienced both the traditional public school setting and the charter school setting. Currently, his family has students learning in both settings. One started in the TPS setting and moved to the charter school setting, choosing Harmony Public Schools. The remaining student has been enrolled in Harmony Public Schools for eight years.

Jude Brooks. Jude Brooks has 18 years of experience in the educational sector as a classroom teacher. Of that time, he has spent 11 years at YES Prep Public Schools. His area of responsibility includes teaching and supporting charter school athletics.

Tyler Davis. Tyler Davis has 10 years of experience in the educational sector as a teacher, instructional specialist, Response-to-Intervention (RTI) Coordinator, assistant principal, and principal in both the TPS and charter school sector. Of that time, he has spent three years at YES Prep Public Schools. His responsibility includes supporting instructional decision-making, ensuring student success and equitable outcomes, parent and community liaison, and campus leader. Prior to this position, he was a TPS campus leader and teacher.

Shay Cole. Shay Cole is a parent associated with YES Prep Public Schools, a charter school system associated with this study. Shay’s children have attended schools in the charter school sector, specifically KIPP, for 13 years.

Table 4.1

Research Study Participant Information

Pseudonym	Role	CMO	Years in Education	Years associated with CMO
Danni Moore	Teacher	KIPP	9	5
Emerson Jones	Leader	KIPP	15	7
Elliot Nichols	Parent	KIPP	-	7
Glen Lewis	Teacher	Harmony	4	2
Gabby Iris	Leader	Harmony	21	12
	Parent	Harmony	-	8

Sidney Roberts				
Jude Brooks	Teacher	YES	18	11
Tyler Davis	Leader	YES	10	3
Shay Cole	Parent	YES	-	13

Organizational Profiles

All educational organizations explored are charter schools located in the Houston area. Charters exist to serve students that, for whatever reason, are not thriving in a one-size-fits-all traditional public school and those who desire educational choice. These selected charters are free and open to all, with an aligned vision to offer students opportunities for educational success. Table 4.2 provides information about the selected Houston-area CMOs. Of these institutions, KIPP Public Schools has 34 Houston-area campuses that serve over 21,000 students; Harmony Public Schools has 25 Houston-area campuses (split among three areas: Houston North, Houston South, and Houston West) serving over 12,000 students, and YES Prep Public Schools which serves over 12,650 students across 21 Houston-area campuses. The organizations represented in the study provide perspectives on multiple charter school systems and processes that Houston-area TPS should emulate to support increased academic achievement.

KIPP Public Schools. KIPP Texas-Houston Public Schools is a network of 34 schools serving over 20,000 students from educationally underserved Houston-area communities. KIPP Texas-Houston is a part of the KIPP Texas family, which serves over 34,000 students among 59 schools across the state. Its first campus opened in Houston in 2004 and is now operable as KIPP Houston High School in Alief Independent School

District. KIPP Houston High School is KIPP’s first college-preparatory high school in the United States. KIPP Texas-Houston Public Schools lead with a focus on culture, alignment, rigor and ratio, and overall engagement.

Harmony Public Schools. Harmony Public Schools Houston network is divided into Houston North, Houston South, and Houston West. Among those three Houston-area regions, over 12,000 students are served. With its focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), Harmony Public Schools believes each student can achieve their own unique, full potential through a caring and collaborative learning environment that emphasizes personalized learning and innovative instructional methods to prepare students for college and equip them with the skills for their future careers.

YES Prep Public Schools. YES Prep Public Schools hosts 21 campuses in the Houston area serving nearly 13,000 students. YES Prep campuses focus on college opportunities and college readiness. Students experience high academic expectations that support launching them into the world prepared.

Table 4.2

Research Study CMO Information

CMO	Number of Houston-area Campuses	Population served
KIPP Public Schools	34	~20,000
Harmony Public Schools	23	~12,000
YES Prep Public Schools	21	~13,000

This section included descriptive information regarding the study participants. The following section provides an overview of the coding procedures. Following, a synthesis of the findings for each research questions and emergent themes are presented.

Findings Based on Coding Procedure

In this section, the researcher reviews the procedures for coding and presents the findings relative to each research question.

Synopsis of Open Coding Procedure

The researcher separated the interview transcripts into segments by reading and reviewing the transcripts thoroughly for readily identifiable themes and patterns. Themes in the literature previously disaggregated informed the researcher's review. Once the initial codes were developed, the researcher listened to the recordings while following the transcripts to recapture what was discussed in the interviews to identify emerging patterns and themes. The researcher coded interviews using ATLAS.ti software and organized quotations under the most fitting theme. After the themes and patterns were identified and organized, the researcher began the second phase of data analysis.

Conceptualization of Emergent Themes and Codes

Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) shared that the first significant step in the analytical process is to consider the "big ideas," or themes of the data collected. Focused coding uses the most frequent and significant codes and involves intuitive decision-making concerning identifying the initial codes that make the most analytical sense to categorize the data (Charmaz, 2014). These focused codes are more conceptual than initial coding. Through constant comparative analysis, some concepts and ideas emerged that helped

illuminate and focus the memoing and analysis of the study. Holton and Walsh (2017) explained that grounded theorists conceptualize data through the process of coding and memoing. This work is the foundation of discovering patterns within the data collected. Through the data analysis process, the researcher generates themes and findings that form the conceptual framework that guides the study's findings.

Many of the data themes that emerged had several codes that were associated with other emergent themes. Table 4.3 is a preview of the more than 137 codes that emerged.

Table 4.3

Condensed List of Emergent Codes

Autonomy	Leadership walks	In the moment	Compliance
Messaging	Common language	Parent Involvement	Level of Attention
Defined focus	Technology Platforms	Grading System	Academic Focus

Many codes were collapsed or combined into more conceptual codes, while others became properties of core categories that replaced themes. As the data was explored and analyzed, the emergent themes needed to be analytical and not solely descriptive. This process would ensure that the information concluded presented a prescriptive measure for supporting traditional public school academic success.

Data Analysis for Research Question #1

The first research question explored the structure of each organization and its impact on academic achievement. Interview protocol questions 13, 14, 19, and 20 were

written to explore the answer to this question. The interviews revealed four findings regarding the structures of the three selected CMOs. Based on the interview analysis using ATLAS.ti, emergent themes, and findings were identified. The findings for research question #1 in the charter school setting of selected Houston CMOs were:

1. Leadership staffing is aligned with organizational goals.
2. Professional development is streamlined for all campuses in the organization.
3. The central office staff is visible at all campuses.
4. Leadership plays a critical role in creating academically excellent schools.

Table 4.4 depicts the relationships between this question's findings, emergent themes, and open coding outcomes. The remainder of the section analyzes the study participants' experiences associated with one of the selected Houston-area charter school CMOs following experience in a TPS.

Table 4.4

Findings for Research Question #1

Findings	Emergent Themes	Codes
Finding #1 Leadership staffing is aligned with organizational goals.	Goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codes (3) • Quotations (29) 	Alignment (3) Leaders (12) Priorities/Values (14)
	Instructional Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codes (4) • Quotations (43) 	Academic/Instructional Focus (17) Accountability (9) Leaders (12) Presence (5)
Finding #2 Professional Development is streamlined for all campuses in the organization.	<i>Trainings used interchangeably with Professional Development</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codes (3) • Quotation(s): (58) 	Academic/Instructional Focus (17) Expectations (27) Specialized Development (14)

	Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codes (3) • Quotations (15) 	Central Office (1) Communication (8) Resources (6)
	Structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codes (3) • Quotations (21) 	Defined Focus (4) Organized (12) Rubric/Tracking System (5)
Finding #3 The central office staff is visible at all campuses.	Personable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codes (4) • Quotations (31) 	Attentive (8) Coaching (10) Communication (8) Connectedness (5)
	Accountable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codes (7) • Quotations (78) 	Academic/Instructional Focus (17) Accountability (9) Alignment (3) Expectations (27) Leadership Walks (3) Presence (5) Priorities/Values (14)
Finding #4 Leadership plays a critical role in creating academically excellent schools.	Aligned <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codes (4) • Quotations (80) 	Coaching Cycle (10) Common Language (11) Expectations (27) Feedback (18) Specialized Development (14)

Overall, the study participants' experiences aligned regarding the organizational structure of the learning organization they were associated with. The remainder of this section included the analysis of the interviews as related to the findings for research question #1.

Finding #1 Leadership staffing is aligned with organizational goals. With an instructional focus of multiple contents comes the need for multiple leaders to support instructional accountability and academic growth to obtain the organization's academic achievement goals. The makeup of the organizational structure and its direct impact on the campus' systemic structure were noted as instrumental in each participant's experience

of success. As a result, the common emergent themes were (a) goals and (b) instructional leadership.

Based on the interviews with parents, leaders, and teachers, charter schools have what is equivalent to assistant principals to support every need. However, the selected Houston-area charter school leaders are staffed purposefully in the charter school arena. The goals' emergent theme specifies how the leader fits in the organization's scope and how their existence will impact the organizational academic achievement outcomes. The instructional leader emergent theme focuses on the type of leader the structure of the organization desires. Ensuring the organization's foundation is led with academic success at the forefront aids in producing academically sound students. Thus, leaders and staff entrusted to lead must possess academically sound characteristics.

TPSs have Assistant Principals and Associate Principals (APs). Likened to the AP role, charter schools have a Dean of Instruction, also known as the Dean of Academics or Dean of Curriculum and Instruction, as well as a Dean of Culture. Having these individuals allows everyone to have a specific focus regarding student success. Deans of Academics or Deans of Curriculum and Instruction are masters of their instructional craft. These educational leaders are visible in the classroom and can focus on best practices of success, identifying instructional characteristics that teachers will employ to support students and that students employ to display their proficiency in the content. In having a Dean of Academics or a Dean of Curriculum and Instruction for specific contents, campus leaders are more visible in the planning community, they can provide feedback on effective lesson plan creation and lesson plan implementation, and can be

visible in the classroom setting to identify how the feedback provided is put into action and what additional supports are needed to close gaps that adhere to the campus and organizations goal.

Unlike a traditional public school at selected Houston-area charters, schools and campuses leaders are not staffed by the number of students they hold but based on the campus goals that are set in place to support desired outcomes designed in the charter and established by the central leadership. Additionally, these selected Houston-area charter school campuses have a Dean of Culture, which is an effective way to frame a leader of behavior. This leader spearheads supporting the culture or behavioral culture of the campus by meeting with students to set goals for their behavioral success, supporting the day-to-day discipline that impedes operation and instruction, and facilitating conversations with parents regarding student choices. Such organizational leadership moves do not mean that, as a campus, all hands need to be more supportive in collaborating with the behavior. However, there is a lead in this part of the campus operation to ensure that the focus remains on the instructional and academic expectations set forth. Participant Danni Moore shared this person handles discipline for the entire school. They relieve [instructional Assistant Principals] of a little bit of [disciplinary] duties (personal communication, April 18, 2023).

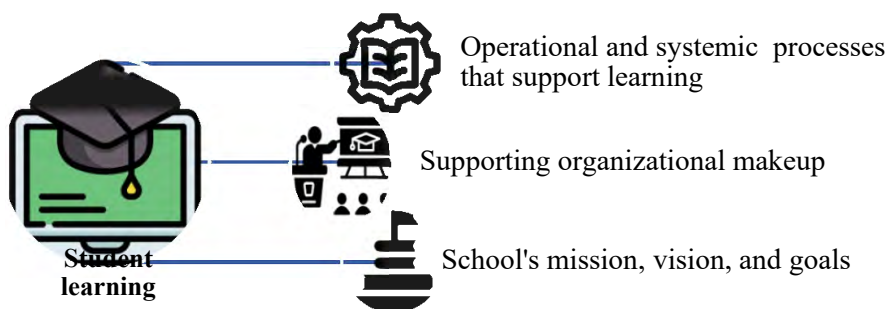
Figure 4.1 depicts the *TPS Model for Organizational Success through Mission Management*. The research first introduced *mission management* in Chapter II (see Figure 2.3). This model supports the organizational structure of institutions ensuring systems are in place to assist with the selection of adequate leadership staffing whose

leadership styles align with the organization's vision and goals and whose strengths support the organization in meeting its goals.

Organizations grounded in a mission management approach make organizational and educational decisions with the mission and core values in mind, as those ideas govern the school body. Success is founded upon ensuring decision support student and campus-body representation and includes processes supporting positive learning outcomes.

Figure 4.1

TPS Model for Organizational Success through Mission Management



Finding #2 Professional Development is streamlined for all campuses in the organization. The second finding was that the study participants shared their experiences with streamlined professional development or training seamlessly implemented across all organizational institutions. Specifically, leaders shared the intentional work that goes into professional organizational development. Further, what was revealed is that the structure of the organization is centered around streamlining professional development opportunities. The same professional development is strategically given in one space or divvied up by individuals who can present it with aligned intended energy. All campuses

and personnel have a calibrated, foundational understanding of organizational and beginning-of-year (BOY) instructional expectations, outcomes, and deliverables.

Professional development and preservice are often the most dreaded or exciting part of welcoming staff back at the beginning of the school year, depending on whether a teacher is a novice or a veteran. Professional development provides the opportunity to level set on expectations, calibrate understandings and misconceptions, and prepare individuals for the work and desired outcomes for the year.

The thoughts on professional development were common across all stakeholders, which created three themes (a) streamlined, professional development, that is, training, (b) support, and (c) structure. Based on the interviews with teachers and leaders specifically, specific characteristics were mentioned concerning campus and professional organizational development. The streamlined professional development emerged from what is later mentioned as a common language across all stakeholders. Additionally, streamlined, professional development ensures a clear expectation across the entire organization and system rather than one team, department, or campus expectation that varies across the district. Further, the training and support emergent theme continues beyond the start of the school year. The trainings were focused on a continuum of support from the beginning of the year (BOY) to the end of the year (EOY). The training is focused on the emergent theme and is fixated on ensuring the information shared is purposeful. It is not planned as a reactive measure in the spur of the moment. However, it is something that is needed from the top of the organization to the bottom of the

organization to support organizational goals and student outcomes. The researcher describes each theme in more detail below.

Streamlined professional development. The first emergent theme in this finding is related to leaders and teachers sharing experiences of their successes after experiencing streamlined, professional development. The participants expressed that their experiences at preservice were affected by seeing professional development at their campus that was echoed across all campuses. Moreover, they were explicit in sharing that the preservice professional development was streamlined and calibrated, and all professional development that teachers and leaders received throughout all campuses were calibrated. Each professional development met the need of the organizational outcomes as well as the students served. So, while the topic, ideas, and expectations were the same, they were appropriate and applicable to the population of learners and the great band served at the campus. Emerson Jones, a study participant at KIPP Public Schools, indicated, “we have explicit professional development that...reflects academics and professional development that answers the questions of how do you push the people who are currently master teachers to the next level” (personal communication, April 26, 2023)?

Support. The second emergent theme in this finding was the importance of training and support in driving the initial success of leaders and teachers to support the organizational outcomes to achieve students' academic success. Such organizations provide support through streamlined training efforts. Several of the interviewees mentioned how the training and support they received at the beginning, middle end, and most critical times of either their teaching experience or leadership experience helped

them navigate throughout the year and provided them with what they needed to be successful or to reflect grow in their instructional practices. Many participants mentioned that while associated with the traditional public-school sector, they received less aggressive training and support than they did in the charter school sector. Specifically, one participant, Emerson Jones shared the following thoughts regarding training and support:

Training is extensive to support the real time coaching. I think that's a deficit potentially, in traditional public settings, is that we just do the training and don't have [participants] practice it, and practice it, and practice it before they go out and do it. I think we could have accomplished [more] had some of the trainings and supports that you get when you're in a charter school. (personal communication, April 26, 2023)

Jones' quote connects and adds value to the idea of training and support as it did not only occur at the beginning of the year. "We had a lot [of training]; there was a lot of professional development and explicit professional development" (E. Jones, personal communication, April 26, 2023).

Structure. The third emergent theme for this finding was identifying the idea that training has a purpose and is meaningful. It is not done in a mundane manner because it must be done but because there is value in the outcome of this work. It is structured and focused. All the participants mentioned finding value in training and professional development. They shared that it was meaningful and intentional for the organization at large. Furthermore, long-term intentional professional development systems are

integrated for leaders, teachers, and support staff, including tiered support levels, focused on areas identified by district leadership, campus leadership and staff, and noted through observations. Specifically, one participant talked about how prescribed campus and organizational, professional development is by saying:

The bulk of ideas in service training was around what they call CMC, classroom management and culture, [for example]. And they had a whole system on how we should do it first; we got to talk about the teaching [and implementation in training]. (E. Jones, personal communication, April 26, 2023)

Another participant, Tyler Davis expressed training “has got to be on point though” (personal communication, April 21, 2023). Emerson Jones then echoed with the following thought, “Everything about [each of] our trainings is carefully curated for what they want to happen. When we went through our trainings, our trainings were a little bit more solid [than in the TPS setting]” (personal communication, April 26, 2023).

Finding #3 Central office staff is visible at all campuses. The third finding relates to visible upper leadership. *Upper leadership* is defined as leadership outside of the campus. Campuses are affectionally called central office leaders, “upper leadership,” or “the higher-ups.” The common emerging themes explored for finding number three were central office staff members, through their visibility, were (a) personable and (b) accountable. All interview participants shared that central office staff was visible on their campuses, their classrooms, and their work. They gleaned around the idea of visible central office staff and its impact on supporting higher or lower-performing departments

or campuses. Specifically, study participant Tyler Davis explained, “they were where the need was... everywhere” (personal communication April 21, 2023).

Specifically, central office leaders provided campus leaders with valuable information through their visibility, hands-on support, and feedback on operational and academic success. Danni Moore, a study participant in a Dean of Instruction role, stated the following regarding central office visibility:

We have more visits from the central office and their higher ups than I've seen on the traditional public school sector. We would have somebody come from the district office at any given time [drop by and] say, “Hey, let's go walk this classroom.” And the Deputy Head of Schools (equivalent to the Superintendent in the TPS), knew the teachers by name. She would know she would come on campus sometime and just go walk classrooms and we wouldn't even know she's there. Then, she'll come back to the office and start giving us feedback about what she's seen, what we need to do, and how we need to go and coach that teacher more. (personal communication, April 18, 2023)

In an organization that grounds its work on decisions that support positive student outcomes, it is important for decisionmakers to be visible where students are. The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools identifies movement toward a new generation of leadership. Spillane (2009) suggested that the role of the leader should be challenged, and a significant change in the educational sector requires a shift toward a more collaborative and community-like structure within schools. This occurs as campus and central office leaders meld together their experience and expertise to plan for and

meet the desired goal of the organization. To this though, participant Danni Moore elaborated with:

She [the Deputy Head of Schools] would actually sit down with us as “Assistant Principals”, coach us, talk to us, tell us about leadership, and tell us about the things that we need to do to build ourselves as leaders [to support teachers and the campus outcomes]. That's a level of being very personable with us more so than I've ever seen with any other place I've been. I mean, she was the principal's boss! I never got that kind of feedback in the traditional schools. And so, I feel like they're there. They're very hands on. And they hold themselves to a lot... they hold themselves accountable for your performance. So, they hold themselves accountable for ensuring your success. I don't see that a lot on the public school side. I don't see them [central office workers] holding themselves accountable for the success of the campus employees, like they did at the charter schools; I didn't see that on the traditional side; I didn't get a lot of direct coaching. (personal communication, April 18, 2023)

Additively, the visibility needs to add value to the environment. Typically, central office staff visits campuses for a brief moment. They visit one class or department and leave. The perception is for an optics opportunity. There must be vocal and present visibility from central office leaders not excluding chief executive officers or board members. All should have a voice and be visible in the work that impacts student success outcomes. Gabby Iris, a study participant shared:

Our central office leaders actually sit side by side with us [after walking our campus] to dissect that and come up with a plan [for next steps]. They put us in touch with other leaders so that we can [have a] connection to build capacity for desirable success. (personal communication, April 28, 2023)

Finding #4 Leadership plays a critical role in creating academically excellent schools. The success of a school stems from the success of the leadership team and its alignment. The sole emergent theme for finding number four was alignment. Not only is it critical to have an adequate number of leaders, but like central office staff, visibility in work plays a critical role in academic success. Carpenter and Peak (2013) shared how leaders in charter schools perceive their function as leaders to keep the internal school community focused on the established and communicated goals, manage staff members, and ensure school safety.

It is imperative when considering the operation and instructional focus of the campus that a leadership team is on one accord and that the leaders are vested, equipped, and prepared for what lies ahead of them. Danni Moore, a study participant, shared that the leadership team was in it together when it came to walkthroughs and calibrating instructional expectations.

We would always be on the same accord; we would have pointed out some of the same stuff. When we, as we would debrief, we would do what we call melody checks, we would walk together and check classrooms together. And we would all be on one accord every time. So, I think it's the teamwork factor that that played a big part in bringing the school up. (personal communication, April 18, 2023)

Data Analysis for Research Question #2

The second research question explored what specific items organizations and institutions communicate to stakeholders that support academic achievement. Interview protocol questions 17, 21, and 24-25 provided insight into what organizations and institutions communicate to all stakeholders (teachers, leaders, students, and parents) prior to their respective first day of school. The communicated items support students' success and operational function. The communicative efforts, moreover, signify the importance of established systems to support operational growth.

By using the transcripts, the researcher coded the interviews using ATLAS.ti. The researcher then generated the emergent themes and identified the finding for the second research question.

Table 4.5

Findings for Research Question #2

Findings	Emergent Themes	Codes
Finding #5 There is an established, communicated common language.	Students and Staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codes: (11) • Quotations: (112) 	Academic/Instructional Focus (17) Achievement (6) Aligned Messaging (4) Common Language (11) Communication (8) Connectedness (5) Culture/Relationships (26) Defined Focus (4) Expectations (27) Success (6) Organized (12)
	Parents and Community Members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codes: (8) • Quotations: (96) 	Aligned Messaging (4) Common Language (11) Communication (8) Connectedness (5) Culture/Relationships (26) Expectations (27)

		Success (6) Support (9)
Finding #6 The vision, mission, and student goals are communicated.	Students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codes: (7) • Quotations: (83) 	Academic/Instructional Focus (17) Accountability (9) Achievement (6) Common Goal (6) Defined Focus (4) Expectations (27) Priority/Values (14)
	Staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codes: (8) • Quotations: (85) 	Academic/Instructional Focus (17) Accountability (9) Alignment (3) Common Goal (6) Common Language (11) Communication (8) Defined Focus (4) Expectations (27)
	Parents and Community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codes: (7) • Quotations: (83) 	Academic/Instructional Focus (17) Accountability (9) Common Goal (6) Common Language (11) Communication (8) Connectedness (5) Expectations (27)
Finding #7 The instructional expectations and individual outcomes are made known.	Student Centered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codes: (6) • Quotations: (52) 	Achievement (6) Communication (8) Common Language (11) Defined Focus (4) Strategic (15) Strong Systems (8)
	Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codes: (4) • Quotations: (46) 	Aligned Messaging (4) Communication (8) Expectations (27) Parent Involvement (7)
Finding #8 Culture of high expectations for all.	Established expectations for students, staff, and stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codes: (3) • Quotations: (46) 	Accountability (9) Achievement (6) Culture/Relationships (26) Tracking System/Rubric (5)
Finding #9 Parent Involvement is mandated.	Visible parents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codes: (4) 	Accountability (9)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quotations: (69) 	Expectations (27) Culture/Relationships (26) Parent Involvement (7)
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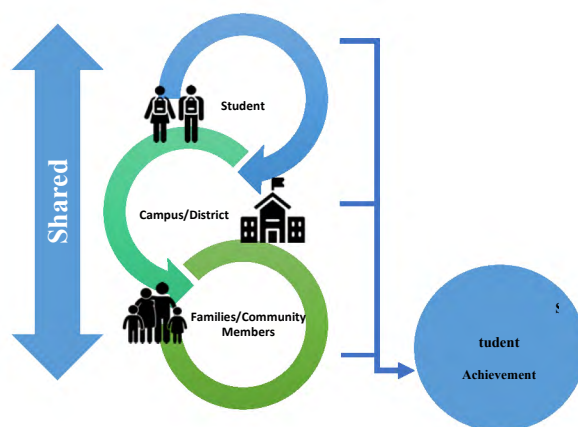
Finding #5 There is an established common language. Common language refers to words or phrases commonly understood by a group of people. It is an understood system of communication consisting of a set of words and phrases commonly used by the people of a particular organization or setting, in this context, for written or spoken communication. A common language established by the district and trained among the school staff, implemented by the system and community members at large provides a framework for a way to talk about instruction and all that supports and informs instruction that is shared by everyone in the district and school level (Marzano et al., 2013). The emergent themes derived from this finding were (a) students and staff and (b) parents and community members—this highlighted who the common language should be available to. Jude Brooks, a study participant, shared “We have our own language; we speak our own language. It’s like a shared language, you know” (personal communication, April 28, 2023).

In having a common language, members of the organization are clear on what the organization publishes, communicates, and expects (Marzano, 2013). Figure 4.2 exhibits one part of the conceptual framework that emphasizes the collaborative work of organizational and systemic structure. It highlights the organization's members with whom the common language should be shared. This idea was first referred to as stakeholder management in Chapter II (see Figure 2.3).

Stakeholder management involves shared accountability and visibility among all staff, students, parents, and community members. Teacher effectiveness centered around improving student learning opportunities must embody a well-articulated foundation for systemically informing all stakeholders' organizational expectations. Student and organizational growth become hindered when systems become misaligned, resulting in an unestablished language that supports the expectation and desired outcomes of the district.

Figure 4.2

TPS Model for Student Achievement through Stakeholder Management



Finding #6 The vision, mission, and student goals are communicated. Leaders in high-performing instructional settings spend extensive amounts of time developing and articulating a mission and vision for learning that is shared with and supported by the community. The core values of each organization drive the work. They are preserved as they are the foundational blocks of success. To ensure the vision, mission, and student goals drive the organization's work, they are emphasized and communicated from start to finish. To echo this thought, the emerging themes that aligned were (a) students, (b) staff, and (c) parents and community.

Selected Houston-area charter schools and their stakeholders not only know and understand the mission and all that supports it but also embody and live it daily. On all of KIPP's, Harmony's, and YES Prep's websites, one will notice their vision, mission, and goals, proudly displayed for all to locate, and know quickly. All stakeholders, from the governing board and central office members to the families and community members, intentionally include and communicate the mission, vision, and student goals at every opportunity. Participant Emerson Jones detailed:

Everything we do is centered around our NorthStar. It is the opening of each meeting, each training, each activity. This ensures everything thing we do, every activity, educational meeting, conference, or data dig is focused and aligned with our outcomes. Students and parents not only know it but expect it. That was not a norm at my TPS and I love this approach. In everything, there is a reflective moment of why each individual is here and on if their current actions are aligned to the desired outcomes set forth at the beginning of the year. (personal communication, April 26, 2023)

Further, the mission is inclusive of all students and all staff. Staffing practices support this work. One participant shared the importance of having a common goal (T. Davis, personal communication, April 21, 2023). A common goal and the outcome of having a shared or common goal that the organization has widely communicated lends itself to the success of an organization. The mission defines the educational approach, setting the stage for how students will learn. The mission also describes the curricula foci, emphasizing what students will learn. Leaders should ensure that the goals of an

organization are articulated and in agreement. It is much easier to aim towards and reach when these are established and communicated.

Finding #7 The instructional expectations and individual outcomes are made known. With a model centered around student success comes ensuring all are aware of the expectations. The ideas around this finding are supported through the information revealed from the emergent themes (a) student-centered and (b) communication.

Charter schools are relatively autonomous schools of choice that have established a focus in their charter. Often in the charter setting, specifically, the selected Houston-area charter schools, ' children of color and other disadvantaged and underserved students received schooling. Effective charters teach students where they are to get them where they desire them to be. They hold student-focused instructional expectations grounded in the desired, communicated student outcomes. Such successful expectations are different from their clearly defined educational plan. Instead, they tweak to support closing achievement gaps based on assessment results where necessary. In the TPS, these students typically underperform on exams and academics. In these selected Houston-area charter schools, students display strong academic results by implementing shared accountability actions (see Figure 4.1) regarding instructional expectations and individual student outcomes.

Participant experiences coupled with research share transparent systems for the prevention of deepened academic gaps and for intervention supports the high instructional expectation that consistently achieves the established desired results. These effective institutions focus on building skills of leaders, teachers, and students that

support academic achievement outcomes. Further, an intense emphasis on the school's and organization's mission as the cornerstone of academic and instructional decisions supports ensuring that instructional expectations are not only known but prioritized at the center of the work.

Finding #8 Culture of high expectations for all. These selected Houston-area charter schools hold a culture of support, achievement, and personalized learning based on students' needs, skills, and interests. Students learn from what the organization puts into it (Bulkley & Fisler, 2002). A culture of high expectations is birthed through ongoing learning opportunities and accountability. Teachers and leaders at selected Houston-area charter schools need and experience collaborative professional learning weekly, if not daily, in some fashion, whether formally or informally. They need to be reminded of the North Star and supported to meet it and that nothing less is expected. Likewise, students and parents are held to a high standard. Everyone is a part of the learning experience and the success of each student. One participant, a parent shared:

There is a parent meeting. Students and parents are expected to attend. They review everything, from the bell schedule to the sequence of classes. They reviewed what the staff role is in the success of each child, what the child's role is, and what the parent's role is. They clearly outlined the expectations.

Sometimes it felt like a lot. Sometimes it felt harsh, I think because it was so straightforward, and you don't often hear leaders talk with such passion about their student *and* parent expectations but it was clear of what education and learning looked like. It provided an opportunity for students and parents to make

decision if this was the environment for them. I valued that level of transparency and the over expectations they have for everyone. That is what I needed. That is what we need. That is a blueprint for success for me. (S. Roberts, personal communication, April 27, 2023)

Public charter schools enroll a higher percentage of students from historically underserved backgrounds. These are students who, for various reasons, leave their neighborhood schools in search of something better. The students who leave are often at-risk and hold a learning disability, or other academic ailment. Nonetheless, the culture of high expectations stands the same for these students, who thrive. The Texas Charter Schools Association (2020) shared that children of color and historically underserved student populations at selected Houston-area charter schools outperform TPS campuses in almost every subject.

Finding #9 Parent Involvement is mandated. There is a huge benefit to children and their schools when parents are involved. Think about generally how successful primary students are in the foundation of their learning, their learning practices, and their beliefs learning. Parents are heavily hands-on in the initial stages of schooling at the primary level.

Selected Houston-area charters work diligently to cultivate strong relationships with parents through active parental and community engagement and accountability. There are overall positive parental remarks concerning charter school parent perception. Like teachers and leaders, parents are typically more satisfied than comparison groups in the traditional public-school setting. They are more pleased with the results due to the

hefty involvement. Not only do parents appear more highly involved in the charter school sector, but they are. Selected Houston-area charter schools hold parents accountable for the success of their students. Additionally, home visits occur once a year to ensure parents understand the importance and impact of their involvement. Participant leader Tyler Davis shared, “there are home visits that these schools host. We push into the homes. We schedule parent conferences, and we hold parents accountable for their students” (personal communication April 21, 2023). A parent participant added:

There were mandatory meetings for parents. They combed through all of their schooling career. And there were home visits. They want to get to know you and your family. They are not here to interview you, it’s more of a ‘hi, nice to meet you’. They give off this we want you to be here. We want to be a part of [the] educational success of your child. At the end, they ask can they take a picture with you which adds a personal touch. (S. Roberts, personal communication April 27, 2023)

As schools of choice, charters rely on partnerships between parents and the community. Charter schools that hold effective practices engage their parents to become partners in the learning process. The partnership blossoms into genuine relationships through intentional, purposeful, and transparent efforts birthed from communication.

Data Analysis for Research Question #3

The third research question explains how the systems, communicated, and implemented, yield consistent achievement within the CMO organization. Interview protocol questions 26 and 27 provided insight into the answer to this question. Cohodes

(2018) shared that if educators wish to reduce achievement gaps, one obvious way to consider is the spread of charter schools and their success to replicate the most successful schools. This study examined the successful characteristics of KIPP, Harmony, and YES Prep charter schools, replicating such characteristics among TPS. With charters a part of the educational system, expansions of charters allude to a shift away from traditional public schools, schools that are the heart of neighborhoods and communities. The data revealed from this research question inform knowledge seekers of effective charter school processes to plug the TPS achievement gap.

Table 4.6

Findings for Research Question #3

Findings	Emergent Themes	Codes
Finding #10 Everything is centered around instruction as priority.	Organizational Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codes: (9) • Quotations: (134) 	Academic/Instructional Focus (17) Alignment (3) Defined Focus (4) Feedback (18) Leadership Walks (3) Priority/Values (14) Strategic (15) Student-Centered (39) Subgroups (21)
Finding #11 Equipping and developing instructional capacity is critical.	Developmental Approach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codes: (6) • Quotations: (48) 	Attentive (8) Defined Focus (4) Resources (6) Specialized Development (14) Intentional Approach (8) Strong Systems (8)
Finding #12 A unified system and standard are vital.	Organizational Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codes: (9) Quotations: (134)	Academic/Instructional Focus (17) Alignment (3) Defined Focus (4) Feedback (18) Leadership Walks (3) Priority/Values (14) Strategic (15) Student-Centered (39) Subgroups (21)

Finding #13 Accountability for all.	High Expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codes: (7) • Quotations: 150 	Accountability (9) Common Goal (60) Connectedness (5) Culture/Relationships (26) Expectations (27) Strategic (15) Strong Systems (8)
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Finding #10 Everything is centered around instruction as priority. The communicated and implemented systems emphasize priority. Campuses and organizations prioritize their decision-making around instruction and instructional outcomes. When examining charter schools and their creation, they were birthed from a place of public-school reform. School effectiveness researchers outline that aspects of schooling closest to the students, those being teaching, instruction, and curriculum significantly impact student learning and increase student outcomes (Mattison, 2020).

Teacher participants shared how the focus of all their work conversations are instructionally driven. They were reflective on the work done in the professional learning community (PLC) and the implementation of the lesson in front of the children. The framework depicted in Figure 4.1 further emphasizes the concept of the impact of clearly defined and communicated systems connected to student learning.

Finding #11 Equipping and developing instructional capacity is critical. Leaders, schools, and organizations should dedicate time and effort continuously to ensure the school and organization are populated with excellent, instructionally sound teachers, and with staff whose values and instructional structure align with that of the campus and organization to support the established goals and communicated mission

(Gawlick, 2017). Linick and Lubienski (2022) shared how charter schools inspire change through aggressive staff capacity building. To instill this practice, a developmental approach, the emergent theme for this finding, is critical to the organization.

Selected Houston-area charter schools often receive the traditional public schools (TPS) the students deemed “left behind.” These, too, are often disadvantaged and at-risk students of color who fall into many minority groups. Nonetheless, they receive these students and assist students in performing better than they did at the TPS. These selected Houston-area charter schools realize the goal is to educate children and have worked to master how to achieve consistent results. As a result, the benefits of charter schools for low-income and students of color have grown due to their successful outcomes.

Finding #12 A unified system and standard is vital. Reform starts at the top. Thus, it is crucial to ensure defined, unified systems. Educators in leadership shared the importance of aligning state goals, local performance measures, and actions toward the district and the campus. Creating entirely written processes and procedures that are reviewed and vetted for implementation across campuses helps these selected Houston-area charter systems maintain their academic and organizational success and systemic and operational efficiency. Participants reported that their campuses had a student or parent handbook, in most cases both, and a staff handbook and mentioned how they were created with the intention of an appropriate and efficient program. Gabby Iris reported:

We conduct a lot of research. We investigate the successes of those around us and the areas of growth. The development of a unified system is not a one-day project or a rushed project. In taking our time, there is a moment of discovery. We

involve stakeholders from the community, parents, teachers, and students even. That part was the most critical and most impactful in work on continuous improvement. Everyone plays a part in this document which evolves into our success model. (personal communication, April 28, 2023)

Finding #13 Accountability for all. Regarding accountability, charter schools are accountable for every entity or group whose support it must maintain to survive and remain open. Specifically, charter schools are accountable to government agencies and stakeholders. The stakeholders include (a) parents who choose whether to enroll their children in a charter school, (b) teachers who have the choice of whether to work in a charter school, and (c) community members who provide donations by way of money, goods, and services to the charter (Hill et al., 2002). Such charter school leaders understand they must build and maintain trust and relationships with teachers, parents, and members of the community to establish and sustain internal accountability. Such accountability is built on the idea that the school's performance depends on all adults working in collaboration. Such accountability leads to shared expectations on how the school will operate, what it will offer children, and who is responsible for each entity (Hill et al., 2002). In TPS, one may see accountability as the relationship between a principal or leader, a person who needs a task done, and someone who accepts responsibility for accomplishing the task. Typically, the person who accepts responsibility for accomplishing the task is often the school or the teacher. There needs to be more shared accountability in the implemented definition.

Highly effective selected Houston-area charter schools strongly emphasize the organization's core tenant: teaching and learning that directly impacts student achievement. Not only are Texas charter schools subject to strict accountability, as outlined in their charters, but they are also held accountable in several ways. When unsuccessful, charter schools can have their charter revoked. For those reasons, it is vital to maintain the highest standards and accountability systems. The Texas Charter Schools Association (2020) shared that, unlike TPS, public charter schools must be closed after three years of receiving unacceptable ratings. Specifically for the selected Houston-area charter schools, there is accountability within the entire organization. One participant defined accountability as holding people to do what they are supposed to do in their roles in which they [are] assigned; ensuring people do their job, parents included.

So, in looking at all stakeholders, each must understand their expectations and how each will be held accountable for students' success. At the core, parents are invited to town hall meetings, parent meetings, and orientations and participate in-home visits. All of which often take place before the first day of school. Additionally, there are parent conferences and frequent communicative opportunities. As parents strongly prefer high academic quality when choosing schools, keeping them accountable supports their desires for academic quality.

One participant shared that even parents sometimes receive feedback. The idea of warranted feedback exemplifies the organization's communication and growth culture. Growth and support not only transcend among students, teachers, and leaders but among parents, as it is a unified work.

Teachers are supported and held accountable for the extensive work of growing students and closing accountability gaps through professional development, adhering to coaching cycles led by leaders, and weekly meetings that support lesson planning and data exploration. To support the work of teachers, leaders, too, are accountable for students' success by developing and cultivating teachers. Study participant and leader Jude Brooks detailed their accountability:

You are supposed to be pushing and supporting. Here, teachers are ready for and wanting feedback before we even come to them. Also, campus and central office leaders are aware of everyone's instructional plan as it pertains to STAAR achievement and overall student success. Not only do we develop students, but we develop teacher leaders. Content leads if you will. I develop them to lead content in a way that I lead it. That way I can become a participant in the learning.

(personal communication, April 28, 2023)

Further, there is an investment from the central office staff in the success of its leadership team. Staff and educational leaders are trained thoroughly on the ins and outs of the system, so they understand the expectation. They are then supported in the expectation so they can be the author of their success. The central office staff not only lead and provide the expectations and governance of the organization, but they are hands-on in a manner that helps policy remain relevant and applicable and makes them accountable for the success of leadership.

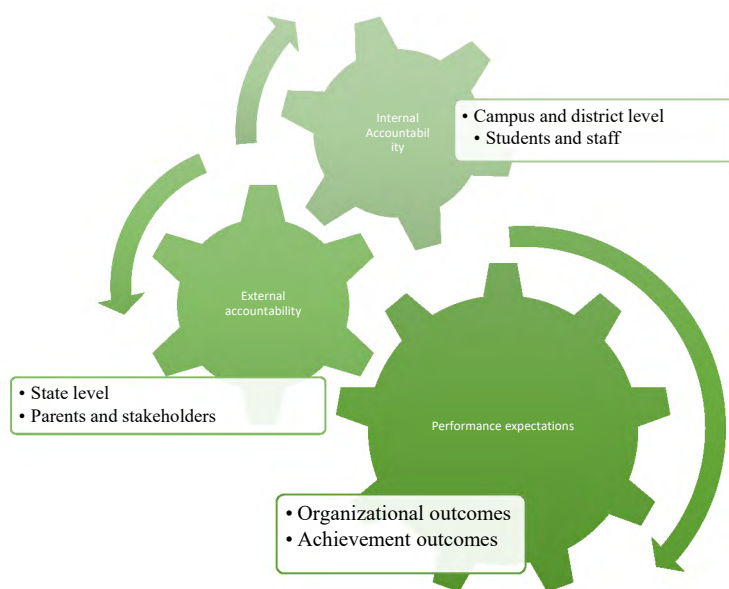
Figure 4.3 avails depth to the level of accountability implemented at these schools. There lies accountability at two levels, internally and externally. In examining at

the campus level, internal accountability lies among students and staff. Thus, internal accountability lies within the campus if the district elicits external accountability. If the state elicits external expectations, internal accountability lies within the districts' systems processes and organizational structures.

Moreover, looking at the campus as implementing internal accountability efforts, external accountability lies among parents and stakeholders. Parents and stakeholders are expected to support students' academic and behavioral functional success. In looking at the district as internal accountability, external accountability lies within the state and among the state legislature and expectations for how leaders should lead and carry out the expectations of a district.

Figure 4.3

Theory of Accountability Model adopted from Charter Schools and Accountability; adopted from Charter Schools and Accountability



Summary of Chapter

Overall, this study provided insight into the experiences, systems, and practices that lead to the success of selected Houston-area charter schools. The study included nine stakeholders whose varying lived experiences attributed to and explicated the success of their chosen charter school and the justification for exiting TPS. The narrative in this chapter presented an overview of the implementation of the study. The second section of this chapter presented descriptive statistics regarding the participants, including a profile of the participants, length in the field, whether they were an educator, and their associated organization. The third section presented the findings by research question through open coding. The chapter concluded with a synopsis. Chapter V of this dissertation presents the results related to the research questions, a summary of the overall study, conclusions drawn from the research findings, a discussion of the findings, recommendations, and future research.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The number of schools operating under charter school laws has soared over the last two decades (Kober, 2020). Specifically in Texas, charter schools have grown from humble beginnings of operating among metropolitan cities serving nearly 400,000 students, according to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) (2019). TPS is fighting to keep its students but requires reform. Charter school systems are reported to have a strong unifying focus.

While often charters intake students from neighborhood schools, charter school advocates CPRE Policy Briefs shares little research has taken place on pedagogy and systemic work in charter schools (Bulkley & Fisler, 2002). As a result, this research serves tremendous importance and works to add to the educational sector beneficial and usable information.

In this chapter, the researcher provides the discussion and recommendations for the research study, including a statement of the problem, research questions, and methods. The chapter continues with a synopsis of the findings, the research limitations, and the study's significance. The chapter concludes with recommendations for practice, guidance for future research, a conclusion, and a summary.

Statement of the Problem, Research Questions, and Method

Education provides immeasurable opportunities for overall individual growth (Brown, 2012). The United States provides opportunities for all its citizens to receive up

to 13 years of schooling to add value to their lives. There are several options for students when selecting their educational route. Sahin et al. (2017) shared over the last decade or more, the choices have expanded to educate children. Private schools offer an education supported by private organizations or individuals rather than by the government.

Traditional Public Schools (TPS) are governed, supported, and funded by public federal and state funds. Charter schools are like public schools in how they receive their funding but draw upon their own "charter" set of rules and performance standards to which they are held accountable (Sahin et al., 2017). Whether selecting a private, religious, TPS, or charter, families can enroll students where they feel their children will be the most intellectually equipped.

The mission of the Texas educational system stands to improve educational and academic outcomes for school-age students in the state by providing systems that include effective leadership practices, proper state guidance, and support to all school systems. As the mission stands, Texas schools have areas of opportunity, specifically its traditional public schools. State data reveals a challenge in ~~our~~ traditional public-school preparation for academically supporting at-risk students and students of color. Consequently, public school systems are seeing a movement of students of color to charter schools, where students experience more successful academic outcomes (Baude et al., 2020).

America's educational objective is to provide the incentive, motivation, and learning experiences to engage all learners through their PK-12 experience. In lieu, Sahin et al. (2017) noted that charter schools had more considerable achievement gains than their TPS peers, ideally supporting America's goal. Furthermore, several existing studies

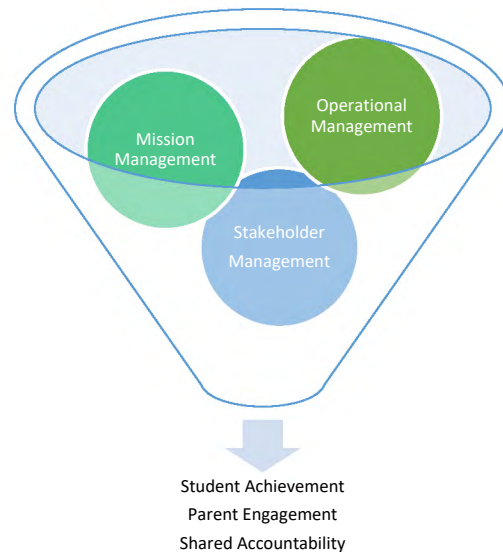
reported significant academic performance improvements in charter school systems (Gulosino & Liebert, 2020). Such data reveals why parents might describe dissatisfaction with TPS's instructional efforts (Brown, 2012).

Therefore, the general problem examined is the idea that traditional public schools (TPS) "are failing to provide equal [instructional] opportunities that each and every kid needs," resulting in an influx of the opening of charter schools to bring competition and quality to the public education system (Sahin et al., 2017, p. 12). More specifically, in addition to the claim that TPS fails to provide equitable educational opportunities, there is an influx of public charter schools opening and establishing, resulting in an annual increased withdrawal from TPS to local charter schools (Buckley & Schneider, 2009). Families are fleeing from TPS in search of a more sound, supportive, and successful source of education, leading them to charter schools. Cohodes (2018) posed the question: what if charter school practices were expanded in the traditional public-school setting?

Thus, to examine the effects of charter schools and the impact selected Houston-area charter schools play on the public school sector, one must review the organization and the systems implemented and explore its impact (Gius, 2021). Figure 5.1 explains the filtration process of intentionally managed streamlined practices that support the success of an organization. Those practices are organizational, management, and instructional, which, once filtrated and examined, merge into a whole, producing increased, consistent student achievement and increased consistent parental engagement or involvement. Again, this emphasizes the outcome educators, desire.

Figure 5.1

Traditional Public-School System Filtration of Success: Conceptual Framework for Success



To support the intended work of this research, the researcher created specific research questions to guide the work. Given the derived questions, the study will bring some closure to the gaps in the literature concerning charter schools, academic achievement, and the systemic success of their programs. This study added to the current literature by addressing these gaps. The researcher used the following research questions to guide this research study:

1. How does the structure of the organization impact consistent academic achievement?
2. What communicated and implemented systems attribute to the consistent academic achievement of the organization?

3. How does the communicated and implemented systems attribute to the consistent academic achievement of the organization?

This qualitative study used a constructivist grounded theory perspective to address the research questions. Grounded theory was uniquely suited to explore participants' experiences that inform necessary reform for Houston-area traditional public schools.

The research design consisted of interviews compiled to form a case study on the selected Houston-area charter schools. This study explored KIPP Public Schools, Harmony Public Schools, and YES Prep Public Schools. Participants were identified through snowball sampling efforts. The selection criteria for study participants included former teachers, administrators, and parents from the TPS now associated with the charter school sector as a teacher, administrator, or parent, limited to KIPP, Harmony, and YES Prep Public Schools in the Houston area. The study participants included teachers, counselors, principals, and assistant principals, providing a broad scope of information and varying perspectives. The researcher extracted the interview transcripts and analyzed data through initial coding, anchor coding, and focused coding practices. From the data analysis, the researcher organized emergent themes, and quotes were used to support the findings discovered. The next section of the chapter discusses the findings of the study.

Discussion of Findings

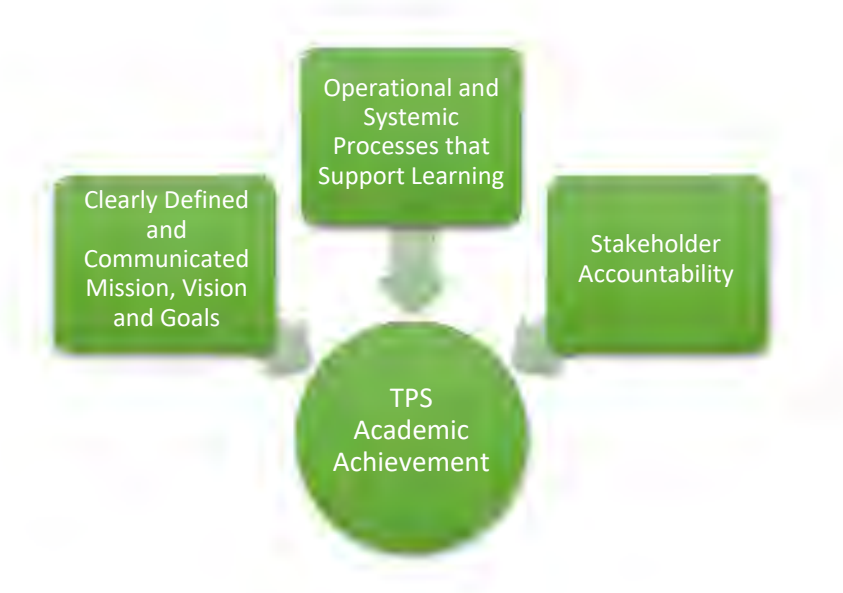
Charter schools are the most debated yet least understood phenomena in the American educational sector (Hill et al., 2002). Charter schools exist for multiple reasons in the nation, in the state of Texas, and more closely in Houston. One reason lies in their

ability to provide former traditional public school (TPS) students and students of color with equal opportunity and access to quality educational opportunities that yield student success.

Using focused coding, participant interviews were analyzed, and emergent themes were identified for each research question (see Table 5.1). A synopsis of these findings is presented in this section of the chapter.

Figure 5.2

Conceptual Framework: Systemic and Organizational Approach to TPS Academic Achievement



Findings for Research Question 1

The first research question was: How does the organization's structure impact consistent academic achievement? The findings from the data analysis were:

1. Leadership staffing is aligned with organizational goals,

2. Professional development is streamlined for all campuses in the organization,
3. The central office staff is visible at all campuses, and
4. Leadership plays a critical role in creating academically excellent schools.

Table 5.1

Findings related to the Research Questions for the Study

Research Question # 1: How does the organization’s structure impact consistent academic achievement?

Finding #1 Leadership staffing is aligned with organizational goals.

Finding #2 Professional Development is streamlined for all campuses in the organization.

Finding #3 The central office staff is visible at all campuses.

Finding #4 Leadership plays a critical role in creating academically excellent schools.

Research Question #2 What communicated and implemented systems attribute to the consistent academic achievement of the organization?

Finding #5 There is an established common language.

Finding #6 The vision, mission, and student goals are communicated.

Finding #7 The instructional expectations and individual outcomes are made known.

Finding #8 Culture of high expectations for all.

Finding #9 Parent Involvement is mandated.

Research Question #3 How do the communicated and implemented systems attribute to the consistent academic achievement of the organization?

Finding #10 Everything is centered around instruction as priority.

Finding #11 Equipping and developing instructional capacity is critical.

Finding #12 A unified system/standard is vital.

Finding #13 Accountability for all.

For this study, the participants were very open and honest about the best practices they experienced, currently experience, or know of through collaborative efforts. They

recognized the structural and systemic differences of their current charter school compared to their former TPS acknowledging if they had what their respective charter school provides in the TPS setting, they felt they, their students, and the school would be much more successful. It was often noted the importance of having control of leadership staffing to support best hiring practices aligned with the organizational goals to ensure the organization was structured efficiently with human capital to support upholding the organizational goals that yield positive educational outcomes and academic achievement.

Much like any other company or corporation, the recruitment hiring, and retention process was paramount for these selected charter school organizations. As introduced at the beginning of this study, charter schools hold great autonomy in their decision making and organizational make-up. Through their autonomy, these selected CMOs can develop strong processes to recruit, hire, and retain dedicated professionals that align with the mission and vision as well as intentionally build, cultivate, and support leadership capacity in their leaders, teachers, and staff through the development of instructional, behavioral, and operational initiatives. This autonomy coupled with what is delineated in the charter supports the desired success of the campus and the organization.

The participants also expressed that the amount of training provided was beneficial. Training took place in a whole group as an organization during established parts of the year but was also one-on-one in the form of coaching and was provided to everyone. There was a culture of supportive measures for all stakeholders. Professional development and support opportunities were purposefully planned for the entire year and were focused on staff needs. It was organized in a way that cultivated staff, ensure

growth, and support progress monitor to close instructional, planning, and leadership gaps. The training opportunities were heavy on practice to allow staff to leave as experts, ready to implement.

Further, participants shared the impact of central office staff being visible on campus and actively working with the leaders. Not only are campus leaders expected to act and lead in the work, but so are central office leaders. They lead by example in work. They are visible in the classrooms and provide in-the-moment feedback that, too, is actionable. They provide in-the-moment coaching opportunities meant to support and grow teachers and leaders.

Lastly, the first research question revealed leadership's importance in developing instructionally sound schools. With new educational regulations, the state of Texas works to ensure that school leaders are leading as instructional leaders. This is a great move to ensure more instructionally sound leaders are being produced to lead instructionally sound institutions.

Findings for Research Question 2

Research question two focused on the importance of communication in a successful organization and in implementing systems that produce success. The findings from the data analysis were: (5) there is an established common language; (6) the vision, mission, and student goals are communicated; (7) the instructional expectations and individual outcomes are made known; (8) culture of high expectations for all; and (9) parent involvement is mandated.

Research has overtime imparted systemic equalities that impede the success of children of color and students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. To remedy the deficits, the development of systems and communicating such systems to stakeholders associated with the organization has been found to support academic achievement and organizational success. The United States Department of Education (2008) shared the impact effective communication has on creating a positive school culture where stakeholders are willing to adapt and embrace change. As such, participants shared that their success laid in sharing a common language.

The participants stressed that communication was most impactful in the successes of all stakeholders as it provided a clear and consistent understanding for all. There was minimal room for doubt or misunderstanding because all parties were aware of the expectation and knew where to go to stay informed. Also, communication was accessible to all. These selected Houston-area charter schools established what was vital for their stakeholders to know to support the organization's success. The common language encompassed the parents' expectations and spanned staff and student expectations. All expectations were aligned to support one another and communicated. The valuable piece was that all stakeholders knew each person's role and what the role encompassed.

Additionally, clearly defined and communicated goals that supported the mission and vision were imperative to the organization's success. The results from this study cast light on the idea that these selected charter school organizations understood and lived their mission daily. From the students to the teachers, leaders, staff, and community members, they were knowledgeable of the mission because the campus and organization

intentionally communicated the vision and mission at every opportunity. Further the study revealed the mission lived through successive planning, return of invest and retention in school leadership, the cultivation and establishment of effective teachers and through empowering and having highly engaged parents.

Such practices laid foundational work for what took place in the classroom. Supporting this work were communicated instructional expectations and outcomes that supported the organization's mission and goals. In working to meet the academic needs of students through providing and increasing quality educational opportunities, "the defining characteristics" of [successful] schools are "the expectations it has for its students and the intensity the institution uses to get students" (YES Prep Public Schools, 2022 p. 2). Such expectations expand beyond the students into the staff, parents, and community.

Almond's (2012) work conveyed that campuses and organizations should possess a defined mission that emphasized academic performance. Having a defined mission that supports the goals and is communicated to all stakeholders is an actualization of the mission statement, and it becomes apparent in the functionality of the organization, but most importantly, in the academic success of the school. Campuses, as a result, can see the procedures that are in place to execute the mission. Participants in this research indicated such the characteristics of a high performing charter organizations include articulating and implementing a clear mission statement which aids in fostering success as there is a publicized emphasis on academic achievement.

Further, a distinct characteristic that the selected charter school organizations possessed was a culture of high expectations. When Meckler (2022) agreed to the 1990

statement issued by *Fortune Magazine* that the public educational sector was in turmoil and held low expectations for children of color; those comments sparked concern and pricked the hearts and minds of researchers and educators. All three charter management organizations examined in the study were identified as having high expectations for their students. The study revealed that students were expected to perform at high levels, manage and maintain their behavior, and give more than 100% of themselves in the classroom and in their academic studies, thus, committing to an esteemed educational experience.

Lastly the findings for this research reassures indicated that, campuses leaders and the organization at large must know the students. They must know and meet students where are live socially, culturally, and emotionally and this can only happen through parental involvement. The schools examined counted on the cultivation of strong relationships with their parents and surrounding community. These effective campuses and institutional organizations engaged their parents in the communities intentionally to become partners with the school and organization's vision, educational and support programs as well as the overall success. There are huge benefits to the success of children and its schools when parents are involved members in the learning community. These selected charter school organizations which are highly successful, worked hard to cultivate solid, genuine relationships with parents and community members, keeping them actively engaged through communicative and hands-on efforts.

The findings revealed these systems and organizations created momentum and fluidness in their ability to gain a competitive advantage on the traditional public schools

by being strategically responsive as soon as situations occurred that might hinder the success of students. That way, campuses could solve problem immediately with the support of parents and stakeholders as such entities understand the intentionality of purpose and transparency of the organization. As parents and stakeholders worked side by side with campus and district leaders to support instruction, they identify parent, student, and community supportive expectations to ensure positive student outcomes and how those expectations are to be communicated.

Findings for Research Question 3

Given the systems mentioned above, the hope is to exhibit a purpose in the system. The purpose of a system supports what it successfully does and yields. The findings from this data analysis were: (10) everything is centered around instruction as a priority; (11) equipping and developing instructional capacity is critical; (12) a unified system/standard is vital; and (13) accountability for all.

Riel (2022) shared one of the central purposes of an education is the promotion of student achievement. The emergence of charter schools in the late 1980s focused on enhancing academic achievement outcomes among disadvantaged students, namely students of color, and thereafter, other marginalized groups. While deliberations exist on the effectiveness of charter schools, participants shared information regarding the implemented systems that positively contributed to the success of their organization and student achievement. Hence, these systems were successful because they were thoroughly thought out and well-communicated to support practical implementation efforts.

Foremost, the research findings highlighted that all organizational and systemic plans were centered around instruction. Many instructional organizations say their decisions are made instructionally, but based on their outcomes, it seems the opposite. Top-tier instruction is the cornerstone of all they do at the selected Houston-area schools. It is grounded in their principles, mission, and goals and is emphasized in any meeting. To support grounding all their work in instruction to support academic achievement for at-risk students and students of color, all staff members were equipped to support all students. These selected Houston-area charter schools governed their work around ensuring all staff was trained and supported to produce the expected desirable results.

Additively, the study revealed these systems promoted achievement. These organizations and campuses held an intense focus on academic achievement as the cornerstone of the mission and overall operations. As a result, the findings revealed the underlining factor related to the success of these organizations yielded from the creation and communication of a high achievement-concentrated mission that was communicated and lived daily by every person associated with the organization. This was exhibited through the emphasis placed on student centered and instructionally focused decision making.

The findings of this research revealed effective charter school systems teach students where they are as opposed to where they should be based on age or grade level. What previous findings support is the idea that this occurs through having clear systems embedded in a vision that identifies how educators can prevent academic gaps as well as intervene once the academic gaps are identified. Such campuses assess students'

strengths, learning styles, and interests to reach every student where they are to support progressive movement. The same systems are applied to help students build the necessary strategies and the stamina to not only excel but perform on state and national assessment and college readiness indicators. Effective schools ensure established expectations are clear, communicated, and consistent and do not waver on the clearly defined expectations shared to students and parents. Based on results, these charter school systems adjust support growth in outcomes, but the expectation remains the same.

The findings centered around accountability expound on the notion that good schools are responsible not only for these students and staff but the families and surrounding communities. The proverb *it takes a village to raise a child* echoes the idea that an entire community of people must provide for and interact positively in children's educational lives to assure each experiences the most successful educational opportunity in the most successful educational environment. This strong arm of support happens when all are held accountable for the success of the student, school, and district.

Findings Related to Literature

After conducting the study and determining the findings, the researcher reviewed the derived conceptual framework and the previously reviewed literature to determine if it explained and informed the study. Carroll, an American psychologist known for many great contributions holds a Model of School Learning, first presented in 1963. What is common about Carroll's Model of School Learning and the charter school approach are the components of the model in comparison to the charter school operation. Carroll's model showed leaders and teachers must hold aptitude (the amount of time needed the

learn the subject matter), ability to understand instruction, perseverance (the amount of time the leader or teacher is willing to actively learn), opportunity, and embody an acceptable a quality of instruction. The analysis of the study revealed these selected charter school management organizations operated the organization and their systems with these same components to meet and support today's learner teacher and leader. Identifying these components support achievement and expectancy.

Figure 5.1 not only echoes the synopsis of the findings presented from the study but also depicts an alignment of the literature examined in action. The graphical representation demonstrated in Figure 5.1 introduces the conceptual framework summed from the literature, research questions, and participants' lived experiences. Further, it visualizes how each entity moves through and impacts the organizational and systemic process. This linear model presents a process of sequential, connected parts that lead to an outcome or goal.

In identifying the system of success for the traditional public-school setting, this model consists of three entities that attribute to or play a role in achieving student success or student academic achievement. With the literature and research exposed from participant review, three factors impacted and supported success at selected Houston area charter schools that traditional public schools should consider. As the basis of this research and conceptual framework, the presented factors ensure that leaders are instructional leaders and managers. The system must be managed in three large entities: managing the mission (mission management) and its implementation, the operation (operational management), and the stakeholders (stakeholder management).

The outside portion of the funnel represents the organization at-large. The inner lining of the funnel represents the systems the organization implements to support intended outcomes. Within the funnel are the governing ideas that support the system at the organization based on the desired outcomes. Each idea is continuously funneled or filtered through the funnel to support yielding the most crucial student achievement. However, two different outcomes result from this filtration process: increased parent engagement, which supports student achievement and shared accountability, which also supports student achievement.

From the results of the research, there also lies a correlation within literature regarding the system as a standard for the emphasis of high expectations. These charter school organizations conducted frequent observations of teachers to provide feedback, tutoring, and data-driven instruction to assess teacher capacity and student outcomes as well as to update teachers on their success measures.

Enhancements to the Literature

Three aspects of the findings were not anticipated based on the literature review. Those included an adopted mindset, learning as an intimate experience, and the idea that all students deserve a personalized education plan. These are discussed in the section below.

There is an Adopted Mindset

Findings from this study indicated that adopting a mindset plays an integral role in the operational success of an organization. The leaders of the selected Houston-area charter schools adopted a mindset, a vision of success, and expectations for their

campus(es) through their vision. One hears a lot about the growth mindset, but there are other mindsets that organizations and individuals can possess. There is an "innovation mindset," and "learning mindset," and a "success-oriented mindset," all of which create opportunities for shifts in education and campus culture toward improvement.

Learning is an Intimate Experience

Findings from this study indicated that learning should be an intimate experience for students and their families. What selected Houston-area charters systems have mastered is how to drill students into smaller groups; earlier on, the data revealed subgroups. In taking subgroups further, campuses and organizations can ensure that every student is noticed. Every student is afforded a personal experience with teachers, leaders, and support staff. Thus, public-school educators must identify how to personalize the experience with students. As educators and staff members get to know students, they know exactly how to help them, teach them, and provide what is necessary for their growth and development. In doing this, teaching is genuinely and authentically about service.

All students deserve a personalized education plan. Findings from this study indicated that to give students the best opportunity to succeed academically, educators should consider a personal education plan for every student. Similar to students who receive special education services, having an individual education plan, a personalized education plan, would reveal all the demographical academic and behavioral information about students that will support their academic and instructional journey.

For instance, upon entry, many staff teachers and leaders must learn about a student's learning style. They may need to learn how they excel or thrive and their immediate deficits. However, like an individual education plan, a personalized education plan can reveal all that information and house the student's remedy or prescription of success. At the high school level, for example, students have a personal graduation plan that outlines the courses they should take, the pathway for certification, and the number of credits they will need to graduate. How wonderful and beneficial would it be to have something like that for every student every year to support their growth and development and track what is needed to ensure academic success?

Delimitations

The delimitations were those that were inherent in qualitative research. Due to the qualitative approach used in this study and the focus on three selected Houston-area charter schools, the researcher could not generalize the result for all Houston or Texas charter schools. Additionally, due to voluntary participation, the experiences presented represent only those who were previously associated with a TPS who wanted to participate in the study. However, even with these limitations, the findings of this study will add to the literature concerning charter school systems that impact achievement in relation to the TPS sector. The next section of this chapter discusses the significance of the study.

Significance

The findings of this study enhanced the current literature by supporting previous findings, reframing the discussion of traditional public-school abilities to adequately

educate all students, specifically students of color, providing quality instruction and educational opportunities. Case studies through interviews from each organization suitably remove the assumptions and capture the accuracies of the organization's perspective and the work's applicability to TPS institutions. Additionally, the study highlighted the characteristics of charter school institutions that cause a family to retreat from TPSs to seek charters and delineated the distinction in success indicators in Texas area schools, specifically Houston and surrounding area cities, related to systemic and organizational structure among charters and traditional public schools.

Recommendations for Practice

For TPS Leaders

The following are three systemic and organizational recommendations for leaders and principals specifically to consider emulating:

1. Identify ways to engage in two-way communication to share information frequently with parents and community members. This practice will allow schools and districts to engage with families and make data-driven decisions to increase and sustain enrollment.
2. Revisit campus mission and goals to support district alignment and structure decision-making and instructional and extracurricular meetings around the campus mission and goals.
3. Review Campus Improvement Plan (CIP) with staffing profiles to support leadership staffing needs.

For TPS Campuses

The following are six systemic and organizational recommendations for campuses to consider emulating:

1. Establish community communication. Parents are pleased by the ability to choose their child's school, the frequency of direct communication, and being connected to the school community. The key when offering choice programs is to ensure the choice option is the right fit for the community and then market it. The idea of choice increases parent satisfaction with school. While TPS may not be able to change its program offerings, it can brand or publicize them in a way that makes the campus appealing or highlight program and course offerings in a manner that parents are informed.
2. Provide frequent, ongoing opportunities for parents to be involved and connected to their child's school. Parents ultimately want their children to achieve at high levels and have opportunities for success while in school. The best way to do that is to involve them in the learning and school environment regularly.
3. Establish a mission, vision, or goal that support the district's core values. The mission statement, vision statement, or proposed goals provide a vivid picture of the school's values, objectives, and expectations. By outlining what the school or organization desires to achieve and presenting that to stakeholders, community members, teachers, and staff, everyone clearly understands the expectations and what it takes to reach the goal. Charter schools do an excellent job of daily broadcasting, emphasizing, and embodying their goals and mission. Traditional public-school campuses must do the same. The mission statement, goals and

vision must be a common language and come second nature for stakeholders who attend or support the school.

4. Provide professional development to staff members on campus expectations, instructional outcomes, and accountability measures. Professional development provides opportunities to engage professionals in a cycle of continual improvement to achieve positive outcomes. Overall, teachers want to excel in the classroom, and staff members want to do a good job. Through providing professional development opportunities to staff members, leaders can increase learning that is presented more equitably, academic gains can be made through succinct practices to meet outcomes, and campuses and organizations can meet individual needs. Organizations cannot expect staff members to show up to work and perform what has not been specified. A guide or framework must support the desired outcome, progress monitors, and follow-up.
5. Present the accountability model for all professionals, implement, and follow through. Chapter IV, Figure 4.3, presented the accountability model for stakeholders. Moreover, it explored the role of accountability for internal stakeholders, the role of accountability for external stakeholders, and how each individual's role and accountability impact the performance outcomes and performance expectations. This model is just as important as the goals and mission statement. Stakeholders must understand what is expected of them, so they know what to do and what happens when expectations are not met or exceeded. As mentioned, learning and education and relatedly, student academic

achievement and success have implications for students and society. It is thus essential to hold all persons accountable. Think about the phrase *it takes a village*. That phrase is accurate in child rearing and the cognitive development stages of learning.

6. Equip teachers and professional staff through coaching opportunities. Jim Knight was previously mentioned concerning coaching opportunities (2020). Another educational guru who has supported pivotal coaching opportunities is researcher Diane Sweeney. Sweeney presents core practices for student-centered coaching and a cognitive coaching model worth exploring by every educator. Irrespective of the model, the model must be established, which means it must govern each teacher or staff member's scope and sequence of support. Similar to student success, each student is different and needs a different level of support. Educators and staff members are the same. Campus leaders must equip their teachers and staff by providing them with a rubric for success, coaching them to meet the expectation, and supporting them as needed to thrive and meet the achievement outcomes set forth by the district or organizational core values, and the campus vision, and goals.

For TPS Districts

The following are five systemic and organizational recommendations for districts to consider emulating:

1. Establish a brand as a district and then individually for campuses. Perception reveals that good teachers and good leadership constitute a good school. Public

schools and public school districts should create and implement a marketing plan that capitalizes on sharing information about the quality of teachers in their buildings. As one participant, teacher Danni Moore shares, charter schools have been able to establish their brand. They are good at making their school sound like an intriguing place to be (personal communication, April 18, 2023).

2. Establish a shared mission, communicate, and live it out through instructional and leading processes. Not only is a mission important for a campus, but it also is vital for a district as it sets the pace and drives the campus direction in fulfilling the district goals. The district should model the expectation of core values for campuses to follow. It is the Guiding Light.
3. Establish a tiered accountability system that is inclusive of all organizational stakeholders. Chapter IV, Figure 4.3, presented a model that hinges upon accountability for academic success. Educators, campuses, and districts must realize that the success of students is everyone's business, and no one person can do it alone. Through establishing a tiered accountability system, there is a defined understanding of all stakeholders who hold a role in student success, a communicated definition of their role, and follow-through when the expectations are or are not met.
4. Establish a cohesive tiered coaching cycle. Jim Knight (2020), a world-renowned educator and instructional leader who focuses on research centered around instructional coaching and best practices, presents two unique pieces of literature centered around coaching outcomes. One text reviewed a strategy called the

impact cycle, which explored what leaders and instructional coaches should do to foster powerful improvements in teaching (Knight et.al. 2020). This can only happen through an impactful coaching cycle. He shared that coaching cycles done well are the most effective ways to intervene in human performance. Further, Knight emphasized the importance of a coaching model and cycle for implementing and tracking visible learning. Through either establishing or implementing a coaching cycle, educators and leaders can translate research into practice. They can identify growth areas among staff and support them with layered development through modeling, implementation, and progress monitoring.

5. Create a streamlined, professional development plan tied to organizational outcomes and staff need. Hammer's (2013) findings revealed that professional development is best viewed as one component in the overall educational system that requires a strategic alignment to student outcomes, exam and curriculum expectations, and policy. Hammer's findings explored that professional development was most beneficial when it had a content focus, coherence, involved active learning, and there was value and purpose in what was presented compared to what was expected. Effective and high-achieving campuses and organizations employ high-quality professional development opportunities aligned with research-based best practices to support positive program outcomes related to behavior and student achievement. Sessions are well thought out and are focused on learning that deepens professional knowledge related to

pedagogical approaches that support the campus and organizational goals.

Further, all professionals in the organizational system or district are presented or calibrated on the expectation.

Future Research

This qualitative study enhanced the body of literature regarding identifying selected Houston-area charter schools' organizational and systemic structure and how such could be emulated to impact traditional public-school education positively.

Further exploration of the study is needed to identify what best practices are worthwhile in the TPS setting. The study offers several recommendations for further research on this topic, listed below.

1. Researchers could explore charter school systems that are not part of a CMO. By exploring non-CMOs, researchers would have a more comprehensive range of organizations or campuses to acquire information.
2. There are Houston area and statewide charter school systems that are newly established in the state or city but have a record of high success. Some of those organizations are considerable for exploration as they may hold additional vital characteristics and attributes that would benefit the traditional public-school setting.
3. Further research should be considered that would charter school success and traditional public school success within the same district. This study explored selected charter schools in one city among multiple districts. Honing in on a charter school or multiple charter schools within one school district or area

might provide greater insight on what strategies and best practices to employ for their growth opportunities in traditional public schools.

Conclusion

This grounded theory study aimed to seek out high-achieving neighborhood charter schools and identify how their defined systems and organizational structure impacted student achievement outcomes. This study examined the experiences, successes, and areas of opportunity of individuals who taught, led, or had students who were taught in the traditional public-school setting and, for such reasons, chose to move their students or seek employment in the charter school sector. The study examined the organizational development and systemic processes of selected Houston area CMOs to identify how to elicit TPS reform that yields continued academic success. The findings of this study suggested that while charter schools have become the schools of choice, there are many practices that traditional public schools could consider to remain contenders as the original neighborhood school of choice.

Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, the researcher provided the discussion and recommendations regarding this study of identifying selected charter schools' organizational and systemic structure and organizations can emulate those practices to positively impact public school education. The researcher provided a brief context for the study, the research questions, and methods. The chapter continued with a synopsis of the findings, the research limitations, and the study's significance. The chapter concluded with recommendations

for practice and directions for future research. This qualitative study used a constructivist grounded theory approach to address the research questions.

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews of teachers, leaders, and parents who formerly taught, led, or had children enrolled in traditional public schools (TPS) but now teach, lead, or have children in one of the selected Houston-area charter school organizations. The findings for this study of identifying selected charter schools' organizational and systemic structure and how much could be emulated to positively impact public school education included experiences that revealed: (1) leadership staffing is aligned with organizational goals; (2) professional development is streamlined for all campuses in the organization; (3) central office staff is visible at all campuses; (4) leadership plays a critical role in creating academically excellent schools; (5) there is an established common language; (6) the vision, mission, and student goals are communicated; (7) the instructional expectations and individual outcomes are made known; (8) culture of high expectations exist for all; (9) parent involvement is mandated; (10) everything is centered around instruction as a priority; (11) equipping and developing instructional capacity is critical; (12) a unified system/standard is vital; and (13) accountability for all. Based on the findings from this study, this research has revealed a positive outlook on charters to be considered. Charters can add value to the traditional public school setting if practices are considered. In doing such, TPS may have a less easy fight to lose students to such schools.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Request for Participation

Date

Name
Title
Address
City, State Zip

Dear Participant:

You are invited to participate in an online case study interview studying the identifying qualities and characteristics of the structures of charter schools to support academic achievement in traditional public schools (Independent School Districts).

I am writing to ask for your participation in my qualitative dissertation research study exploring the experiences of former traditional public school (ISD) parents, teachers, and leaders who are now current parents, teachers, and leaders in the charter school system. This study is limited to parents, teachers, and leaders associated with KIPP, Harmony, and YES Prep public schools in the Houston-area. My dissertation titled *“Examining effective methods and practices of selected Houston-area charter school systems that support academic achievement to reestablish Houston-area traditional public schools as the school of choice: a constructivist grounded theory approach”* is a grounded theory research methodology using interviews to support a case study approach exploring the lived experiences of participants to inform the traditional public school sector.

Your response to this request is important to add the voices of parents, teachers, and leaders who have left the traditional public schools setting in pursuit of consistent success in student achievement in one of the selected charter school organizations. Your participation is greatly needed, valued, and would be deeply appreciated. The time commitment for study participants is one interview that will last no more than 60 minutes and be scheduled at your convenience from in April 2023.

I would be honored if you would agree to share your experiences with me for this important research study. If you are interested in participating, please complete the initial participant survey linked here. Shortly after receiving your interest, I will contact you to set up an interview. If you have questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact me at 281-619-8846 or mbeene@pvamu.edu.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Best regards,

Monea R. Beene, Doctoral Candidate
Educational Leadership Program, College of Education
Prairie View A&M University

APPENDIX B

Participant Survey

The researcher will collect this information via Google Form

First Name

Last Name

Age

I am a (parent, teacher, leader)

What districts have you been associated with?

What charter school system are you currently associated with?

How long were you a parent, teacher, or leader in the traditional public school
(TPS) setting?

How long have you been a parent, teacher, or leader in the charter school system?

Are you willing to budget 60-90 minutes for an interview to support educational
advancement?

Email

Phone number

Best time of day to contact?

Preferred method to contact (email, phone call, text):

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent

Study Number 2023-022

Approval Date 04-11-2023

Expires 04-10-2024

Consent for Participation in Research

Title: Examining effective methods and practices of Houston-area charter school systems that support academic achievement to reestablish Houston-area traditional public schools as the school of choice: a constructivist grounded theory approach

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether to participate in the research study. The person performing the research will answer any of your questions at any point in the study.

Read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether to take part in the research study. If you decide to be involved in this study this form will be used to record your consent.

Purpose of the Study

You have been asked to participate in a research study concerning individuals who have chosen to leave the traditional public school setting and either enroll their student or seek employment in the charter school setting. The purpose of this study is to identify what systems and processes, if any, impact the systemic academic success of charter school systems to better support the operation of traditional public schools.

What you will be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will participate in an individual interview. The study's interview will not exceed 90 minutes. Should additional questions arise, one follow-up interview session will take place not to exceed 30 minutes.

What are the risks involved in this study?

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

The participant will not receive direct benefits from engaging in this study however the research benefits society and the educational field of study by providing leaders, stakeholders, and decision makers in traditional public schools located in Independent School Districts (ISDs) with considerable techniques to emulate or implement to support increased annual academic achievement for all students.

Do you have to participate?

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may initially decide not to participate at all or decide once the study has begun. If you start the study, you are free to withdraw at any time. Withdrawal or refusing to participate will not affect your relationship with the Texas A&M system or Prairie A&M University in any way.

If you would like to participate, please sign, and return this form either in person or via e-mail at mbeene@pvamu.edu. You will receive a copy of this form after submission.

Will there be any compensation?

Compensation will not be offered for the participation in this study.

What is the confidentiality or privacy protections when participating in this research study?

This study is meant to identify best practices to inform the intended audience. So, while gleaning on practical information is important for considerable implementation, so is the confidentiality of the participant. Specific campuses and persons will not be identified in this study unless there is a desire by the participant.

The researcher will use a pseudonym instead of participants actual names on the interview tapes. Participants will also be assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity and in some instances, quotations will be edited for clarity to not reveal the person but keep the integrity of the information shared. Also, the identities of individuals they reference locations and events will not be disclosed to protect the confidentiality of this study participants.

Who may you contact with questions about this study?

Prior during or after your participation you may contact the researcher Monea Beene at 281-619-8846 or send an e-mail to mbeene@pvamu.edu. This study is undergoing review and approval by Prairie View A&M's University Institutional Review Board and the study number is 2023-022.

Who may you contact with questions concerning your rights as a research participant?

For questions about your rights or any dissatisfaction with any part of this study, you may submit a report by email to researchcompliance@pvamu.edu or by phone at **936-261-1587/3518**.

Participation

If you agree to participate, please sign this form, and return to the researcher either in person or via email at mbeene@pvamu.edu.

Signature

You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks and you have received a copy of this form, for your records. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been informed that you can ask additional questions at any time. You have voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

Printed Name

Signature

Date

As the representative of this study, I have explained the purpose procedures benefits and the risk involved in this research study.

Printed Name of Person obtaining consent

Signature of Person obtaining consent

Date

APPENDIX D

Email to Study Participants

Date

Dear Participant Name:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an interview studying the identifying qualities and characteristics of the structures of charter schools to support academic achievement in traditional public schools (Independent School Districts) As previously discussed, I will use your responses for my dissertation research study. I will contact you via phone on (date).

In addition, as a follow-up confirmation, you shared you were associated with _____ district(s) and are now associated with _____ charter school system.

Attached are the interview questions. In addition, there is a full consent form attached describing the study. I will need you to review, sign, and return to me within three days (**by: _____**). You may scan to me at mbeene@pvamu.edu

Please do not hesitate to contact me via email (mbeene@pvamu.edu) or by phone at (281-619-8846) with any questions prior to our scheduled interview.

Sincerely,

Monea R. Beene

Doctoral Candidate

Prairie View A&M University

APPENDIX E

Interview Protocol

Start Time: _____

End Time: _____

Introduction

Share a little bit about myself and the research I am conducting. Share the why.

1. Tell me about yourself and how long you have been in education. What districts have you been associated with and the grade levels? Parents, share what districts your children have attended and how long.

TPS Setting

2. How long has been it been since you were a teacher, campus-level administrator, central-level administrator, or parent associated to TPS setting?
3. Tell me about how your TPS was organized. Makeup? Leadership?
4. Tell me about how your TPS system was structured in the operation (day-to-day) instructional outcomes?
5. What academic successes, if any, did you experience or observe as a teacher, campus-level administrator, central-level administrator, or parent associated to TPS setting?
6. What academic challenges, if any, did you experience or observe as a teacher, campus-level administrator, central-level administrator, or parent associated to TPS setting?
7. What systems, if any, do you recall experiencing or observing as a teacher, campus-level administrator, central-level administrator, or parent associated to TPS setting? Did those experiences positively or negatively impact academic achievement?
8. What was the organizational structure like as a teacher, campus-level administrator, central-level administrator, or parent associated to TPS setting? Did it have a positive or negative impact on academic achievement? Elaborate.
9. Reflecting on the TPS setting, were you aware of any processes or structures that supported desirable academic achievement? Did any of the processes (or lack of processes) impeded on desired academic achievement?
10. What impacted your decision to depart the TPS setting?

Charter School Setting

11. How long have you been associated, now with the charter school setting? Are you pleased? Why or why not?
12. Are you in the same role you were in while in the TPS setting?
13. Tell me about how your charter school system is organized. Makeup? Leadership?
14. Tell me about how your charter school system is structured in the operation (day-to-day) instructional outcomes?
15. How successful was your student/were students in the TPS setting vs the charter school setting? What differences did you see? Commonalities?
16. In what setting did you observe your student/students struggling more academically? What do you believe played a role in/caused those struggles?
17. Reflecting on the current charter school setting, what processes or structures were you aware of that supported consistent desirable academic achievement?
18. What is enticing about charter schools as a former teacher/leader/parent of TPSs?
19. What observative systems do you think contribute to the academic success of charter schools that lack in the TPS setting, if any?
20. What organizational structure do you think contributes to the academic success of charter schools that lack in the TPS setting?
21. Are there any characteristics of the organizational structure that could/has impeded on charter school academic success?
22. Tell me, how would you define accountability. In your experience, what does that look like in the TPS setting? Charter school setting?
23. What research, if any, did you conduct before leaving the TPS setting to the charter school setting before deciding where to land?
24. Is there a communicated expectation of teacher/leader/parents in the TPS setting? if so, what is the communicated expectation?
25. Is there a communicated expectation of teacher/leader/parents in the charter school setting? if so, what is the communicated expectation?
26. Given your experience as a teacher, campus-level administrator, central-level administrator, or parent how has the organizational structure positively or negatively impacted charter school achievement?
27. Given your experience as a teacher, campus-level administrator, central-level administrator, or parent how has the systemic structure employed positively or negatively impacted charter school achievement?

Closing

28. If you could share three organizational characteristics of a successful charter school that TPS should emulate to render academic achievement as well, what would you share.

29. If you could share three structural or systemic characteristics of a successful charter school that TPS should emulate to render academic achievement as well, what would you share.
30. Is there anything else that you would like to add about any of the topics we have discussed or other areas that we didn't discuss, and you think are important?

Thank you for your time and participation in this interview.

APPENDIX F

Selected Houston- area Charter Schools

Houston-area Charter Schools				
Campus	CMO	City	Grade Type	Total Enrollment
KIPP Houston High School	KIPP Inc Charter	Houston	High School	526
YES Prep - Southeast Campus	YES Prep Public Schools Inc	Houston	High School	865
YES Prep - North Central Campus	YES Prep Public Schools Inc	Houston	High School	854
Harmony Science Academy	Harmony Science Academy	Houston	High School	556
Harmony School Of Science - Houston	Harmony School Of Science - Houston	Houston	Middle	527
KIPP 3D Academy	KIPP Inc Charter	Houston	Middle	279
KIPP Academy Middle	KIPP Inc Charter	Houston	Middle	394
Harmony School Of Excellence	Harmony School Of Excellence	Houston	Middle	806
Harmony School Of Innovation - Houston	Harmony Science Academy	Houston	Middle	579
KIPP Spirit College Prep	KIPP Southeast Houston	Houston	Middle	301
YES Prep - Gulfton	YES Prep Public Schools Inc	Houston	Middle	661
Harmony Science Academy	Harmony Science Academy	Houston	Middle	556
Harmony School Of Discovery - Houston	Harmony School Of Excellence	Houston	Middle	520
KIPP Sharpstown College Preparator	KIPP Inc Charter	Houston	Middle	390
YES Prep - Southeast Campus	YES Prep Public Schools Inc	Houston	Middle	865
YES Prep - Southwest Campus	YES Prep Public Schools Inc	Houston	Middle	749
Harmony Science Academy - Houston	Harmony Science Academy	Houston	Middle	314
YES Prep - East End Campus	YES Prep Public Schools Inc	Houston	Middle	786

YES Prep - North Central Campus	YES Prep Public Schools Inc	Houston	Middle	854
Harmony School Of Excellence - Endeavor	Harmony School Of Excellence	Houston	Middle	555
Harmony School Of Fine Arts and Technology	Harmony Science Academy	Houston	Middle	598
KIPP Polaris Academy for Boys	KIPP Inc Charter	Houston	Middle	183
KIPP Liberation College Prep	KIPP Southeast Houston	Houston	Middle	262
Harmony Science Academy - Houston	Harmony School Of Excellence	Houston	Middle	636
Harmony School Of Ingenuity	Harmony Science Academy	Houston	Middle	583
KIPP Sharp College Prep	KIPP Inc Charter	Houston	Elementary	754
KIPP Shine Prep	KIPP Inc Charter	Houston	Elementary	798
Harmony School Of Excellence	Harmony School Of Excellence	Houston	Elementary	806
KIPP NE Lower School Dream	KIPP Inc Charter	Houston	Elementary	886
Harmony School Of Science - Houston	Harmony School Of Science - Houston	Sugar Land	Elementary	626
Harmony School Of Discovery - Houston	Harmony School Of Excellence	Houston	Elementary	520
Harmony School Of Innovation - Houston	Harmony Science Academy	Houston	Elementary	579
Harmony Science Academy - Houston	Harmony Science Academy	Houston	Elementary	314
Harmony School Of Excellence - Endeavor	Harmony School Of Excellence	Houston	Elementary	555
Harmony School Of Ingenuity	Harmony Science Academy	Houston	Elementary	583
Harmony School Of Fine Arts and Technology	Harmony Science Academy	Houston	Elementary	598
Harmony Science Academy - Houston	Harmony School Of Excellence	Houston	Elementary	636

CURRICULUM VITAE

Monea R. Beene

EDUCATIONAL HISTORY

Prairie View A&M University, 2023
 Doctor of Philosophy: Educational Leadership

Sam Houston State University, 2019
 Master of Education: Education Administration

Sam Houston State University, 2015
 Master of Education: Instructional Supervision

Stephen F. Austin State University, 2013
 Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies: 4-8 Education

CERTIFICATIONS

Principal EC-12
 English Language Arts 4-8
 English as a Second Language 4-8

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

2023-Present	Associate Principal/9 th Grade Principal- Spring ISD
2022-2023	Interim Associate Principal/9 th Grade Principal- Spring ISD
2020-2022	Assistant Principal- Spring ISD
2019-2020	Professional Development Facilitator- Spring ISD
2018-2019	Development Specialist- Spring ISD
2017- 2018	English Learner Teacher Facilitator- Spring ISD
2014-2017	ELA Teacher, Grade 8- Aldine ISD
2013-2014	ELA Teacher, Grade 6- Spring ISD

CONFERENCES

Sept. 2023	HETL: Istanbul, Turkey
June 2023	HAABSE
March 2023	TAMUS Symposium
Jan. 2023	International Conference on Education in Hawaii: IAFOR
Dec. 2022	TAGT GiftED

Sept. 2021 HAABSE