ABSTRACT

EFFECTIVE OR NOT: THE PLIGHT OF OHIO’S CHARTER SCHOOLS

By Percy Jenkins

The purpose of this research project was to examine how Ohio’s charter schools compared to public schools on mandated proficiency testing of students in the 4th and 6th Grades during the 2003 school year. Analysis of variance were used to study the achievement rates of charter schools in relation to their local school district as well as to matched public school districts throughout the State of Ohio in writing, reading, mathematics, citizenship and science. Results suggest there are significant differences between the achievement demonstrated by public school students and that of students attending charter schools.

This study should provide readers with accurate knowledge of Ohio’s charter school performance on standardized testing. It is hoped that the information presented will aid practitioners in consulting with parents and crafting appropriate placement or intervention for students. Although the analysis of one state cannot be generalized, the results will increase awareness and prompt critical thinking about alternatives to traditional public education.
EFFECTIVE OR NOT: THE PLIGHT OF OHIO’S CHARTER SCHOOLS

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Miami University

in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Education Specialist

Department of Educational Psychology

by

Percy Jenkins Jr

Miami University

Oxford, Ohio

2005

Advisor_______________________________________

(Dr. Gerri Susan Mosley-Howard)

Reader_______________________________________

(Dr. Cheryl Burgan Evans)

Reader_______________________________________

(Dr. Lawrence W. Sherman)

Reader_______________________________________

(Dr. Katherine F. Wickstrom)
Table of Contents

Introduction.............................................................................................................................. 1

Literature Review...................................................................................................................... 3

Origins of American Schools................................................................................................ 3

Early Colonial Education..................................................................................................... 3

Academic Academies .......................................................................................................... 4

Common Schools ................................................................................................................. 5

Secondary Schools .............................................................................................................. 5

School Reform ....................................................................................................................... 6

Charter Schools ..................................................................................................................... 7

The Proposed Study ............................................................................................................. 10

Methodology ........................................................................................................................ 12

Participants and Setting ..................................................................................................... 12

Examiners ........................................................................................................................... 12

Materials and Procedures ................................................................................................. 12

Independent and Dependent Variables .......................................................................... 16

Design and Analysis .......................................................................................................... 16

Results .................................................................................................................................. 17

4th Grade Writing OPT Subscale ....................................................................................... 17

4th Grade Reading OPT Subscale ...................................................................................... 17

4th Grade Math OPT Subscale .......................................................................................... 17

4th Grade Science OPT Subscale ....................................................................................... 20

4th Grade OPT Subscales ................................................................................................. 20

6th Grade Writing OPT Subscale ....................................................................................... 22

6th Grade Reading OPT Subscale ...................................................................................... 22

6th Grade Math OPT Subscale .......................................................................................... 22

6th Grade Science OPT Subscale ....................................................................................... 22

6th Grade OPT Subscales ................................................................................................. 22

Attendance rate .................................................................................................................... 23
List of Tables

Table 1  Fourth-Grade and Sixth-Grade Proficiency Tests: Overview of Number and Type of Items ........................................................................................................15

Table 2  2002-2003 OPT data, Mean percent passage rates for 4th grade OPT Subtests by School type and region ........................................................................19

Table 3  2002-2003 OPT data, Mean percent passage rates for 6th grade OPT Subtests by School type and region.................................................................21

Table 4  2002-2003 OPT Mean percent attendance rates for 4th and 6th grade students by School type and region ........................................................................24
List of Figures

Figure 1  Subscale passing percentage for the 4th grade ..................................................34
Figure 2  Subscale passing percentage for the 6th grade ......................................................35
Figure 3  Charter schools passing rate for each OPT .............................................................36
Figure 4  Mean attendance rates for each school type by region ........................................37
Chapter I

Introduction

If one reads the numerous articles found in newspapers across the nation on a daily basis, (for example, Dillon, 2005 ), listens to educational reports on television, listens to citizens who refuse to vote for school levies, or politicians who believe making education as competitive as the fast food industry will increase student outcomes, it is only natural to make the assumption that the public school system is a failure. To further fuel this belief, President Bush signed The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), or the Reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) on January 8, 2002. NCLB made public schools accountable for achievement results and expanded the educational choices for parents. If failing schools do not show improvement in two years, NCLB gives parents the right to place their child in another school at the expense of the school district of origin.

For parents who are dissatisfied with public schools, or those seeking a higher quality education, or for parents who desire to offer their child a different educational experience, NCLB promotes charter schools as a viable alternative to the traditional public education. Since admittance to charter schools is free, many parents are removing their students from public schools and enrolling them in charter schools in the hopes that their child will obtain higher academic achievement. Many parents are rushing to enroll their student(s) in charter schools without having any research-based evidence to suggest that their child will achieve higher academic levels. Uninformed or ill-informed decisions can have grave consequences in any aspect of life, however, such a decision with respect to education, can lead to one’s failure as quickly as one’s success.

With increasing governmental options and mandates, it is crucial to clearly understand the impact of school climate, and the type and structure of schooling on student learning. The purpose of this study was to provide school administrators, school psychologists, and other educators in Ohio with preliminary data that will empower them to intelligently discuss the expected level of student performance in charter schools compared to the level of student performance in traditional public schools. It might also add to the discussion among citizens who question the effective outcomes of traditional public schools as compared to charter schools.
This thesis first provides an overview of the historical context for public education, followed by an overview of charter schools, then outlines the study method and analysis employed, and ends by discussing the results and implications for practice.
Chapter II
Review of the Literature

Origin of American Schools

There is a longstanding debate over whether education in America originated from America’s ties with England or Holland (Monroe, 1934; 1940). The primary issue that many historians have with giving England full credit as the source of America’s education system is that there was no such thing as state-supported schools or education for the masses in England (Monroe, 1940). Additionally, educational models such as apprenticeships, reading schools, and grammar schools operated by British colonials were different from their English equivalent (Pulliam, 1968). Although New England’s Puritans promoted the idea of state-supported schools for all communities, unlike in the Netherlands, Scotland, and a few other European states, the Puritans did not attempt this practice until American colonialism (Monroe, 1940). Regardless of the debate, the premise of America’s education system is primarily of English decent (Monroe, 1940; Pulliam).

Early Colonial Education

Education during early colonial years was primarily of a religious nature (Pulliam, 1968; Sadker & Sadker, 2000). As such, education focused on moral development through biblical reading, writing, and prayer (Pulliam; Sadker & Sadker). The initial education process began in the home and was provided by family members (Lowe, 2000; Sadker & Sadker). During home schooling, students learned socially acceptable behaviors as well as vocational skills (Sadker & Sadker). Students desiring specialized training in academic areas such as reading and writing attended home schools known as dame schools (Lowe; Sadker & Sadker, ). Women converted portions of their homes, generally the kitchen, into classrooms and taught students for a fee (Lowe; Sadker & Sadker).

While many students received their education via home or dame schools, education through apprenticeship reflected another aspect of early colonial education (Sadker & Sadker, 2000). As they approached 7 years of age, boys left their parent’s home to live with a master for a minimum of 7 years (Monroe, 1940; Sadker & Sadker). Although primarily designed for boys, some girls also underwent apprenticeship training for life as a homemaker (Sadker & Sadker). During that time, the master taught the child a specific trade and assumed all responsibility for the child’s welfare (Monroe; Sadker & Sadker).
The quality of masters varied and so did the quality of education received (Sadker & Sadker, 2000). Concern over neglect and inadequate training by masters led to the Massachusetts Law of 1647 (Monroe, 1940; Pulliam, 1968; Sadker & Sadker). Commonly referred to as the Old Deluder Satan Law, the Law of 1647 not only required community leaders to conduct regular checks on parents and masters but also required towns of 50 households to hire someone to teach reading and writing to town members, and towns with 100 households to establish a Latin grammar school (Sadker & Sadker). If a town desired not to establish a school, the law provided an option that allowed that town to pay the next larger town to provide education to its citizens. Although the Law of 1647 does not mention schools directly, many historians believe it laid the foundation for schools, as we know them today (Monroe; Pulliam; Sadker & Sadker).

Prior to 1647, mostly students from wealthy families attended Latin Grammar schools (Monroe, 1940; Sadker & Sadker, 2000). These tuition based schools provided a classical education in reading and reciting Latin (Monroe; Sadker & Sadker). The overall purpose of Latin Grammar Schools was to develop religious and community leaders to direct the advancement of colonial societies (Monroe).

**Academic Academies**

During the early 18th century, attendance at Latin Grammar Schools began to decline (Monroe, 1940). Disenchanted with a system that only provided education to upper society, some prominent political leaders such as Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Rush and Noah Webster began to promote education for all whites regardless of class (Mondale & Patton, 2001; Pulliam, 1968; Sadker & Sadker, 2000). These leaders felt the then current education system limited the number of educated citizens that understood public issues, the value of electing appropriate leaders, and the new political system (Mondale & Patton). Furthermore, the perception was that Latin education was not equipping students with practical skills and therefore was no longer considered valuable (Monroe; Pulliam; Sadker & Sadker). This line of thought led to the rise of academic academies focusing on subjects such as bookkeeping, surveying, navigation, astronomy, and arithmetic (Monroe; Pulliam; Sadker & Sadker). By the time the 18th century ended, more than six thousand academies were in existence. This further laid the groundwork for contemporary public education.
Common Schools

Funded through property tax, common schools provided free education to all white children, were controlled by local school boards, and regulated by the state (Mondale & Patton, 2001). “Common schools” were created in the 19th Century to provide education to “common people” such as immigrants, farmers, and laborers (Sadker & Sadker, 2000). The biggest proponent of common schools was Horace Mann (Mondale & Patton, 2001; Sadker & Sadker). Mann and other reformers such as Henry Barnard spent much of their time convincing the business community and owners of private schools the value of providing a free, common education to all (Mondale & Patton). Owners were concerned that their businesses would suffer without an adequate pool of laborers from which to choose (Sadker & Sadker). Similarly, private and church operated schools complained because of the expected loss of revenue (Sadker & Sadker).

The legacy of common schools is that they increased the awareness of education across the nation (Mondale & Patton, 2001). Using legislation and supervision, common schools provided education in morale education, practical studies, patriotism, politics and public affairs to the most diverse population of students thus far (Mondale & Patton).

Secondary Schools

A push for secondary education began to gain momentum during the 1820s (Monroe, 1940). The movement occurred in two concurrent phases; free academies and opening of high schools (Monroe). Although academies and high schools received public funding, many of them operated similarly to early academies by charging tuition for attendance (Monroe; Sadker & Sadker 2000). However, some regions funded academies through local taxation (Monroe). Since these academies allowed local students to receive a tuition-free education, they became known as free-academies (Monroe). Historians believed that the only difference between academies and high schools was that academies daily operations were dictated by a board of trustees and high schools were run by a public school board (Monroe). Therefore, these terms were often used interchangeably (Monroe).

In 1821, Boston’s English Classical School, an all boys’ school, became the first free secondary school (Monroe, 1940; Sadker & Sadker, 2000). Although based on the principles of Latin Grammar Schools, the English Classical School taught English literature, mathematics, science, logic, and history instead of Latin and Greek (Monroe).
Even with the success in Boston, public taxation caused the general public to resist supporting free schools (Sadker & Sadker, 2000). Therefore, free secondary schools did not progress as quickly as the common school movement (Pulliam, 1968; Sadker & Sadker). In fact, it would take 31 years before a girl’s version of the English Classical School to open and 35 years before the first co-educational school to come about (Pulliam; Sadker & Sadker). However, court rulings such as the 1874 decision in Kalamazoo, Michigan that approved the use of taxes for secondary schools, help high schools overcome the resistance (Pulliam; Sadker & Sadker).

**School Reform**

Prior to 19th century, most colleges required students to pass an admission examination prior to acceptance (Pulliam, 1968). However, during the mid-to-late 19th Century, colleges such as Michigan and Indiana offered automatic acceptance to students who graduated from preferred high schools (Pulliam). This practice identified the need for standardized graduation requirements (Pulliam). In view of this, the National Education Association (NEA) established the “Committee of Ten” in 1892 (Pulliam; Sadker & Sadker). A year later, the committee of ten made recommendations that effectively linked high school courses to college curriculum (Pulliam).

The NEA shifted its focus in 1918 from college bound students to students who would join the work force after completion of high school (Sadker & Sadker, 2000). This led to the creation of the “Cardinal Principals of Secondary Education”, that identified health, worthy home membership, command of fundamental academic skills, vocation, citizenship, worthy use of leisure time, and ethical character as the seven goals of a high school education (Sadker & Sadker).

In 1918, representatives of the NEA published the Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education; the Progressive Education Association (PEA) made recommendations designed to improve social and individual welfare during the 1930’s; and studies conducted during the middle of the century prompted high schools to offer more electives (Sadker & Sadker, 2000). However, the 1983, U.S. Department of Education report titled *A Nation at Risk* was one of the most influential documents prompting education reform ((Mondale & Patton, 2001; Sadker & Sadker). The report suggested that the inadequate education provided by American schools threatened the country’s level of existence (Mondale & Patton; Sadker & Sadker). President
Ronald Reagan, went as far as to blame racial integration, women’s rights, and education of the disabled, all elements of the civil rights movement, for the stagnation of academic progress noted in the nation at risk report (Mondale & Patton).

Although many educators believed National Assessment of Education Progress reports contradicted the consistent decline in student achievement indicated in A Nation at Risk, and disagreed with Reagan’s comments on the effect of civil rights enforcements, A Nation at Risk would forever change the American public school system (Mondale & Patton, 2001). Recommendations of the report’s authors led to higher graduation standards, longer school days, increased the emphasis on academic subjects and increased the amount of homework for students (Mondale & Patton). In order to monitor the success of schools in not only establishing but also meeting the new standards, high-stakes testing became the federal government weapon of choice (Mondale & Patton).

John Golle, founder and chairman of the for-profit company “Education alternatives”, as well as other proponents for school reform believed the best way to create better schools was to force public schools to compete with the private sector (Mondale & Patton, 2001). Even though alternatives to public education had been available since the early 1970’s in some states, especially in New York, Golle’s train of thought eventually led to the creation of Magnet schools, the voucher system, and finally charter schools (Mondale & Patton). Magnet schools received financial assistance for providing “elite” students a high-quality education in the arts, science, and mathematics (Mondale & Patton). The voucher program gave funding that public schools would normally receive to the private school of choice for students (Mondale & Patton, 2001). Charter schools, were not considered the same as private schools because anyone could attend them, no tuition was charged, and charter schools reported directly to state officials (Mondale & Patton).

The primary focus of this study is to examine how these relatively new entities, “charter schools”, performed on Ohio’s Proficiency Tests (OPT) when compared to public schools.

Charter Schools.

A charter school is an independent public school that is authorized to provide education in the manner that it chooses with minimum government interference, to students who choose to attend that institution (Good & Braden, 2000). The first charter schools were founded in Minnesota in 1991 (Good & Braden). Since that time, another 39 states, the District of
Columbia and Puerto Rico have approved legislation establishing charter schools. Two states, Iowa and Tennessee, signed legislation authorizing charter schools as recently as 2002 (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). By the 2001-02 school year, there were 2,348 charter schools in existence (Frankenberg & Lee, 2003). When surveyed, charter schools identified their primary goals as (1) seeking an alternative vision for schooling, and (2) service to a specific population of students (Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 2000).

The demographics of charter schools are significantly influenced by each state’s legislation which typically outlines the number of schools a particular state can have, who can attend, and enrollment procedures (Frankenberg & Lee, 2003). As of 2001, most charter schools and 95.4 % of the students attending charter schools were found in 16 states (Frankenberg & Lee). Analysis of the charter schools in those 16 states indicated that more than 50% of charter schools were located in central cities (cities with a population over 200,000 citizens), student enrollment consisted of predominately African American and Latino students, and charter school with higher proportions of white students were located in suburban areas (Frankenberg & Lee).

In order to operate, charter schools must be authorized by a public agency acting as a state representative body (Hill, Lake, & Celio, 2002). Charter schools are accountable to the chartering agency and to the parents of enrolled student’s (Hill, Lake, & Celio). However, most states exempt charter schools from many or all of the regulations imposed on traditional public institutions (Hill, Lake, & Celio). Although charter schools promote deregulated education, even without regulations, these schools consistently reported inadequate progress in the eight areas traditionally monitored in public schools (Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 2000). For example, during the 1998-99 school year, 81% of charter schools received passing marks in the categories of finances, compliance with regulations, student achievement, and student attendance (Office of Educational Research and Improvement). However, charter schools performed significantly lower than public schools, less than 63%, in the categories of student behavior, school completion, school governance and instructional practices (Office of Educational Research and Improvement).

In terms of academic assessment, 96% of charter schools use standardized assessments, yet also consider student work, portfolios and performance when measuring achievement (Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 2000). With the exception of Ohio, 70% of charter schools in every state use five or more methods to assess achievement (Office of Educational Research and Improvement).
Research and Improvement). Nationally, the percentage of charter schools using multi-methods assessments (four to six) is 60% (Office of Educational Research and Improvement).

When compared to similar public schools, test scores of charter schools in the State of Colorado indicated high achievements on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (Colorado Department of Education, 2002). Charter school’s scores were 10% higher on the 4th and 5th grade reading assessments, 9% higher in 7th grade writing and 5% lower than public schools on the 9th grade reading assessment (Colorado Department of Education). Also, a charter school represented 2 – 7 of the top ten schools in almost every grade level and on most subtests (Colorado Department of Education). If Colorado is reporting such achievements, one must ask why all charter schools were not as successful?

When a study was conducted to see what impact charter schools were having on local school districts, Arizona, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, and Michigan were chosen because they represented a wide range of charter populations as well as demonstrated a wide range of state policies (RPP International, 2001). According to public school district’s administrators, the two major effects of charter school on public schools were cuts in funding and a decline in student enrollment (RPP International). In order to counter the threat, many districts increased their public relations efforts through communications with parents, implemented new programs and made system wide changes (RPP International). While many administrators used charter schools as a motivation to implement changes within their districts and others chose to work closely with charter schools in order to improve the overall quality of the district, some districts, who were feeling threatened, refused to grant charters as a method of self preservation (RPP International).

In Ohio, both public and private schools, are chartered through the state, therefore, charter schools in Ohio are known as community-charter schools (Fox, 2002). Original approval for community-charter schools was granted in 1997 (Fox). Currently, there are 71 community schools in Ohio’s 21 largest districts (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). According to state legislation, section 3-132 of Title 70, community schools are not held to most state education laws and regulations (U.S. Department of Education). This may be the reason that less than 70% of community-schools use less than 5 methods to assess student achievement when all other states use 5 or more.
The Proposed Study

This review of literature provided a broad overview of our educational system’s origins and outlined how charter schools were created and expanded. The lack of regulatory requirements has influenced this expansion, and has facilitated a differential regulatory reporting system for charter schools. Further, limited success has been noted among charter schools, and charter system outcomes cannot be generalized across states or even districts. Charter schools are prompting a variety of responses from local school districts, but the major impact that they are imposing on the traditional public school district is often loss in revenue and a decline in student enrollment.

Ohio has been identified as a state whose community-charter schools exert minimum effort in assessing student’s achievements. In order to assess charter schools’ performance, this study was conducted to compare standardized test results from the State of Ohio proficiency test (OPT) from Ohio’s community-charter schools to matched public schools. A study of this nature is important, to determine the educational outcomes found among students attending these charter schools. The degree of progress made by students is of interest to school psychologists as well as all education professionals. Interventions rely to a large extent on understanding academic-achievement. Therefore, the results of this study will address whether charter schools differ from public or similar schools with regards to OPT 4th Grade math, reading, writing, and science scores, and whether charter schools differ from public or similar schools with respect to OPT 6th Grade math, reading, writing, and science scores. The null hypothesis is that there will be no difference between charter school and traditional public school scores on the OPT subtests. It is hypothesized that at least one grade level or subject subscore will differ from the others in each subscale at each grade, with the scores of charter students being lower than public students.

The implications for practice and educational decision-making are immense. The inability to know exactly how many students will leave for a charter school, and the corresponding budgetary impact limits the traditional school districts ability to make improvements such as building new schools, buying new equipment, creating new programs and the ability to hire qualified staff. In order to meet the statewide OPT standard used to identify schools as high achieving schools, (and as a manner of self preservation) schools must decide whether to teach the curriculum as outlined or to focus teaching on preparation for the OPT. If the latter is chosen, students may be promoted to the next grade without having the hierarchical
skills required for continued success. When referrals are received for students who previously attended charter schools, school psychologists and multifactored evaluation teams will have to determine whether a student’s potential lack of achievement was due to a disability, underachievement, lack of effort, or a function of an inadequate educational background. Since only time, test data, observation and exposure can provide empirical data upon which to base these decisions, some students that require special educational services could be forced to struggle longer in the general education environment than they should. Similarly, other students could be misdiagnosed and given a “label” that may remain with them for a significant period of their academic careers. Finally, the impact for multicultural students and low SES students (often recruited to attend charter schools as a replacement for “failing” public schools) needs to be addressed.

What follows is an explanation of the study procedures, results, and a discussion of findings.
Chapter III
Methodology

Participants and Setting

The State of Ohio consists of 608 school districts. These districts were then divided into three regions for this study. The three regions each comprise at least one urban area (e.g., Southwest-Cincinnati, Northeast-Youngstown; Other-Toledo, Columbus, and Portsmouth) and numerous smaller town and rural areas. Individually, Ohio’s Southeast, Central and Northwest regions had sample sizes too small to independently analyze charter school achievement. Therefore, the region titled “Other” in this study includes schools from those three regions. Results from Ohio Proficiency test results were downloaded from the Ohio Department of Education’s website, http://www.ode.state.oh.us/. The 4th and 6th Grades proficiency scores from all public and charter schools that reported scores for the 2002-2003 school year were included in this study. There were a total of 96 charter schools during that year, 49 of which reported 4th Grade scores and 36 reported 6th Grade scores. There were approximately 47 non-charter schools in the data set and approximately 38 charter. Results from the 9th Grade OPT were not included because of the limited sample size and availability of data. Additionally, many charter schools did not report results for the OPT Citizenship subscale. Therefore, Citizenship was also excluded from analysis.

Examiners

The author of this study is a school psychology graduate student from Miami University with a master’s degree in school psychology. Training involved in preparation for this study included course-work that provided an introduction to and critical study of research practices and reporting processes. The expertise of one faculty member in Ohio Proficiency research and one in school climate and testing research were also instrumental. Even though these data are considered “public record”, Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research approval was obtained for this study (see Appendix A).

Materials and Procedures

During each academic school year, all students in Ohio’s public schools in the 4th, 6th, and 9th grades must take the appropriate level proficiency test. The tests are forwarded to the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) for scoring and recording. Besides individual student results being reported to each family, official results are consolidated on local report cards for
each school and school district in Ohio. As public information, the local report cards are available at the state board of education office and through the official web page on the internet. The reports on state-wide charter schools were obtained directly from the state website for this study.

The 4th and 6th grade proficiency tests are state-developed tests designed to measure learner outcomes for writing, reading, mathematics, citizenship, and science. These tests are mandated by Section 3301.0710 (Revised Code) as amended by the Amended Substitute House Bill 55, enacted in the spring of 1992.

The 9th grade proficiency tests are state-developed measures of student literacy and basic competency in writing, reading, mathematics, citizenship, and science. Since graduation requirements stipulate that students must pass all subjects of the 9th grade proficiency (and now 10th grade test), these are considered “high stakes” testing. This requirement pertains to all students enrolled in Ohio public high schools and chartered nonpublic high schools.

The proficiency tests at grades 4 and 6 are administered in a specific order: the writing subtest first, followed by reading, mathematics, citizenship and science. Tests at these grades must be given on alternate days so students will not take more than three tests in a week during the regular test administration period. In grade 9, the proficiency tests may be administered in any order, but students are limited to only one test per day. Students are permitted up to 2-1/2 hours to complete each test.

In order to maintain a consistent schedule, test administration occurs annually in the following manner, and under the following guidelines:

4th Grade testing begins on the first Monday of October for the fall administration (Reading only). The remaining sessions of the 4th Grade OPT and all 6th Grade testing begins on the Monday of the week containing the 8th of March.

Table 1 provides an overview of the number and type of items associated with each grade level proficiency test (all tables in this thesis are found within the text of the document, while figures are located at the end).

After the study was approved by the Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research, I then accessed the Ohio Department of Education website locating the proficiency data. I then downloaded the 2002-2003 4th, 6th and 9th grade data from all charter schools into an Excel file spread sheet. I then located the assigned “similar district” and corresponding public
school data. Determining that the 9\textsuperscript{th} grade data were incomplete, I eliminated them from the dataset, subsequently using only proficiency data from grades 4\textsuperscript{th} and 6\textsuperscript{th}. These data served as my basis for analysis.
Table 1.

Fourth-Grade and Sixth-Grade Proficiency Tests: Overview of Number and Type of Items

| Item Type & Quantity |
|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                       | Grade Subtest   | Prompts on writing test (4 points ea.) | Multiple Choice items (1 point ea.) | Short Answer items (2 points ea.) | Extended response items (4 points ea.) | Number of field test items | Total number of operational items | Total number of points |
|                       | 4th Grade Writing | 2 | NA | NA | NA | 0 | NA | 8 |
|                       | 6th Grade Writing | 2 | NA | NA | NA | 0 | NA | 8 |
|                       | 4th Grade Reading | NA | 30 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 38 | 50 |
|                       | 6th Grade Reading | NA | 26 | 8 | 2 | 5 | 36 | 50 |
|                       | 4th Grade Math | NA | 30 | 8 | 2 | 5 | 40 | 54 |
|                       | 6th Grade Math | NA | 34 | 10 | 2 | 5 | 46 | 62 |
|                       | 4th Grade Citizenship | NA | 30 | 8 | 2 | 5 | 40 | 54 |
|                       | 6th Grade Citizenship | NA | 34 | 10 | 2 | 5 | 46 | 62 |
|                       | 4th Grade Science | NA | 30 | 8 | 2 | 5 | 40 | 54 |
|                       | 6th Grade Science | NA | 34 | 10 | 2 | 5 | 46 | 62 |
Independent and Dependent Variables

There was one independent variable (type of school) of interest in this study with three levels: Charter Schools, Public Schools, and Similar Schools. The schools were then divided by region in the state for comparative purposes (thus region is a moderating variable). The dependent measures are the OPT mean percent passage scores on each subtest by grade and aggregated across schools and summed by school type.

Charter Schools were those schools operating on a charter issued by a sponsoring district. Therefore, each Charter school is assigned to a public school district. These deregulated schools provided parents and students an alternative to the traditional public education.

Public Districts were those schools designated as a traditional school and operated under the guidance of a local school board. These non-private entities are held to federal and state regulations regarding student achievement.

The ODE groups Public Districts into a cluster of districts known as Similar Districts. These groupings contain school districts across the state that “resemble” each other with respect to enrollment, demographics, free and reduced lunch and social economic status.

Design & Analysis

The overall design of this study was causal-comparative, in which relationships or differences among variables can be determined without being able to attribute cause to any particular variable. In this study, results will allow one to be able to identify or suggest differences without being able to attribute those differences specifically to attending a charter school or traditional public school. A Two-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze results. An ANOVA determines how a dependent measure is affected by one or more factors (e.g., type of school or region). A Two-way ANOVA simultaneously asks questions like; (1) does the first factor systematically affect the results, (2) does the second factor systematically affect the results, and (3) do the two factors interact (is the difference the same for each school type for each subscale).
Chapter IV
Results

The question driving this study focused on student achievement, as measured by OPT, in charter school environments compared to traditional public schools. Are the proficiency scores from students attending charter schools different from those of comparable sites throughout the state? To address this question, 2002-2003 OPT scores from 4th and 6th graders in comparative charter and traditional public schools were compared. In addition, a comparison between subscale scores within school type was completed to determine if performance in one subscale was stronger than other subscales for charter schools. Overall significant differences were found on many subtests. Given post hoc testing, comparison of mean scores and levels of significance, one could suggest that there are differences among school type with scores being generally higher for traditional public schools.

4th Grade Writing OPT Subscale

In the 4th Grade writing subscale, charter schools (highest mean = 54.30) performed significantly lower, \( p \leq .01 \), than public schools (highest mean = 69.58) and similar schools (highest mean = 68.26). These results are illustrated in Figure 1. Regardless of school type, when analyzed by region, no region performed significantly better than any other region in respect to writing. The interaction between school types, \( F(2,158)=13.09, p \leq .01 \), indicated that the mean differences are truly significant and did not occur by chance.

4th Grade Reading OPT Subscale

Charter schools performed significantly lower (mean = 28.07) than public schools (mean = 56.39) and similar schools (mean = 51.11) in reading (See Table 2 and Figure 1). Scheffe post hoc analysis indicated that schools in the Northeast region performed significantly better, \( p=.03 \), than the Southwest Region. The interaction between school types, \( F(2,158)=41.37, p \leq .01 \), suggested that the mean differences noted in the reading subscale results are also significant.

4th grade Math OPT Subscale

Charter schools performed significantly lower (mean = 28.07) than public schools (mean = 56.39) and similar schools (mean = 51.11). These results are provided in Table 2 and illustrated in Figure 1. When compared by region, charter schools in the Northeast region out performed those in the Southwest and Other Region (See Figure 1). The interaction between
school types, $F_{(2,157)}=65.65, \ p_{\leq.01}$, indicates that the mean differences among the math subscale results are significant.
Table 2

2002-2003 OPT data, Mean percent passage rates for 4th grade OPT Subtests by School type and region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>Regions of the State</th>
<th>F (df)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SW (n=18) Mean (SD)</td>
<td>NE (n=24) Mean (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F (2,158)=13.09*</td>
<td>F (2,158)=41.37*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>54.30 (23.7)</td>
<td>53.46 (21.51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>60.45 (2.77)</td>
<td>69.58 (7.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Similar</td>
<td>66.99 (2.16)</td>
<td>68.26 (5.84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>25.97 (19.72)</td>
<td>28.07 (20.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>40.28 (5.91)</td>
<td>56.39 (8.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Similar</td>
<td>49.53 (3.62)</td>
<td>51.11 (8.52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>17.50 (16.55)</td>
<td>20.21 (16.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>27.96 (5.03)</td>
<td>46.40 (7.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Similar</td>
<td>39.74 (3.33)</td>
<td>41.39 (8.89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>19.67 (21.56)</td>
<td>17.67 (17.74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>27.10 (4.94)</td>
<td>46.52 (8.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Similar</td>
<td>37.78 (3.57)</td>
<td>39.40 (9.20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* indicates significance at the .01 level
4th Grade Science OPT Subscale

Charter Schools performed significantly lower (mean = 19.67) than public schools (mean = 46.52) and similar schools (mean = 39.40). These results are listed in Table 2 and presented in Figure 1. When compared by region, charter schools in the Northeast region performed significantly better, \( p=.02 \), than those in the Southwest region. Similarly to the previous three subscales, the Northeast region generally outperformed schools in the Southwest and Other (See Figure 1). In respect to the interaction between school types, \( F(2,158)=34.88, \ p<.01 \), the mean differences noted in science were truly significant.

4th Grade OPT Subscales

When the mean passing rate for the 4th Grade OPT was analyzed by subscale (Writing, Reading, Math, and Science) Charter school’s 4th Grade students writing performance was significantly higher (mean = 53.46/median = 50.48), than their performance in reading (mean = 28.07/median = 27.91), math (mean = 20.28/median = 17.50), and science (mean = 19.67/median = 17.67). These results are presented in Figure 3. There were no significant differences noted here among region (Figure 3). However, the interaction between subscales, \( F(3,191)=29.28, \ p<.01 \), indicated that the mean differences noted were truly significant.
### Table 3
2002-2003 OPT data, Mean percent passage rates for 6th grade OPT Subtests by School type and region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>Regions of the State</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>F (df)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SW (n=18) Mean (SD)</td>
<td>NE (n=24) Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Other (n=8) Mean (SD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>72.65</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>72.75</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>71.33</td>
<td>76.21</td>
<td>76.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Similar</td>
<td>76.4</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>76.37</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>25.18</td>
<td>21.35</td>
<td>35.62</td>
<td>26.81*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>39.86</td>
<td>47.96</td>
<td>41.17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Similar</td>
<td>44.12</td>
<td>45.39</td>
<td>44.65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>16.15</td>
<td>7.82</td>
<td>11.28</td>
<td>37.90*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>26.09</td>
<td>34.36</td>
<td>27.47</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Similar</td>
<td>31.19</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>31.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>26.17</td>
<td>7.44*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>45.57</td>
<td>42.35</td>
<td>37.51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Similar</td>
<td>38.92</td>
<td>40.72</td>
<td>39.82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* indicates significance at the .01 level
6th Grade Writing OPT Subscale

The interaction between school types, the mean passing rate and standard deviations for each school type by region is provided in Table 3. In the 6th Grade writing subscale, students demonstrated no significant differences, p<.01, in charter school’s performance (highest mean = 72.75) when compared to public schools (highest mean = 76.62) and similar schools (highest mean = 77.00). Similarly, there was also no significant difference among charter schools by region. These results are illustrated in Figure 2. The interaction between school types, F(2,124)=2.38, p=.0965, confirmed that the mean differences were insignificant and may have occurred by chance.

6th Grade Reading OPT Subscale

Charter schools performed significantly lower (mean = 35.62) than public schools (mean = 47.96) and similar schools (mean = 45.39). These results are published in Table 3. As indicated in Figure 2, no region’s charter schools performed significantly better than any other region’s charter schools. Unlike with the math subscale, the interaction between school types, F(2,124)=26.81, p<.01, confirmed that the mean differences were truly significant and was not a function of chance.

6th Grade Math OPT Subscale

Public and Similar schools’ students performed significantly better (mean = 34.36 and 32.5 respectively) than students in charter schools (mean = 16.15) on the 6th Grade math subscale. These results are published in Table 3. No region’s charter schools performed significantly better than any other region’s charter schools. The interaction between school types, F(2,123)=37.90, p≤.0001, indicated that the mean differences among school types were truly significant.

6th Grade Science OPT Subscale

Charter schools performed significantly lower (mean =26.17) than public schools (mean = 45.57) and similar schools (40.72). These results are presented in Table 3 and Figure 2. When compared to each other by region, no region’s charter schools significantly outperformed any other region’s charter schools. As with the previous two subscales, the interaction between school types, F(2,123)=7.44, meant that the mean differences noted were truly significant.

6th Grade OPT Subscales
When the mean passing rate for the 6th Grade OPT were analyzed by subscale (Writing, Reading, Math, and Science), the only significant finding was that charter school’s student performed significantly better on the reading subscale (highest mean = 35.62/median mean 25.18) than they did in math (highest mean = 16.15/median mean 11.28). These results are illustrated in Figure 3. When subscale performance was compared by region, the region titled Other significantly outperformed the Northeast region (See Figure 3). Although not at a significant level ($p \leq .01$), the Other region outperformed the Southwest regions in reading, writing, and science. The interaction between subscales, $F_{(3,141)}=5.09$, $P=.0023$, indicated that the mean differences noted were truly significant.

*Attendance Rate*

Table 4 contains the 2002-2003 school year mean attendance rate for each school type by region. As indicated, there was no significant difference in the attendance rate of charter school students and students that attended public schools. However, when compared regionally, the attendance rate of students attending Northeast charter schools was significantly better (median mean = 94.51) than students attending charter schools in the Southwest region (median mean = 92.17). These results are illustrated in Figure 4.

In sum, for the 4th grade, charter schools performed lower than traditional publics, with the Northeast region fairing better than the other regions except in science. For the 6th grade, charter schools performed lower than public schools, and the Northeast and Southwest regions performed lower than the “Other” region.
Table 4
2002-2003 OPT Mean percent attendance rates for 4th and 6th grade students by School type and region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>SW (n=18) Mean (SD)</th>
<th>NE (n=24) Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Other (n=8) Mean (SD)</th>
<th>F (df)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F(2,182)=0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>92.17 (7.46)</td>
<td>95.23 (3.30)</td>
<td>92.3 (5.58)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>90.29 (1.72)</td>
<td>94.51 (1.29)</td>
<td>93.32 (0.20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similar</td>
<td>93.33 (0.25)</td>
<td>93.33 (0.66)</td>
<td>93.39 (0.33)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* indicates significance at the .01 level
Chapter V
Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the performance of charter schools in comparison to public schools on the Ohio Proficiency Test (OPT). The questions posed centered on what impact these schools had on achievement as measured by the OPT. In this study, the analysis of the OPT data for the 2002-2003 school year indicated that charter schools are not performing as well as public schools. Regardless of region, it appears that the alternative choice to traditional education in the State of Ohio is performing worse than traditional public schools. If the trends indicated in this study continue, one could suggest that the funds redirected from public schools are possibly sacrificing the education of those that remain in the traditional public school setting under the false pretense of higher achievement. Below, is a brief review of findings followed by further discussion.

Analysis of the 4th Grade OPT subscales highlighted three major trends. First, charter schools in the Northeast region were performing at a higher level than charter schools in the other regions. Similar districts, whose grouping was created by the Ohio Department of Education and based on characteristics such as demographics, social economic status, and number of students, demonstrated the most consistent achievement level. Third, and possibly the most important trend noted is that no region or school type achieved the state requirement of 75% of students at or above the proficient level in any subscale. However, the results indicated that public schools were much closer to meeting the state mandated proficiency level than charter schools. A more detailed summary of the specific findings by OPT subscale follows.

Public schools and similar districts in the Northeast region demonstrated a higher level of proficiency than their counterparts in writing. Students in the Southwest region demonstrated the best performance among charter schools. The similar schools grouping results was again the most consistent school type.

In 4th Grade Reading, students from the Northeast region out performed their counterparts in charter schools, public schools and similar districts. Overall, schools in the similar district category demonstrated the most consistent level of reading.

Charter schools in the Northeast region demonstrated a higher percent passage rate than in the other regions on the 4th Grade Math assessment. Similarly, public school students in the
Northeast and students in similar districts of the Northeast also out-performed their respective counterparts. When compared to traditional students, charter schools’ students performed significantly lower than students in public schools and similar districts.

Science results for the 4th Grade OPT indicated that students in the public schools outperformed students in similar districts and charter schools. The most consistent school type was the similar district schools and the most consistent region was the Northeast.

When the achievement rate of 4th Grade subscales were compared to each other within school type, charter school’s students performed significantly higher in writing than they did in math, reading, and science. Regardless of region, charter schools student performed similarly on each OPT subscale. Public school students also performed higher in writing than on other subtests and their mean passing rate (median mean = 64.10) was higher than charter schools’ mean passing rate (median mean = 53.46).

The results for 6th Grade writing OPT subscale indicated that there was no significance between students performance in similar schools, public schools and charter schools. The school type and region that demonstrated the least writing proficiency was charter schools located in the Northeast.

On the 6th Grade reading subscale, the Northeast’s public schools and similar schools demonstrated the highest level of achievement. While the region titled Other demonstrated the greatest performance among charter schools, the Northeast region performed the worst. As far as consistency in reading, there was little difference (median mean = 44.65) among students in the similar district.

In the math subscale, similarly to the 6th Grade results, public schools and similar districts performed significantly better than charter schools. Public schools in the Northeast demonstrated the highest achievement, followed by Northeast’s similar schools and charter schools in the Southwest. The fact that students from the Northeast had the highest achievement in public and similar schools but the lowest achievement among charter schools could imply that the current methods used to teach math in charter schools are ineffective.

In regards to science, students in public schools demonstrated the highest achievement and students in similar districts demonstrated the most consistent (median mean = 39.82) level of performance. Charter schools in the Other region performed greater than their peers. However, charter schools as a whole performed significantly lower than public and similar districts.
Remaining consistent, charter schools of the Northeast again demonstrated the lowest achievement (mean = 14.60).

When charter schools’ achievement rate for the 6th Grade subscales were compared to each other, each region performed better in the area of reading (Other Region’s mean = 35.62, Northwest’s mean = 21.35, and Southwest’s mean = 25.18. The region titled Other outperformed the others in three of the four categories (reading, science, and writing). This region’s performance was also significantly better than the Northwest region.

Analysis of the 6th Grade OPT subscales highlighted how even though students in the Northeast region generally demonstrated a high level of achievement in public schools and similar districts, students attending charter schools in this region are showing the least amount of achievement. This is important to note because students who leave a traditional education for one in the charter school environment in the Northeast, may actually be choosing the least effective educational alternative. Secondly, analyses also indicated students’ performance in writing was the only subscale which any school type met state requirements. Since the grading rubric for writing is more subjective than the scoring for the other subscales, the mean passing rates need to be cautiously viewed.

If public schools and similar schools are performing significantly higher than charter schools on the OPT, one must ask why? While charter schools hail innovative teaching techniques, public schools advocate strict statewide guidelines (e.g., content area objectives per subject matter-science etc.) for consistent instruction while allowing innovation as well. This in itself may lead to stronger instructional practices within public schools. These same instructional practices have led public schools to realign their curriculum to correspond to the standards and assessment established for each grade level. This does not mean that teachers are teaching to the test, but rather may indicate that students are being exposed to the materials that they are expected to know. If a charter school’s educational experience is not required to adhere to these statewide standards, and does not introduce students to the subject matter dictated by the standards established by ODE, it is unlikely that many of their students will gain exposure through their natural environment.

Another plausible reason for performance differences could lie within the sample of students being served in each school setting. Since public schools cannot legally choose which students to accept or deny admittance, it would seem that this option would give charter schools...
the upper hand in that they can choose and retain or suspend students at will. However, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has made administrators, schools, and teachers accountable for their district, buildings, and student’s performance. On the positive end, this accountability has prompted officials to seek help from intervention specialists and school psychologists. This consultation often allows teachers to access empirically-based researched interventions and information used by school psychologists and intervention specialists in practice. One could argue that the modifying of instructional techniques, aligning of curriculum to standards, and additional help that students can receive within public schools lends itself to an increase in their achievement.

Finally, teachers in the public school system, as dictated by NCLB, must be qualified teachers. As such, all teachers are certified in their area of expertise. Yet, the autonomy and lack of accountability afforded to charter schools do not require them to meet this regulation. Upon examination of OPT data, most teachers in public schools are more qualified and better prepared for their position than teachers in charter schools. For example, during the 2003-2004 school year, 100% of Cincinnati Public School District had at least a Bachelor’s Degree and 75% had at least a Master’s Degree. Analysis of a sample of Cincinnati’s charter schools (the first 5 schools alphabetically, that reported all data) for the same school year indicated that 98.76% of teachers had at least a Bachelor’s Degree and 8.36% had at least a Master’s Degree. In respect to teachers classified as “Highly Qualified Teachers”, 84.6% of Cincinnati Public Schools (state average is 93.1%) and 4% of Cincinnati charter schools’ teacher met the requirements for this classification. Additionally, 91.1% of Cincinnati’s public schools and 92.6% of charter schools’ core academic subject elementary and secondary classes were taught by properly certified/licensed teachers. The state average was 97% for that year.

In the public information domain and in political discussions (often critical of public education), charter schools have been held up as the answer to “failing” public schools. Many of the students impacted by these “failing” schools are multicultural, rural or lower SES students. A significant number of these students are being enticed to attend charter schools with the suggestion that they will fair better. According to Frankenberg & Lee (2003) 1,855 charter schools existed within 34 states, and since America’s population is estimated to become more diverse, this is likely to increase the number of students of color within charter schools. In particular it is projected that the “minority” population will increase to about 35% of the total

With changing demographics, urban flight, and “accountability policy” allowing families to withdraw students from under-performing public schools, some schools could find themselves with a smaller student body as well. With this, urban school districts are reporting the largest amount of lost revenue from students transferring to charter schools. This could imply that charter schools are disproportionately targeting minority-at-risk students or at least this is where the impact is most evident. Because of this mass exodus of predominantly African American students from the traditional setting, charter schools resemble American schools during the time of legal segregation. Achievement performance data from this resegregation of schools indicates that minority-at-risk students are not only receiving a separate education, they are also possibly receiving an unequal education (Frankenberg & Lee, 2003).

The inadequate education provided by charter schools can have a negative impact on student’s achievement when or if they return to the public school setting. Since there are very few Ohio charter schools available for students in grades 9-12, most students attending charter schools will eventually return to the traditional public setting. The financial situation of some families may allow students to return to a parochial or private setting. Regardless, unless charter schools address the deficiencies noted across all OPT subscales, the achievement gap between public school students and charter school students will continue to increase. Therefore, the data suggest that the longer a student remains in the charter school setting, the further behind the student will be when he/she returns to public schools.

For the practicing school psychologist, knowledge of charter schools, what they offer, and their performance will soon be a necessity for school/parent collaboration. Considering the rapid expansion of charter schools, questions from parents regarding these relatively new entities will become more common. Furthermore, the threat or competition that charter schools pose to public school’s administrators may prompt school officials to enquire about information on local charter schools and recommendations on whether to issue charters to agencies seeking to establish new charter schools (New York Times, 2005).

In respect to servicing students, school psychologists will have to address the issue of whether referred students returning from charter schools have a disability that qualify them for
special educational services. According to IDEA, when a student’s lack of achievement is due to an inadequate education and it is the sole basis for determination, the student does not qualify for services. In situations such as this, practicing school psychologist will be faced with questions such as; what is ethically correct, how can the school provide a free and appropriate education if services are not provided, and how can the school prevent the achievement gap from continuing to expand? Although this study cannot answer the previous questions, implications for school psychologists is that those practicing need to start preparing to address these issues.

Limitations of the Study

There are numerous limitations to this study limiting the degree to which results can be used widely. First, this study used OPT results from one school year (2003-2003) as opposed to over a longitudinal period of time. In addition, OPT subtests are not all scored in the same manner. The writing subtest has a different scoring rubric which may have impacted the results obtained on that subtest as compared to the other subtests. In order to increase the validity of the results, a study should be conducted using data from 3 or more school years. Additionally, similar studies conducted for each state across the nation would provide a better picture of the overall performance of charter schools and how they compare to public schools. In view of the previous two statements, the reported results of this study could not be generalized to charter schools outside of Ohio. Finally, since this was a causal-comparative study and not a true experimental design study, attribution of causation is limited.

Conclusion

In summary, the present study identified how one of the primary choices offered to parents as an alternative to the traditional public school setting produces different and lower results on the OPT. This implies that having multiple choices does not always guarantee that these choices are better. Yet some would argue that simply because an alternative to public education exists, it may prompt public schools to address internal issues that challenge its success. The financial burden caused by the existence of charter schools however, may hinder efforts to adequately address the challenges facing the public schools. This is especially true for large urban districts already stricken with budget problems.

The results from this study may provide the rational for ODE to review the number of charter schools authorized in Ohio, the criteria used for approval, and the methods currently used for accountability. Further, these results may also prompt school psychologists and other
educational intervention specialists to examine: achievement gaps between charter and traditional public students, instructional strengths and weaknesses in charter versus traditional schools, consultative advice offered to families, and modes of assessment to use with charter versus public school students to determine knowledge gaps.
References
Fox, J. L. (2002). Organizational structures and perceived cultures of community-charter schools in Ohio. Phi Delta Kappan 83(7), 523-531.


Figure 1.
Subscale Passing Percentage for the 4th grade
Figure 2.
Subscale Passing Percentage for the 6th grade
Figure 3.
Charter Schools passing rate for each OPT
Figure 4.
Mean attendance passing rate percentage for each

2002-2003 Attendance Rate

State Mandated Attendance Rate

Charter Public Similar

Mean Attendance Percentage

Southwest Northeast Other

School Type

Mean Attendance Percentage

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
August 17, 2004

To: Mr. Percy Jenkins, Jr., Educational Psychology  
Dr. Susan Mosley-Howard, Educational Psychology  
CAMPUS

From: Gordon Allen, Chair, Institutional Review Board for Human  
Subjects Research  

Re: Human Subjects Project:  
Effectiver or Not: The Plight of Charter Schools

Thank you for submitting the above-referenced protocol to the Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research. The committee has reviewed and approved your proposal.

Approval of this project is in effect until: August 16, 2005

Should you decide to change your procedures relating to the use of human subjects in the above project, you must obtain approval from the Committee prior to instituting any changes.

Miami University policy requires periodic review of human subjects for all ongoing projects. If your project will continue beyond the approval date mentioned above, you will need to submit an Application for Continuing Review so that the committee can review your application in a timely fashion.

Please submit your next application for continuing review by: July 16, 2005

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and best wishes for the success of your project.