Inequalities of Intradistrict School Choice in a Mid-Sized Urban School District

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INEQUITIES OF INTRADISTRICT SCHOOL CHOICE IN A MID-SIZED URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

by

Jacob C. Konrath

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School, Marquette University, in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

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This dissertation explores inequities created by intradistrict school choice policies in a mid-sized urban school district. Five years of parent intradistrict school choice forms, totaling 6,245 submissions, were reviewed and coded to highlight themes pertaining to why parents utilize the intradistrict school choice program. Current student enrollment was pulled and analyzed to show student movement trends based upon demographics such as ethnicity, special education status, and socio-economic levels. This data was utilized in interviews with building principals to determine if perceived inequities posed real consequences to their buildings. The findings suggest inequities in the intradistrict school choice process. Specifically, BIPOC students and economically disadvantaged students were disproportionately underserved as participants within the intradistrict school choice program. This led to greater segregation across the district. The findings were utilized to suggest policy changes that would lead to a more equitable intradistrict school choice process, specifically for BIPOC and economically disadvantaged students. Finally, the findings and implications contribute to the knowledge base surrounding school choice. Limitations of the study and recommendations for future research are noted within the study.
I would like to express my appreciation and love to my wife Kelly for her support in caring for our three wonderful children while I made countless trips to classes and the library. Had you ever asked me to stop pursuing my PhD I would have, but instead you always encouraged me.

I would further like to thank Dr. Eckman and Dr. Birren for their support. Dr. Eckman remained committed to helping me complete this process even after her retirement. That meant a great deal to me. Dr. Birren helped me understand the concept of qualitative research as I never had before. Her teaching truly changed the way I approach my profession on a daily basis.

My academic career has been filled with some of the most amazing individuals I’ve ever met. This includes my parents, Sue and Mark Konrath, who both dedicated their lives to helping students who needed their support most. Their selfless example led me down a similar path. A path that started as a teacher at an “alternative” high school where I met Roxanne Reedyk who taught me how to be the best educator I could be. I will forever cherish the time I have spent with all of you.
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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The concept of introducing choice to the public school system is an idea that has been explored for decades in the United States. Most recently the attention of school choice efforts seems to be targeted on large urban school districts where No Child Left Behind and other testing legislation has been used to highlight achievement gaps between white and BIPOC students. Although school choice has spread throughout the state, in Wisconsin public discourse focuses almost exclusively on the city of Milwaukee. This study explores the implications of evolving school choice programming which produced adaptive policy changes at a mid-sized urban school district. A mixed-methods case study approach was chosen to account for student movement and principal perceptions related to intradistrict school choice policies to ground understanding of the effects of intradistrict school choice on educational opportunity in the district.

The concept of choice has been explored in a plethora of ways, and locally, Milwaukee has served as a catalyst for the implementation of different choice
programs affecting public education. The city is home to the oldest voucher system that started in 1990 and grew exponentially when religious schools gained access to the program in the late 90s (Witte et al., 2014). As these changes occurred in Milwaukee and expanded throughout the state, the district under study adapted by increasing choice within the district, to address inter-district competition and prevent declining student enrollment. It is imperative to understand how this competition has affected the district, and by examining student movement and principal perceptions the study examines issues of access and equality of opportunity that developed in the process of trying to offer additional school choice options to families.

The politics and rationale behind school choice movements and the rationale for school choice can certainly be debated; however, the push for more choice does not come from just one political party or for just one reason (Maxwell and Aggleton, 2010). The initial belief that school choice would lead to economic gains and end social inequality was backed by many, and the belief that schools should be run more like businesses continues to be supported by different
stakeholders (McDonald, 2014). However, as school choice struggles to deliver on its most difficult promise of closing achievement gaps, those high expectations have led to the reframing of the claimed capabilities of school choice, dampening expectations that choice could likely solve the deeply rooted social inequalities of our schools and country. The process of reframing came from as high as then President Obama’s Administration, and has afforded the school choice movement greater life (McDonald, 2014). The concept of school choice now simply relies on a simple premise of parents preferring to have options. While that concept is simplistic and straightforward, my research shows that there are undeniable consequences for offering choice in education in the district studied. The results illustrate that intradistrict school choice has led to an even greater segregation of students across the district.

The source of the calls for school choice has been extremely diverse in origin, and the effects are often difficult to calculate and fully understand. One area that lacks research is the effects of school choice on Wisconsin’s mid-sized urban school districts. While Wisconsin’s largest
choice programs in the Milwaukee, Racine, and Kenosha areas have received a great deal of focus and interest from politicians, think-tanks, non-profit charitable organizations, and researchers, little has been documented on the effects of school choice within urban districts outside of the Milwaukee, Racine, and Kenosha school systems.

**Problem Statement**

School districts that react to national and state school choice policies created to promote competition within the education sector must understand the full ramifications of their own policies that are meant to respond to the changes at the national and state level. Districts must understand if intradistrict school choice policies are creating inequities within their own system. This research shows that while school choice is often purported as a means to enhance educational opportunity and promote equity by allowing families to choose the best option for their children, the reality in the district studied is that schools became more segregated by race and socio-economic status.

Simply stated, school districts are trying to create choice within their own district to ensure
families have other within-district options in order to discourage choice-based attrition. As a result, some districts have created policies and procedures that allow students to choose other neighborhood schools and have even created charter schools to offer additional school choices all within the same district. This response to the evolving state-wide school choice movement could potentially create greater equity by allowing choice for all, or it could create greater inequity through greater segregation within a school district based upon income, race, disability status, etc… The analysis for the district studied clearly shows a clear pattern of increased segregation among students along the lines of race and socio-economic status as a result of intradistrict school choice movement.

In 1974 educational historian David Tyack authored, *The One Best System* highlighting the falsity of believing in a golden age of education within the United States. Diane Ravitch (2011) continued this research clearly pointing out the lack of evidence to support the belief that choice has done anything to improve the educational system. The value of this research is in the discussion that it creates around
the history and current status of inequities within public education. Tyack and Ravitch present a broad understanding of the public education system from the late 19th century to the current time. However, individual states and districts pose a different challenge for research as they all act differently within the regulations that exist. Tyack’s (1974) reflection on the history of education in our country is clear, our nation’s public education system has always lacked equity for all learners, and these inequities continue to persist. This research helps to better understand the current inequities that have manifested as a result of increasing choice options within a district.

The historical inequalities described in the work of Tyack and Ravitch are further highlighted through additional research at local school district levels. Roda and Wells (2012) use statistical research and qualitative evidence to show how parents may state they value equity in education; however, they act differently when enrolling their children in the public school system. Their collection of research through interviews and observations gives great insight into how inequalities can persist and
expand in a school choice setting, and how knowingly or unknowingly a school district can implement a choice system that results in a two-tier system divided heavily by race. Proponents of a choice system such as John Chubb and Terry Moe (2011) confirm these inequities are a part of a true choice system. Their belief is that inequities will always be present in any system of education. While school choice was once used as a means for trying to make an inequitable public education system more equitable, the narrative is now shifting in a manner that recognizes inequities will always persist and producing a level of comfort with those inequities that exist in any free-market system. If we are to agree with Moe and Chubb, we must accept these inequities as a reality of any system. This research acknowledges that inequities exist within school boundaries as a result of property prices; however, it clearly shows that inequities are exacerbated when additional intradistrict school choice options are added into the system. The research also informs policy making decisions that can be utilized to reduce inequities within a school system. Embracing inequities in a “cost of doing
“business” manner that Chubb and Moe suggest is simply failing to care about equity.

**Significance of the Study**

Understanding the effects of intradistrict school choice on public school districts is valuable to understand how school choice policy at the national and state level have consequences at the local levels. School choice policy produces changes to neighborhood schools that can be researched by tracking student movement and through utilizing qualitative research methods to understand the implications through the lens of school administrators. Just as Roda and Wells (2012) showed in their research within the New York City Public Schools, what parents say they value and how they ultimately act in relation to school enrollment choices do not always align. Very few parents utilize school choice as a tool to enroll their children into a traditionally lower socio-economic and more diverse school than the one they are currently attending. Given the relative infancy of school choice in comparison to the age of public education, it becomes essential to understand the thought processes of parents when they consider school choice.
To a varying degree, parents have always had a form of school choice through their ability to choose where they reside. However, this research shows that additional school choice options and policies within the district studied are deepening the segregation of students along racial and socio-economic lines. District school boards need to understand if this same scenario is occurring in their districts if they truly want to address equity, and policy makers need to consider these implications when supporting the school choice movement.

The lack of current research regarding school choice within public districts is astonishing, and this research will undoubtedly point towards areas of need for future study. Understanding how a current school choice model may or may not have an impact on inequalities within a school district is an extremely important first step in understanding the benefits and consequences of choice within school districts, as many districts try to use intradistrict school choice as a means to compete with voucher and charter schools for students. While a plethora of research around school choice related to vouchers and “outside authorized” charters already exists, there is a
pressing need to better understand the full results related to policy enacted at the local level regarding intradistrict school choice within public school systems. Having a better understanding of how school administrators feel these policies are affecting their schools adds additional depth to research in the overall school choice discussion.

Research Questions

1. Which students are taking part in the intradistrict school choice process within the district?

2. Why are parents choosing to utilize the intradistrict school choice program to attend a school other than the one in their attendance area?

3. How do neighborhood school administrators feel school choice has impacted their school?

4. What do principals feel can be done to address equity issues within the school choice system?

Research Design

Conducting research with a pragmatist approach allowed me to research student movement and administrator opinions related to the intradistrict school choice system. (Creswell and Poth, 2017). The
pragmatist paradigm allowed for my research to better explain the quantitative data pertaining to student movement and enrollment trends in a way that can be used for practical implementation (Creswell and Poth, 2017). A phronetic approach which asks the guiding questions of, “Where are we going?,” “Is it desirable?,” and “What should be done?,” is beneficial in completing research that answers the research question in a manner that is practical for immediate use and highlights areas of need for additional research (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 60).

Statistical analysis of parent school choice was used to understand the movement of school choice families within the district to answer questions about the direction of student movement and the reason as to why students chose to move. It is essential to understand when and how school choice opened in the district, understand who is utilizing school choice, and why parents chose to switch schools. More specifically, what demographic trends, if any, exist for those that utilize school choice? After gaining insight into the history of school choice and understanding which families are utilizing this
option, it is necessary to explore the results through an interpretive paradigm.

Research was completed using mixed-methods with a phronetic approach to understand if the student movement is desirable and what should be done to address areas of concern. Finally, the fourth question of the phronetic approach must be answered. The research must address “Who gains and who loses; by which mechanisms of power?” (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 60). Partially structured interviews of building principals on the effects of the intradistrict school choice policies on their schools allowed for thematic data analysis of the interviews to best understand the power struggle within the system. This approach produced research that both tells the story of school choice within a mid-sized urban school district and informs as to possible policy changes that could limit observed inequities within the current system.

A case study approach required the researcher to compile interviews, study archived documents, and analyze student and school records. Interviews with administrators across all grade levels allowed for a full understanding of how intradistrict school choice has affected their schools.
The research was completed in a manner that explores the history and current status of school choice within the mid-sized urban school district. Areas of concern related to inequalities within the school choice system were identified, and areas of policy change that could result in a more equitable system are noted. Finally, areas of possible concern where future research is needed have been documented.

**Definition of Terminology**

**Interdistrict School Choice (open-enrollment)** - allows families to send their children to any traditional public school in their resident state or a defined region (EdChoice.org, 2018).

**Intradistrict School Choice** - allows families to choose from among more than one public school within their assigned district (EdChoice.org, 2018).

**Free and Reduced Lunch** - To qualify for the school lunch program, families have to be at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty level – which calculates out to about $44,000 for a family of four (NPR, 2015).

**School Choice** - allows for public education funds to follow students to the schools or services that
best fit their needs—whether that’s to a public school, private school, charter school, home school or any other learning environment parents choose for their kids (EdChoice.org, 2018).

Charter Schools - are public schools that operate with freedom from many of the local and state regulations that apply to traditional public schools (US Dept. of Ed., 2018).

Voucher schools - School vouchers give parents the freedom to choose a private school for their children, using all or part of the public funding set aside for their children’s education. Under such a program, funds typically spent by a school district would be allocated to a participating family in the form of a voucher to pay partial or full tuition for their child’s private school, including both religious and non-religious options (EdChoice.org, 2018).
CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Introduction

Chapter two presents a review of literature pertinent to intradistrict school choice in a mid-size urban school district. The literature review first defines the concept of school choice in relation to the research topic. This definition is narrow and exact to ensure the broader issues of school choice at a state and national level do not stretch beyond the scope of the research questions. The next section outlines a phronetic approach to research that emphasizes the relationship between student movement and school administration perception of the effects of intradistrict school choice. The review next explores works of literature that take a historical perspective related to inequities in educational choice models in a chronological manner. The literature review then states the perceived concerns and benefits related to school choice. The importance of fully understanding the multiple viewpoints of a complex narrative is vital to directing research focused on any inequalities that may exist. The review then associates the literature in a manner that resolves
varied conflicts within the school choice debate. Finally, I connect the literature to the work of this dissertation, directly highlighting gaps within current research.

**History of School Choice and Inequalities**

School choice has a complicated history as the term is used in every state to reference different laws and understanding pertaining to the actual process. Many researchers will point to the United States Supreme Court ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)* as the start of policies related to school choice as communities tried to find options to avoid desegregation. However, identifying a single point in history to determine the origin of school choice is neither necessary nor possible (Ball et al., 1996). The idea of a corporate educational model similar to that being advocated by many charter organizations in modern times dates back to the early 1900s when Charles Eliot pushed for a corporate model that centralized control of urban schools to ensure social efficiency (Tyack, 1974). In the early 1920s northern philanthropists pushed urban blacks into educational models meant to prepare them for jobs of physical labor and technical education (Anderson,
1988). The initial purpose of choice was not meant to offer different opportunities to black students; it was simply their only chance for an education.

In more modern times, choice within public education can be found mostly within the options of neighborhood schools offering interdistrict and intradistrict choice options, charters, magnet schools and voucher schools (Cobb & Glass, 2009). Starting in the 1950’s desegregation opened the door for school choice as it was used to avoid the court's rulings (Ball, Bowe, & Gewirtz, 1996); however, by the time Minnesota adopted the first charter school law in 1991 the concept of choice was being used as a way to provide better educational opportunities for underserved children.

The use of school choice rhetoric has now come full circle from its origins of purposefully keeping schools segregated to the current political use of providing options for underserved students. A noted flaw in the current use of school choice is that it provides opportunities for parents, who find a school district’s attempt to ensure equality across schools as unacceptable, to choice out of the desegregation process and into other choice public schools (Grant,
2009). The option for choice is increasingly becoming viewed as a right for families, and while it conceptually appeals to many, the results need to be understood at all levels, including the stresses that it puts on individual districts to offer choice or lose students to outside organizations. The demand for school choice plays out in a myriad of options for parents that can be best defined within the categories of voucher, charter, magnet and district choices.

**Defining School Choice**

The concept of school choice is complex, and contrasting opinions often lead to deviating perceptions and definitions of the varied processes and models. While Milwaukee is rooted in the school choice movement as a model both locally and nationally, it is important to define the construct of choice in relation to the research completed for this dissertation. The organization EdChoice, a leader in the pro-school choice movement focused on the works of Milton Friedman, defines school choice as, “allowing public education funds to follow students to the schools or services that best fit their needs—whether that’s to a public school, private school, charter school, home school or any other learning environment
parents choose for their kids” (EdChoice.org, 2018). This definition is helpful in understanding that a core belief of the choice movement is allowing public funds to follow a student to non-public schools.

For the purpose of this research I will take a more narrow and granular view of school choice. Wisconsin State Statute 118.60 and administrative rule PI 48 are beneficial in describing school choice, and for the purpose of this research I will focus specifically on intradistrict school choice options. Annually, over 50,000 students participate in the interdistrict school choice program in the state of Wisconsin, while intradistrict school choice numbers are not tracked beyond local districts (Ritsche and Kuczenski, 2014).

Choice within most mid-sized public school districts pertains to district authorized charter schools and school choice between the different “neighborhood” schools that make up the district. While voucher schools have expanded throughout the state, the vast majority of students participating in that program were already attending parochial schools prior to the expansion (Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction, 2019). Thus, for the purpose of this research the focus will remain on intradistrict school choice.

**Voucher Schools**

The concept of voucher schools is typically credited to John Stuart Mill who, in his 1838 essay, *On Liberty*, argued that parents were not obligated to send their children to school (Bracey, 2002). This belief was furthered by Milton Friedman through his works in the mid-1900s. Friedman’s popular plea for vouchers was made in his book, *Capitalism and Freedom*, and remains relevant in modern-day school choice debates (Friedman, 1962). When the Friedman Foundation for School Choice (renamed EdChoice) was created to “advance educational freedom and choice for all as a pathway to successful lives and a stronger society,” this belief provided a sustainable voice to continue the push for vouchers on a national level (EdChoice, 2018).

Currently, voucher school programs exist in 15 states (NCES, 2018). The types of voucher programs vary greatly by each state including the following: eleven programs in nine states are targeted at special needs students; four states have income eligibility
requirements; three states have geographical location requirements; one state has a low performing school requirement; and two states offer “town tuitioning” which requires the public schools to provide students with funds to attend a private school or public school in another district (Wixom, 2017).

The current state of vouchers and their effectiveness is difficult to interpret due to the complexity of school choice and those who support it for many reasons. Terry Moe (2003) suggests that vouchers were nearly dead in the 2000 election; however, they started to make a comeback in 2002. He argues that vouchers are a way to bring better education to students in our nation’s worst schools. In the same review Moe also admits that the voucher movement is largely political, but shares his belief that the anti-voucher movement is self-serving while the pro-voucher movement is socially desirable prioritizing the interests of students not adults. He details his belief that the voucher movement is led by conservatives who advocate for the poor (Moe, 2003).

The educational performance of students enrolling in voucher schools is as controversial as political ties to the voucher movement. Paul Peterson
researched three large urban voucher programs in his 2003 study on the effects of voucher schools on student achievement. Peterson’s research showed mixed results related to student achievement across the cities studied, and New York City was the one program that showed promising results, while Washington DC showed the opposite (Peterson, 2003). Peterson put in controls for some family background demographics; however, the simple argument that makes quantitative research pertaining to choice schools difficult is the issue of which parents are able to take advantage of a school choice program, and does that signal that they are more involved in their child’s education? Peterson’s research shows this when he states that overall parental approval is much higher at the private schools versus the public schools. The question then becomes why do the parents who are dissatisfied with the public school remain there if socio-economic demographics are comparable across groups?

Moe and Peterson have also changed their beliefs on the possible benefits of the voucher system, making their continued argument difficult to understand (Bracey, 2002). Bracey’s research points to
conflicting statements from Moe who in 1990 stated that school choice is a panacea that has the ability to reform schools in and of itself. However, five years later in response to research showing limited to no gains within Milwaukee’s choice program, Moe cited the issues of institutional context as the reason his panacea failed to show promising results (Bracey 2002). Peterson contradicted himself in the same manner when arguing that the Milwaukee school choice system should be expanded as it showed some successes under extreme duress; however, that statement came after an earlier statement that said nothing could be taken from the Milwaukee data as it was too small of a sample size and too restrictive in nature (Bracey 2002).

While it is generally agreed that measuring the effects of vouchers is extremely difficult due to the different structures in which each program exists, the differences in those structures are noteworthy (Moe, 2008). Often voucher schools do not require accreditation or an authorizing board. Typically private schools are allowed to take part in the voucher program, and both schools and policy makers often cap the number of students that can take part in
the voucher program. In some cases, the eligibility for vouchers is much greater, as is the case in Arizona where the voucher credit is offered to many with no constraints on participating schools (Timpane, Michael, et al., 2001.) In recent years vouchers have failed to gain bipartisan support, and the funneling of taxpayer money to private schools has been a heavily debated topic between Republicans and Democrats. The debate is often difficult due to the lack of accountability placed upon voucher schools and the varying analyses of the data pertaining to the effectiveness of different voucher programs (Bracey, 2002).

**Charter Schools**

The National Center for Education Statistics defines a charter school as, “a publicly funded school that is typically governed by a group or organization under a legislative contract (or charter) with the state, district, or other entity (NCES, 2018).” Enrollment and statistical data on charter schools varies greatly from one organization to another; however, the NCES reports a jump in charter school enrollment from two to five percent of total public school enrollment between 2004 and 2014. While
overall public education enrollment is predicted to rise through 2028, enrollment trends show the number of students attending public charter schools increased by 1.8 million students while the number of students attending traditional public schools decreased by .4 million (NCES, 2015).

The development of charter schools is mostly attributed to Albert Shanker (1988). Shanker believed that restructuring curriculum or licensing programs was simply not enough to produce adaptive changes within public education. He introduced the idea of choice into public education through the concept of giving teachers more control over the schools in which they work (Shanker, A. 1988). Following Shanker’s lead the first charter school law was passed in 1991 allowing charter schools to exist in the state of Minnesota (Finnigan, Adelman, et al., 2004). The transformation from Shanker’s ideas to modern-day charter schools is drastic, and while some supporters of charter schools still hold Shanker’s beliefs in high regard, the notion of teacher control of schools is certainly not the driving force behind the vast majority in the charter movement today.
In May 2000, President Bill Clinton allocated $16 million to new charter grants and appropriated an additional $121 million for continuous funding in future years (Bracey, 2002). In a speech at the National Charter School Conference in Washington DC in 2011, Clinton noted that he believed in charters against his campaign staff’s advice, because he felt the message of choice made sense to parents. Additionally, Clinton added that while he was Governor of Arkansas, he had tried to engage public schools in research-based improvement models; however, he was disappointed with the lack of interest and motivation from the public schools (Clinton, 2011). Clinton was determined to make charter schools part of his campaign platform; however, his stated purpose for doing so was political and driven by personal experiences rather than driven by Shanker’s belief that teachers should have more control of the schools in which they teach.

**Magnet Schools**

The concept of magnet schools first entered the educational scene in the late 1960s. Formally titled magnet schools were not observed until the early 1970s as the courts tried to find a way to amicably
implement the desegregation of schools across the nation (Waldrip, 2017). This was the case in Raleigh, NC when Wake County determined that schools would be desegregated in an equitable manner, causing an uproar with many white parents. Magnet schools were created essentially to offer an option for parents who did not want to have their children bussed around the county to comply with the district’s decision to desegregate schools equitably (Grant, 2009). School districts found that parents were more amicable to desegregation of schools if they had a public school option that allowed their children to be in a school of choice or magnet school that also happened to be mostly white.

Today approximately 3,285 magnet schools exist in the United States. Their growth and enrollment trends have been stagnant since 2011, and they are mostly found in large urban school districts (NCES, 2015).

**Interdistrict and Intradistrict School Choice**

The use of choice within school districts continues to grow as the ability to provide subsidized choice outside of the traditional neighborhood school district increases and school districts try to combat the perils of declining enrollment. Interdistrict school choice refers to the option for parents to
choose to attend a district other than the one in which they reside. In the state of Wisconsin this program is simply known as “open enrollment,” and the process is managed by the state’s Department of Public Instruction. Special restrictions do exist for special education students, and school districts can deny any student based on a lack of space. The Education Commission of the States published a report in October 2017 showing that all but three states offered some form of open-enrollment within individual state statute code (Wixom, 2017).

Intradistrict school choice allows for a much less regulated form of choice within a school district. Dependent on district policies, families are able to choose the school within their district that they would prefer to attend. There is little to no research on this process as the data is not recorded or maintained outside of individual school districts. Historically, real estate values have reflected the fact that many parents exhibit choice prior to purchasing a home, but the ability to properly choose a school has been shown to be a task parents find difficult to complete (Schneider and Buckley, 2002). Researchers also note the interesting
dynamics between gentrification of schools and neighborhoods when families are offered options within their school district or neighboring school districts that do not require them to live in a school’s attendance boundary (Pearman and Walker, 2017). Pearman and Walker (2017) found that college-educated white household were more likely to gentrify a diverse community when school choice allowed options for white families to avoid their neighborhood schools. The National Center for Educational Statistics data shows roughly forty percent of parents stated public school choice was an option for them. In addition, fourteen percent of parents noted they enrolled their children in a public school of choice rather than of geographical assignment (NCES, 2018). The overall lack of data pertaining to intradistrict school choice raises a serious need for greater research as inequities that have long persisted within public school districts could be enhanced by intradistrict school choice.

**Concerns and Benefits of School Choice**

The concerns and benefits of school choice are debated at many different levels of government, and the perceived advantages and disadvantages of school
choice are vast. Understanding the different opinions of experts who argue for and against school choice helps to understand why inequities may exist and the level of the degree to which equity is a concern. The general arguments for and against school choice are typically as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Benefits</th>
<th>Perceived Concerns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Free market approach improves efficiencies</td>
<td>Free markets benefit the wealthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current status of public education is unacceptable</td>
<td>Less accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliminates bureaucracy</td>
<td>Transfer of public dollars to private market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allows choice for all as school choice already exists through property values</td>
<td>Greater segregation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undesirable schools will close</td>
<td>Lack of evidence of increased student achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater parent satisfaction</td>
<td>Equal satisfaction of teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are many arguments for school choice. Perhaps the two strongest arguments are from those who feel a free market approach to schooling is simply the most effective and efficient means of educating students, and those who feel that current
public school offerings have fallen short of addressing inequalities within our schools and society. Milton Friedman makes a plea for school choice in his book *Capitalism and Freedom*, when he states, “The good public schools are in the high-income neighborhoods. The family might be willing to spend something in addition to what it pays in taxes to get better schooling for its child. But it can hardly afford simultaneously to move to the expensive neighborhood (Friedman, 1962, p. 92).”

Friedman’s push for a free market approach to schooling resonates on the surface within a capitalistic society. Friedman argues that parents should have the right to choose the best school for their child and that options within the educational system will lead to greater effectiveness and efficiencies. His position yields a philosophical debate that is difficult to either win or lose. Statistical data shows that parents are generally more satisfied with their school setting when given the opportunity to choose their school, and if parent satisfaction is the sole goal of the educational system, few would argue that choice would be advantageous (NCES, 2018). The argument for a free
market within education typically revolves around the belief that “one best system” does not exist and that the public school system was built upon various political wins and losses (Chubb and Moe, 2011; Tyack, 1974). These proponents believe that inequalities in the current public school system exist due to an abuse of power by those holding positions, such as school boards, superintendents, politicians, and special interest groups (Chubb and Moe, 2011). The research maintains that the cause for concern within public education is, “the public education system as a whole. Its institutions of democratic control are inherently destructive of school autonomy and inherently conducive to bureaucracy” (Chubb and Moe, 2011, p. 47).

The second argument for choice within the educational system comes from a slightly different place than a strict belief that free markets and capitalism free of government bureaucracy will outperform a public entity. The issues pertaining to educational inequalities, specifically to those of minority status, is difficult for any proponent of public education to defend. The debate is entrenched in our country’s history. For example, WEB Du Bois
(1929) struggled to determine whether blacks stood a better chance of obtaining a quality education in a segregated or desegregated school system (Du Bois, 1929). The conceptual argument is essentially that choice already exists in education, and it is the poor who have no ability to exercise choice within the current system (Fuller, 2002). Thus a common belief is that expanded choice becomes a means for the poor to have value within the educational setting, and that achievement of schools will increase or the schools will no longer exist (Hoxby, 2003). This argument for choice is clear, and often those that argue this belief do so knowing that conservatives who make the same argument do so with a very different motive in mind (Fuller, 2000). The support for school choice through the lens of righting past inequalities or for obtaining the benefits of a free market economy is often argued by proponents as the reason that choice is essential to public education. While Fuller (2000) utilized NCES data to highlight parent satisfaction when choice was available to them, he failed to highlight the fact that NCES data also showed those utilizing choice were affluent families. This discrepancy is at the core of the argument for school
choice as critics argue that the free market benefits the wealthy, leaving the poor with even greater inequalities (Ravitch 2016).

Proponents of school choice often point to the free market as a means for parents to exercise their ability to advocate and choose what is best for their children. While Friedman’s voucher concept did gain mild approval in individual states, the notion of vouchers was routinely denied at the federal level and in referenda in several states (Ravitch, 2016). NCES data does show overall parent satisfaction with schools is slightly greater when parents choose the school their children attend; however, the data shows those same parents are equally satisfied with their children's teachers whether choice is or is not exercised (NCES, 2018). A central argument against the free market belief is that corporate reform is simply a way to move public dollars to the private market at the expense of children being poorly educated in schools that eventually close down (Ravitch, 2013). While proponents of the free market within education argue that they have shined the spotlight on our failing schools, proponents of public education point out that while the national
satisfaction hovers around 47 percent, the satisfaction at the local level is vastly different, as 79 percent of parents state they are satisfied with their children’s education (Ravitch, 2013; Swift, 2017).

The much more difficult debate within school choice is strikingly similar to the debate Du Bois had while reflecting on years of inequality for blacks within the educational setting (Du Bois, 1929). Du Bois first argued that desegregation was essential for society to bridge racial divides; however, he later argued that separate but equal may offer the most practical chance for the education of black students. The belief that our capitalist economy creates inequalities that schools cannot overcome is crucial in understanding the school choice opponent's adversarial reply to those who feel free markets and choice will create a better and more equitable system for all (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). The complexity of the argument was shown when civil rights activist and former Milwaukee Public School Superintendent Howard Fuller argued for the creation of voucher schools in Milwaukee, while the local branch of the NAACP and
other civil rights groups argued against the plan (Ravitch, 2016).

While the charter school concept is attributed to Albert Shanker, he showed a change in beliefs as he denounced the choice movement when it was instituted across many states in a manner he felt was a “quick fix that wouldn’t fix anything.” (Ravitch, 2016). Ravitch (2016), herself an early proponent for choice who turned fierce opponent, notes the lack of statistical difference in student performance across charters, vouchers, and public schools. As choice has been further introduced into the public school sector, southern states have seen increased segregation trends in more than three quarters of their schools (Orfield and Yun, 1999). Critics point to the current status of the Minnesota public schools where charter school laws were first introduced. Research shows that after fifteen years of charter schools, the state’s schools have “grown more segregated and the state’s nation-leading academic achievement gap refuses to close” (Magan, 2017). A similar finding at the national level in the Associated Press analysis shows that charter schools are, “among the nation’s most segregated...more than 1,000 of the nation’s 6,747
charter schools had minority enrollment of at least 99 percent, and the number has been rising steadily” (Moreno, Ivan, and Fenn, 2017). Chubb and Moe note that they have few concerns related to equity as it is not the priority of their preferred educational system. They simply believe that inequities will be present in any system, and they believe a free-market approach will provide some options for families that cannot afford to spend additional dollars on schooling (Chub and Moe, 2011).

The argument for and against school choice is complicated and becomes personal to many different people and organizations. Ravitch’s ability to plot the historical deficiencies of choice and the lack of accountability within the system makes a strong argument for the concern that choice has siphoned enormous amounts of public dollars that could have been used to benefit an underfunded public education system. She draws attention to the fact that the current choice system, comprised of mostly charter schools, is very similar to the system devised by Chubb and Moe, and a far stretch from the beliefs of Shanker (Ravitch, 2016). When understanding the true intentions and belief of that system we must note that
Chubb and Moe (1991) were not overly concerned with equity in schools when they published Politics, Markets, and America’s Schools. Their work concluded with recommendations for a free market system that included very forthright dialogue around the notion of equity in which they suggest, among other things:

- Schools must be free to admit as many or as few students as they want, based on whatever criteria they think relevant – intelligence, interest, motivation, behavior, special needs—and they must be free to exercise their own, informal judgments about individual applicants.

- Schools will set their own “tuitions.”

- Schools must also be free to expel students or deny them readmission when, based on their own experience and standards, they believe the situation warrants it.

- When it comes to performance, schools are held accountable from below, by parents and students who directly experience their services and are free to choose.

The public is left to decipher inconsistent data, changing positions from advocates like Howard Fuller,
complete pivots in beliefs from leaders like Diane Ravitch, and a shift away from a Shanker teacher-led model of schools. The more recent research within school choice leans in the direction of political wins and losses. Success may not necessarily be about getting academic results but rather finding an “action space” that aligns important stakeholders in a manner that produces school choice opportunities with little attention to academic achievement. The focus becomes winning in the legislature rather than winning in the classroom (McDonald, 2014).

When choice happens for the sake of choice the perceived benefits beyond the sense of parents feeling they have greater control of their child’s education greatly diminish. The reality of the increase in school choice is previously noted in the results from recent research studies showing increased segregation with no discernable impact on student achievement. Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, and Wang note this in their research stating, “Without appropriate measures to equalize information and mobility, studies show that utilization of educational options—including vouchers and private academies, in addition to charter schools—results in higher levels
of segregation than if students attended assigned zone schools” (Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawlye, Wang, 2011, pg. 6). This concern is highlighted by the research of Roda and Wells when they introduce the notion of applying Bourdieu’s “cleft” or “fractured habitus” as a cause for concern. Parents state they prefer to send their children to neighborhood schools with diversity but ultimately use the choice system to do just the opposite, resulting in greater segregation within the studied school district (Roda and Wells, 2012). While free market believers like Friedman, Chubb, and Moe would state they believe structures could be put in place to correct and improve inequalities within the current system, historians such as Ravitch and researchers such as Roda and Wells point out that the results are never as promised.

**Gaps in Research Literature**

The work of Roda and Wells (2012) not only shows how privileged parents are able to take advantage of a school choice system, creating a segregated schooling system, but also shows how schools and districts are structuring themselves to best mitigate the issue of “white flight.” School districts in states with voucher and open-enrollment legislations, like that of
Wisconsin, feel forced to implement school choice policies to answer the threat of declining enrollment. The effects of these school choice policies are rarely studied, and research is needed to ensure that inequities are not being created or exasperated as a result of implementation. Research in the New York City school district showed that parents often stated they valued diversity, and even chose to live in diverse neighborhoods, but when it came time to send their children to school they chose to utilize school choice options to enroll their children in predominately white schools (Rhoda and Wells, 2012). Rhoda and Wells (2012) noted this occurrence as a fractured habitus, as parents who value diversity chose to “choice” their children out of diverse neighborhood schools and into segregated choice schools. The end result is segregation within school districts that is not necessarily seen within the neighborhoods they serve.

While extensive work has been done to evaluate, criticize and promote vouchers, charters, and other choice methods within large urban metropolitan areas, very little has been done to understand the effects of choice within smaller mid-size urban districts. In
the state of Wisconsin most districts offer charter schools along with interdistrict and intradistrict school choice. Research is lacking as to why school districts offer the current choice options they do, how choice is altering school districts (specifically in terms of equality), and whether the outcomes are those that are sought. Research is needed to direct future policy decisions and to help districts understand who currently holds power within the organization and who is being left behind, powerless.

**Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this research is most beneficial in helping to ensure that the case study is specific in both its unit of study and the research results (Yin 1994). Huberman, Miles, and Saldana (2014) reiterate this point when stating, “a conceptual framework forces you to be selective - to decide which variables are most important, which relationships are likely to be most meaningful, and, as a consequence, what information should be collected and analyzed - at least at the outset” (pg 20). Following the phronetic approach to this research ensures that I am selective in determining what data should be collected and analyzed. The data
analysis ensures the case study is evaluative, and the phronetic approach ensures I conclude by addressing Flyvbjerg’s final question, “Who gains and who loses; by which mechanisms of power?” (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p.60).

The conceptual framework for this research helped to delineate the process and people involved in each of the processes. While the students and parents may be the obvious end results for an intradistrict school choice policy, this study takes a different approach to understand the end result at the school level, specifically how the principals view the effects of the intradistrict school choice on their schools in relation to perceived inequities. My research was narrowed to a local district level; however, my review of literature helps to position that research in response to the changes at federal and state level.

The conceptual framework shows the need for an initial understanding of the student movement and demographics through a quantitative lens before a qualitative analysis was started. Once cognizant of the nature of the student movement, my research moved to better understand parent preferences and perceived inequities which were then highlighted through
interviews with building principals. The conceptual framework highlights the pragmatic paradigm in alignment with an evaluative case study design that follows a phronetic research approach. The research questions align to the phronetic questions posed by Flyvbjerg (2001) in a manner that produces an evaluative case study. The focus of the research remains on the final outcome, highlighting the concept of power and inequities and those that benefit and suffer as a result.

Figure 1
Conceptual Framework

State/Federal Policy → District Policy → School Results
The conceptual framework for this research starts with an understanding of the school choice policies at all levels of government. It then focuses on the intradistrict school choice policies created by the district’s school board and cabinet level administration. The effects of those policies are then examined through a quantitative understanding of student movement. After student movement is highlighted through a quantitative analysis the research focuses on parent perceptions and the effects of the intradistrict school choice through the lens of the school principal.

**Research Questions**

Flyvbjerg (2001) defines his phronetic approach as one based upon ethics that allows for “deliberation about values with reference to praxis. Pragmatic, variable, context-dependent. Oriented toward action. Based on practical value-rationality” (pg. 57). His value-rational questions are highlighted as a means to guide my research questions, giving perspective to the power and inequities as viewed by principals within an intradistrict school choice program (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 60).
Flyvbjerg’s (2001) first phronetic question asks, “Where are we going?” This is an important question within this case study as I must show the history of the process, along with the goals and the current results of the school choice program. The initial research question for this evaluative case study is the following: Which students are taking part in the intradistrict school choice process in the researched district? A quantitative review of student movement based upon socio-economic status, ethnicity, and disability status allows for an understanding of where the district is going in terms of student movement related to the intradistrict school choice policy, and the quantitative data provides background information when interviewing principals on the effects of the intradistrict school choice program on their school.

With an understanding of what the student movement looks like within the district related to intradistrict school choice, the research moved to a phase that is qualitative in nature. Understanding parents’ rationale for school choice was beneficial in understanding where the district is going as it allows the research to explain why parents are choosing to utilize the intradistrict school choice process to
choose a school outside of their neighborhood. The analysis of parent school choice request forms answers the second research question of why parents are choosing to utilize the intradistrict school choice program to have their children attend a school other than the one in their attendance area. This data provides an understanding of the parent rationale for having their child(ren) take part in the intradistrict school choice process.

Flyvbjerg’s (2001) second question asks “Is it desirable?” This question is answered by interviewing principals based on the overarching research question of how neighborhood school administrators feel school choice has impacted their schools. Properly conducted interviews within a case study format allowed the researcher to highlight the various beliefs of building principals related to the effects of school choice on their buildings.

The question of “Who gains and who loses; by which mechanisms of power?” was also answered as the quantitative analysis of the intradistrict school choice program was utilized in the interviewing of the principals. The overarching research question asks if the district’s intradistrict school choice policies
create inequities within the school system. This was answered as principals reflected on the effects of greater segregation across the district as a result of the intradistrict school choice program, especially in the areas of race and socio-economic status. Those “who gained and who lost” were evident in both the quantitative study and in the principal interviews.

The final question asks “What should be done?”. Interview questions targeted at answering the research question of what principals feel can be done to address equity issues within the school choice system were utilized to reflect the views of principals as to what can be done to create a better intradistrict school choice program. Differing opinions vary based upon the demographics of the school the individual principal represents, and the interview data allows for the final question of the evaluative case study to be answered.

A nuanced understanding of student movement, parent rationale for that movement, and principal beliefs and opinions on the impact and possible changes of the intradistrict school choice policy allowed for the evaluative case study to be complete in its outcome.
Fractured Habitus

An emergent aspect of the findings required additional theoretical tools to address contradictions in parents’ choices and their stated values. I incorporated a concept from Bourdieu’s cleft habitus theory to address this confounding finding. Bourdieu’s theory explains the concept of how individuals internalize their status and social position in society, however, the relevant concept for the purpose of this study is a cleft or fractured habitus. Rhoda and Wells (2012) used the theory of fractured habitus similarly to explain parent’s choice with regard to segregated schools. The increased segregation within schools as a result of the intradistrict school choice program clearly shows who gained and lost, and it points towards a fractured habitus among parents. The increased segregation along the lines of race and income are likely a result of how “individuals internalize their class status and social position into their tastes and worldview, which then reinforce that very same social position and unconsciously reproduce one’s status” (Lee and Kramer, 2013, pp. 18-19). This fractured habitus leaves parents knowingly and unknowingly seeking out a school
that reinforces their social position, rather than celebrating the diversity that exists within their neighborhood school.

Through researching parents' positive comments and beliefs related to diversity in schools, Roda and Wells (2012) noted that parents do not always act in accordance with their beliefs. The fractured habitus that they brought attention to showed how parents stated they valued diversity, but when school registration neared, the parents enrolled their children in less diverse schools. Roda and Wells (2012) attributed this fractured habitus to mostly social influences related to friends and family strongly recommending schools that they previously had positive experiences with. It is likely that a fractured habitus exists within the district being studied, and that while some parents were open to stating their fears regarding poverty and safety, they were less likely to mention fears related to race and disability status.
CHAPTER III

Research Methods

In order to answer the research questions presented at the end of chapter two this case study utilized a mixed-methods approach to highlight the inequities created as a result of the intradistrict school choice policy utilized by the studied district. A mixed-methods case study analysis allows for a qualitative understanding of how principals of these schools feel the intradistrict school choice policy and outcomes are affecting their individual schools. In addition, quantitative data is utilized to assist in shaping the appropriate analysis for the qualitative component. A pragmatic approach to the research adds authenticity to the quantitative data through interviews with principals, and issues with inequities are highlighted by the findings. In summary, this approach allows the data to show where student movement is occurring and the effects of that movement on the school buildings through the lens of school administrators.

Phronetic Research

Understanding and assessing the outcomes of public policy related to school choice is a
complicated process, as many variables need to be accounted for and they are difficult to control. Literature specific to school policy gives direction to this process by examining normative, structural, constituent, and technical dimensions to research (Cooper, Fusarelli, and Randall, 2004). While understanding the beliefs, government arrangements, networking, and implementation of public policies is crucial in determining the effectiveness of school policy, it falls short of directly posing the question of who gains and who loses as a result of the policy. Focusing this research on inequalities within the intradistrict school choice process is the focus of this research.

A phronetic approach asks these guiding questions: “Where are we going?”, “Is it desirable?”, and “What should be done?”. This guided my research in a direction that is both immediately valuable and also shows the need for advanced research in specific areas (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 60). I give preference to phronetic approach in this study as it offered me the ability to research both current practice and results. The approach provides an indication of where current trends are likely to move in the future. The
pragmatic praxis for the research is simple in nature as having a better common sense understanding of inequalities within a school choice process can allow for both discussion and policy change that will better reflect the needs of the entire school community. Ultimately, a dialogical approach allows my research to take on meaning that is far greater than statistics when tilting the imbalance of power.

Cooper, Fuarelli, and Randall (2004) navigate school choice policy research through the frameworks of normative, structural, constituent and technical dimensions. This framework is effective in evaluating the effects of school choice; however, it lacks emphasis pertaining to the results of the policy through the lens of equity. Their research lends itself to a portion of Flyvbjerg’s phronetic approach, but the importance of Flyvbjerg’s work requires researchers to fully understand who holds power within a given policy and how those holding power benefit from that power. I utilized the phronetic approach as means to explain who holds and benefits from the power granted within intradistrict school choice policy. Power studies have a strong tradition from Machiavelli’s beliefs that those holding power need to
be unprincipled and manipulative to Bourdieu’s “habitus” that reflects upon the social and cultural evolution of power. To fully understand who holds power, my research moves beyond purely quantitative data to delineate the complexity of the power struggles that exist, and I try to give a voice to those who do not dominate the power (Flyvberg, 2002).

When trying to understand the imbalance of power within a school choice system, I was cognizant of the five aspects of power presented by Lisa Delpit (1988). Viewing Delpit’s (1998) culture of power through a school choice lens pushed my research to examine whether issues of power are enacted within the school choice process; if codes or rules for participating in power exist; if those rules are reflective of those who hold power; if those not in power are aware of the rules, and if those who hold power are least likely to acknowledge their position of power. Delpit’s concepts related directly to education help to bridge the works of Flyvberg to a more concrete place within education, and allowed for my research to directly identify those in power through the use of a systematic questioning process.
Assumptions and Rationale for a Qualitative Study

For the purpose of this research a case study approach was utilized to best understand the effects of school choice upon multiple schools within a specific school district. This approach helped define a boundary around intradistrict school choice in which the study focuses on the outcomes of the research (Merriam, 1998). The use of qualitative research requires a researcher to take a position on multiple assumptions (Creswell and Poth, 2017). Ontological and epistemological assumptions are important to realize within the work of this research as interviews allow for understanding different perspectives from principals. Additionally, an axiological assumption places an emphasis on the role of values for both the researcher and those being interviewed (Creswell and Poth, 2017).

A qualitative approach was key to furthering the research and understanding around values pertaining to school choice, specifically around inequities that may exist as a result of the outcomes. Flyvbjerg describes the purpose of social science as “to carry out analyses and interpretations of the status of values and interests in society aimed at social
commentary and social action, i.e. praxis” (Flyvbjerg, 2001, pg. 60). Pragmatism allows for this analysis of values and interests as it places the emphasis on the outcomes of the research, allowing the researcher to use both qualitative and quantitative methods to best address the research problem (Creswell and Poth, 2017). Pragmatists have a great deal of freedom and choice within their research to determine the “what and how” (Creswell and Poth, 2017). This approach aligns with the concepts of Flyvbjerg’s phronetic approach asking: 1.) Where are we going? 2.) Is this desirable? 3.) What should be done? (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 60). The emphasis of the research remained on the results, and the issue of values related to intradistrict school choice were central to understanding the inequalities created within the current system.

**Design**

The use of the pragmatic paradigm offers a great deal of flexibility in how research is done; however, it does not simply grant an “anything goes” structure to research (Denscombe, 2008, p. 274). The emphasis is instead placed upon the method that will best allow for the research question to be answered (Creswell and
Clark, 2011). For the purpose of this research, an approach that allows for some quantitative analysis to guide the more in-depth qualitative research is beneficial in answering the research question.

Case study research utilized within a pragmatist approach allows the researcher to answer the “how” and “why” questions within a study (Yin, 1994, p. 9). Merriam describes a case study by focusing on its end result stating, “A qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (Merriam, 1998, p. 21). A case study analysis allows for research on intradistrict school choice to be studied as a phenomenon within a single district but across multiple schools.

To ensure that a case study approach is appropriate for this type of research, Merriam (1998) suggests that there must be a “limit to the number of people involved who could be interviewed or a finite amount of time for observations” (p. 27). Interviewing the principals of the charter and neighborhood schools within a single district allowed for a finite collection of qualitative data that was
used to understand competing and complex views of 
principals based upon their values and beliefs.

Merriam (1998) further describes qualitative case 
studies as being particularistic, descriptive, and 
heuristic in nature (p. 31). Given the direction of 
this research those three characteristics blend 
cohesively with a phronetic research approach that 
clearly addresses the aspects of those three 
characteristics. Understanding these characteristics 
ensures that the research process is clear as to “what 
my case is” and “where my case leaves off” (Huberman, 
Miles, Saldana, 2014, p. 28). Viewing the district as 
the case and individual schools as subcases allows the 
research to show the difference in opinions among 
principals at each school. These opinions varied based 
upon the perception of who wins and who loses as a 
result of the school choice program and the values of 
each of those individuals (Huberman, Miles, Saldana, 
2014).

The case study is particularistic in nature, 
meaning that it “examines a specific instance but 
illuminates a general problem” (Merriam, 1998, pg. 
30). The research question addresses inequalities 
that exist as the result of the local intradistrict
school choice process. In this case the general problem can be viewed as all school districts having to react to federal and state school choice policies. The value of the research is looking at the specific inequities created within a single school district based upon its reaction to changes at the state and federal level. In addition, the research “suggests to a reader what to do or what not to do in a similar situation” (Merriam, 1998, pg. 30). The completed case study allows other districts to compare their policies and results to the results of the researched district to identify whether similar inequities exist within their district.

The descriptive nature of the case study is powerful in its ability to show the complexity of the school choice program and the many factors that principals take into consideration when evaluating the program. Merriam (1998) states that one strength of a case study is its ability to, “cover many years and describe how the preceding decades led to a situation” (p. 31). Within this research the history leading up to the current situation was thoroughly explored and understood in order to follow the phronetic approach that requires the researcher to understand “where we
are going” (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 60). Differences of opinion were noted across the principals interviewed to understand how power and values lead to different viewpoints.

The case study is also heuristic, meaning the, “case study illuminates the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon under study” (Merriam, 1998, pg. 30). Merriam lists the following heuristic qualities of a case study. These qualities align with the phronetic approach to this research stating that the research will (Merriam, 1998, pg. 31):

- Explain the reasons for a problem, the background of a situation, what happened, and why.
- Explain why an innovation worked or failed to work.
- Discuss and evaluate alternatives not chosen.
- Evaluate, summarize, and conclude, thus increasing its potential applicability.

The design of this case study benefits these four areas as the pragmatic approach of phronetic research provides a strong match.
The final question Flyvbjerg (2001) proposes is, “Who gains and who loses; by which mechanisms of power?” (p. 60). This question led the researcher to a case study that is evaluative in nature as the case study presents “information to produce judgment. Judging is the final and ultimate act of evaluation” (Guba and Lincoln, 1981, p. 375). Guba and Lincoln (1981) also noted the value of the evaluative case study as being rich in description and lifelike in nature. The intent of the design of this study was to produce an end result that takes a complex issue and highlights inequities resulting from the intradistrict school choice phenomenon and reports the findings in a clear and easily understood manner.

This evaluative nature then allows for common language to be used to foster a general understanding of a complex issue. Kenny and Grotelueschen (1980) discuss the importance of common language within a complex evaluative case study. Merriam (1998) applies this belief to education with the understanding that “using common language, as opposed to scientific or educational jargon, allows the results of a study to be communicated more easily to nonresearchers” (p. 39). The importance of being able to take the large
and complex topic of school choice and narrow it down to identify inequities within an intradistrict school choice process within a single school district is strength of this research. If the results were to fail to produce a common language that can be understood by the various stakeholders in public education, the research will have not served its purpose. Kenny and Grotelueschen (1980) note this importance as the evaluative case study leads to a "better understanding of the dynamics of the programme. When it is important to be responsive, to convey a holistic and dynamically rich account of a programme, case study is a tailor-made approach" (p. 5).

To best understand and evaluate the effects on equity of the intradistrict school choice program there is a benefit to using both numbers and words to understand the research and results (Huberman, Miles, and Saldana, 2014). For the purpose of this research, quantitative data was collected to understand which students are participating in the intradistrict school choice process. This data was then used to draw attention to possible areas of inequity; interview questions for principals were formulated with an
understanding of the trending and current intradistrict school choice data. For example, the principal of school EN8 was asked how a 14.56 percent increase in the free and reduced lunch rate effected the school. Providing principals with these specific numbers related to the demographic groups within their buildings was the first time they truly knew the quantitative effects of the intradistrict school choice program on their enrollment numbers.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher within the pragmatic paradigm focuses on the truth in a practical everyday experience (Mihas, 2019). The focus of the research was to emphasize the human experience within the intradistrict school choice process and to convey results that are meaningful to all stakeholders (Morgan, 2014).

It was essential that I first understood my research bias in regards to school choice (Maxwell, 2005). This allowed for a “reflexivity” to my research that ensures I am self-aware of my biases and cognizant of the experiences I have had within the area of school choice (Creswell, 2013, p. 216). While I believe school choice has a place in education at a
local level, my bias is that it is likely utilized most by affluent families, thus exacerbating inequities. It was essential to ensure that I remain cognizant of my bias in order to minimize its influence on the research process. Most importantly I was open about my bias within my writing to ensure fairness and control in my findings (Creswell, 2013).

This study examines the intradistrict school choice movement across the entire school district comprised of 11 neighborhood elementary schools, three charter elementary schools, three neighborhood middle schools, four charter middle schools, two neighborhood high schools, and three charter high schools. The quantitative analysis and parent perception document review spanned across all 26 schools. The interview process included 13 principals proportionality representing the 26 schools in the researched district.

**Quantitative Data Collection**

For the purpose of this enrollment “snapshot,” data was pulled from September 20, 2019. All enrollment data was pulled from the district’s internal student-information-system. Enrollment data was pulled to include id number, economic status
(free/reduced lunch), race/ethnicity, special education status, school, school path, and grade. The enrollment data was then organized in two different tables. The first table was titled “Current Enrollment,” and this table pulled the above listed data for each student based upon the “school” field. This allowed for all students currently attending the school on September 20, 2019 to be sorted into that school's data. The second table created was titled “Boundary” as data was sorted based upon the “school path” field. That field is a marker that is utilized to note the school in which the student is assigned to based upon school boundaries. The two tables could then be analyzed and compared to highlight the differences in demographics of a school based upon parents utilizing intradistrict school choice. Students participating in the state open enrollment, voucher, or private school programs were not included in this data. The intradistrict school choice enrollment data will be presented below sorted by school level (elementary, middle, and high).

**Quantitative Analysis**

The research initiates with a quantitative analysis targeted at the movement of school choice
students based upon their demographics. This quantitative data assisted in formulating interview questions for principals that position my research in a manner that allowed for an evaluative case study to conclude in a manner that draws similarities and differences between principal opinions and quantitative evidence of inequities within the intradistrict school choice system.

A quantitative analysis was first completed to understand student movement within the district. This was straightforward in nature and utilized data to make comparisons across the following demographic factors based upon socio-economic standing (free/reduced lunch), ethnicity, and disability status:

1. School enrollment differences if all students currently attending the school district attended their home school.

2. Current free/reduced lunch rate and the free/reduced lunch rate if choice students were attending their home school.

3. Current ethnic breakdown and that same breakdown if choice students were attending their home school.
4. Current percentage of students with an identified disability (IEP) and the percentage if choice students were attending their home school. This analysis is simplistic in nature; however, school districts have a very difficult time understanding these numbers simply because SIS systems were not designed to track and monitor school choice, especially when looking to understand demographic shifts and trends. This analysis required a great deal of manual merging of exported spreadsheets to determine which schools students were currently attending as well as where their home school was, and then sorting each result by different demographics to highlight the shifts and trends created through intradistrict school choice.

Document

Document analysis of parent intradistrict school choice applications allowed for an understanding of why parents are choosing to move their students. Over 5,000 documents spanning three years were analyzed and coded to highlight themes as to what parents list as the reason for their intradistrict school choice requests. These documents gave a voice to parents comparable to that collected during fieldwork (Glaser
and Strauss 1967). A special consideration was given to what the document was intended for, what was trying to be accomplished, and the degree to which the writer was likely to be honest in their response (Merriam, 1998).

**Interviews**

The majority of the qualitative data used in this evaluative case study was garnered through interviews with building principals. These thirteen interviews were conducted with building principals based upon the qualitative data previously collected. The principals represent schools at all levels of education within the district, and the interviewed principals included both charter and neighborhood school. The interviews offered a “conversation with a purpose” (Morehouse and Maykut, 2002, p. 75). Participation was voluntary and limited to head principals at school buildings within the same district.

**Interview Type**

Interview types can be categorized as structured, semistructured, or unstructured (Merriam, 1998). For the purpose of this research semistructured interviews were utilized to ensure that the specific questions are asked of all participants, still providing an
ability to respond to different situations within individual interviews. A portion of all the interviews were highly structured to ensure all participants’ opinions are gathered on important questions that fit across all participants (Merriam, 1998). Flexibility within the interview process was utilized to ensure that more open-ended questions were explored when necessary.

**Questioning**

The interviews were “evaluation interviews” in nature (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p. 27), understanding that personal accounts and rationalizations of those involved was expected when questioning the effectiveness of a program. When asking questions targeted at the research question of the impact of intradistrict school choice on the individual school, questions will fall into the category of “devil’s advocate, ideal position, and interpretive” forms (Merriam 1998 p. 77). The use of a devil’s advocate question was effective given the controversial topic of school choice, and phrasing the question in that manner allowed for the respondents to share their opinions with less fear of embarrassment (Merriam, 1998).
When addressing the fourth research question pertaining to what can be done to address inequities within the intradistrict school choice policy, “hypothetical and ideal position” questions were beneficial in garnering both information and opinions on the topic (Merriam 1998). Careful consideration was made to ensure that multiple questions, leading questions, and yes-or-no questions were avoided (Merriam 1998).

To ensure a successful interview, the interviews initiated with the following:

1. My purpose and intention being to gain the principals’ insights into the effects of intradistrict school choice on their buildings and possible solutions to any perceived problems related to equity.

2. Ensured the respondents that they will remain anonymous in this process through the use of pseudonyms.

3. Ensured the respondents understood that the research would be shared with them prior to being submitted.
4. Ensured the respondents understood the general logistics of the interview such as time, location, etc... (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984).

Interviews were recorded using a cell phone with a digital recorder as a secondary device. Transcripts were created and all data was kept on and in password protected devices. Transcripts were created with the use of Otter Artificial Intelligence software.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis was critical given the volume of qualitative data collected (Creswell, 2013). Collection and analysis happen simultaneously resulting in findings that are both believable and trustworthy (Merriam, 1998). The initial data collection was simplistic and quantitative in nature as previously described. The qualitative portion of the study produced a much larger volume of data to be analyzed. The task of the data analysis was to find “reasonable conclusions and generalizations based on a preponderance of the data” (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984, p. 139). The final phronetic question of this research was to answer “Who gains and who loses; by which mechanisms of power” (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 60). This ultimately directs the research to answer
the overarching question, “Do principals feel inequalities exist as a result of the intradistrict school choice process?” To best analyze the large volume of data allowing for the case study to be final, a thematic analysis was utilized.

Braun and Clarke (2006) propose a six step thematic analysis that consists of the following steps:

1. Familiarize yourself with the data
2. Generate initial codes
3. Search for themes
4. Review themes
5. Define and name themes
6. Produce the report (pp. 16-23)

Following this process allowed me to highlight units of data that are heuristic and interpretable (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Methods for Verification

It was essential to remain unbiased in the collection of data while being involved in the data collection process (Gay and Airasian, 2003). Preformulated interview questions based upon the quantitative data that was pulled from the district student-information-system allowed me to know
that the questions were grounded in evidence rather than in an unfounded opinion. It was important that the research findings were detailed and specific in a manner that ensures the findings “make sense” to those that could benefit from the research (Firestone, 1987, p. 19).

**Internal Validity**

“Pragmatism, when regarded as an alternative paradigm, sidesteps the contentious issues of truth and reality, and accepts, philosophically, that there are singular and multiple realities that are open to empirical inquiry and orients itself toward solving practical problems in the ‘real world’ (Feilzer, 2010, p.8). The purpose of this research is not to debate reality but rather to highlight the experiences and beliefs of those, particularly the school principals, who interact with the intradistrict school choice ramifications on a daily basis. This did not mean that internal and external validity, reliability, and the ethics of the research and findings did not need to be carefully understood and accounted for.

Merriam (1998) lists six aspects to improve internal validity that include triangulation, member checks, long-term observation, peer examination,
participatory or collaborative modes of research, and researcher’s biases (pp. 204-205). Particularly important to this study was the concepts of member checks, peer examination, and researcher’s bias. Researcher’s bias was noted earlier in this chapter, and the ability for me to understand my bias regarding school choice and any perceived inequities was extremely important as I positioned myself within my research. Given the nature of an evaluative case study, and working in a pragmatic paradigm with a phronetic approach pushed my research in a necessary direction of determining if inequities exist and questioning the power struggles that exist around them. My research speaks for itself, and a preponderance of evidence was present to represent any research as a finding beyond one person’s opinion.

Member checks and peer evaluation played a large role in working to push the internal validity of the research to a high level. Continuous checks of reporting findings to those interviewed, and ensuring that the findings were plausible given their experiences with the intradistrict school choice program was essential to my research and findings (Merriam, 1998). In addition, peer examination was
utilized from both a process and findings aspect to ensure colleagues and advisors agreed with the direction of the research and its final voice through the findings.

The final aspect of internal validity revolves around trustworthiness. Merriam (1998) notes two questions that can be asked that specifically assisted in ensuring this research was trustworthy. The two questions are linked; the first asks if the researcher’s presence alters the participant’s behavior, and the second asks if the study would be replicable in results if done by another researcher. The initial explanation of the research and questions stated earlier in this chapter was used to set up the interview process. That process ensured all participants were understanding of the purpose of the research, and their anonymity. The ability for them to review the research and findings prior to being published assisted in ensuring participant behavior was as natural as possible. The replication of any research study is questionable; however, the goal of working towards replication is a worthwhile task (Baker, 2015). This was done through thorough interviewing techniques that reach the point
of data saturation. Proper coding and attention to shared views given the preponderance of evidence will heighten the ability of replication.

**External Validity**

Merriam (1998) defines external validity as, “the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations” (p. 207). This was extremely important as this research offers similar school districts the ability to understand possible inequities created by their intradistrict school choice policies. If generalization is viewed as a difficult task, the research at the very least pointed toward areas that need to be further explored through the lens of different research methods and models.

**Ethics**

Ethics considerations regarding heavily qualitative research exists around the collection of data and the findings (Merriam, 1998). The interview process was clear in its purpose and in the participants’ abilities to approve of the findings prior to their release. A preponderance of evidence was present when representing the voice of more than a single individual. The writing of the findings themselves is extremely descriptive to ensure clarity.
over the origins of the statements and beliefs so that no data is misrepresented.
CHAPTER IV

Findings

Introduction

Understanding how and why parents choose to utilize the intradistrict school choice process is necessary to best understand any inequities that may exist within the system. Two key pieces of data were used to best understand this movement: parent rationale for utilizing the intradistrict school choice process and the student information system (SIS).

Individual student intradistrict school choice forms were analyzed to answer the question of why parents were choosing to utilize the intradistrict school choice program rather than attending their neighborhood school. The basis of this research was to analyze five years of intradistrict school choice forms, specifically the question on the forms that asks parents to give a brief explanation as to why they are choosing to enter into the intradistrict school choice process.
The second piece of data used to understand the intradistrict school choice student movement was the district’s student information system. This system allows individual student data to be analyzed in order to show a number of different enrollment scenarios given certain specifications. The SIS data also shows what enrollment would be in the district if intradistrict school choice were not an option. This gives a clear picture as to what school enrollment and demographics would look like if all students currently enrolled in the district attended the school into which they were assigned by attendance boundaries.

The district processed an average of 1,249 intradistrict school choice forms on an annual basis between the years of 2015-2020. Forms are distributed through postal mail, email, social media, and on the district website in multiple languages that utilize translating technology. The form can be completed online or a hard copy can be completed and returned to the district. Students entering grade 9 also attend an annual presentation where each high school presents its educational programming. Schools also publish open house dates, and those dates are distributed across the district to all parents.
A review of the intradistrict school choice policy shows the process for submitting an intradistrict school choice form that starts on December 1 for the next school year. While intradistrict school choice forms are allowed to be submitted for the current school year at any time, the process is broken into “two rounds.” The first round runs from December 1 through February 15. The second round is then open on February 16 as a “first-come-first-served” model. On February 15 students are approved for their chosen school as long as space exists and any special education needs can be accommodated. Over the last five years, 81 percent of intradistrict school choice forms were completed during the first round of enrollment. Round one acceptance is done in a lottery system. Any family submitting their intradistrict school choice application on or before February 15 is placed in a lottery, based upon enrollment caps for the school. Enrollment caps are determined based upon staffing and building capacity. Staffing records, along with intradistrict school choice demand, indicate that the staff has been moved from one building to another in order to accommodate a large number of intradistrict
school choice applications for a single school. Families submitting their intradistrict school choice transfer form after February 15 are accommodated on a “first-come-first-served” basis. Again, students are accepted and denied based upon enrollment caps or the ability to meet any special education IEP requirements. In all scenarios, students with siblings currently attending the school are given first priority in each of the rounds.

    Students qualifying for special education are handled slightly differently within the intradistrict enrollment process. Students with an IEP are only allowed to advance in the enrollment process if their IEP needs can be met by their requested school. If special education staffing and resources at the requested school cannot accommodate the student’s IEP needs, the application is denied. If special education requirements can be accommodated, the application is then handled in the same manner as the other non-special education applications. Over a five-year period, special education applications have made up 11 percent of the total applications. The district’s five-year average for percentage of special
education students with the total district enrollment is 16.1 percent.

Acceptance Rates

Acceptance rates show a five-year average of 96.3 percent during round one of the intradistrict school choice period. When special education students are removed from those numbers the five-year average acceptance rate rises to 98.6 percent for round one. Round two acceptance rates are predictably lower. The five-year acceptance rate is 89.2 percent for all students, and the rate rises to 92.8 percent when special education students are removed from the data. When acceptance rates are calculated across levels (elementary, middle and high school) the acceptance rates improve as the level progresses. The five-year elementary level acceptance rate is 94.4 percent for round one and 88.1 percent for round two. When special education students are removed, those rates rise to 95.9 percent for round one and 90.2 percent for round two. The middle school acceptance rate is 96.4 percent for round one, rising to 98.8 percent when special education students are excluded. In round two the rates are 89.5 percent with special
education students accounted for and 93.1 percent with special education students excluded. High school rates complete the trend with 97.2 percent of students being accepted in round one. The acceptance rate rises to 99.4 percent when special education students are excluded. In round two high school students are accepted at a rate of 91.6 percent, and when special education students are excluded the acceptance rate rises to 93.5 percent. The acceptance rates show that the intradistrict school choice program is extremely efficient and effective at allowing families that are able to participate in the process the option to choose their school.

**Intradistrict School Choice Demographics**

The movement of students utilizing intradistrict school choice options can be useful in examining the effects of the program on the district, along with giving some insight into the possibility of a fractured *habitus*. This data answers the question pertaining to which students are taking part in the intradistrict school choice process. Specifically, are there inequalities based upon the demographics of students utilizing the intradistrict school choice program, and what inequities, if any, then result in the individual
schools? Given that intradistrict school choice and school enrollment in general are very fluid it was necessary to take a snapshot in time to complete this analysis. The “Third Friday” report is a required enrollment report that is collected by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction on an annual basis. The “Third Friday” enrollment numbers affect schools in many ways, the most important being distribution of per pupil revenue. Utilizing enrollment numbers on “Third Friday” gives a clear snapshot in time that every district in the state of Wisconsin would be extremely familiar with.

**General Enrollment**

The elementary school enrollment data shows a total district enrollment of 4,126 boundary students. Students attend one of fourteen elementary schools of which three schools are charter schools and one school is a dual-language Spanish immersion school. The five-year average for the number of intradistrict school choice transfer forms submitted at the elementary level (kindergarten through fifth grade) is 437 applications annually. Schools have been coded based upon level (E), charter or neighborhood designation (C,N), and with a random number assigned (1-14). For
example, the school labeled EC13 is an elementary charter school randomly assigned number 13. The general current enrollment data and demographics of the elementary schools are highlighted in Table 1 below.

**Table 1**

*Elementary School Current Enrollment and Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Code</th>
<th>Current Enroll</th>
<th>% Spec Ed</th>
<th>% Dis.</th>
<th>% Asian</th>
<th>% Black</th>
<th>% Hisp.</th>
<th>% Mixed Race</th>
<th>% White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EN1</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>13.79%</td>
<td>46.55%</td>
<td>2.59%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>27.59%</td>
<td>1.72%</td>
<td>68.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN2</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>17.45%</td>
<td>67.45%</td>
<td>25.84%</td>
<td>3.35%</td>
<td>15.10%</td>
<td>8.39%</td>
<td>48.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN3</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>19.21%</td>
<td>73.73%</td>
<td>9.77%</td>
<td>6.21%</td>
<td>22.32%</td>
<td>9.32%</td>
<td>42.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN4</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>22.25%</td>
<td>93.08%</td>
<td>14.75%</td>
<td>8.85%</td>
<td>12.60%</td>
<td>8.85%</td>
<td>55.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN5</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>27.44%</td>
<td>55.43%</td>
<td>23.37%</td>
<td>4.08%</td>
<td>16.03%</td>
<td>6.52%</td>
<td>48.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN6</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>24.30%</td>
<td>91.28%</td>
<td>38.63%</td>
<td>7.17%</td>
<td>15.58%</td>
<td>13.40%</td>
<td>25.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN7</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>14.11%</td>
<td>37.83%</td>
<td>19.40%</td>
<td>2.02%</td>
<td>10.58%</td>
<td>4.79%</td>
<td>64.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN8</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>22.73%</td>
<td>95.08%</td>
<td>24.24%</td>
<td>9.09%</td>
<td>20.45%</td>
<td>15.53%</td>
<td>30.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN9</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>15.26%</td>
<td>47.37%</td>
<td>22.56%</td>
<td>2.63%</td>
<td>10.53%</td>
<td>6.39%</td>
<td>57.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN10</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>15.16%</td>
<td>83.20%</td>
<td>0.82%</td>
<td>4.10%</td>
<td>70.90%</td>
<td>4.92%</td>
<td>19.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN11</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>14.01%</td>
<td>64.20%</td>
<td>30.35%</td>
<td>2.33%</td>
<td>13.81%</td>
<td>9.14%</td>
<td>43.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC12</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>11.02%</td>
<td>46.56%</td>
<td>5.34%</td>
<td>4.58%</td>
<td>24.43%</td>
<td>10.69%</td>
<td>56.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC13</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>6.51%</td>
<td>33.56%</td>
<td>5.76%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>20.68%</td>
<td>8.47%</td>
<td>66.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC14</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>16.16%</td>
<td>50.50%</td>
<td>0.50%</td>
<td>0.99%</td>
<td>10.89%</td>
<td>5.94%</td>
<td>82.67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The middle school enrollment data shows a total district enrollment of 2,213 boundary students.
Students attend one of seven middle schools of which four schools are charter schools. The five-year average for the number of intradistrict school choice transfer forms submitted at the middle school level (sixth through eighth grade) is 412 applications annually. The general current enrollment data and demographics of the middle schools are highlighted in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Middle School Current Enrollment and Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Code</th>
<th>Current Enroll</th>
<th>% Spec Ed</th>
<th>% Econ Dis.</th>
<th>% Asian</th>
<th>% Black</th>
<th>% Hisp.</th>
<th>% Mixed Race</th>
<th>% White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MN1</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>20.49%</td>
<td>69.96%</td>
<td>20.85%</td>
<td>7.24%</td>
<td>21.73%</td>
<td>7.60%</td>
<td>42.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN2</td>
<td>663</td>
<td>20.06%</td>
<td>66.37%</td>
<td>19.00%</td>
<td>5.43%</td>
<td>24.89%</td>
<td>5.43%</td>
<td>44.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN3</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>15.85%</td>
<td>62.80%</td>
<td>22.10%</td>
<td>4.42%</td>
<td>17.68%</td>
<td>6.25%</td>
<td>49.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC1</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>6.40%</td>
<td>30.40%</td>
<td>5.60%</td>
<td>0.80%</td>
<td>20.80%</td>
<td>8.80%</td>
<td>64.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC2</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>10.61%</td>
<td>45.45%</td>
<td>6.06%</td>
<td>4.55%</td>
<td>24.24%</td>
<td>10.61%</td>
<td>54.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC3</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
<td>58.89%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>2.22%</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
<td>8.89%</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC4</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>14.89%</td>
<td>59.57%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>25.53%</td>
<td>6.38%</td>
<td>68.09%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The high school enrollment data shows a total district enrollment of 3,206 boundary students. Students attend one of five high schools of which three schools are charter schools. The five-year average for the number of intradistrict school choice transfer forms submitted at the high school level
(ninth through twelfth grade) is 399 applications annually. The general current enrollment data and demographics of the high schools are highlighted in Table 3 below.

**Table 3**

*High School Current Enrollments and Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Code</th>
<th>Current Enroll</th>
<th>% Spec Ed</th>
<th>% Dis. Ed</th>
<th>% Asian</th>
<th>% Black</th>
<th>% Hisp.</th>
<th>% Mixed Race</th>
<th>% White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HN1</td>
<td>1624</td>
<td>16.50%</td>
<td>45.57%</td>
<td>15.76%</td>
<td>4.06%</td>
<td>18.72%</td>
<td>4.56%</td>
<td>56.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HN2</td>
<td>1135</td>
<td>19.82%</td>
<td>62.82%</td>
<td>19.38%</td>
<td>5.55%</td>
<td>23.08%</td>
<td>5.37%</td>
<td>46.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC1</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>7.53%</td>
<td>45.21%</td>
<td>2.74%</td>
<td>0.68%</td>
<td>17.81%</td>
<td>2.05%</td>
<td>76.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC2</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>12.09%</td>
<td>79.53%</td>
<td>6.05%</td>
<td>10.23%</td>
<td>34.88%</td>
<td>3.26%</td>
<td>45.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC3</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>20.93%</td>
<td>51.16%</td>
<td>1.16%</td>
<td>2.33%</td>
<td>12.79%</td>
<td>9.30%</td>
<td>73.26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. School HC2 is an alternative-education school with recommended enrollment.

*Boundary Versus Current Enrollment*

The difference in current enrollment in comparison to what enrollment would be if all students attending the district remained within their school boundaries shows a great deal of student movement within the district. This analysis allows for an understanding of what schools would look like if all students currently attending school through the intradistrict school choice policy were instead
attending their neighborhood school. While we know it
would be likely that some students would utilize other
forms of school choice or private education if
intradistrict school choice were not an option, the
boundary enrollment data gives a clear picture of what
schools would look like if students currently enrolled
in the district all were enrolled in their boundary
school.

Table 4

Elementary School General Enrollment - Current vs Boundary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EN1</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>-29</td>
<td>-20.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN2</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>-131</td>
<td>-30.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN3</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>-125</td>
<td>-26.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN4</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>-26</td>
<td>-6.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN5</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN6</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>-48</td>
<td>-13.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN7</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>11.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN8</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>-239</td>
<td>-47.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN9</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>-117</td>
<td>-31.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN10</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>36.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN11</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>-22</td>
<td>-4.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC12</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>127</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC13</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>292</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC14</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>198</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>4126</td>
<td>4126</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above data shows eight schools with lower enrollment than what the actual boundary enrollment would be for the school. Schools saw an enrollment drop of anywhere between 26 and 239 students. This represented a total enrollment decrease of approximately 7 to 48 percent. Six schools saw an increase in enrollment due to intradistrict school choice options. Obviously all three charter schools benefited from intradistrict school choice; however, three neighborhood schools also saw an enrollment increase due to intradistrict school choice. Those increases ranged from 15 to 65 students and represented a percentage increase of enrollment between 4 and 36 percent.

Schools noting large percentages of increases or decreases due to intradistrict school choice are of obvious interest due to the effects of enrollment on a school’s staffing and funding. Further analysis will help explain the demographics of the student movement to better understand if there are any trends pertaining to specific groups of students or specific elementary schools. School EN8 is of particular interest. A school operating at 52.5 percent of its capacity is likely a financial burden to the school
district. With two additional schools operating at less than 70 percent capacity (EN9 and EN2) the ability to consolidate schools is likely operationally possible. Principal interviews will need to determine if consolidation is a concern, and how the overall changes in enrollment affect individual schools.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Code</th>
<th>Current Enrollment</th>
<th>Boundary Enrollment</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>% of Enrollment Increase/Decrease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MN1</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>691</td>
<td>-125</td>
<td>-18.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN2</td>
<td>663</td>
<td>766</td>
<td>-103</td>
<td>-13.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN3</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>756</td>
<td>-100</td>
<td>-13.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC1</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>125</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC2</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC3</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC4</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>2213</td>
<td>2213</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 highlights the enrollment declines across all three middle schools as families utilized the intradistrict school choice process to move across the district. Net enrollment declines at or above 100 students were observed across the three neighborhood schools, and the net percent of total enrollment dropped between 13 and 18 percent within the neighborhood schools. Charter school enrollment
accounted for approximately 15 percent of total enrollment at the middle school level (328 students). This enrollment will be analyzed to better understand the demographics of the students utilizing intradistrict school choice and the effects on the individual school enrollment within those categories.

Declining enrollment poses obvious concerns to a school as it generally is associated with staffing and overall funding reductions. While enrollment decreased at all neighborhood schools, it should be noted that the decrease at school MN1 was approximately 4.5 percent greater than the other two neighborhood schools. As shown in Table 5, school MN1 has the highest percent of economically disadvantaged students, the smallest percent of white students, and the highest percent of special education students in the district at the middle school level. School MN1 also has the smallest number of boundary students to draw upon making its 18 percent reduction in total enrollment potentially more difficult to absorb in relation to the other two neighborhood schools.
Table 6 documents the enrollment decline at high school HN2, and shows that school HN1 remains relatively flat in regards to total enrollment as a result of intradistrict school choice policy. The three charter schools enroll 447 boundary students. School HC2 serves an “at-risk” population of high school students; however, state law and district policy require the school’s enrollment to be handled under the same intradistrict school choice policies as all charter schools in the state.

Declining enrollment of 28.62 percent at school HN2 is a clear area of interest within the general enrollment movement of students related to intradistrict school choice policies. A high school operating at approximately 71 percent of its
attendance boundary enrollment in a declining enrollment scenario will likely face many financial and educational challenges. School HN2 is also currently 30 percent smaller than the other neighborhood high school (HN1). This likely creates inequities between the schools, especially given the various aspects of a comprehensive high school such as expansive course offerings, clubs and activities, sports, etc.

**Special Education Enrollment**

Intradistrict school choice policies related to special education add a separate barrier to the process for admission. Special education acceptance rates are lower than regular education rates due to capacity restraints within special education programs at each individual school. Of most importance to this study is to understand the movement of special education students within the district as a result of intradistrict school choice, and to identify if any potential issues pertaining to equity exist as a result of the intradistrict school choice policy. The district’s five-year average for percentage of special education students within the total district enrollment is 16.1 percent, and the percentage of
intradistrict school choice transfer forms completed by students who are receiving special education services is 11 percent. Given this data, we know that special education students are less likely to participate in the intradistrict school choice program in comparison to their peers and more likely to be denied admissions into their selected school due to added layers of enrollment requirements.

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Code</th>
<th>Current Percent of Spec Ed in Total Enrollment</th>
<th>Boundary Percent of Spec Ed in Total Enrollment</th>
<th>Enrollment Percentage Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EN1</td>
<td>13.79%</td>
<td>12.41%</td>
<td>1.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN2</td>
<td>17.45%</td>
<td>15.15%</td>
<td>2.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN3</td>
<td>19.21%</td>
<td>16.91%</td>
<td>2.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN4</td>
<td>22.25%</td>
<td>16.79%</td>
<td>5.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN5</td>
<td>27.44%</td>
<td>19.69%</td>
<td>7.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN6</td>
<td>24.62%</td>
<td>24.39%</td>
<td>0.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN7</td>
<td>16.45%</td>
<td>16.25%</td>
<td>0.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN8</td>
<td>22.73%</td>
<td>17.50%</td>
<td>5.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN9</td>
<td>15.26%</td>
<td>14.21%</td>
<td>1.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN10</td>
<td>15.16%</td>
<td>27.93%</td>
<td>-12.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN11</td>
<td>16.14%</td>
<td>15.86%</td>
<td>0.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC12</td>
<td>11.02%</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC13</td>
<td>6.51%</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC14</td>
<td>16.16%</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Special education law dictates that districts must provide accommodations as dictated by a student’s individual education plan (IEP); however, that accommodation does not need to be replicated in all schools. There are two elementary schools within the district being studied that provide specialized educational programs, and students can select into those programs through their IEP process. Table 7 accounts for those students to ensure complete transparency as the students are considered intradistrict school choice transfers. As shown in Table 7, the effects of the intradistrict school choice transfer process creates a discrepancy between both schools with specific special education programs (schools EN4 and EN5) and between neighborhood and charter schools. While the charter schools reduce the total number of special education students in the neighborhood schools, the percentage of special education students within a neighborhood school actually increases at all schools except school EN10 (dual language).

The data shows a disproportional movement of students from neighborhood elementary schools to elementary charter schools. The increase in the
percentage of students attending a neighborhood elementary school was generally minimal with a few exceptions. The dual-language elementary school (EN10) shows a drastic 12.77 percent reduction in the percentage of special education students in its enrollment. Schools EN4 and EN5 show large increases in the percentage of special education students in attendance, and this would be expected given their specialized programming for special education students. School EN8 has a noticeable jump in the percentage of special education students enrolled. It should be noted that this school also has the highest percentage of economically disadvantaged students in the district. There are no specialized programs for special education in this school, and the increase in the percentage of special education students is a result of the disproportionality of non-special education students utilizing the intradistrict school choice program to leave the school.
Table 8


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Code</th>
<th>Current Percent of Spec Ed in Total Enrollment</th>
<th>Boundary Percent of Spec Ed in Total Enrollment</th>
<th>Enrollment Percentage Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MN1</td>
<td>20.49%</td>
<td>18.96%</td>
<td>1.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN2</td>
<td>20.06%</td>
<td>18.02%</td>
<td>2.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN3</td>
<td>15.85%</td>
<td>15.61%</td>
<td>0.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC1</td>
<td>6.40%</td>
<td>6.40%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC2</td>
<td>10.61%</td>
<td>10.61%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC3</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC4</td>
<td>14.89%</td>
<td>14.89%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Special education numbers across the neighborhood middle schools show an increase in two schools (MN1 and MN2) with specific special education programming. School MN3 shows a minimal increase in net percentage of enrollment of special education students as a result of intradistrict school choice movement. The charter schools show special education enrollment percentages ranging from a low of 6.4 percent to a high of 14.89 percent. All charter schools have special education enrollment percentage numbers less than that of the lowest neighborhood school (MN3). This is evidence that the increase of the percentage of special education students attending the neighborhood schools increases as a result of non-
special education students utilizing the intradistrict school choice program at a higher rate than special education students. The district enrollment for special education students across all middle schools is 17.49 percent of the total population. All schools with the exception of MN1 and MN2 are below the district average of percent of special education students at the middle school level.

The data shows disproportionality across the district’s middle schools as a whole. Ideally, a proportionate representation would show an equal percentage of special education students within the boundary and current enrollment percentages. Instead, the percentage of special education students is higher at all three neighborhood middle schools than the boundary enrollment percentages. Of greater concern is the percentage of special education students at MC1, MC2, and MC3 being drastically lower than the district middle school average of 17.49 percent. This shows the student movement within the intradistrict school choice process is disproportionate in regards to students with special needs at the middle school level.
Table 9


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Code</th>
<th>Current Percent of Spec Ed in Total Enrollment</th>
<th>Boundary Percent of Spec Ed in Total Enrollment</th>
<th>Enrollment Percentage Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HN1</td>
<td>16.50%</td>
<td>16.15%</td>
<td>0.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HN2</td>
<td>19.82%</td>
<td>18.05%</td>
<td>1.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC1</td>
<td>7.53%</td>
<td>7.53%</td>
<td>7.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC2</td>
<td>12.09%</td>
<td>12.09%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC3</td>
<td>20.93%</td>
<td>20.93%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The percentage of high school special education students at school HN1 reveals a minimal increase due to intradistrict school choice movement. School HN2 has a slightly larger increase in the percentage of students receiving special education services. The percentage of boundary special education students is 18.05 percent and that percentage climbs to 19.82 percent after intradistrict school choice movement is accounted for. This movement results in a .35 percent increase at school HN1 and a 1.77 percent increase at school HN2. The three charter schools have current special education enrollment ranging from 7.53 percent to 20.93 percent.

The data in Table 9 shows an interesting movement of special education students across the district as a
result of intradistrict school choice policy. There does not seem to be a disproportionate movement of special education students out of the neighborhood schools and into the charter schools. This is evident by the relatively stable enrollment percentage difference between boundary and current enrollments at schools HN1 and HN2. There is a great deal of disproportionality between the charter schools receiving the students through the intradistrict school choice process. School HC1 and HC2 are below the high school average of special education students while school HC2 is well above. Understanding why a 13.4 percent gap between special education enrollment exists at two different charter schools operating under the same intradistrict enrollment policies is necessary to address the inequities between enrollments.

**Economically Disadvantaged Enrollment**

Students that are economically disadvantaged are coded as such based upon the State of Wisconsin’s guidelines based on the premise of a family of four with total earnings of less than $47,638. The data below shows what individual school enrollment of economically disadvantaged students currently is, and
what that enrollment would be if all students were attending their neighborhood school. The density of economically disadvantaged students within any building creates challenges for the school community, and this density is a microcosm of the neighborhood it serves. If intradistrict school choice policies are creating a density of economically disadvantaged students even greater than that seen in the neighborhood boundaries, it would obviously create concerns related to equity.

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Current Percent of Students Econ Dis</th>
<th>Boundary Percent of Students Econ Dis</th>
<th>Percent Enroll Diff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EN1</td>
<td>46.55%</td>
<td>40.69%</td>
<td>5.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN2</td>
<td>67.45%</td>
<td>62.47%</td>
<td>4.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN3</td>
<td>73.73%</td>
<td>65.55%</td>
<td>8.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN4</td>
<td>53.08%</td>
<td>50.63%</td>
<td>2.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN5</td>
<td>55.43%</td>
<td>54.86%</td>
<td>0.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN6</td>
<td>91.28%</td>
<td>79.67%</td>
<td>11.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN7</td>
<td>37.78%</td>
<td>37.54%</td>
<td>0.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN8</td>
<td>95.08%</td>
<td>80.52%</td>
<td>14.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN9</td>
<td>47.37%</td>
<td>43.17%</td>
<td>4.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN10</td>
<td>83.20%</td>
<td>82.68%</td>
<td>0.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN11</td>
<td>64.20%</td>
<td>63.81%</td>
<td>0.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC12</td>
<td>46.56%</td>
<td></td>
<td>46.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC13</td>
<td>33.56%</td>
<td></td>
<td>33.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC14</td>
<td>50.50%</td>
<td></td>
<td>50.50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above data in Table 10 shows the density of students that are economically disadvantaged is greater at all neighborhood schools as a result of intradistrict school choice. This difference ranges from roughly .5 to nearly 15 percent depending on the neighborhood school. The three charter schools (EC12, EC 13, and EC14) have percentages of students economically disadvantaged lower than the district average of 61 percent at the elementary level. This indicates that families choosing to utilize intradistrict school choice into elementary charter schools are disproportionately non-economically disadvantaged in comparison to the district average of elementary economically disadvantaged students.

Charter school EC13 has the lowest level of economically disadvantaged students in the district. Six schools (EN1, EN2, EN3, EN6, EN8, and EN9) saw increases to their percentage of economically disadvantaged students of more than 4 percent, with schools EN6 and EN8 seeing increases above 10 percent. Those two schools have the highest percentage of economically disadvantaged students in the district.
An equitable movement of students would obviously show the percentage of economically disadvantaged students within a school remaining constant within the intradistrict school choice process. Schools EN5, EN7, EN10 and EN11 exhibit a relatively proportional movement of students within the intradistrict school choice process. This evidence shows that parents of relative privilege are the families taking advantage of school choice at a higher rate than those less advantaged, and challenges that narrative that school choice is needed to provide options for those that cannot afford to live in the attendance boundaries of “more desirable” schools.

**Table 11**

*Middle School Econ. Dis. Enroll. - Current vs Boundary*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Current Percent of Students Econ Dis</th>
<th>Boundary Percent of Students Econ Dis</th>
<th>Percent Enroll Diff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MN1</td>
<td>69.96%</td>
<td>63.97%</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN2</td>
<td>66.37%</td>
<td>63.71%</td>
<td>2.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN3</td>
<td>62.80%</td>
<td>61.77%</td>
<td>1.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC1</td>
<td>30.40%</td>
<td>30.40%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC2</td>
<td>45.45%</td>
<td>45.45%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC3</td>
<td>58.89%</td>
<td>58.89%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC4</td>
<td>59.57%</td>
<td>59.57%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above data shows that prior to intradistrict school choice policy affecting attendance, the three neighborhood schools (MN1, MN2, MN3) are comprised of approximately 62 to 64 percent economically disadvantaged students. When intradistrict school choice is entered into the enrollment process the percentage of free and reduced students rises at each of the three neighborhood schools. The percentage of economically disadvantaged students at the four charter schools ranges from 30.4 percent to 59.57 percent. The charter schools were all below the district average of 63 percent. The difference in the percentage of economically disadvantaged students as a result of intradistrict school choice ranges from 1.03 percent to 6 percent.

School MN1 sees the greatest increase in the percentage of economically disadvantaged students enrolled as a result of intradistrict school choice. An increase of 6 percent is disproportionately high compared to the other neighborhood schools. The school saw a decrease of 125 students through intradistrict school choice. Only 46 of those students were students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. This means that only 36.8 percent of the
students utilizing intradistrict school choice from that school qualified as free/reduced lunch while the percent of free/reduced lunch students in that boundary area is actually 63.97%. The boundary attendance shows that the percentage of economically disadvantaged students living within the attendance boundary of school MN1 is .26 percent higher than school MN2 and 2.2 percent higher than school MN3. After the student movement through the intradistrict school choice process is accounted for, those gaps increase to 3.59 percent and 7.16 percent. Charter school enrollment, particularly at schools MC1 and MC2, is dramatically disproportionate. School MC1 is 32.6 percent less than the district average and school MC2 is 17.55 percent less. The data shows that student movement within the intradistrict school choice program increases the percentage of economically disadvantaged students in all neighborhood schools. This is due to the data showing that charter schools disproportionality enroll students that are not economically disadvantaged. Overall, the middle school data shows intradistrict school choice is being disproportionately utilized by more affluent families.
Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Current Percent of Students Econ Dis</th>
<th>Boundary Percent of Students Econ Dis</th>
<th>Percent Enroll Diff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HN1</td>
<td>45.57%</td>
<td>49.26%</td>
<td>-3.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HN2</td>
<td>62.82%</td>
<td>58.99%</td>
<td>3.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC1</td>
<td>45.21%</td>
<td>45.21%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC2</td>
<td>79.53%</td>
<td>79.53%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC3</td>
<td>51.16%</td>
<td>51.16%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

High school HN1 has a boundary percentage of economically disadvantaged students in attendance of 49.26 percent, and high school HN2’s percentage is noticeably higher at 58.99 percent. When the intradistrict school choice movement is accounted for, the percentage of economically disadvantaged students in school HN1 drops 3.69 percent from 49.26 percent to 45.57 percent. High school HN2’s enrollment shift is the near opposite increasing 3.83 percent from 58.99 percent to 62.82 percent. The alternative charter high school HC2 has the highest percentage of economically disadvantaged students at 79.53 percent and the other two charter schools are lower than the high school district average of 54 percent economically disadvantaged students.
Table 12 indicates that the movement of high school students as a result of intradistrict school choice is disproportionate in regards to students that are economically disadvantaged. The increase of the percentage of economically disadvantaged students at school HN2 and the decrease of students who are economically disadvantaged at school HN1 shows that the shift in enrollment is not proportional to the original boundary enrollment percentages. It is an unfortunate reality that poverty plays a considerable role in a student’s likelihood of being “at-risk;” thus the high percentage of economically disadvantaged students at HC2 is regretably predictable. Of greater interest is the fact that schools HN1, HC1, and HC3 all have economically disadvantaged percentages of students lower than the high school district average. School HN2 is disproportionate to start the enrollment process based upon school boundaries; however, the intradistrict school choice process only exacerbates this disproportionality.

**Race/Ethnicity Enrollment**

Student enrollment data analyzed by race can be utilized to best understand the movement of students of different races across the district in response to
the intradistrict school choice policies. Parents designate the race of their child, if they choose to do so, when completing registration paperwork at the beginning of each school year. The data below shows enrollment shifts based upon intradistrict school choice movement. For example, in Table 13 the percentage of Asian students at school EN1 is .52 percent greater after intradistrict school choice student movement is accounted for. The charter schools’ demographics are listed for a reference as they do not have any boundary students to account for. In addition to the races listed in the Tables 12, 13, and 14, American Indian and Pacific Islander are also race categories tracked within the district; however, those races were excluded to ensure confidentiality of student records given the small cell sizes (less than ten) that they represent.
Table 13

Elementary School Race/Ethnic Enroll. - Current vs Boundary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Code</th>
<th>Asian Current - Boundary</th>
<th>Black Current - Boundary</th>
<th>Hispanic Current - Boundary</th>
<th>Mixed Race Current - Boundary</th>
<th>White Current - Boundary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EN1</td>
<td>0.52%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>3.45%</td>
<td>-1.03%</td>
<td>-2.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN2</td>
<td>1.13%</td>
<td>0.72%</td>
<td>-0.05%</td>
<td>-0.47%</td>
<td>-1.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN3</td>
<td>7.67%</td>
<td>1.83%</td>
<td>-1.07%</td>
<td>-0.49%</td>
<td>-8.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN4</td>
<td>1.21%</td>
<td>0.58%</td>
<td>-0.18%</td>
<td>0.08%</td>
<td>-1.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN5</td>
<td>0.53%</td>
<td>0.93%</td>
<td>1.33%</td>
<td>-0.04%</td>
<td>-0.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN6</td>
<td>13.16%</td>
<td>1.47%</td>
<td>-7.19%</td>
<td>3.64%</td>
<td>-11.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN7</td>
<td>-1.89%</td>
<td>-1.07%</td>
<td>-2.87%</td>
<td>0.02%</td>
<td>7.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN8</td>
<td>6.75%</td>
<td>2.73%</td>
<td>-8.37%</td>
<td>4.79%</td>
<td>-7.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN9</td>
<td>6.44%</td>
<td>-0.37%</td>
<td>-2.86%</td>
<td>0.11%</td>
<td>-3.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN10</td>
<td>-12.59%</td>
<td>-1.49%</td>
<td>44.64%</td>
<td>-9.05%</td>
<td>-21.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN11</td>
<td>2.37%</td>
<td>0.28%</td>
<td>-5.40%</td>
<td>1.12%</td>
<td>-0.10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Elementary Charter School Race/Ethnic - Current Enrollment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Code</th>
<th>Asian Current</th>
<th>Black Current</th>
<th>Hispanic Current</th>
<th>Mixed Race Current</th>
<th>White Current</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EC12</td>
<td>5.34%</td>
<td>4.58%</td>
<td>24.43%</td>
<td>10.69%</td>
<td>56.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC13</td>
<td>5.76%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>20.68%</td>
<td>8.47%</td>
<td>66.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC14</td>
<td>0.50%</td>
<td>0.99%</td>
<td>10.89%</td>
<td>5.94%</td>
<td>82.67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above data shows the net change in percentage of students enrolled (by race) based upon the current percentages versus the boundary percentages. Movement across races varied greatly depending on the school. School EN10 is again difficult to compare as the dual-language Spanish program enrolled many Hispanic students across the district and greatly reduced the number of Asian, mixed race, and White student populations within the school. Neighborhood school
enrollment data shows the Asian percentage of enrollment increased at nine of eleven schools, and the enrollment percentages of Black students increased at eight of eleven schools. Hispanic enrollment percentages were down at eight of the eleven schools as the percentage of enrollment increased 44.64% at the dual language school (EN10). The enrollment of mixed-race students varied across the neighborhood schools with six schools showing an increase in enrollment percentage and five showing a decrease in enrollment percentage. The data shows every neighborhood school with the exception of school EN7 saw a reduction in the percentage of White students enrolled in their school as a result of intradistrict school choice movement.

The reduced percentage of White students in all neighborhood schools with the exception of school EN7 raises concerns over “White flight.” School EN7 represents the district's most affluent neighborhood school, as well as the boundary school with the highest percentage of White students living within its attendance area. Proportional movement would indicate an equitable outcome related to intradistrict school choice policies; however, the increased enrollment of
White students at school EN7, and the relatively disproportionate number of White students at the three charter schools (EC12, EC13, EC14), shows the net movement of students out of neighborhood elementary schools leans disproportionately White. A dual-language Spanish immersion neighborhood school results in a decrease of Hispanic enrollment percentages at most neighborhood elementary schools resulting in disproportionality as well.

**Table 14**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Middle School Race/Ethnicity Enrollment - Current vs Boundary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Charter School Race/Ethnicity - Current Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14 highlights the increases in percentage of a single race within the total enrollment of the school for all neighborhood schools with Asian and Black students. Enrollment changes of Hispanic
students was minimal at schools MN1 and MN3, while school MN2 saw a 4 percent increase. Neighborhood schools saw minimal change in terms of percentage of the total population with students of mixed race. The percentage of White students was down considerably at all three neighborhood schools with school MN1 dropping 9.84 percent, school MN2 dropping 7.14 percent and school MN3 dropping 6.94%. The charter school enrollments were disproportionate across all races with the exception of Hispanics.

The middle school race/ethnicity data shows a number of areas of interest, especially related to equity and proportionality with respect to who is utilizing the intradistrict school choice process. The percent of White student enrollment in neighborhood middle schools ranges from 42.4 to 49.5 percent. Charter middle schools have enrollments of White students ranging from 54.55 to 68.09 percent. This signifies a disproportionate movement of White students out of the neighborhood middle schools and into the charter middle schools. Hispanic enrollment in charter middle schools is more proportional, and in some cases the enrollment of Hispanic students at charter middle schools is greater than the enrollment
of Hispanic students at neighborhood middle schools. Given the large percentage of White enrollment, and the more proportional enrollment of Hispanic and mixed-race students, the charter middle schools lack proportional representation with Asian and Black students. In some cases the enrollment of Asian and Black students in non-existent.

Table 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Code</th>
<th>Asian Current - Boundary</th>
<th>Black Current - Boundary</th>
<th>Hispanic Current - Boundary</th>
<th>Mixed Race Current - Boundary</th>
<th>White Current - Boundary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HN1</td>
<td>2.83%</td>
<td>-0.27%</td>
<td>2.07%</td>
<td>0.16%</td>
<td>-4.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HN2</td>
<td>4.67%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0.57%</td>
<td>0.59%</td>
<td>-5.78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Code</th>
<th>Asian Current Enroll</th>
<th>Black Current Enroll</th>
<th>Hispanic Current Enroll</th>
<th>Mixed Race Current Enroll</th>
<th>White Current Enroll</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HN</td>
<td>15.76%</td>
<td>4.06%</td>
<td>18.72%</td>
<td>4.56%</td>
<td>56.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HN2</td>
<td>19.38%</td>
<td>5.55%</td>
<td>23.08%</td>
<td>5.37%</td>
<td>46.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC1</td>
<td>2.74%</td>
<td>0.68%</td>
<td>17.81%</td>
<td>2.05%</td>
<td>76.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC2</td>
<td>6.05%</td>
<td>10.23%</td>
<td>34.88%</td>
<td>3.26%</td>
<td>45.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC3</td>
<td>1.16%</td>
<td>2.33%</td>
<td>12.79%</td>
<td>9.30%</td>
<td>73.26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in Table 15 highlights the general increases in the percentage of minority students attending neighborhood high schools after accounting for enrollment shifts resulting from intradistrict school choice policies. Minority enrollment increased at both neighborhood high schools and across all
different minority groups with the exception of Black students at high school HN1. The data also shows a decrease in the percentage of White students at both of the neighborhood high schools as a result of the intradistrict school choice movement. Charter school data is presented as current enrollment percentages for a reference point as there are no boundary students assigned to charter schools as they do not have an attendance boundary.

High School HN1 shows a decrease of the percentage of total enrollment of White students by 4.61 percent and the same trend is true of high school HN2 with a decrease of 5.78 percent. This would indicate a disproportionate movement of White students as a result of the intradistrict school choice enrollment policies. Student movement across all other races/ethnicities is relatively proportionate to the original boundary percentages. Within the charter high schools, and especially true at schools HC1 and HC3, disproportionality exists in regards to district averages within individual ethnicities as well. HC1 and HC3 have a much greater proportion of White students in their total population, and this comes as a result of having fewer Asian, Black, and Hispanic
students. The data suggests that the intradistrict school choice program is being utilized disproportionately across race at the high school level, with a greater proportion of White students taking part in the program.

**Intradistrict School Choice Demographic Summary**

The above data highlights the inequitable distribution of students as a result of the effects of the intradistrict school choice enrollment policies. While the school choice process starts with where people choose and can afford to reside, school choice advocates often argue that school choice can mitigate inequities created by school boundaries and property values. The data from this district shows a very different result. The data does not show that families who cannot afford to live in the boundaries of a certain school are now able to access that school because of the intradistrict school choice policies. Instead, the data shows the disproportionality actually grows in most schools across most demographics. The intradistrict school choice process exacerbates the boundary disproportionalities. These disproportionalities would add additional difficulties
for a school from both a financial and student achievement perspective.

**Table 16**

*Elementary School Enrollment Summary*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Increase/Decrease in Enrollment</th>
<th>Increase in % of Spec. Ed. Enroll.</th>
<th>Increase in % of Econ Dis. Enroll.</th>
<th>Increase in % of White Students Enroll.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EN1</td>
<td>-20.00%</td>
<td>1.38%</td>
<td>5.86%</td>
<td>-2.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN2</td>
<td>-30.54%</td>
<td>2.30%</td>
<td>4.98%</td>
<td>-1.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN3</td>
<td>-26.10%</td>
<td>2.30%</td>
<td>8.18%</td>
<td>-8.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN4</td>
<td>-6.52%</td>
<td>5.46%</td>
<td>2.46%</td>
<td>-1.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN5</td>
<td>4.12%</td>
<td>7.76%</td>
<td>0.58%</td>
<td>-0.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN6</td>
<td>-13.01%</td>
<td>0.23%</td>
<td>11.60%</td>
<td>-11.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN7</td>
<td>11.20%</td>
<td>0.20%</td>
<td>0.25%</td>
<td>7.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN8</td>
<td>-47.51%</td>
<td>5.23%</td>
<td>14.56%</td>
<td>-7.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN9</td>
<td>-31.97%</td>
<td>1.05%</td>
<td>4.20%</td>
<td>-3.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN10</td>
<td>36.31%</td>
<td>-12.77%</td>
<td>0.52%</td>
<td>-21.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN11</td>
<td>-4.10%</td>
<td>0.28%</td>
<td>0.40%</td>
<td>-0.10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16 shows a summary of the disproportionalities across the elementary level. In the case of all but two schools an enrollment decline is observed as a result of intradistrict school choice transfers. In all schools with the exception of the dual-language Spanish immersion school the percentage of special education students showed an increase in proportion to
total enrollment. When looking at the proportion of students who are economically disadvantaged, every single elementary school saw an increase in the percentage of students that were economically disadvantaged. All but one school, the most affluent elementary neighborhood school in the district, saw a decrease in the percentage of White students attending in proportion to students of color.

School EN11 is the elementary school that most closely resembles the demographics of the district within its attendance boundaries. The school also saw the most proportional results from intradistrict school choice transfers. The percentage of White students, special education students, and students who are economically disadvantaged changes very little in comparison to their boundary enrollment. The school saw a 4.1 percent enrollment decrease as a result of intradistrict school choice, which was less than other comparable schools in the district. Overall, the type of results school EN11 saw as a result of intradistrict school choice policies is the exception to the rule.
School EN8, the district’s least affluent school, saw a 47.51 percent enrollment decrease and saw an increase of 5.23 percent in special education enrollment in proportion to total enrollment. The school’s percentage of economically disadvantaged students rose 14.56 percent, and the number of White students in proportion to total enrollment dropped 7.29 percent.

School EN7, the district’s most affluent school, saw an 11.2 percent increase in enrollment. Special education and economically disadvantaged numbers were essentially flat, and the percentage of White students in comparison to the school’s total enrollment rose 7.31 percent. The data in Table 1 also shows the general disproportionalities observed between charter and neighborhood schools. Given this data it is extremely difficult to make an argument that the intradistrict school choice policy fulfills any goal of equity within the district. At the very least, policy modifications will be needed to ensure the outcomes of the policy affect schools in a similar manner to school EN11 versus the effects on every other elementary school.
The data shows similar disparities at the middle school level, though the level of disproportionality is slightly less in most cases. Table 17 summarizes the movement of intradistrict school choice students across the district in comparison to the boundary enrollment numbers.

Table 17

Middle School Enrollment Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Increase/ Decrease in Enrollment</th>
<th>Increase/ Decrease in % of Spec. Ed. Enroll</th>
<th>Increase/ Decrease in % of Econ. Dis. Enroll</th>
<th>Increase/ Decrease in % of White Students Enroll</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MN1</td>
<td>-18.09%</td>
<td>1.54%</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
<td>-9.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN2</td>
<td>-13.45%</td>
<td>2.04%</td>
<td>2.66%</td>
<td>-7.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN3</td>
<td>-13.23%</td>
<td>0.25%</td>
<td>1.03%</td>
<td>-6.94%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similar to the elementary data, an enrollment decrease was observed at all three neighborhood middle schools. While this would be an obvious effect of the implementation of charter schools, the impact of the enrollment decreases needs to be understood. In addition, all neighborhood middle schools saw an increase in special education enrollment percentages in proportion to the total enrollment of the school. The data shows the same is true for all neighborhood
schools in relation to students who are economically disadvantaged. Each school saw an increase in the proportion of students economically disadvantaged in comparison to the total enrollment. These increases range from 1.03 percent to 6 percent. Finally, “White flight” was observed at all three neighborhood middle schools in relatively large numbers. The percentage of White students in attendance in proportion to the total population dropped between 6.94 and 9.84 among the three middle schools as students chose to attend charter schools. Table 2 shows the disproportionalities between the charter schools and the neighborhood schools that account for these inequities.

As shown in Table 11, school MN1 has 63.97 percent of its boundary population consisting of students who are economically disadvantaged. This number is similar to the other two neighborhood middle schools; however, Table 16 shows that the relatively minor disparity between the neighborhood schools grows drastically as a result of intradistrict school choice as the middle school MN1 endures an increase in the percentage of economically disadvantaged students in relation to total enrollment of 6 percent. Middle
school MN1 changes from a relatively equitable distribution of boundary students to a school with 18.09 percent fewer students. A slight increase of 1.54 percent of special education students in relation to total enrollment is also noted. Finally, the percentage of economically disadvantaged students in middle school MN1 increased by 6 percent, and the population of White students dropped 9.84 percent in relation to total enrollment. While the boundary enrollment of school MN1 was relatively equitable in comparison with the other neighborhood schools, intradistrict school choice results leaves middle school MN1 with greater disproportionalities as the charter school enrollment skews disproportionately White, affluent, and students without disabilities.

High school summary data showed similar trends to the elementary and middle schools. Table 17 below shows the summary results of the intradistrict school choice program on the district’s two high schools. The schools fare very differently from a total enrollment perspective with high school HN1 showing a slight increase of .5 percent, while high school HN2 shows a large decrease of 28.62 percent.
### Table 18

**High School Enrollment Summary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Increase/Decrease in Enrollment</th>
<th>Increase/Decrease in % of Spec. Ed. Enroll</th>
<th>Increase/Decrease in % of Econ Dis. Enroll</th>
<th>Increase/Decrease in % of White Students Enroll</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HN1</td>
<td>0.50%</td>
<td>0.35%</td>
<td>-3.69%</td>
<td>-4.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HN2</td>
<td>-28.62%</td>
<td>1.77%</td>
<td>3.83%</td>
<td>-5.78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School HN2 also sees an increase in the percentage of students in the total population that are economically disadvantaged, and drop of 5.78 percent of White students in the total population. As previously noted, high school HN2 is disproportionate across every demographic given its boundary attendance. The results of the intradistrict school choice program exacerbates these inequities, and because high school HN1 does see the same extent of the negative effects of intradistrict school choice the inequities between the two schools is even greater.

Understanding why parents choose to utilize the intradistrict school choice program, and analyzing enrollment data based upon boundary versus current enrollment gives great insight into possible inequities within the intradistrict school choice
program. The above results clearly show that inequities and disproportionality are enhanced as a result of the intradistrict school choice policies. The extent of the harm of these disproportionalities is difficult to understand. The principals who lead these schools are most likely to face the day-to-day challenges posed by these disproportionalities. Allowing principals to reflect on what their schools would look like in a boundary circumstance versus the realities of the current enrollment under the intradistrict school choice policy sheds light on the effects of those policies on individual schools and the district.

**Parent Perceptions and Rationale**

The intradistrict school choice form requires parents to list a reason for their transfer request. The question is asked in an open answer response format. Five years of intradistrict transfer forms were compiled and coded to identify themes as to why parents were utilizing the school choice process. Within this analysis, careful attention was given to note themes pertaining to the perceived benefits of one school over another. Four strong themes emerged
from the analysis of 6,245 intradistrict school choice forms. The most noted rationale was that a current or former sibling attended the school. This rationale far exceeded any other rationale and was not informative as to why the parents originally selected the school for the sibling. Other notable themes that were not related to the perception of a school were start and end times of the school, school location, and ability to attend the same school as a friend. These themes addressed the research question as to why parents choose to utilize the intradistrict school choice question, but they were not informative to the overlying question related to inequities within the intradistrict school choice program.

Themes specific to inequities were noted at a lesser volume than those previously listed. These themes included perceived effects of the poverty level of a school, a sense of lack of safety within a school, and a lack of safety surrounding a school. The quantitative analysis shows a greater level of segregation, especially related to race and socio-economic status, and further gives evidence to the belief of a fractured habitus. In other words, bias may be deeper than the surface level reasons parents
were giving for their intradistrict school choice rationale.

*Poverty*

The theme coded to issues of poverty within a school was most noted at the elementary and middle school level; however, it was present at all three levels. One parent stated that they, “would never send their child to a school with so many kids whose parents refuse to get jobs and who take advantage of handouts from working taxpayers.” Another parent stated that they, “refuse to send my child to a school full of ghetto kids with no manners.” One parent went as far as to say the school was, “full of students who do not shower or even brush their teeth.” All of these comments came from parents living in a neighborhood in which the school’s population was greater than 90 percent free and reduced lunch students.

Many parents responding with concerns over poverty showed empathy for the difficulties of educating students in poverty, and the general theme was that they felt their child would not get the attention they deserved given the extreme needs of
other students. This was best exhibited in a comment from a parent stating, “The staff is amazing at the school, but we do not feel that our child can get the education she deserves because the teachers are constantly dealing with students who come from very difficult backgrounds.” Another parent stated, “It is with a heavy heart that we leave school EN3. The staff is so dedicated to the students. We just don’t feel our daughter is properly pushed to reach her potential because of the extreme poverty and needs of so many of the students.” The tone from parents varied greatly in regards to the effects of poverty on the school and their child, but the theme of utilizing the intradistrict school choice process as a way to avoid their neighborhood school in favor of a more affluent school was evident.

School Safety

The concern over student safety was also noted repeatedly by parents. This rationale was frequently given at all levels; however, it was strongest at the elementary and middle school levels. One parent stated that she felt, “unsafe sending my child to a school with parents who all were drug users.” Another
parent of an elementary student noted that he was requesting a transfer to, “ensure his daughter would not be assaulted by a gang banger.” Many comments from parents noted they had concerns related to their neighborhood school because of comments from other parents who previously had students at the school. These comments were more subtle, such as, “I have heard that fights are a common occurrence at school EN8, and I do not feel that my child will be safe at school.” Interestingly, there was not a single comment in any of the forms that were fearful of a threat of mass school violence. The fear was always over individual student interactions.

Another theme within the school safety parameter was that of a lack of trust in the other parents. One mother stated that “my child cannot make friends when it is unsafe for him to be under the supervision of the other parents in the school.” The fear of not having friends who come from safe homes was most evident at the elementary level and was seldom mentioned at the middle and high school levels. Comments related to friends at the middle and high school level were often linked to parents who wanted their child to attend the same school with friends of
their current school. One parent simply stated, “My son has attended EN7 elementary school, and we would like him to attend MN3 middle school where we know he will transition with a group of friends from his current school.” Parents utilizing the intradistrict school choice form for middle and high school to remain on the “school path” of the other students in those schools was extremely common.

**Neighborhood Safety**

The final theme related to school perception was that of safety in the vicinity of the school. One parent stated she, “would never send my child to a school in the ghetto.” Another parent lamented that “the school should be closed as it is not safe for any child to be in that neighborhood.” A number of parents also described their knowledge of sexual predators and drug addicts that were living in the neighborhood. A parent stated, “I have called the city many times. It is insane that a house full of recovering addicts is allowed to exist so close to a school. The district should do something if it truly cares about the students.” Many parents noted a lack of bussing to certain schools and stated that they
were uncomfortable with their child walking to school. This can be summarized by a parent simply stating, “I do not feel comfortable having my child walk to school in this neighborhood, so if we are going to have to drive we are choosing a different school. The district should have bussing for all kids.” Many parents stated that they were choosing a different school because bussing was not an option for them, but they were not comfortable with their child walking, so they were choosing a different school since they were having to give their child a ride to school either way.

Acceptance Expectations

An interesting theme presented itself in the form of parents demanding their application be accepted within their response. Numerous parents threatened to withdraw their child(ren) from the school district if their request was not approved. One parent stated, “If my request is not approved I will be forced to withdraw all four of my children from your district along with the tax dollars that accompany their enrollment.” It was evident that many parents felt that threatening to leave the school district would
increase their chances of having their intradistrict school choice request approved. A parent of a student entering kindergarten stated that “If this application is not approved you will be losing 13 years of revenue as my child will be withdrawing from the district.” The reference to pulling a student out of the district was not uncommon, and it is a variable in this research that needs to be noted. The focus of this research is narrow in examining only intradistrict school choice, and the student movement within that process; however, it is clear that some parents would look to utilize private, voucher, or open-enrollment options if intradistrict school choice were not offered by the district. This rationale gives evidence to the belief that districts are reacting to state school choice laws to protect themselves against attrition without fully understanding the true effects on the district.

**Parent Perceptions and Rationale Summary**

The analysis of parent perception and rationale for utilizing the intradistrict school choice process highlighted the reasons parents stated that they chose to participate in the intradistrict school choice
process. While the comments of some parents were very informative related to school perceptions and inequities, the notion of the fractured habitus that Rhoda and Wells witnessed in their study of New York City Schools appears to be present in the district studied as well.

Principal Interviews

Introduction

Parent perceptions and rationales analyzed across five years of submitted intradistrict transfer forms help to explain why parents are choosing to utilize the intradistrict school choice process. The analysis of the intradistrict school choice movement answers the question of who is participating in the intradistrict school choice process, and the data shows the quantitative effects of the intradistrict school choice program. With an understanding of why parents are choosing to utilize intradistrict school choice and an understanding of which students are participating in the intradistrict school choice program, the research follows a pragmatic approach that provides an understanding of where intradistrict school choice policies are taking individual school
and the district. The final research questions ask how neighborhood school administrators feel school choice has impacted their schools, and if they feel anything should be done to address equity issues within the choice system.

Providing principals with an understanding of why families are utilizing the intradistrict school choice program, along with showing the quantitative effects of the intradistrict school choice program on enrollment demographics, allows for principals to be well informed when answering questions pertaining to the effects of the intradistrict school choice program on their schools. Having this data also allows for a check-and-balance related to principal perceptions and responses to their perceptions of the effects of the intradistrict school choice program on their school. The coding process of the principal interviews resulted in themes pertaining to disproportionality, school culture, revenue, competition, and choice.

**Have and Have Nots**

The theme of disproportionality was the most prevalent concern raised by principals about the effects of intradistrict school choice. All
principals interviewed stated that they felt there were inequities as the result of the intradistrict school choice program. The idea that the intradistrict school choice policy itself was discriminatory was less of a concern among principals; however, most principals did articulate ideas as to how the intradistrict school choice program could be improved to lessen the inequities currently observed. The aspects of poverty, special education, and race were all explored in the interview process. The common theme among the principals was the effects of the disproportionalities within their school.

The quantitative data showed the disproportionalities across the district as a result of the intradistrict school choice, and the principals were often surprised at the levels of disproportionality as a result of the intradistrict school choice process. One elementary principal commented that, “the density of poverty is a trending factor in their school that worsens by the year.” A common concern among principals was not only the negative effects of poverty in their school, but a fear that the current disproportionalities, especially pertaining to poverty, were going to get worse in
future years. One high school principal stated, “It’s like we have the have and have-nots, and if you’re a have-not the gaps in socio-economic status between the two groups of schools is only going to get worse.” A similar comment was made by an elementary principal who stated, “I don’t think there is anything we could do to keep families from leaving our school over fears related to issues of poverty. What am I supposed to say to a parent who tells me that they want to use the intradistrict school choice process to change schools because they are sick of dropping their child off and seeing parents dressed in ripped sweatpants?”

The effects of poverty were not only a concern related to enrollment. One principal discussed how the increase in the percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch in his building, “has led to such a strong focus on combating the negative effects of poverty that we simply can’t focus on the needs of all students, especially our high achieving students, like some other schools in the district do.” While the principal pointed out that they view students as individuals, he also pointed to obvious district and state-wide achievement gaps between students who are and are not free and reduced lunch
students. His belief is that other schools have more students ready for advanced learning, and as a result those programs are stronger at the other schools, and this means that parents of those students will often utilize intradistrict school choice to simply enroll their children at the schools that have stronger advanced programming for students.

An elementary principal noted a similar concern stating, “I honestly don’t believe that school EN7 does anything better than we do other than enroll students that aren’t poor.” When asked how that specifically affects their school, the principal responded, “it is frustrating because we feel like we work twice as hard as some schools. We run amazing programs for students that suffer the effects of poverty, and that’s a large population of our school, but we also make sure that this doesn’t come at the expense of ensuring that we challenge all students. I don’t think we get any credit for that.”

The same principal stated that when she was presented with the quantitative data prior to the interview she noted the economically disadvantaged percentage of students in her boundary and saw that
there were other schools with current enrollment that would be comparable. She explained that it was really difficult to see those numbers and make that comparison because she realized how much “more manageable her school would be” if she were a principal at a school with those socio-economic demographics.

Nearly every principal mentioned some remorse for feeling like students suffering from the effects of poverty were a burden. One principal stated that he specifically entered education to help students suffering the effects of poverty, but he was clear that “it was becoming nearly impossible to be all things for all students.” He explained that they have seen a nearly 10 percent increase in free and reduced lunch numbers over the last three years, and discussed how that trend has put a great deal of stress on the school, while staffing has been reduced due to lower enrollment numbers.

The density of students who are economically disadvantaged was often the strongest theme pulled from the discussion related to disproportionality. Many principals of schools with high percentages of
economically disadvantaged students referenced other district schools that were more affluent and stated their belief that those schools had an easier time dealing with the effects of poverty because the density was not as great. One principal summarized, “It’s a lot easier for a teacher to have five kids who need extra attention because of the effects of poverty than it is for a teacher who has 20 free and reduced lunch students in their classroom. The same is true at the school level.”

**Special Education**

The disproportionality and density of special education students was also a topic of the interviews; however, the effects were not viewed by principals as being nearly as problematic to the overall school operations. One elementary principal stated, “I know we have a higher percentage of special education students, but the staffing is also there to meet the needs of the IEP. When I have a higher proportion of free and reduced lunch kids I get some extra funding through Title I and AGR, but not nearly enough to give the support those students need.” A middle school principal echoed that idea when he stated, “special
education numbers are rarely problematic. I would like to see the caseloads be smaller, but that is no different from any other school. I feel like we meet the needs of our students with disabilities, and if we are not meeting their needs we reevaluate.”

The most discussed area of concern related to the change in special education numbers as a result of intradistrict school choice was related to behaviors. A middle school principal stated that he “struggles with scheduling some classes because he knows the number of special education students with behavioral needs will put a stress on the teacher and could possibly alter the education of the other students in the classroom.” The overall consensus was very different across the principals regarding special education numbers, while some felt the staffing was adequate and additional students weren’t an issue, there were some that shared the belief that the disproportionality made it more difficult for their teachers to provide quality instruction to all students. All principals that referenced concern over an increase in special education numbers as a result of intradistrict school choice stated their concern in terms of students with behavioral needs. One
elementary principal likened it to the issue of poverty stating, “It’s just more difficult when you are trying to push students into a classroom and no matter how you schedule you’re going to end up with two or three high needs behavior students in a room. Reducing that number by even one student makes a huge difference. That is the difference between my school and school EN7.”

**Race/Ethnicity**

Questions on race were also included in the interview process. Many principals had a difficult time articulating their concerns in this area. One elementary principal stated that he, “appreciates diversity, but worries that the district is headed in a direction in which we will have schools that are mostly white and schools that are mostly students of color.” He went on to express concerns over “white-flight.”

The general concern among all principals was related to charter schools taking a larger percentage of white students than proportionally representational to the district. One principal questioned, “Why do we allow a charter school to look so different from a
neighborhood school? I’ve been told it’s because we have more and less affluent or diverse neighborhood schools as well, but that doesn’t mean we should exacerbate the problem by creating more schools with segregation issues.” Another principal stated that they felt the diversity in their school was a strength, but questioned if families felt that way given that, “the majority of the families leaving us are white.”

Principals were questioned on what they felt the change would be in their school if their ethnicity data looked like their boundary data in comparison to their current enrollment. The common theme in response to that question was one of general equity. One principal stated, “I think it just becomes really hard when as a district we preach equity, but our school choice options create greater segregation.”

The vast majority of principals discussed concerns over the inequities created by the intradistrict school choice policies. While many principals also noted the concerns over likely issues in the absence of an intradistrict school choice program, there was a strong general theme that the
disproportionality of participation was not beneficial to the individual schools or district. One principal stated, “I guess I have to support intradistrict school choice because the alternative may be even worse, but the results of this process in my school are not equitable or in line with what we say we stand for in this district.” This comment summarizes the majority of responses. Only two principals did not feel the intradistrict school choice process had a large impact on their schools, and in both cases those principals stated that while they believe their school was relatively unaffected from a demographics standpoint they could see where their colleagues have concerns in their respective schools.

**School Culture and Climate**

The theme of school culture and climate was frequently identified within the interview process with principals. The general theme pertained to the families that leave schools as a result of intradistrict school choice, and the willingness of parents to use the intradistrict school choice process as leverage in a variety of situations. Principals spoke of many different situations and scenarios in
which the culture and climate of their buildings is affected by the intradistrict school choice program, and they showed a strong disdain for specific situations related to intradistrict school choice that they have had to deal with. These frustrations ranged from parents with extremely high expectations and needs “school shopping” to find a school that would meet their demands, to parents who were threatening to leave a school to avoid having themselves or their child held accountable for actions such as truancy or incidents of school violence.

One elementary principal spoke passionately about a parent who utilized intradistrict school choice to leave her school because she was frustrated with the lack of support from other parents towards the school. The principal noted, “I had my PTO President intradistrict school choice her child from my school because she was so frustrated that she couldn’t find any other parents that wanted to support our school through the PTO process.” The principal used this example to highlight her belief that the parents who are leaving are often the most involved parents, and her belief that those parents want to have their children attend school where other parents are just as
involved. The principal noted that she believes her parents are involved in their own ways, but acknowledged that the “school culture looks very different at her school versus school EN7.” She noted that losing engaged parents has changed their school culture over the last five years as they no longer even have a PTO.

Another elementary principal of a more affluent school noted that the families that choose her school through the intradistrict school choice are generally looking for “a school with high standards and strong parent involvement.” These two principals had two very different outcomes in relation to the effects of intradistrict school choice. A different principal summarized this experience as “winners and losers.” He stated that, “Generally speaking the families that choice into our school are great to work with and supportive of our school. We are definitely a winner as a result of intradistrict school choice, and I can understand the frustration of the principals that are losing these families through no fault of their own.”

The response most elicited through questioning pertaining to school culture and climate was that of
frustration with parents who use the policy to “school shop.” A principal stated that he had a group of three parents ask to meet with him to discuss the math curriculum. They stated that while they understood the school didn’t have enough students to have a high math group, they would simply transfer their child to school EN7 because they know that school has one. The principal was adamant that they provided the same curriculum through a delivery model that didn’t require grouping of students; however, he was frustrated that he was put in a place where he had to change his model or lose the parents and students. Another principal stated a similar frustration when she explained, “I once had a parent email me with what he thought was accurate financial information on the cost of having his child choice out of my school. He stated it was clearly in my best interest to spend additional dollars on his child because if I didn’t he was going to choose his daughter to a different school in the district.”

One principal referred to this behavior by parents as “entitlement,” but the examples shared were not specific only to parents looking for what they perceived was an advantage for their child.
Principals also spoke of frustrations related to parents utilizing their intradistrict school choice options to “run from their actions.” One principal gave an example of how they made a call to social services about a parent and the very next day the parent completed intradistrict school choice paperwork to have their child transfer to a different district school. The principal stated, “It’s not beneficial when we start to file truancy on a student, or are mandatory reporters of abuse, and the minute we move in this direction parents simply fill out an intradistrict transfer form and leave our school as soon as district policy allows. Now we have a student who just went through a traumatic experience, we had to call social services, and that parent switches schools and the student has to make new friends and build new relationships with counselors and teachers. It breaks my heart.”

There was a great deal of frustration shared in regards to schools working extensively to improve the education for a child only to have all that work undone by a parent then utilizing the intradistrict school choice program. One principal summarized the frustrations when she stated, “Parents feel they are
entitled to enter and leave our school anytime they choose. They’ll be in our school one year, get frustrated with us and leave the next year, only to return the following year after they become frustrated with that school. The wheel never stops spinning.”

**Competition Versus Collaboration**

Another predominant theme identified in the interviews was the frustration related to a feeling of competition rather than collaboration. A principal from a more affluent school stated, “I feel bad that I see my colleagues having to recruit the families that should attend their school, while we don’t do any of that and we see families enroll in our school at a high rate. While I’m proud of our school, I also understand that families are likely choosing us because of perception and factors that we don’t control.” One principal spoke to this by simply saying, “can we have a rule that no neighborhood school or charter school can have a billboard, and we can all save that money?” The concerns over time, resources, school and district focus and true collaboration were all topics related to this theme of competition.
The comments regarding billboards were said “tongue and cheek”; however, the principals were sincere in their concerns over having to spend money to attract and retain students. One elementary principal discussed his concerns related to recruiting students from a district and school perspective. He stated that, “It feels like the district has taken a lot of initiative to brand and market itself in the community, and we should all benefit from that. Instead, we end up battling each other for students in an unregulated environment. What if neighborhood schools started putting up billboards like charter schools do?” Another principal commented on how morally and ethically she did not feel comfortable trying to “steal” students from other schools. Instead she referenced that all her efforts go into making sure her neighborhood parents are aware of the positive things happening in her school. She complained that even this felt like it “crossed the line from parent engagement to pure marketing and recruitment at times.”

The difference in perception related to time and money spent on recruiting varied along the lines of level of affluence within the school. Principals of
affluent schools felt little need to market their schools. One middle school principal discussed that there is no need for him to market their school as they do well in the intradistrict school choice process without marketing their school. An elementary principal discussed how school choice is “empowering” to her as parents know there is a waiting list to get into her school. When asked if they feel they lose students to other schools (typically charters), both principals stated that they know they lose students to charter schools but they were not worried about this as they simply replace the students with kids from other district schools. Both principals of schools with high rates of students utilizing the intradistrict school choice system to enter or exit their school showed little interest in that occurrence as a reflection of how they truly educate their students.

The concept of time and money was mentioned routinely across many different principals. An elementary principal stated that they have to “blow what little we have in discretionary spending on the creation, printing, and mailing of marketing materials to try and attract families to their school.” A
different principal complained that they have been forced to choose between making purchases that they believe would have an impact on student achievement in order to fund recruiting activities. Similar to the discussions related to time, the principals of schools that are more affluent and often have waiting lists for admittance reported that they spend little to no money on recruiting students. One principal stated, “Parents are not aware of our SGP (standard growth percentage) scores being one of the highest in the district, I wish parents would at least make informed decisions on school choice based upon data, but that is not the reality. Instead, we have to market ourselves to ensure parents understand the strengths of our school.”

The common theme from the concerns over competition rather than collaboration was that schools who are already struggling to attract students are forced to not only improve their school data, but they are also forced to improve their school marketing. One elementary principal stated, “I never went into education to market my school to parents. We have better results across all demographics than school EN9, but the perception is they are better than us
because they have a higher percentage of non-free and reduced lunch students. So now I have to spend time and money telling our story to parents in hopes that they won’t choice out of our school, rather than putting time and money into supporting our increasingly diverse and economically disadvantaged student population.”

A final concern was that of the focus of the district as a whole. One principal stated that, “it seems like we spend a great deal of time talking about schools that educate very few students.” The principal was referring to charter schools within the district, and the concern was that the district has placed an emphasis on being a “district of choice,” but the time and attention given to charter schools is disproportionate to that given to neighborhood schools. Another principal observed, “It seems like the school board spends a lot of time talking about charter schools. The concept of charter schools is supposed to be autonomy, so that whole deal seems odd to me.” The principal expressed concern that there are schools that could benefit from a great deal of support from the school board, and didn’t feel that the school board understood the realities of those
schools as well as they did the realities of the charter schools. He stated, “It doesn’t seem right that the board knows everything about a specific charter school, but yet knows nothing about a neighborhood school that is doing amazing things with a very underserved population.”

**Parent Choice**

Principals also noted the benefits of parent choice in their interviews. While most principals gave ideas for how to improve the intradistrict school choice process to be more equitable, many also cautioned against completely removing the process from the district. The general consensus among the group of school leaders was simply that without choice we would see an enrollment decline in our district that would look similar to what some of our schools are currently observing. There was one principal at the elementary level and one principal at the high school level who did not support the continuation of intradistrict school choice in any fashion. All other principals were in favor of making the intradistrict school choice system more equitable, but they were not in favor of removing the program in its entirety. The
rationale for not wanting to close the intradistrict school choice program centered around the themes of fear of decreasing enrollment and the perceived benefits of parents who feel empowered by the intradistrict school choice policy.

The fear of decreasing enrollment within the district was the biggest concern for principals. Even the two principals who were in favor of completely ending intradistrict school choice acknowledged that it would likely have a negative impact on student enrollment within our district. One principal stated, “I fully understand that my support of ending intradistrict school choice would result in families leaving our district, but I don’t feel I can support a policy that gets such inequitable results.” Another principal stated, “I look at what is happening in some of the schools in our district because of intradistrict school choice, and I feel like that would happen to our entire district if we were to end intradistrict school choice.” This conflict of what is “right” and what is sustainable was something all principals grappled with.
A middle school principal stated that “there is no way you can look at this data and feel that the results of intradistrict school choice are equitable, but it’s impossible to look at this in a vacuum. Ending intradistrict school choice would take something that we have prided ourselves on in this district and ending it would result in irreparable harm with so many parents.” Another principal simply laughed at the idea and said, “I would love to see the results of upsetting a third of parents in the name of equity, just not in this district.”

The most noted strength of the intradistrict school choice process noted among principals was the belief that it leads to greater parent satisfaction simply because parents feel they have a choice in the education of their child. An elementary principal stated that, “My choice parents are some of the most supportive parents I have. They are always appreciative of the opportunity to attend our school, and if there are ever concerns they want to work to resolve them rather than return to their home school or choice to another school.” Principals gave conflicting views on the willingness of intradistrict school choice parents’ willingness to work with them
when problems arose; however, it was evident that they all believed the parents felt a great deal of satisfaction knowing that they had a choice in the school their child(ren) attended. One principal stated, “I honestly don’t know if I would want my choice parents back, while I believe we can provide a great educational experience to any child, it’s such an uphill battle with some parents that it seems like time wasted to try. I’m okay with them leaving our school.” One principal went as far as to state, “I’ve never told a parent to choice out of our school, but when they are unhappy and threaten to leave our school, they are often surprised when I do not object. There are times when I will tell the parent that I don’t think that changing schools would be in their child’s best interest, and there are other times when I feel like the relationship is so strained that a fresh start may be the best thing for the child because the parent is having such a negative impact on their own child’s education.”

The concept of a “fresh start” was a theme among principals with many noting the benefits of a student moving schools after a serious disagreement or event. Principals gave many examples of specific situations
in which they felt the student leaving their current school for another school in our district put parents in a position where they didn’t have to agree with the school but could still remain in the district. Numerous principals gave examples of peer conflict that was resolved when a student decided to change schools. While principals were cautious to promote this as a positive outcome or solution to peer conflict, a principal summarized the collective sentiment when he stated, “I hate to see a student switch schools because they can’t get along with another student, but we have had students involved in situations that are so personally embarrassing that if it were my child I would certainly be in favor of a change of schools.”

One interesting difference was noticed between principals of highly sought out schools. A principal who routinely has a waiting list stated, “I think parents are pretty careful about pushing too hard because they know there are other parents that would like to get into our school. If they blow it with me their only other option is a private school or open-enrollment which they obviously don’t want or they wouldn’t be in my school.” This belief was similarly
shared among three principals. They all referenced some feeling of empowerment with choice parents feeling fortunate to have an enrollment slot in their school. It was a stark comparison to most principals feeling like they needed to go above and beyond to ensure they did not lose additional students as a result of intradistrict school choice. However, in all cases, the principals all felt that the intradistrict school choice process ultimately resulted in parents with more positive attitudes toward the school in which the children were attending.

**Improvements**

A number of principals gave insights into how they feel the intradistrict school choice process could be changed to result in a more equitable process. Nearly all principals shared a general belief that intradistrict school choice is beneficial to the district; however, they also shared a belief that the results of the intradistrict school choice process were not equitable. These beliefs were woven within their responses to many different questions, and the general theme was that changes could be made
to improve the equity of intradistrict school choice without having to completely eliminate a program that is appreciated by most parents. Many principals struggled with these suggestions as they noted a feeling of conflict between falling short of suggesting what they believe is the right thing to do and dealing with the realities of the results of their decision if implemented. An elementary principal highlighted this internal conflict by stating, “I know that anytime choice is involved in education it is not going to be equitable, but I also feel that we can make the current system better.” This statement was followed by a rhetorical question, “Does that make me sound like I’m enabling inequities?” That level of conflict was present in many statements from principals; however, a number of recommendations were given to improve the current intradistrict school choice process.

The most requested change was for “yellow bus” transportation to any school. There were two concerns related to transportation shared in the interview process. The first concern was that the district bussing policy fails to meet the needs of many families, and the second concern was that families
could not participate in the intradistrict school choice process because transportation was a struggle for them. In relation to the first concern, principals discussed families that live within their boundary and would send their children to their neighborhood school if the school was able to offer transportation; however, the district policy of not offering bussing to students living within two miles of the school did not allow for bussing so the family would choose a school closer to work or a babysitter. One principal stated, “I lose a handful of kindergarten students each year because they live too close to qualify for busing, but the families don’t feel comfortable with the child walking to school. Once I lose them in kindergarten it is rare that they return when the family feels they are old enough to safely walk to school. I could fill a bus with those students. Our neighborhood isn’t the safest, and I’m not sure I would want my kindergartener walking.” Another elementary principal stated, “Our students have to rely on city buses and many parents don’t want their child to have to deal with that. While I know we are discussing school choice and busing changes would affect school choice, I feel like not having busing
for my students is inequitable in general. A student attending school EN7 is almost always bussed because of a lack of sidewalks in affluent subdivisions, but my kids have to walk nearly two miles past drug houses."

Related to the second concern, many principals stated that having bussing for all students would simply even the “playing field” for all families. An elementary school principal summarized, “I’m not sure what it would cost to offer bussing for all students, but it’s the easiest way to make the school choice process more equitable. I know many families that can’t take part because they either don’t have reliable transportation or their work schedules don’t allow for them to take their child to school each day.” These concerns were repeated by many principals, especially at the elementary level where age was a concern in relation to walking or taking public transportation. Principals noted that before and after school programming helps to alleviate drop-off and pick-up time concerns; however, this doesn’t meet the needs of all parents. An elementary principal illustrated this instance when stating, “I had a mother who desperately wanted her child at my
school, but because she was a single mother working third-shift she couldn’t get home from work and get her child to our school for the start of the school day. Her apartment was a couple blocks from the neighborhood school, and the grandmother lived with them, so the grandmother would walk the child to school because she didn’t have a car.” Many similar stories were shared of families reaching out to schools with the intent to utilize the intradistrict school choice process to enroll only to realize that there was no possible way to do so without district-provided transportation.

Another recommendation noted by a number of principals was the idea of “quotas.” While all who suggested such a change acknowledged the difficulty and legalities of doing so, the overall theme was that it would shift the numbers of students participating in the program to make the process more equitable. A principal stated, “I’d like to see schools only be able to take the number of white and non-free and reduced lunch students that are reflected in our district’s demographics.” Most principals acknowledged the controversy that generally ensues around affirmative action policies, but stated that it
would put a great deal of pressure on schools to market and find ways to enroll a student population reflective of the district. A principal of a more affluent elementary school stated, “I would have no problem if my school’s demographics shifted to better reflect those of the districts, but I would have a problem if my school’s demographics were like school EN8 (referencing a high poverty elementary school). That doesn’t seem equitable at all.” Not a single principal objected to having a student body that mirrored the demographics of the district. A middle school principal suggested that the vast majority of the disproportionality was a result of charter schools and stated, “Charter schools should be required to have enrollments similar to that of the district. If they are simply here to enroll affluent students I’m not sure that is beneficial to the district academically or financially.”

The final recommendation related to intradistrict school choice was suggested by two principals who felt the program should be ended. Both principals were against the concept of any publicly funded school choice option, and while they acknowledged the reactionary nature of the intradistrict school choice
policy to previous policies promoting voucher, independent charter schools, and open-enrollment, they did not feel any choice process could be done in an equitable manner. This was summarized by a principal who stated, “Even if we were to do full transportation, before and after school care, and everything else we could possibly do to increase access, the parent still has to care enough to fill out the form.” While nearly all principals acknowledged that school choice begins based upon the ability to buy a home or rent a residency in a desired area, the question posed by these two principals challenges whether doing anything to add to the inequities that already exists based upon where someone can afford to live should ever be added to or addressed through more choice options.

**Summary**

The insights of these principals show the complexity of intradistrict school choice policy in a mid-sized urban school district. While the principals were unanimous in their beliefs that inequities exist as a result of the intradistrict school choice process, they were uniquely different in their beliefs
related to the effects of intradistrict school choice on their building and with their views on how to make the intradistrict school choice process more equitable. Their opinions provide a valued perspective and highlight the complexity of public policy in relation to equity. The initial research and data pertaining to student movement allowed the researcher to follow Flyvbjerg’s phronetic path, answering the questions of, “Where are we going?”. The principal interviews helped to inform the questions of “Is it desirable?” and “What should be done?” (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 60). Of most significance, the combination of the quantitative and qualitative data answers Flyvbjerg’s final question of “Who gains and who loses; by which mechanisms of power?” This understanding defines not only the inequities that exist as a result of the intradistrict school choice policy, but more significantly, that the data can be used to inform policy makers of the results of their policies and solutions to amend such policies to ensure equity within the process.
CHAPTER IV

Conclusions

Introduction

The phronetic path utilized to collect and analyze data allows for the findings to inform possible policy revisions. While the history of school choice throughout our nation is controversial and broad in nature, the purpose of this study was strictly to understand how intradistrict school choice policies, created as a result of national and state school choice policies, affected a mid-sized urban school district in Wisconsin. The presented problem and purpose of the research study highlighted the possible concerns related to inequities within the intradistrict school choice program of the district being studied. The research questions were explored through a pragmatic process focused on producing data that can inform policy makers. A mixed-methods case study was utilized within a pragmatic paradigm to ensure that the best method of research was used to answer the “how” and “why” of the study (Yin, 1994, p. 9). The research questions, aligned to Flybjerg’s phronetic approach, inform policy makers of inequities
as a result of current policy related to intradistrict school choice. The research first identified the students and demographic data related to those taking part in the intradistrict school choice process. It then analyzed possible parent rationale for utilizing the intradistrict school choice process.

Given that information, school building principals were interviewed to better understand how the changes in demographics and the intradistrict school choice had affected their schools. The principal interviews answered the questions pertaining to equity, and they were completed in a manner that allowed the principals to reflect upon the quantitative data collected. The case study approach allowed for the research process to clearly explain “what my case is” and “where my case leaves off” (Huberman, Miles, Saldana, 2014, p. 28). Ultimately, the research is particularistic in nature, and can be used to inform similar school districts grappling with the difficulties of creating intradistrict school choice policies in light of an ever-changing role of open-enrollment, voucher, and charter school systems.
The research process addressed the research questions related to the demographics of the students taking part in the intradistrict school choice process, why parents are choosing this option, how principals feel about the intradistrict school choice process, and what can be done to address concerns specifically related to equity within the intradistrict school choice process. Using a mixed-methods approach to collecting this data, themes were identified related to student safety, declining enrollment concerns, and disproportionalities related to race and students living in poverty. These findings are essential to answering the research questions and identifying inequities and the reason for those inequities within the intradistrict school choice program. The data is beneficial in that it ensures policy makers understand the effects of their current intradistrict school choice policies, and highlights areas of inequities that exist as a result of the intradistrict school choice program. Understanding this data allows for research-based policy recommendations to be made that could have a positive impact on eliminating barriers to the
intradistrict school choice program, thus creating a more proportional and equitable program.

The statement of the problem for this research study identified the likelihood of inequities created by the intradistrict school choice program stemming from the district’s reaction to state school choice policies. The data collected pertaining to this problem offers insight into possible policy changes; however, the issue of how power affects policy specifically related to the intradistrict school choice program needs to first be understood. Flyvbjerg suggests this be addressed with the culmination of research to inform, “Who gains and who loses; by which mechanisms of power?” (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p.60). Delpit’s (1998) guidance assists in helping to make policy recommendations when the imbalance of power is understood. Specifically, she states;

The rules of the culture of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who have power. This means that success in institutions, schools, work places, and so on is predicated upon acquisition of the
culture of those in power. Children from middle-class homes tend to do better in school than those from non-middle-class homes because the culture of the school is based on the culture of the upper middle classes of those in power. The upper and middle classes send their children to school with all the accoutrements of the culture of power; children from other kinds of families operate within perfectly wonderful and viable cultures but not cultures that carry the codes or rules of power. (p. 283)

Given the inequities shown in both the quantitative and qualitative data collected for this study, Delpit’s words highlight concerns over equity within the district studied. Delpit (1998) points out that “children from other kinds of families operate within perfect wonderful and viable cultures but not cultures that carry the codes or rule of power.” This research shows that those with power are writing policy that benefits the upper- and middle-class families that share a similar culture of power (p. 283).
The final research question asks what can be done to address inequities within the intradistrict school choice policies. This requires an understanding of the role of power and culture within the current policy. The increased segregation of schools (Orfield and Yun, 1999) along with the lack of statistical difference in student performance across different educational models (Ravitch, 2016) have long plagued the school choice movement, yet the data of this study clearly shows strong parent support for policy that produces those unfortunate outcomes. Chubb and Moe (1991) make it clear that at the heart of a capitalistic society with free markets, schools should be given the freedom to accept whomever they want, exclude whomever they want, expel whomever they want, and charge tuition of any amount. While intradistrict school choice policies stop far short of this belief, the data does show that equity and diversity are not factors that are of strong importance. To lean on Ibram X. Kendi’s words, “There is no neutrality in the racism struggle...One either allows racial inequities to persevere, as a racist, or confronts racial inequities, as an antiracist. There is not in between
safe space of ‘not racist.’ The claim of ‘not racist’ neutrality is a mask for racism” (Kendi, 2019).

The first finding, specific to the research question of why parents are choosing to utilize the intradistrict school choice process, is answered through the analysis of parent intradistrict school choice requests and interviews with school principals. The theme of safety was strong among both parent intradistrict response analysis and principal interviews. Parents noted their rationale for requesting an alternative school through the intradistrict school choice process, and a very strong theme was that of safety. While some parents were very forthcoming in their statements, such as stating they felt “unsafe sending my child to a school with parents who are all drug users,” other parents were more subtle with their opinions, as was the case with the mother who stated, “I love my child’s teachers, but I have not felt comfortable around the other parents.” Principals noted a similar trend in their interviews often linked to the school culture and climate along with poverty concerns. Principals reported parents who were concerned over the lack of a
strong functioning PTO, again referencing back to Delpit’s beliefs on power and culture.

Safety was also a concern raised by both parents and principals in the form of transportation. Parents were concerned about not having busing available to their neighborhood school because of fear over safety concerns in the surrounding neighborhood. Parents also referenced concerns over not having busing to choice schools, making them inaccessible to their children. Principals echoed similar concerns. Many principals, especially at the elementary level, noted their belief that parents would likely send neighborhood students to their school if policy allowed for more busing. At the same time, principals also reflected upon conversations with parents who wanted to utilize intradistrict school choice to enroll in their school but could not do so because of a lack of transportation. To summarize the link between transportation and safety, both parents and principals pointed to transportation as a means to make the intradistrict school choice process more equitable and to alleviate some safety concerns related to schools in neighborhoods of higher than average crime.
While safety concerns were one of many variables leading to enrollment shifts, the sheer number of enrollment transfers was a concern for many principals. Reversing student choice enrollments gave a clear picture of what neighborhood schools would look like if intradistrict school choice were not an option, and if all students currently enrolled in the district remained enrolled. While it is noted that some of those families would likely opt to participate in the open enrollment or voucher program if the intradistrict school choice program were no longer an option, reversing current intradistrict school choice enrollments shows an incredibly different school make-up across the district. Five elementary schools saw an enrollment decline of greater than 20 percent due to intradistrict school choice. At the secondary level two of the three middle schools saw enrollment decline 13 percent each, while one saw a decline of 18 percent, and at the high school level one high school saw an enrollment decline of approximately 29 percent. These declines were not of concern to parents, who are not likely to realize the consequences to some of the neighborhood schools; however, they were of great concern to many of the principals.
The effects of intradistrict school choice in relation to competition and collaboration within the district was a predominant theme noted in the principal interviews. An aspect of that theme pertains directly to individual school enrollment. While the other findings of this research will discuss the issues pertaining to disproportionality across socio-economic and racial lines, principals fully understand the effects of declining enrollment on their schools, specifically in respect to how enrollment movement affects relationships between schools. Even principals who do not suffer from declining enrollment as a result of intradistrict school choice noted their empathy for schools that continue to lose families and have to spend a great deal of their time and budget on recruiting and retention of students.

The harsh reality for schools struggling with declining enrollment is that they find themselves having to cut staff, tighten budgets, and reverse an enrollment trend that requires both more staff and money. While this finding is fundamentally simple to understand, the effects are rooted deeply in nearly every aspect of a successful school. Schools with
declining enrollment struggle to make budget and face having to cut key staffing positions typically associated with extra supports for both academically and behaviorally challenged students along with students who need what is generally termed "gifted and talented" support. In addition, schools with declining enrollment as a result of intradistrict school choice were schools with the greatest levels of poverty. In this case, those schools also face a loss of Title I and Achievement Gap Reduction (AGR) funds which are typically distributed on a per pupil basis. Finally, these schools ultimately face the reality of closure.

Principals questioned how low enrollment could decline at a school before it would ultimately be closed, and the possibilities of school closures, accompanied by busing policies that can force students to walk up to two miles. In addition, a school closing could be an attractive option for a district looking to cut expenses while not having to increase transportation much, if at all, due to the proximity of other neighborhood schools.
In addition to the declining enrollment and safety concerns that were found to have a profound impact on enrollment at schools, the effects of intradistrict school choice also proved to create greater disproportionalities in enrollment across nearly all subgroups. Rhoda and Wells (2012) suggest that a fractured habitus leads to parental actions not matching their beliefs, and the totality of the data analysis of intradistrict school choice results points to a fractured habitus within the district. Again, the theme of “have and have nots” is observed across this finding as the schools with the highest enrollments of attendance boundary residing free and reduced lunch students also prove to be the same schools that see an even greater increase in percentage of free and reduced lunch students after accounting for intradistrict school choice movement.

Advocates of school choice have long argued that school choice exists within public education for those that can afford it, thus additional tuition free choices can only benefit those in need (Fuller, 2002). However, the effects of intradistrict school choice in this district tell a very different story. The qualitative and quantitative data both point to
schools that were already suffering from disproportionate levels of free and reduced lunch students now having an even greater density of those same students. Influential advocates for school choice such as Howard Fuller feel that school choice leads to greater benefits for those suffering from poverty; however, the eventual results of the intradistrict school choice policy with the district study proved the opposite, a predictable outcome for critics of school choice such as Diane Ravitch (2016).

Disproportionalities were also noted along the lines of race and ethnicity as a result of the intradistrict school choice program. A fractured habitus makes collecting qualitative data around race and “white flight” extremely difficult; however, the benefits of quantitative data are invaluable in highlighting this finding. The quantitative analysis shows that as a result of intradistrict school choice the percentage of white students attending neighborhood schools dropped in nearly all neighborhood schools. The general theme of “have and have nots” needs to be noted again, as the only neighborhood school not observing a decrease in enrollment of white students was the district’s most
affluent neighborhood elementary school. This finding shows the difficulty of desegregation, as parents find the intradistrict school choice policy as a way to opt out of desegregation efforts (Grant, 2009). The quantitative data is very clear, the intradistrict school choice program is being disproportionately used by students that are both white and affluent.

The findings of this study show the inequities of the intradistrict school program within the mid-sized urban school district studied. These inequities and disproportionalities are staggering at both a quantitative and qualitative level. A fractured habitus likely exists, causing a great deal of white flight from neighborhood schools that offer a greater level of diversity across racial and socio-economic lines. The research informs the necessary questions to make this judgment, and the qualitative and quantitative data shows little conflict. The unfortunate results are as Pearman and Walker (2017) would suggest: greater gentrification of schools. While Schneider and Buckley (2002) note the difficulty for parents to properly choose the best school for their children, the data analysis in this study shows the consensus is to simply leave schools with moderate
to high levels of poverty and diversity in preference to schools with less diversity and more affluence.

Limitations

Limitations to this study are noteworthy because the study essentially acts as if student enrollment takes place in a bubble. The single greatest limitation to any policy recommendation to come from this study is the inability to judge the reaction from the public, specifically parents, if intradistrict school choice were to be eliminated. Reversing the current intradistrict school choice enrollments to obtain the demographic data of schools if intradistrict school choice did not exist is extremely beneficial in showing the results of intradistrict school choice. While the purpose of this study is fulfilled, it is unknown how families would react to policy changes that would eliminate the intradistrict school choice process or make the intradistrict school choice process more equitable. One can assume it is extremely likely that state-wide open enrollment and voucher schools would be an enticing option for parents if the intradistrict school choice process were limited; however, this research did not examine
the propensity of parents already utilizing the intradistrict school choice process to move to a voucher or open-enrollment option if limited in intradistrict school choice options. A greater understanding of this would likely be beneficial, especially when providing policy recommendations to elected officials and district leadership.

**Implications for Practice and Policy**

The findings of the research shows a clear concern from both principals and parents for the safety of children. The qualitative data shows disproportionalities as a result of the intradistrict school choice policy, and principals spoke to the difficulties that those disproportionalities, especially along socio-economic lines, create in their schools. Transportation was routinely noted and requested by principals as a way to make the intradistrict school choice process more equitable. A review of the district’s busing policy shows that students are not afforded transportation if they live within two miles of their neighborhood school unless a hazard exists (i.e. dangerous street crossing with no crossing lights or crossing guard, no sidewalks,
etc.). While busing is currently provided to some charter schools (at the cost of the charter school), it is not provided to neighborhood schools for students taking part in the intradistrict school choice process.

A district policy that would allow for busing for any student that requests transportation to any school of choice would surely come at a large expense. That being said, the current intradistrict school policy leaves families who cannot transport their children to different schools largely excluded from the school choice process. Parents who work during pick-up or drop-off times obviously rely on the ability of their children to walk to school or be bused, as their work schedules preclude them from being able to transport their children to school. Universal busing would allow for all children to have door-to-door transportation to any school of choice. Again, cost becomes a likely deterrent for policy makers; however, given the safety concerns expressed by parents and principals such policy for only elementary aged students could provide a compromise that is viewed to be very popular among parents and staff. This cost could possibly be included in the funding of schools
taking school choice students as well. An example of this would be that instead of a school choice student counting as a full-time equivalent student, they would be counted as a fraction of a student, say 90 percent or 9/10s. When schools are allocated funding for their third-Friday enrollment a tenth of the funding for each student would then be placed in a fund to pay for the busing of intradistrict school choice students.

Policy pertaining to busing to integrate schools has been controversial in the United States since the 1970s (Kahlenberg, 2016). School districts in Wake County, North Carolina, La Crosse, Wisconsin, and Cambridge, Massachusetts are often referenced as districts leading the pursuit of socio-economic integration of their schools (Kahlenberg, 2007). Critics of such policy typically point to the fact that areas with forced busing ultimately failed to prevent white flight (Armor, 2016). While impossible to prove, the notion of optional busing for all students would avoid the political pitfalls of forced busing observed in Wake County, La Crosse, and Cambridge (Kahlenberg, 2007). While the goal of the policy would not be full socio-economic integration of
schools, the policy would meet the goal of a more equitable intradistrict school choice policy and enrollment outcomes. This policy would also address the parent concerns related to safety.

While universal busing would likely help create an intradistrict school choice system with fewer disproportionalities across socio-economic and racial lines, there are other policy measures that go further in ensuring proportionality. The concept of a weighted lottery has been promoted as a means to gain greater integration in charter schools, and this same system could be utilized within the intradistrict school choice process for both charter and neighborhood school selection (Nunberg and Potter, 2019). The district data shows that a waiting list exists for enrollment at all five of the district's most affluent schools. A weighted lottery based upon socio-economic status would likely be the least controversial and most effective way to better integrate these schools, reduce disproportionalities across the district, and ultimately have the largest impact on student achievement (Century Foundation, 2019).
In addition to weighted lottery and universal busing, a third policy recommendation aimed at achieving more equitable results across the intradistrict school choice program would be to reward schools that are able to attract a more proportional representation of the district’s enrollment. A district supported program similar to the Obama administration’s “Stronger Together” initiative would likely benefit urban school districts that have socio-economic gaps within their own attendance boundaries. While the Obama administration’s initiative was immediately disbanded following the election of President Trump, there are lessons to be learned from the short period applications were accepted for the grant.

A policy that would allow schools to submit a plan for recruiting and retaining a student demographic similar to that of the school district would be required for access to funds. Similar to the “Stronger Together” initiative, schools would need to highlight how they plan to utilize research-based methods to attract a student demographic similar to that of the district. Instead of a district-led approach promoting school choice families currently
underrepresented in the intradistrict school choice process, a school-based incentive would allow for schools to create and communicate their unique attributes to families currently not proportionately represented in their schools. This incentive would likely be manageable under the current financial constraints school districts are faced with as the dollars would be distributed over the period of no more than three years, and there would not be a need for ongoing costs beyond the three-year implementation period.

**Summary**

The combination of universal busing, a weighted lottery system, and a program aimed to incentivize schools to market themselves to specific student demographics currently not participating in the intradistrict school choice program in a proportional manner would likely remove barriers and increase proportionality across the intradistrict school choice program. The combination of the three approaches would ensure all families understand their educational options and that barriers to those options are minimalized. While a weighted lottery would likely
cause consternation among non-free and reduced lunch families, the level of opposition would be minimal in comparison to other options implemented to address school choice inequities. Although the concepts of forced integration strategies, such as forced busing or redoing boundaries based upon socio-economic data, would likely prove more equitable, they would also prove more difficult for policymakers to pass and implement. The policy strategies of universal elementary busing, weighted lotteries, and incentive based integration grants would be a solid first step in addressing the inequities shown through the qualitative and quantitative data analysis in this study.

**Recommendations for Researchers**

This study shows a dire need for a better understanding of the effects of intradistrict school choice programs within the state of Wisconsin. While the results of the specific district studied are clear, and likely similar in other comparable districts across the state, a quantitative study confirming that assumption is not currently available. When the continued desegregation of our state and
nation's schools is discussed, the conversation is typically relegated to the voucher, open enrollment and charter school movement. Unfortunately, the district studied show that the reaction to those policies has been to create internal intradistrict school choice policies that help to reduce enrollment losses at the cost of creating greater desegregation within the district’s own school system. Clear, researched-based policy recommendations for districts to create intradistrict school choice policy that would meet the needs of their communities while not further desegregating schools would be beneficial to school boards and administrators of many districts throughout the state of Wisconsin and nation.

Conclusion

The data analysis and policy recommendations in this study are put forth with a great deal of concern for the future of a public education system that is supposed to meet the needs of all students that choose to attend. Tyack’s (1974) historical perspective on education supports the belief that schools never had a “golden age” as they continue to work towards serving all students. The most recent data shows a dark
future for education as school desegregation efforts are being reversed under the disguise of school choice. Segregation in our nation’s schools is now worse than it was in the 1970s (Nunberg and Potter, 2019). If these trends are to be reversed it will take a considerable amount of work from national and state level politicians. While it is difficult to be optimistic in regards to national and state leadership pertaining to desegregation of schools, school districts can play a role to limit the effects of segregation on their respective districts. This study shows the effects of well-intended intradistrict school choice policy on a mid-sized urban district in the state of Wisconsin. Those effects can be called “white-flight” within the school district, leading to greater segregation than the already segregated attendance boundaries intended. The policy suggestions serve as a recommendation of how elected board of education members and public-school administrators can improve equitable access to the intradistrict school choice process in a manageable and controlled manner to limit the effects of desegregation on their schools while still retaining the current student enrollment.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Bracey, Gerald W. *The War Against America's Public Schools: Privatizing Schools, Commercializing Education.* Allyn & Bacon, A Pearson Education Company, 75 Arlington Street, Suite 300, Boston, MA 02116, 2002.


APPENDIX A

PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. A data set was shared with you showing the standard school socio-economic and diversity data along with what the data would look like if intradistrict school choice was not an option and all students remained in their home school. Did you have any questions pertaining to that data?

2. Can you summarize the amount of time and resources the intradistrict school choice program requires of your school on an annual basis?

3. Do you feel the district intradistrict school choice policy is equitable in nature and language?

4. Do you feel the results of the intradistrict school choice policy are equitable?

5. What negative results do you believe would occur in your school if intradistrict school choice did not exist?

6. Your school enrollment is currently _______; however, your school enrollment would be ________ if intradistrict school choice was not allowed and all current students remained in our district. What effect would that have on your school?

7. Your percentage of economically disadvantaged students would change from ______% to ______% if all students attending the district remained in their home school. What effect do you believe that change would have on your school?

8. What measures do you have in place to assist students who are economically disadvantaged?

9. Your percentage of special education students would change from ______% to ______% if all students attending the district remained in their home school. What effect do you believe that change would have on your school?
10. Research tells us that the percentage of students in special education across socio-economic and ethnic lines should be similar. In other words, money and race are exclusionary factors. Do you feel the intradistrict school choice program results in an unequal percentage of special education students at some schools versus others?

11. (Elementary/Middle) How do you feel the dual-language intradistrict choice school option affects your school?

12. The top three themes pertaining to why parents choose to utilize the intradistrict school transfer option is a perceived better education, safety, and practicality (location, start time, etc.). Why do you feel parents choose to “choice-out” of your school?

13. Why do you feel parents choose to “choice-in” to your school?

14. Sixty percent of all district students are economically disadvantaged. What would your school look like if 60 percent of your students were economically disadvantaged?

15. Some districts in the nation have worked to impart policies that keep economically disadvantaged student numbers similar across buildings. How do you think a similar policy would change your school?

16. How do you feel your parents would react to such a policy?

17. When communicating with parents, do you become aware of any barriers for families who would like to utilize intradistrict school choice but are unable to? If so, what are those barriers?

18. Do you believe the intradistrict school choice program is positive for your school?
19. Your school’s ethnic demographics are currently as follows:

Hispanic ___________
American Indian ___________
Asian ___________
Black ___________
Pacific Islander ___________
White ___________
Mixed Race ___________

If all students currently attending the district remained in their home school the school’s Ethnic demographics would be as follows:

Hispanic ___________
American Indian ___________
Asian ___________
Black ___________
Pacific Islander ___________
White ___________
Mixed Race ___________

What effect do you believe that change would have on your school?

20. Do you have any ideas as to how intradistrict school choice could be improved?

21. Overall, do you support/value intradistrict-school choice?

22. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding your thoughts and observations related to intradistrict school choice?
APPENDIX B

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Date: 07/06/2020
HR-3611
Principal Investigator: Jacob Konrath
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Ellen Eckman and Dr. Jill Birren
Department: Educational Policy and Leadership
Study Title: Inequities within Intradistrict School Choice in a Wisconsin Mid-Sized Urban School District

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<th>New Study Approval</th>
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<td>☑️ This protocol has been determined to be Exempt under category #2 as governed by 45 CFR 46.101(b) on 07/06/2020.</td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ This protocol has been approved as minimal risk under Expedited category # as governed by 45 CFR 46.110 on [DATE].</td>
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<td>☐ This protocol has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board on [DATE] and approved as:</td>
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<td>☐ Minimal risk</td>
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Please note that in-person research cannot be initiated until in-person research resumes and must follow the MU research ramp-up plan.

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<td>☑️ Please use the final version of the exempt information sheet or consent form submitted to the IRB. Contact the IRB office if you have questions about which document you should be using.</td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ The IRB approved informed consent form is attached. Use the stamped copies of this form when enrolling research participants. Each research participant should receive a copy of the consent form.</td>
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<td>☐ This study has been approved for waiver of documentation of consent under 45 CFR 46.117(c)(1) or (2) of (3). Please use the approved consent information sheet with your participants.</td>
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<td>☐ This study has been approved for alteration or waiver of consent under 45 CFR 46.116(d).</td>
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<th>Study specific notifications</th>
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<tr>
<td>☐ The IRB approved recruitment materials are enclosed with this letter. Use stamped copies of these documents for recruitment purposes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ This study involves students collecting data through surveys- please review the MU Questionnaire/Survey Procedures: <a href="http://www.marquette.edu/ods/policies/survey_procedure.shtml">http://www.marquette.edu/ods/policies/survey_procedure.shtml</a></td>
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<td>☐ This study involves recruitment emails for online surveys to be sent to 100 or more Marquette students, faculty or staff. Please review the website of the Online Survey Review Group: <a href="http://www.marquette.edu/onslinesurveys/">http://www.marquette.edu/onslinesurveys/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ This protocol involves the use of electrical or mechanical systems that require direct human contact. Electrical and mechanical safety inspections should be conducted per Marquette University Human Research Protection Equipment and Electrical Safety Testing Policy 98.106.</td>
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**HIPAA**

- This study involves accessing PHI from a HIPAA covered entity. The IRB has granted approval to access the following protected health information for the purpose of this study:
  - [X]

- [ ] A HIPAA Authorization form has been approved and should be used to with study subjects.
- [ ] A waiver of authorization has been approved for this study.

All changes to this protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before being initiated, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the human subjects. If the study is exempt, please email the requested changes to [orc@marquette.edu](mailto:orc@marquette.edu). If the study is not exempt, please submit any changes using the amendment submission form or the first page of the protocol form.

If there are any adverse events or deviations from the approved protocol, please notify the Marquette University IRB immediately.

If this study is a federally funded clinical trial, the PI is responsible for registering this study on clinicaltrials.gov and submitting a final copy of the consent form and all required documentation during the life of the study.

An IRB Final Report Form must be submitted once this research project is complete. The form should be submitted in a timely fashion, and must be received no later than the protocol expiration date.

The principal investigator is responsible for ensuring that all study staff receive appropriate training in the ethical guidelines of conducting human subjects research and documenting that this requirement has been met.

Unless a separate reliance agreement is in place, please note that approval of a study with non-Marquette investigators does not indicate that Marquette University is assuming oversight for the research activities occurring outside of Marquette’s purview.

Please contact the Office of Research Compliance with any further questions. Thank you for your cooperation and best wishes for a successful project.

Jessica Rice, MPH, CIP  
IRB Manager  
Office of Research Compliance  
JR/je
APPENDIX C

RESEARCH RELATED CORRESPONDANCE

MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY

AGREEMENT OF CONSENT FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Inequities within Intradistrict School Choice in a Wisconsin Mid-Sized Urban School District
Jacob Konrath
EDPL

You have been invited to participate in this research study. Before you agree to participate, it is important that you read and understand the following information. Participation is completely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding whether or not to participate.

PURPOSE:
- The purpose of this research study is School districts that react to national and state school choice policies created to promote competition within the sector must understand the full ramifications of their own policies meant to combat the changes at the national and state level. Districts must understand if intradistrict school choice policies are creating inequities.
- You will be one of approximately 20 participants in this research study.

PROCEDURES:
- Given your strong understanding of the effects of intradistrict school choice policies on your building you are being asked to take part in an interview process as follows:
  - Consent form sent to possible interviewee
  - District intradistrict data shared with consenting interviewees for review prior to interview along with a list of interview topics including:
    - Intradistrict school choice – effects on your school
    - Inequities within intradistrict school choice
    - Beliefs related to what your school would look like if intradistrict school choice was not an option
    - Other general feelings related to the intradistrict school choice process (competition with other schools, time and resource allocation, etc…)
  - Member check follow up to verify interviewees approval of collected data
- Interviews will take place in your office at a date and time practical for you.
You will be audio recorded during the interview portion of the study to ensure accuracy. The tapes will later be transcribed and destroyed after 2 years beyond the completion of the study. For confidentiality purposes, your name will not be recorded.

DURATION:
Your participation will consist of a single interview lasting approximately one hour. Analysis of the interview will occur within two months, and a follow-up member check of approximately one hour will be utilized to address any need for clarification, to ensure internal validity, and to ensure you approve of the level of confidentiality provided in the analysis. Member checks will consist of individual follow-up meetings used to establish trust and credibility in the research through allowing the interviewee to review the findings prior to submission. For the purpose of this research the member check will allow you to review the themes pulled from your individual interview to ensure there is no misunderstanding between your response and the themes highlighted in the research. The full dissertation will be shared upon completion.

RISKS:
Given that you are asked to share your opinions on an approved school board policy, one risk to participating in this study is the potential for breach of confidentiality and any employment related consequences. To minimize this risk the following will be done:
- Member check will be completed to ensure comfort with interview analysis.
- No principal names or principal demographic data will be used in the dissertation.
- All study IDs correlated to names for interview notes will be removed immediately following member checks.
- Documentation of the link between study ID and principal name will be shredded immediately following member checks.
- School Board approval will be granted for this research signifying their support of review of their policies for inequities.

BENEFITS:
There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. This research may benefit society by helping to reduce inequities within our schools, specifically within the area of intradistrict school choice.

CONFIDENTIALITY:
The key linking names to research ID numbers will be stored in a locked personal file cabinet.
- ID numbers will be removed from the interview notes and analysis following member checks.
- The key linking names to research ID numbers will be shredded upon completion of member checks.
- No principal names or demographics will be used within the dissertation.
- All interview recordings will be stored in the cloud (Google Drive) with 2-step password protection. The drive will be deleted within 2 years of completion of the dissertation.
- The data/samples collected in this study will not be used or distributed for future research even if they have been deidentified.
When the results of the study are published, you will not be identified by name.
Direct quotes may be used with the interviewee’s approval.
The data will be destroyed by shredding paper documents and deleting electronic files within two years after the completion of the study.
Your research records may be inspected by the Marquette University Institutional Review Board or its designees, and (as allowable by law) state and federal agencies.

**VOLUNTARY NATURE OF PARTICIPATION:**
- Participating in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
- Data specific to your interview will not be used if you withdraw from the study.
- You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer.
- Your decision to participate or not will not impact your relationship with the investigators or your employer.

**ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION:**
- There are no known alternatives other than to not participate in this study.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**
- If you have any questions about this research project, you can contact Jacob Konrath at 920-207-5307 or jacob.konrath@marquette.edu.
- If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you can contact Marquette University’s Office of Research Compliance at (414) 288-7570.

I HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO READ THIS CONSENT FORM, ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RESEARCH PROJECT AND AM PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROJECT.

____________________________________________
(Printed Name of Participant)

____________________________________________
(Signature of Participant)

____________________________________________
(Printed Name of Individual Obtaining Consent)

____________________________________________
(Signature of Individual Obtaining Consent)