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AN EXAMINATION OF NON-RESIDENT STUDENTS VERSUS RESIDENT
STUDENTS IN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT, STUDENT ATTENDANCE,
AND IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION PLACEMENTS

by

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Dedication

For my parents, Delbert “Delby” and Linda Pape.

I am greatly indebted to the loving support of my family in the pursuit of my doctoral degree. To my wife, Christina, for constantly reminding me the sacrifice will be worth it. If not for you, this accomplishment would have never taken place.

To our children, Cassadi, Jaron, and Cammi, I dedicate this dissertation to each of you as an example of hard work and much sacrifice which is required to accomplish one’s goals and dreams.

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To Cohort Nine: Thanks for your great friendship and support.

May God bless each of you.

ABSTRACT

AN EXAMINATION OF NON-RESIDENT STUDENTS VERSUS RESIDENT STUDENTS IN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT, STUDENT ATTENDANCE, AND IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION PLACEMENTS

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University of Houston-Clear Lake, 2024

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The purpose of this quantitative study was to assess whether participation in an interdistrict program, a form of school choice, has any impact on student achievement, student attendance, and student in-school suspension (ISS) placements. A Multiple Linear Regression ANOVA was conducted with Algebra I and English I scores as the dependent variables. For Algebra I, the independent variables, resident/non-resident, student attendance, in-school suspension placement, and economically disadvantaged, were significant in predicting student scores while ethnicity was not significant. For English I, all the independent variables were significant in predicting student scores. However, given the lower R square values for both the Algebra I and English I Linear Regression ANOVAs, this model should not be used to predict the students Algebra I and English I scores.

Independent-samples t-tests were computed to determine whether there was a significant difference between the two student groups in Algebra I and English I end-of-course exam scores and student attendance. A Pearson Chi-Square was computed using the categorical independent variable, participation or non-participation in an interdistrict transfer program and the dependent variable, if a student was assigned in-school suspension at least once. The data were further analyzed by conducting a regression analysis with the dependent variable of student achievement as measured by the students' scale score on the Algebra I end-of-course exam and the independent variables of resident/non-resident, student attendance, in-school suspension placement, ethnicity, and economically disadvantaged. The analysis was repeated with the dependent variable of student achievement as measured by student's scale score on the English I end-of-course exam and the independent variables of participation or non-participation, student attendance, in-school suspensions placements, ethnicity, and economically disadvantaged.

Students who participated in an interdistrict transfer program outperformed resident students in Algebra I, English I, student attendance, and had lower in-school suspension placements at a significant level. The Multiple Linear Regression ANOVA with Algebra I as the dependent variable indicated the independent variables resident/non-resident, attendance, ISS, and economically disadvantaged were significant for predicting student scores; however, ethnicity as an independent variable was not a significant indicator of predicting student scores. The Multiple Linear Regression ANOVA with English I as the dependent variable indicated all independent variables were significant for predicting student scores. Given the lower R square values on both Algebra I and English I Multiple Linear Regression ANOVA, this model should not be used to predict Algebra I or English I scores.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

School choice has been an intensely debated topic among parents, media, politicians, and researchers and each year the debate seems to intensify (Cowen, 2017; Pappano, 2023; Phillips et al., 2012; Stanford, 2023). School choice has proponents who adamantly believe giving parents the choice to determine where their children attend school will reform public education and improve student performance (Friedman, 1962; Nathan, 1989; Pappano, 2023; Phillips et al., 2012; Stanford, 2023). However, there are school choice opponents who feel just as strongly that school choice (particularly vouchers) will destroy public education and leave minority and low socioeconomic students behind (Campbell & Brown, 2017; Pappano, 2023). As of 2019, approximately 42.3 percent of all students had access to school choice and approximately 20 percent of students in the United States participated in a “chosen public school,” which is a form of public-school choice (USDE, 2019a). This study is a contribution to research literature that seeks answers to an old and often visited question: Does school choice matter?

Purpose of the Study

School choice allows parents and/or students the opportunity to choose the school they want to attend rather than having their school attendance determined by their residence (Friedman, 1955; Lavery & Carlson, 2015). While charter schools and voucher programs have attracted the majority of attention from researchers, the media, and politicians, the term “school choice” is much broader and includes a wide variety of options such as interdistrict and intradistrict open-enrollment policies, magnet schools, charter schools, and voucher programs (Cowen, 2017; Phillips et al., 2012; Zeehandelaar & Winkler, 2013).

Interdistrict and intradistrict transfer programs allow parents to exercise school choice; the programs allow districts and campuses to maximize budgets and create healthy competition among campuses and districts all the while ensuring tax dollars remain in public education (Mikulecky, 2013; Zywicki, 2014). Although interdistrict programs are used by many districts throughout the United States, the research on their effectiveness has produced varying results (Armor & Pieser, 1997; Brittain et al., 2019; Chen, 2022; Daring, 2005; Lavery & Carlson, 2015; Mikulecky, 2013; Reback, 2008).

Of the 1,029 school districts in Texas, approximately 1,000 have adopted interdistrict transfer policies which enable students to transfer to another school district (Texas Association of School Boards, 2012). In school year 2017-18, in the state of Texas 769 students attended a campus within the same district where they did not reside in the campus attendance zone, and 445,630 students exercised school choice by attending school in a district where they did not reside (Texas Education Agency, 2018a). In the fall of 2022, over 100,000 students in the southeast region in Texas participated in school choice (Texas Education Agency, 2023a). This includes students choosing to attend a public school outside the district they reside in or choosing to attend a charter school.

In Texas, school boards have the authority to adopt policies to eliminate the geographical boundaries that determine the schools these students attend (TASB, 2012). Districts typically have in their policies a caveat allowing for students transferring into the district to have their enrollment revoked if they do not follow the rules and regulations of the district (La Porte ISD, 2023; Dallas ISD, 2023; El Paso ISD, 2023). This caveat often includes student conduct and attendance. Parents of children who enroll through the interdistrict transfer program are responsible for transporting their children to and from school in the district. Once students are accepted, they may remain in the

district through graduation, subject to compliance with the transfer agreement. With over 10 years' experience having an interdistrict program, the Buck Plaza Independent School District (BPISD) [pseudonym] has sufficient archival data to determine whether there is a difference between student achievement, student attendance, and in-school suspensions between interdistrict transfer students and resident students. This study will serve as a contribution to former analyses regarding the impact of interdistrict transfers on student achievement.

In conclusion, knowledge and understanding of the relationship between participating in an interdistrict transfer program (a form of school choice) and academic achievement, student attendance, and in-school suspension may contribute to understanding the impact increasing school choice options will potentially have on students and parents.

Significance of the Study

Increasing school choice options may increase parental and student engagement, thus increasing parent involvement and decreasing the number of students dropping out of school. With school choice options being touted by politicians and advocates, can school districts find the “sweet spot” by offering interdistrict transfer programs to improve student achievement, improve student attendance, and decrease in-school suspension placements?

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to define and discuss the relationships in student achievement, student attendance, and in-school suspensions between interdistrict and resident student populations in a district that allows interdistrict transfers.

The quantitative research questions that guided this study were:

- 1) What is the difference in student achievement between students participating in an interdistrict transfer program and resident students taking the Algebra I end-of-course exam?
- 2) What is the difference in student achievement between students participating in an interdistrict transfer program and resident students taking the English I end-of-course exam?
- 3) What is the difference in student attendance between students participating in an interdistrict transfer program and resident students?
- 4) What is the difference in in-school suspension placements between students participating in an interdistrict transfer program and resident students?
- 5) When comparing students participating in an interdistrict transfer program with resident students, what is the relationship between student achievement, student attendance, and in-school placement in Algebra I?
- 6) When comparing students participating in an interdistrict transfer program with resident students, what is the relationship between student achievement, student attendance, and in-school placement in English I?

Hypotheses

- 1) Student achievement of students participating in an interdistrict transfer program will be higher than resident students taking the Algebra I end-of-course exam.
- 2) Student achievement of students participating in an interdistrict transfer program will be higher than resident students taking the English I end-of-course exam.
- 3) Student attendance will be higher for students participating in an interdistrict transfer program than resident students.

- 4) In-school suspension (ISS) placements of students participating in an interdistrict transfer program will be lower than the in-school suspension (ISS) placements of resident students.
- 5) When comparing students participating in an interdistrict transfer program with resident students, the relationship between student achievement, student attendance, and in-school placement in Algebra I will be significant.
- 6) When comparing students participating in an interdistrict transfer program with resident students, the relationship between student achievement, student attendance, and in-school placement in English I will be significant.
- 7) attendance, and in-school placement in English I will be significant.

Definition of Key Terms

The following terms are defined according to their usage in this study:

Average Daily Attendance (ADA): A simple calculation of the number of students in ADA can be found by adding the number of students who are in attendance each day of the school year for the entire school year and dividing it by the number of instructional days in the school year (Texas Education Agency, 2014).

In-School Suspension (ISS): A disruptive student can be removed from the regular classroom and assigned one or more days to a separate ISS classroom to complete his/her class assignments (Texas Appleseed, 2009).

Interdistrict Transfer Program: Students may choose to attend another public school outside their geographically assigned district (Education Commission of the States, 2018).

Intradistrict Transfer Program: Students are permitted to transfer to a school within the district where they reside (Education Commission of the States, 2018).

Magnet School: A magnet school public school campus offers a unique curriculum to attract students of different racial backgrounds (U.S. Department of Education, 2003)

Non-Resident Student: A student not residing in the district boundary and attends school in the district.

Open Enrollment (interdistrict transfer program): The U.S. Department of Education Office of Innovation and Improvement (2007) defines open-enrollment programs as a system where parents can choose among schools in a district (intradistrict), or even among districts (interdistrict).

Resident Student: A student resides in the district boundaries and attends school in the district.

School Choice: School choice allows parents and/or students the opportunity to choose the school they want to attend rather than having their school attendance be determined by their residence (Friedman, 1955; Lavery & Carlson, 2015).

State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR): In spring 2012, the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) replaced the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). The STAAR program includes annual assessments for Reading and Mathematics, grades 3–8, Writing at grades 4 and 7, Science at grades 5 and 8, Social studies at grade 8, End-of-course assessments for English I, English II, Algebra I, biology and U.S. History.

Vouchers: Parents are either given a set amount of funding from the state or may redeem a given amount of funding from the state or local school district to attend a private school of choice (Zelman, 2002).

Limitations of the Study

There are at least five limitations to this study. First, due to the sample consisting of participants from only one district, it is difficult to generalize these results to national comparisons, thus lowering external validity. Second, internal validity is also limited due to lack of control of confounding variables such as teacher quality. Third, individual student interest while participating in the interdistrict transfer program will affect results, and fourth, nonresident students with discipline issues at their district of residence are typically not accepted into the interdistrict transfer program. Fifth, if a non-resident student becomes a discipline problem, the student has an increased chance of not having their application renewed for the following school year.

Summary

School choice can be implemented by offering an interdistrict transfer program. The purpose of this study is to define and discuss the relationships in student achievement, student attendance, and in-school suspension placements between students who participate in the interdistrict transfer program and students who reside in the district.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This literature review begins with a brief explanation of the different types of publicly funded school choice options: voucher programs, charter schools, intradistrict choice programs, and interdistrict choice programs. Also discussed are the history of interdistrict choice in the U.S., other school choice options, interdistrict choice options in the U.S., the reasons parents choose interdistrict choice, and the use of interdistrict choice programs as a desegregation policy. The academic achievement of interdistrict choice programs is discussed, followed by issues related to the implementation of interdistrict choice programs. School choice options in Texas as well as charters and interdistrict choice programs are discussed followed by the summary of findings of choice options in Texas. The theoretical framework premise of school choice, a free market system, is discussed followed by a summary of school choice.

Publicly Funded School Choice Options

There are two types of school choice: choosing a public school and choosing between private and public schools (Chen and Moskop, 2020; Forster, 2016; Hsieh & Shen, 2001; Skinner & Sorenson, 2022). The public school choice options are magnet schools, open enrollment programs, and charter schools (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Skinner & Sorenson, 2022; Texas Association of School Boards, 2012). While charter schools are considered public schools, they follow a different set of rules than public school districts and do not have attendance boundaries (National Charter School Resource Center, 2019; Public Charters, 2016; Skinner & Sorenson, 2022). Voucher programs (also referred to as opportunity scholarships or educational savings accounts) consist of students using state funds in the form of a voucher to pay or offset the cost of attending a private school (Daring, 2005; National Conference of State Legislatures, 2016a; Skinner & Sorenson,

2022; Zelman, 2002). School choice options such as voucher programs, magnet schools, charter schools, and open-enrollment programs have seen an increase throughout the United States (Lee et al., 2020; Carlson et al., 2011). During and since the

COVID pandemic a parent's rights movement has gained momentum throughout the U.S., advocating for changes to the way schools address racism, sexuality, gender equity, and the movement is advocating to expand school choice, especially voucher programs (Meckler & Natanson, 2023; Pappano, 2023; Stanford, 2023).

Voucher Programs

Economist Milton Friedman (1955) is credited as the first to propose applying the qualities of a free-market system, competition, and efficiencies to education through a voucher system. Voucher programs allowing rural students to attend private schools have existed in Maine and Vermont since the late 1800s for students who do not have a public school in the area where they live (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2016b; Tang, 2019). The number of students participating in voucher programs has increased from 341 with the creation of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program in 1990-91 to 312,443 in 2022-23 in 25 voucher programs in 16 states plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico (EdChoice, 2023a). There are twelve voucher programs in twelve different states for students with identified disabilities and/or an individualized education program (Education Commission of the States, 2021). Voucher programs tend to be the most controversial of the school choice options since they are deemed to take tax dollars out of public education as the money follows the students (Daring, 2005; Tang, 2019). Voucher programs allow students to attend private or religious-based schools and these schools are not subject to the same state accountability and transparency rules as public schools (Center of Education Policy, 2011). These private schools must meet minimum standards established by state legislatures in order to accept voucher recipients (National

Conference of State Legislatures, 2016b). The targeted student subgroups can be low-income students who must meet a specific income threshold, students attending a low performing public school, students with disabilities, students in military families, or students in foster care (Education Commission of the States, 2021; National Conference of State Legislatures, 2016b).

Witt (2000) ties vouchers to tuition tax credits for students to attend private schools, which began in the South a few years prior to the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) ruling. Tuition tax credits were developed to avoid integration in public schools and, as such, they were found unconstitutional. However, in *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* (2002) the U.S. Supreme Court ruled the Ohio voucher program did not violate the establishment of the religion clause of the U.S. Constitution since parents were able to choose between both private and public schools (Garnett and Pearsall, 2005; Howell et al., 2002). Additionally, under Ohio's voucher program schools were not allowed to use race, ethnicity, national origin, or religion as a qualifier in their decision (Howell et al., 2002). The ruling also clarified the use of vouchers when considering the separation of church and state. Because state funding was sent directly to the student and not the school (usually a religious school) and the program was widely available to many students in a neutral manner, vouchers were deemed legal (Garnett and Pearsall, 2005; Howell et al., 2002). Tuition tax credits, education savings accounts, and vouchers became synonymous terms (Meckler & Natanson, 2023). Since Witt's research, voucher programs have continued to expand and have become one of the main platforms of the conservative political agenda (Pappano, 2023; Stanford, 2023).

The research on the Milwaukee, Cleveland, and D.C. voucher programs conducted by the Center on Education Policy (2011) showed that student performance on

reading and math were essentially the same. Ten years later the findings were the same for both the Milwaukee and

Cleveland voucher programs (Resseger, 2021). Figlio and Hart, (2010) examined the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program and found voucher recipients are more likely to graduate from high school than their public school counterparts and that school competition was found to slightly improve student achievement in some Florida schools that lost students to school vouchers under Florida's tax credit scholarship program. A later study found higher standardized test scores, lower absenteeism, and lower suspension rates compared to students attending public schools (Figlio et al., 2023). In a meta-analysis of international school voucher programs in private schools, Shakeel, Anderson, and Wolf, (2016) found that reading and math scores in private school choice programs increased in 19 out of 20 studies representing 11 different school voucher programs. Of these eleven programs, seven were in the United States. Six U.S. and three non-U.S. reading programs were studied, and the effect of the U.S. programs was barely a null effect while the non-U.S. programs experienced a more positive impact (Shakeel et al., 2016). The results for the math studies were both positive and statistically significant for both the U.S. and non-U.S. programs (Shakeel et al., 2016). While the studies show improved scores in both reading and math, the possibility exists that the differences in academic achievement in traditional public schools and private schools were greater in the non-U.S. countries than in the U.S. (Shakeel, et al., 2016). The original study was re-released in 2021 after locating five additional studies; however, four of the five studies were extensions to studies already in the meta-analysis with three studies reporting more positive/fewer negative results while two reported fewer positive/more negative results (Shakeel, et al., 2021).

Voucher programs are a form of school choice that tend to be very political and have mixed results. Texas does not currently have a taxpayer-funded voucher program. However, legislation to implement a taxpayer-funded voucher program has been introduced in every legislative session since 1995 (Texas Association of School Administrators, 2018). When vouchers were added to the school finance bill in 2017, legislators killed the bill. The only voucher legislation introduced in the 86th Legislative Session in 2019 was HJR105 which proposed a state constitutional amendment prohibiting taxpayer-funded voucher programs; it died in committee (Legiscan, 2019). In the 88th Legislative Session in 2023, the main issue as declared by Governor Abbott in the 2023 State of the State address was to pass school choice legislation; the Governor declared school choice an emergency item and promised (threatened) to continue to call special sessions until the legislation was passed (Office of the Texas Governor, 2023). While voucher programs have yet to be implemented in Texas, another form of school choice, charter schools, has been implemented.

Charter Schools

Charter schools are public schools which have been given the freedom from state legislation to be more innovative while at the same time being held accountable for student achievement (Public Charters, 2016). Because charter schools are public schools, they are open to all children, are tuition free, and do not have special entrance requirements. Minnesota's legislature passed the first charter law in 1991, and the first charter school opened in 1992 (Boyd et al., 2002; Budde, 1996; Lavery & Carlson, 2015; Mikulecky, 2013; Urahn & Stewart, 1994). Advocates of charter schools claim charter schools should be held accountable for student learning, be allowed greater flexibility to ensure students succeed, and should share successes within the education system (Public Charters, 2016; Wohlstetter et al., 2008; Zimmer, 2009).

The nation's first charter school, City Academy, opened in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1992 (Urahn & Stewart, 1994) and, at the time, only two states, Minnesota and California, had authorized their creation (USDE, 2000). By 1997, charter schools had been authorized in approximately half of the states (USDE, 2000) and, as of the 2011-12 school year, only eight states had yet to authorize charter schools (NCES, 2014). The number of charter schools increased from 1,500 to 7,500 over the same period (NCES, 2014; NCES, 2022). Charter school enrollment increased from an estimated enrollment of 252,000 in 1998-1999 in the 27 states with open charter schools (USDE, 2000) to 3,700,000 students in 2021 with 45 states and the District of Columbia authorizing charter schools (USDE, 2017; NCES, 2023).

The Center for Research on Education Outcomes study compared 485 Texas charter schools in reading and 530 charters schools in math performance to their peer traditional public schools (CREDO, 2017). The study found 33% of charter students performed significantly better than their peers in traditional public schools and 20% were significantly worse in reading. In math, 38% of charter students performed significantly better and 30% significantly worse than their peers in traditional schools. The study indicated charter school performance is strongest in elementary schools and academic achievement is higher in non-profit charters compared to for-profit charters. In 2023, Texas charter student's academic growth in reading was 24.3 days of instruction ahead of public-school student results; however, Texas public school students' academic growth in math was 4.6 days of instruction ahead of charter school students' results (CREDO, 2023).

The charter school debate focuses on whether they can provide better educational outcomes, but proponents and opponents alike typically define "better" as higher test scores. School choice proponents believe having high-quality schools of choice will force

other schools to improve or close, which will improve all schools for all students (DeAngelis & Erickson, 2018; Forster, 2016). Most parents surveyed seek a school with a strong curriculum in the core subject areas, especially the STEM fields (Zeehandelaar & Winkler, 2013). Other variables considered important to parents include the school's proximity to their home or workplace (Jochim et al., 2014; Stewart et al., 2010; Zeehandelaar & Winkler, 2013) and the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the school (Carlson, Lavery, and Witte, 2011; Garcia, 2008; Mawene & Bal, 2018).

Intradistrict Choice Programs

In the United States, Americans are most familiar with the concept of intradistrict transfer programs (or intradistrict choice), which is one of the more widespread public school choice options. Intradistrict transfer policies, which allow students to attend any school within district boundaries, have been implemented in 33 states (Education Commission of the States, 2022). In addition, all states are required under the Federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) to offer intradistrict transfers to Title 1 students who are zoned to attend failing schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). While intradistrict transfer programs have not received as much attention in the academic literature as other forms of school choice, it is becoming increasingly popular to the extent that more students are currently served by this type of school choice than any other type of choice policy (Education Commission of the States, 2019; Reback, 2008).

Intradistrict transfer programs allow disadvantaged families the opportunity to determine which school is best for their student without having to move to a different neighborhood (Phillips, Larsen & Hausman, 2015; Schneider, Teske & Marschall, 2000). Intradistrict transfer programs tend to be most successful when the district has many campuses with varying degrees of achievement levels and demographics (Kahlenberg 2011; Richards, Stroub & Holme 2011). One benefit to intradistrict transfer programs is

they provide a variety of choice opportunities in a more equitable manner when compared to magnet schools, charter schools, and vouchers and are deemed by parents to be a better choice option (Phillips, Hausman, & Larsen, 2012). Intradistrict choice has similar features as magnet or alternative schools; however, intradistrict choice is the least problematic of the three. Since parents (and students) make an active choice to select their school, it likely makes them more committed and involved in their schooling (Hoxby, 1998; Phillips, Hausman, & Larsen, 2012).

Interdistrict Choice Programs

All but seven states have some type of interdistrict open enrollment program (Table 2.1). Under voluntary program policies, school districts may choose whether to accept transfers from other districts (Lavery & Carlson, 2015; Wixom, 2017). Under mandatory program policies, school districts are required to accept transfers from other districts although state laws generally specify a set of conditions under which districts can legally refuse to accept transfers. Both the voluntary and mandatory program policies generally prohibit districts from restricting students from transferring out of the district (Wixom, 2017).

Table 2.1:
Number of States with Interdistrict Transfer Programs

Program type	Number of states
Any interdistrict open enrollment program	43
Voluntary only	28
Mandatory only	24
Both voluntary and mandatory	9

Note. Adapted from Education Commission of the States (2022). <https://www.ecs.org/50-statecomparison-open-enrollment-policies/>

While the specifics of mandatory interdistrict open enrollment policies vary across states, nearly all programs possess three features (Lavery & Carlson, 2015). First, interdistrict open enrollment policies allow students to attend public schools located in districts other than where they reside. Second, interdistrict open enrollment policies generally specify a set of conditions where school districts can refuse to accept interdistrict transfers. While each state’s policies differ, the two most common conditions include a lack of capacity in the district and an applicant’s disciplinary history including suspensions, expulsions, or substance abuse. Third, interdistrict transfer program policies are typically designed in a manner where the state funding for the students participating in open-enrollment programs follows the students to their school of choice. While each state has different funding mechanisms and per pupil funding levels, the amount is generally greater than the marginal cost of educating an additional student (Reback, 2008).

History of Interdistrict Choice Programs in the U.S.

Voluntary interdistrict choice programs began to emerge as choice options in the early 1980s and the first mandatory statewide interdistrict program was passed by the Minnesota Legislature in 1991 and implemented in 1992 (Boyd, Hare, & Nathan, 2002; Budde, 1996; Lavery & Carlson, 2015; Mikulecky, 2013; Urahn & Stewart, 1994; Wixom, 2017, Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity, 2013). School choice options began getting the attention of school reformers and state legislatures in the mid-1980s with the release of the report *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (National Governors' Association, 1986). The National Governors' Association first publicly endorsed the goal of providing school choice among public schools in 1986. Three years later President George H. W. Bush and all fifty governors agreed to include school choice on their education agenda. The first school choice programs were intradistrict, interdistrict, and magnet school programs which were all within the public school system; however, most of the push for school choice was aimed at charter schools. Under President George W. Bush, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) allowed students in schools failing to meet adequate yearly progress to transfer to a different school within the district also known as an intradistrict transfer (*No Child Left Behind*, 2001; Mikulecky, 2013). Intradistrict school choice programs have been implemented in 32 states (Education Commission of the States, 2022), and currently 52 states/territories have either a voluntary or mandatory interdistrict program (Education Commission of the States, 2022). Charter schools operated in 44 states in 2016 (USDE, 2019b), and in 2019 there were 65 private school choice programs in 28 states plus the District of Columbia (EdChoice, 2019b).

Other School Choice Options

Other school choice options include sending children to private school or homeschooling.

However, both options require the parent to pay the full cost of education (Zywicki, 2015). Another option is the magnet school concept, which was one of the first experiments in public school choice (Archbald, 2004). Texas has 273 magnet schools (78 high schools, 91 middle schools, 198 elementary schools, 100 pre-K, and 8 charter schools) which serve over 218,000 students (Public School Review, 2023). Magnet schools are a form of intradistrict choice, but some magnet programs also exist as interdistrict choice programs (USDE, 2004). In 2014, voucher programs, tuition tax credit programs, and educational savings accounts programs were available only in fourteen states and the District of Columbia and were not available in most areas (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014). However, due to the COVID pandemic and the parent rights political movement, vouchers, tuition tax credits, and education savings accounts are being demanded by constituents (Pappano, 2023; Meckler & Natanson, 2023; Stanford, 2023). Virtual course offerings are becoming more popular and are being marketed to supplement the traditional school course offerings thus furthering the competition of school choice (Texas Education Agency, 2019; Wang & Decker, 2014). Virtual schools were marketed in 31 states and used by 275,000 students (Ahn & McEachin, 2017; Wang & Decker, 2014). The COVID pandemic forced an immediate shift to online learning which neither educators, students, or parents were prepared for, and the low results showed in both student scores and student engagement (Lewis, 2023).

Interdistrict Choice Options in the U.S.

The Colorado and Wisconsin studies found students who participated in interdistrict choice tended to leave districts with higher percentages of low-socioeconomic students than the number of students who choose to attend schools with fewer low-socioeconomic students (Carlson et al., 2011; Welsch et al., 2010). Lavery and Carlson's (2015) research on the Colorado program found more students left high-achieving districts than left low-achieving districts; however, the students leaving high-achieving districts went to districts with even higher levels of achievement. In Denver, researchers found more affluent students participated in interdistrict choice than less affluent students which led the state implementing changes to the program to ensure more students of low socio-economic status participated (A+ Colorado, 2019; Holme & Richards, 2009). Research from the Wisconsin interdistrict program found the more students who transfer into a school, the greater the advanced scores on state standardized tests (Holmberg & Flanders 2021; Welsch et al., 2010). Further research supported families are motivated by academic performance even as the program expanded from 2,500 students to over 70,000 students (Holmberg & Flanders, 2021; Murray, 2023). The following cities have had interdistrict desegregation programs: Rochester, NY, (1965), Boston, MA, and Hartford, CT, (1966), Milwaukee, WI, (1976), Indianapolis, IN, and Minneapolis, MN, (2001), St. Louis, MO, (1983), East Palo Alto, CA, (1986); and all these interdistrict choice programs, except Minneapolis, were implemented in a time when the main goal was to help solve racial inequality (Wells et al., 2009). Research on the interdistrict choice programs showed Hartford students who participated in the interdistrict choice program had significantly higher test scores than the students who did not participate in the interdistrict choice program and remained in the Hartford Public School system (Frankenberg, 2007; Werth, 2022). In St. Louis, African American

students who transferred to suburban schools did not show significant academic improvement on tests in elementary school; however, their scores in high school were much higher than those of their peers who remained in neighborhood schools (Racette, 2016; Wells & Crain, 1997; Wells, 2001). Black urban-suburban interdistrict transfer students had almost two times higher graduation rates than their peers who remained in urban schools (Wells & Crain, 1997; VICC, 2023). In the Milwaukee, Wisconsin, interdistrict choice program, research showed students transferred to schools with a lower percentage of minorities, and more students transferred from districts that offered fewer extracurricular activities (Holmberg & Flanders, 2021; Welsch et al., 2010).

Armor and Peiser (1997) studied the Massachusetts school choice plan and determined schools which experienced a loss of students were more inclined to focus on improvement. This study found many choice parents, students, and some staff at the receiving districts cited academics as the main reason for participating in school choice. Students participating in Boston's interdistrict school choice plan graduated from high school approximately 30 percentage points above students attending their assigned school or participating in Boston charter schools (Brittain, et al., 2019; Mantil, 2022).

Research showed that white students who participate in interdistrict choice programs often are leaving lower-performing districts and transferring to a higher-performing district that typically have lower low-socioeconomic demographics and less racial diversity (Mikulecky, 2013; Robson, 2020). When designing interdistrict choice programs, it may be in the best interest both politically and for the students to offer interdistrict choice program priority to low socioeconomic students.

Why Parents Choose Interdistrict Choice

More than 70 percent of parents surveyed support students who choose to attend a public school in another district (National School Choice Week Team, 2023). Parents who participate in school choice programs are typically more satisfied with their children's education than those parents who send their children to the assigned public school (Daring, 2005; Gill et al, 2001; Jimerson, 2002; Lee et al., 2021). Parents evaluate many factors when selecting a school, but typically parents choose higher academic achieving schools (Murray, 2023). One of the broadest forms of school choice is interdistrict choice which has received the least amount of attention (Carlson et al., 2011; Reback, 2008).

Parents study many different factors specific to their needs and wants while at the same time balancing their personal preferences with the available options (Forester, 2016; Gill et al., 2001). There are numerous factors parents use in selecting their children's schools with each factor being unique to individual circumstances. Some examples of factors parents look for when looking for a potential school for their children are the following: academic achievement (Bell 2009; Carrasco & San Martin, 2012; Catt & Rhinesmith, 2017; Jochim et al., 2014; Kelly & Scafidi, 2013; Wolf et al., 2000; Zeehandelaar and Winkler, 2013), safety (Bell 2009; Jochim et al., 2014; Kelly & Scafidi, 2013; Stewart et al. 2009), the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the school (Carlson et al., 2011; Garcia, 2008), religious and/or moral instruction (Catt & Rhinesmith 2017; Kelly & Scafidi, 2013; Stewart et al. 2009; Zeehandelaar & Winkler, 2013), sports programs (Lincove et al., 2018; Stewart et al. 2010; Zeehandelaar & Winkler, 2013), and the school's proximity to home (Jochim, et al., 2014; Stewart et al. 2010; Zeehandelaar & Winkler, 2013).

In a 2000 study, 68% of parents cited academic quality among the reasons for participating in a choice program (Wolf et al., 2000). In a 2017 Indiana parent survey, 45% of school district parents cited the reason for attending their school was because it was their assigned school, 19% cited closeness to home and work, and 11% cited academics, whereas the top choice for voucher and non-choice families participating in private schools, indicated that 23% cited religious environment and 30% cited instruction (Powers, 2017). When parents were made to prioritize, they desired a school with strong academics (Zeehandelaar and Winkler, 2013). The research also showed both African American and Hispanic parents rank test preparation and high test scores higher than white parents. African American parents emphasize diversity more than other racial groups and white parents focus more on non-core characteristics than other racial groups.

Interdistrict Choice Programs as Desegregation Policy

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Miliken v. Bradley* (1974) that public school districts did not need to address unintentional segregation, which led to advocates and reformers seeking to implement the research of Coons and Sugarman (1971) to use school choice to address desegregation. The first type of choice program known as magnet schools came about as the school desegregation battles were taking shape in the late 1960s (Witte, 2000). Magnet schools were originally tools of desegregation under the Emergency School Assistance Act from 1972-1981 (Rossell, 2005). This act required magnet schools not only to aid in desegregation but also to focus on improving the quality of education to be eligible for federal funds. Early magnet schools provided a relatively uncontroversial and peaceful way of integrating schools. The magnet choice movement received a boost from two federal district court decisions in Milwaukee and Buffalo in 1976 (Daring, 2005; Rossell, 2005) whereby the courts seemed more than willing to accept reasonable alternatives to the forced busing of students (Rossell, 2005).

Interdistrict choice programs allow students to choose to attend school in a different district, in theory, allowing urban students to attend a suburban school to escape unintentional segregation (Finnigan & Scarbrough, 2013; Robson, et al., 2020). Doering (1998) found that the interdistrict choice program in Georgia showed some positive results addressing racial segregation. Studies in eight interdistrict public school choice programs in Omaha, NE, Hartford, CT, Milwaukee, WI, St. Louis, MO, East Palo Alto, CA, Minneapolis, MN, Rochester, NY and Boston, MA, found these programs improved racial attitudes and closed achievement gaps for both urban and suburban students participating in the interdistrict programs (Brittain et al., 2019; Wells, et al., 2009). Twenty-three states with open-enrollment programs have legislation pertaining to desegregation (Robson, et al., 2020). Many interdistrict studies found students typically leave lower performing districts to attend higher performing districts and in certain cases the new district had less diverse student make up than the district they left (Mickulecky, 2013; Sass et al., 2022; Singer, 2022).

Academic Achievement of Interdistrict Choice

Studies of interdistrict programs in Michigan, Minnesota, and Colorado showed no proof that participation in school choice improves academic achievement (Carlson et al., 2011; Cowen, 2017; Jimerson, 2002; Robson, et al., 2020). Schools in metropolitan areas where interdistrict choice is widely available were found to have higher test scores than areas without interdistrict school choice (Hoxby, 2001; Wolf, et al., 2021). In 23 of 24 studies, competition was shown to increase student test scores in district schools with no study showing a negative effect (Chakrabarti, 2013; Egalite, 2014, Egalite 2016). Students participating in the state of

Massachusetts interdistrict choice program scored higher in English language arts in 92 out of 138 districts, 55 out of 99 districts scored higher in science, but math scores

were lower in 73 out of 139 districts. When comparing statewide averages, the choice students outscored the district averages in all cases (Hatch, 2018). Disengaged students benefit from choice, as choice may increase student outcomes such as graduation rates through increasing student engagement which may not necessarily result in improved test scores (DeAngelis & Erickson, 2018; Kelly & Price, 2009).

Issues to Implementation of Interdistrict Choice Programs

Researchers have found the theory of open-market choice programs described by Milton Friedman do not necessarily match what is implemented as local politics and interests oftentimes create barriers to choice programs (Mikulecky, 2013). Research by Mikulecky (2013) found states' "space available" policies are unclear which allows districts to impede students' access to participating in choice programs. Reback (2005) studied the Minnesota interdistrict open enrollment program and found 35 out of 345 districts had rejected at least one transfer applicant for the 1999-2000 school year and in the Milwaukee open enrollment program the most common reason given for denying an application over the past twenty years was space (Holmberg & Flanders, 2021). Transportation was also identified as a barrier that prevented some students from participating in interdistrict transfer choice programs. The lower the income of the student's family, the higher transportation was identified as a barrier (Harper, 2018; Mikulecky, 2013; Teske et al., 2009). Urban areas have more access to public transportation systems than do rural areas and school choice options are typically offered more in urban areas. Further, certain states/districts place limits on students participating in open-enrollment programs if the program would change the ethnic/racial make-up of the districts and other states use interdistrict programs to promote desegregation (Jimerson, 2002; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

School Choice Options in Texas

Texas has over 1,000 public school districts, and charter schools have been an option since 1995 (Texas Education Agency, 2018c). Many districts offer open-enrollment programs which allow students who reside in another district to attend school in the open-enrollment district. Some open-enrollment districts charge tuition, and some do not, but most districts offer open-enrollment programs to increase state funding or in some cases to reduce their payments to the state of Texas for being deemed a property-wealthy district. Some districts offer intradistrict choice, which allows students to choose among campuses within the district. Additionally, more than 800 private schools in Texas serve approximately 260,000 students (Texas Private Schools Association, 2023) and parents also have the option of homeschooling.

Charter Schools in Texas

The Texas State Legislature enacted legislation approving charter schools in 1995 (Texas Education Agency, 2018c). The first year there were 17 charter school campuses with a total charter school enrollment of 2,498 students. Eleven of the charter schools were in their first year and the other six were converted private schools. In the 2021-22 school year, the number of charter school campuses in Texas had increased to 996 with enrollment of 442,842 students (Texas Education Agency, 2023b).

Voluntary Interdistrict Choice in Texas

Of the 1,029 districts in the state of Texas, approximately 1,000 districts have adopted interdistrict transfer policies; these policies allow students to transfer to another school district (Texas Association of School Boards, 2012). In school year 2017-18, 445,630 students in Texas exercised public school choice (interdistrict) by attending school in a district where they did not reside (Texas Education Agency, 2018a). In the

fall of 2017, over 85,000 students in the southeast region in Texas participate in interdistrict choice (Texas Education Agency, 2018b).

Summary of Findings of Choice Options in Texas

Texas has many school choice options available including intradistrict, interdistrict, charter schools, magnet schools, private schools, and homeschooling. The state of Texas does not offer a voucher program. While Texas has numerous options, these choices are not necessarily available to every student in Texas. The number of charter schools is increasing but they are predominantly located in urban areas and are not as available to students in rural areas. The 273 magnet schools in Texas are similar to charter schools as they are typically offered in high populated urban areas. The biggest opportunity to expand school choice in Texas is for public school districts to embrace school choice and expand interdistrict and intradistrict choices throughout the state. The state legislature could also pass legislation mandating all districts participate in both interdistrict and intradistrict school choice options.

Theoretical Framework

Economist Milton Friedman (1955) is credited as the first to propose applying the qualities of a free-market system, competition, and efficiencies to education through a voucher system. Friedman claimed the current public school set up of geographic boundaries limited students' options and were essentially monopolies and proposed that government schools should compete with private schools for students (Friedman, 1962). Parents would have access to a voucher, which would allow the students to attend either a government or private school, the assumption being that parents and students would only select the best schools and this competition would force schools to be competitive or lose students; only those schools able to attract students would remain open. In Friedman's system of education, the government would set the minimum standards. Friedman's

assertion that increasing competition would improve efficiency was along the same line of thought as Adam Smith (1895) in *The Wealth of Nations*.

Most people consider the concept of free market economics, as introduced by Adam Smith in his book, *The Wealth of Nations*, to be the trademark of the classical school of economics (Smith, 1895). Smith envisioned an economic system or a free-market system where the prices for goods and services are set between sellers and buyers with little, if any, governmental interference, and he felt free-market competition was best and any inhibition of free-market constructs would negatively impact the market (Smith, 1895). Friedman's free market education system was an application of Smith's writing on markets and monopolies applied to the American public education system (Friedman, 1962; Hanushek, 1986; Levin, 2011; Viteritti, 2010).

Friedman believed education is a consumable product subject to the preferences of consumers (parents and families) and should be publicly funded and available to everyone (Friedman, 1962; Levin, 2011). Friedman proposed the first public voucher system in the United States whereby parents would be free to choose the school their children would attend (Friedman, 1962). Friedman believed it best to promote publicly funded competition among schools that were privately operated (Friedman, 1962). Post-Friedman school choice theories have, for the most part, followed Friedman's teachings and treated education as market systems. Friedman's vision of having a competitive education market with parents/students as consumers is coming to fruition as evidenced by the fact there were five choice programs with fewer than 10,000 students when he started his foundation and now there are 74 programs in 32 states plus D. C. and Puerto Rico, with almost 700,000 students (Hroncich, 2023).

School Choice Summary

There are numerous school choice options available, some more political than others. Parents want their children to attend a school where they feel safe, have quality academics, and strong extra-curricular programs. Historically, schools simply focused on educating students and did not view students as customers. With the increased competition among schools, public charter schools, private schools, virtual schools, and voucher programs, schools are now forced to compete for students. Competing for students requires schools to market their strengths and continue to improve their weaknesses.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this quantitative study was to assess whether participation in an interdistrict program, a form of school choice, has an impact on student achievement, student attendance, and student in-school suspension placements. Archival student scores on the Texas state mandated End-of-Course (EOC) exams for Algebra I and English I were collected from the following two student groups: students residing in the district and students participating in an open enrollment program (interdistrict transfer program). This chapter describes the procedures used in this study.

Specifically, this chapter presents an overview of the research problem, research purpose and questions, research design, population and sample, instrumentation, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, privacy and ethical considerations, and research design limitations of this study.

Overview of the Research Problem

School choice proponents feel choice allows for the matching of schools and student interests. This matching of student and interests should lead to higher student achievement, improved school attendance, and fewer discipline issues. Proponents of school choice also believe that parents and students who are more involved in selecting their school will choose schools with programs that interest them, which may result in reducing the number of high school dropouts (Alther, 1994; Vaughn & Witko, 2013). High student attendance has been directly linked to academic achievement, greater participation in school programs, and graduation from high school (Benson, 2012) whereas poor attendance in early grades is one predictor of dropping out of school (Carruthers, 1993) and has potential negative consequences for students, families, schools, and society (Baker et al., 2001). Charter schools have more autonomy than

traditional schools in developing student discipline policies. Research on charter schools showed charter schools had fewer student discipline infractions than traditional schools (Imberman, 2011; National High School Center, 2011).

Operationalization of Theoretical Constructs

This study consisted of four constructs: (a) open-enrollment participation, (b) student achievement, (c) student attendance, and (d) student in-school suspensions. Student achievement was measured using the ninth grade Algebra I and English I STAAR scores. School attendance was measured by the number of days present divided by the number of days enrolled for the 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19 school years. Student in-school suspension placements were measured by the number of times a student was assigned an in-school suspension placement due to a discipline infraction.

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this quantitative study was to assess the impact participation in an interdistrict transfer program has on student achievement, student attendance, and student in-school suspension. It is important to determine whether there is a difference between students who exercise school choice and students who do not exercise school choice. If so, should states and/or districts pursue school choice programs? If not, should states and districts focus their attention on other areas in the hopes of improving student performance and parent satisfaction?

The quantitative research questions that guided this study were:

- 1) What is the difference in student achievement between students participating in an interdistrict transfer program and resident students taking the Algebra I end-of-course exam?

- 2) What is the difference in student achievement between students participating in an interdistrict transfer program and resident students taking the English I end-of-course exam?
- 3) What is the difference in student attendance between students participating in an interdistrict transfer program and resident students?
- 4) What is the difference in in-school suspension placements between students participating in an interdistrict transfer program and resident students?
- 5) When comparing students participating in an interdistrict transfer program and resident students, what is the relationship between student achievement, student attendance, and in-school placement in Algebra I?
- 6) When comparing students participating in an interdistrict transfer program and resident students, what is the relationship between student achievement, student attendance, and in-school placement in English I?

Research Design

This study addressed whether a difference existed in student achievement, student attendance, and in-school suspension placements between two student populations in a district that has an interdistrict transfer program. A quantitative descriptive design was used, and archival data were collected from the district's student information system and analyzed using SPSS.

Population and Sample

Student scores for Algebra I and English I end-of-course state tests, student attendance data, and student in-school suspension placements for school years 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19 were analyzed to determine whether differences existed between non-resident and resident students. The participants for this study were drawn from the

population of a Buck Plaza Independent School District (BPISD), the pseudonym for a large suburban school district 20 miles southeast of Houston, Texas. The district boundaries encompass 37.68 miles and are home to approximately 13,152 students and approximately 1,800 employees. The district’s student population is primarily Hispanic (54%) and White (39.8%) (Table 3.1) and 43.9% are designated low socio-economic status. Permission was granted by the district to use data for this research.

Table 3.1:
District Student Demographic Data

Race/Ethnicity	Percent
White	39.8%
Hispanic	54.0%
African American	2.8%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.2%
Native American	0.3%
Percent students low socio-economic	43.9%

Note. Adapted from “Texas Academic Performance Report 2015-16 District Profile” (Texas Education Agency, 2016). <http://tea.texas.gov/>

The BPISD has operated an interdistrict transfer program for over 10 years. Each spring the district accepts applications for non-resident students to attend schools in the district. The applications are reviewed by a district committee composed of district administrators and campus principals. Applications are considered on a first-come, first-served basis for a limited number of spaces (Table 3.2) and limited-open enrollment students are allowed to complete their education in the district as long as they follow the district’s policies and rules.

Table 3.2:*Applications to Participate in Interdistrict Transfer Program*

School Year	# Applications	# Accepted
2016-17	274	164 (59.9%)
2017-18	214	179 (83.6%)
2018-19	276	233 (84.4%)

Note. BPISD. (2019). History of interdistrict transfer applications and acceptances.

At the end of the school year very few, if any, students have their open enrollment status revoked because of low-attendance or discipline issues. Approximately, 2,300 students attend the district who do not live in the district's boundary. BPISD is comprised of one early childhood center; seven elementary schools' grades K-5; four junior high schools with grades six through eight; and one split campus high school with one campus serving ninth grade, the other serving grades 10-12; and an alternative campus. The purpose of this research is to examine archival data of all students taking the Algebra I and English I End-of-Course (EOC) tests for the first time in the spring of 2017, 2018, and 2019. The group was further divided into non-resident and resident students.

Instrumentation

This study used the following archived student data:

Algebra I End-of-Course Test

School district personnel extracted archival EOC scores for analysis from all students taking the Algebra I EOC test in school years 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19. The Algebra I EOC test was designed to assess five objectives: (a) functional relationships; (b) properties and attributes of functions; (c) linear functions; (d) linear equations and inequalities; (e) and quadratic and other nonlinear functions. The Stratified

Alpha Reliability of the STAAR 2017, 2018, and 2019 Algebra I exam (paper and online combined) was .925 for 2017 (Texas

Education Agency, 2020a), .93 for 2018 (Texas Education Agency, 2020b), and .94 (Texas Education Agency, 2020c). Validity is content based and tied directly to the statewide curriculum. If students do not pass the Algebra 1 EOC exam, they can re-test after undergoing accelerated instruction. To ensure apples-to-apples comparison of students' test scores, only the first test scores were used in this study. Student privacy was ensured by substituting student names with a corresponding number.

English I End-of-Course Test

School district personnel extracted archival EOC scores for analysis for all students taking the English I EOC test in school years 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19. The English I EOC test was designed to assess five objectives: (a) understanding/analysis across genres (reading); (b) understanding/analysis of literary texts (reading); (c) understanding/analysis of informational texts (reading); (d) revision (writing); (e) and editing (writing). The STAAR 2017 Stratified Alpha Reliability for the English I paper exam was .914 and .901 for the English I online exam (Texas Education Agency, 2020a), the STAAR 2018 Stratified Alpha Reliability for the English I paper and online exam was .92 for both exams (Texas Education Agency, 2020b), and the STAAR 2019 Stratified Alpha Reliability for the English I paper exam and online exam was .92 (Texas Education Agency, 2020c). Validity is content based and tied directly to the statewide curriculum. If students do not pass the English 1 EOC exam, they could re-test after undergoing accelerated instruction. To ensure apples-to-apples comparison of students' test scores, only the first test score was used. Student privacy was maintained by substituting names with a corresponding number.

Student Attendance

School district personnel extracted archival student attendance data for the 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19 school years. School attendance was measured by the percentage of days present at school during the time of enrollment from August to June of each school year. Student privacy was ensured by substituting student names with a corresponding number.

In-School Suspension

School district personnel extracted archival student in-school suspension data for the 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19 school years. In-school suspensions were measured by extracting students who were assigned in-school suspension at any time during the 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19 school years. Student privacy was ensured by substituting student names with a corresponding number.

Data Collection Procedures

Permission from the Committees for the Protection of Human Subjects at the University of Houston-Clear Lake and the school district was granted prior to conducting any research. The Office of Assessment and Accountability and the Department of Instruction of the school district provided data for the 2016-2017, 2017-18, and 2018-19 English I and Algebra I EOC tests, student attendance, and ISS placements. The data were downloaded from an Excel file into an SPSS database for analysis. The data were stored in two locations: computer hard drive and password-protected memory stick. The data will be stored for five years before being destroyed.

Data Analysis Procedures

All quantitative data were entered into Microsoft Excel 2016 and then imported into the SPSS (Version 19) software for analysis. Independent samples t-tests were appropriate for the first part of this study because this study compared one independent variable, participation or non-participation in an interdistrict transfer program, by dependent variable factors to evaluate whether the mean of the test variable for one group differed from the mean of the test variable from the other group (Green & Salkind, 2014). Multiple linear regression analyses were appropriate for the second part of this study because they examined the influence of the variables on the dependent variable, which is Algebra I EOC and then repeated for English I EOC.

In the first part of the analysis the independent variable is participation or nonparticipation in the interdistrict transfer program, and the three dependent variable factors were evaluated separately: student achievement, student attendance, and in-school suspension placements.

To answer the first two research questions regarding student achievement and student attendance, a Pearson Correlation was conducted between Algebra I and English I (Table 3.3). The Pearson Correlation was high (.632) which was significant ($p < .01$), and a two group MANOVA was conducted to compare Algebra EOC multivariate responses to the English I multivariate responses. The MANOVA yielded a Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances of .245 for Algebra I and .335 for English I. The Hotelling's T^2 significance was .000 ($p < .05$). Because the Hotelling's' T^2 was significant, it ensured a statistical difference existed between the non-resident and resident groups when comparing the Algebra I and English I scores.

The Two-Sample Hotelling's T^2 is appropriate because it is the multivariate analog of the two-sample t -test in univariate statistics in which both are used to compare two populations (Penn, 2020).

Table 3.3:
Correlations – Algebra I and English I

		<i>Algebra</i>	<i>English</i>
Algebra	Pearson Correlation	1	0.632
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	2,117	2,103
English	Pearson Correlation	0.632	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	2,103	3,076

To answer the third research question regarding student attendance, an independent samples t -test was computed using the categorical independent variable, participation or nonparticipation in an interdistrict transfer program, and the dependent variable, the percent of days present of the total days enrolled. To answer the fourth research question regarding in-school suspension placements, a Pearson Chi-Square was computed using the categorical independent variable, participation or non-participation in an interdistrict transfer program, and the dependent variable, whether a student was assigned in-school suspension at least once. To answer the fifth and sixth research questions the data were further analyzed by conducting a regression analysis with the dependent variable of student achievement as measured by the students' scale score on the Algebra I EOC state exam and the independent variables of resident/non-resident, student attendance, in-school suspension placement, ethnicity, and economically

disadvantaged. The data were analyzed again by conducting a regression analysis with the dependent variable of student achievement as measured by the students' scale score on the English I EOC state exam and the independent variables of participation or non-participation, student attendance, in-school suspensions placements, ethnicity, and economically disadvantaged.

Since the number of resident students taking the Algebra I and English I EOC tests was greater than the number of non-resident students taking the Algebra I and English I EOC tests the Hedges' *g* effect size was used. The Hedges' *g* effective size is best used when comparing groups of different sizes. The Hedges' *g* formula is:

$$\text{Hedges' } g = \frac{M_1 - M_2}{SD^*_{pooled}}$$

where $M_1 - M_2$ is the difference in means and the SD^*_{pooled} is the pooled and weighted standard deviation (Field, 2013). The general rule for interpreting Hedges' *g* effect size is:

Small Effect (cannot be discerned by the naked eye) = 0.2

Medium Effect = 0.5

Large Effect (can be seen by the naked eye) = 0.8

The effect size is an agreed-upon or standardized measure of the magnitude of observed effect which allows two groups of results to be compared (Field, 2013). For the purposes of this study, a statistical significance value of .05 was used.

Research Design Limitations

There are three limitations to this study. First, due to the sample consisting of participants from only one district, it is difficult to generalize these results to national comparisons, thus lowering external validity. Second, internal validity is also limited due to lack of control of confounding variables such as teacher quality. Third, individual

student interest while participating in the interdistrict transfer program is difficult to determine.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of participation in an interdistrict transfer program to determine whether there is a difference in student achievement, student attendance, and in-school suspension placements. This chapter provides a description of the research design, population and sample, instruments utilized, and data collection and analysis procedures.

CHAPTER IV:

RESULTS

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine whether students participating in an interdistrict transfer program had higher academic achievement, higher attendance rates, and lower discipline placements than resident students. A district near Houston, Texas with a long established interdistrict transfer program was selected. The number of eligible students participating in the interdistrict transfer program was 710 and the number of eligible resident students was 2,612 from which all quantitative data were derived.

The results have been divided into four sections. The first section was student achievement and consisted of comparing Algebra I and English I end-of-course exam scores between the two groups. The second section was student attendance and consisted of comparing the attendance rates of the two groups. The third section compared discipline placements between the two groups. The fourth section determined whether a statistically significant difference existed between student achievement, student attendance, or disciplinary placement between non-resident students and resident students.

Participant Demographics

The total participants in the study were 3,322 ninth graders from a high school located near Houston, Texas. The study consisted of two groups, an interdistrict (non-resident) participant group and a resident participant group. Table 4.1 disaggregates participants by gender, race, and socioeconomic status. Approximately 36% of the students in this study were low SES, the district rate was 43.9%, and the high school rate was 37.6% (Texas Education Agency, 2016).

Table 4.1:
Demographic Information for Participants

		Non-Resident	Resident
Gender			
Male	1,701 (51.2%)	325 (45.8%)	1,376 (52.7%)
Female	1,621 (48.8%)	385 (54.2%)	1,236 (47.3%)
Total	3,322 (100%)	710 (100%)	2,612 (100%)
Race			
Hispanic	1,907 (57.4%)	407 (57.3%)	1,500 (57.4%)
White	1,192 (35.9%)	266 (37.5%)	926 (35.5%)
Black	112 (3.4%)	17 (2.4%)	95 (3.6%)
Asian	74 (2.2%)	15 (2.1%)	59 (2.3%)
Multi-Race	26 (.8%)	3 (.4%)	23 (.9%)
American Indian/ Alaskan/ Native American	10 (.3%)	2 (.3%)	8 (.3%)
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	1 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.0%)
Total	3,322	710 (100%)	2,612 (100%)
Socioeconomic Status (SES)			
Low SES	1,152 (34.7%)	213 (30.0%)	939 (35.9%)
Non-Low SES	2,170 (65.3%)	497 (70.0%)	1,673 (64.1%)
Total	3,322 (100%)	710 (100%)	2,612 (100%)

Research Question One

Is there a difference in student achievement between students participating in an interdistrict transfer program and resident students taking the Algebra I EOC exam? To determine whether a difference in student achievement in Algebra I EOC exists between nonresident students and resident students, an independent sample t-test was conducted. Of the students taking the Algebra I EOC test 413 students were in the interdistrict transfer group and 1,704 students were in the resident student group. The group statistics are in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2:
Algebra I – Group Statistics

Student type	Size (n)	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error mean
Non-resident	413	4,190.40	436.83	21.50
Resident	1,704	4,074.42	465.17	11.27

The Levene's Test (Table 4.3) indicated the equality of variance assumption was met ($p = .202$). The equal variance is in line with the central limit theorem which states the distribution of sample means approximates a normal distribution as the sample size increases (Sanders, 1990). The corresponding two sample t-test indicated a significant difference ($p < 0.000$) between the average Algebra scores for non-resident and resident students. The non-resident group ($M = 4,190.58$, $SD = 436.83$) had a higher mean score than the resident group ($M = 4,074.42$, $SD = 465.17$). Further, the estimated confidence interval (-115.98, -160.54) indicated the non-resident group scored significantly higher than the resident group.

Table 4.3:*Algebra I – Independent Samples T-Tests*

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				95% Interval	Confidence of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error difference	Lower	Upper
Equal Variance Assumed	1.63	0.2	-4.6	2115	0	-115.98	25.22	-160.54	-78.18

Note. The out-of-district-group scored statistically higher than the in-district group ($p < .05$).

To ensure the difference in sample sizes did not skew the results, the Shapiro-Wilk test was run. The Shapiro-Wilk test showed the normality had been violated. The Mann Whitney U test was run which showed the difference in the two groups were significant ($p < .05$). These results are in Tables 4.4 through 4.6.

Table 4.4:*Algebra I Normality Test – Shapiro-Wilk Test Results*

	Statistic	df	Sig.
Algebra	21.50	2,117	.000

Table 4.5:*Algebra I Mann-Whitney U Mean Test Results*

	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Non-resident	413	1,190.12	491,520
Resident	1,704	1,027.22	1,750.383
Total	2,117		

Table 4.6:
Algebra I Mann-Whitney U Test Results

	Algebra
Mann-Whitney U	297,723
Wilcoxon W	1,750,383
Z	-4.86
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

Note. Non-resident and Resident ($p < .05$)

Research Question Two

Is there a difference in student achievement between students participating in an interdistrict transfer program and resident students taking the English I EOC exam? To determine whether a difference in student achievement in English 1 EOC exists between students participating in an interdistrict transfer program and resident students, an independent samples *t*-test was conducted. Of the students taking the English I EOC test there were 673 students participating in the interdistrict transfer group and 2,403 students in the resident student group. The group statistics are in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7:
English I – Group Statistics

Student type	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error mean
Non-resident	673	4,199.58	461.79	17.80
Resident	2,403	4,080.22	486.91	9.93

Note. Non-resident group scored statistically higher than the resident group ($p < .05$).

The Levene's Test (Table 4.8) indicated the equality of variance assumption was met ($p = .128$). The equal variance is in line with the central limit theorem which states

the distribution of sample means approximates a normal distribution as the sample size increases (Sanders, 1990).

The corresponding two sample t-test indicated a significant difference ($p < 0.000$) between the average English scores for non-resident and resident students. The non-resident group ($M = 4,199.58$, $SD = 461.79$) had a higher mean score than the resident group ($M = 4,080.22$, $SD = 486.91$). Further, the estimated confidence interval (-119.36, -160.54) indicated the non-resident group scored significantly higher than the resident group.

Table 4.8:
English I – Independent Samples T-test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				95% Interval	Confidence of the Difference	
	F	Sig	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal Variance Assumed	2.32	.128	-5.68	3074	.000	-119.36	21.00	-160.54	-78.18

To ensure the difference in sample sizes did not skew the results, the Shapiro-Wilk test was run. The Shapiro-Wilk test showed the normality had been violated. The Mann Whitney U test was run which showed the difference in the two groups were significant ($p < .05$). These results are in Tables 4.9 through 4.11.

Table 4.9:
English I Normality Test – Shapiro-Wilk Test Results

	Statistic	df	Sig
English	.995	3,076	.000

Table 4.10:
English I Mann-Whitney U Mean Test Results

	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Non-resident	673	1,489.14	3,578,406.50
Resident	2,403	1,714.74	1,154,019.50
Total	3,076		

Table 4.11:
English I Mann Whitney U Test Results

	English
Mann-Whitney U	690,000.50
Wilcoxon W	3,578,406.50
Z	-5.83
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

Note. Non-Resident and Resident ($p < .05$)

Research Question Three

To determine whether a difference in student attendance exists between students participating in an interdistrict transfer program and resident students, an independent t-test was conducted to compare the two student groups. There were 710 students in the interdistrict transfer group and 2,612 students in the resident student group. The results of the independent T-test are in Tables 4.12 through 4.16.

Table 4.12:*Non-Resident/Resident Attendance – Independent Samples T-test*

Student type	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error mean
Non-resident	710	.97	.05	.0018
Resident	2,612	.95	.08	.0015

The Levene's Test (Table 4.13) indicated the equality of variance assumption was not met ($p < .001$). The corresponding two sample t -test indicated a significant difference ($p < 0.001$) between the student attendance percentage of non-resident and resident students. Further, the non-resident group ($M = .97, SD = .05$) had a significantly higher attendance than the resident group ($M = .95, SD = .08$).

To ensure the difference in sample sizes did not skew the results, the Shapiro-Wilk test was run. The Shapiro-Wilk test showed the normality had been violated. The Mann Whitney U test indicated the difference in the two groups was significant ($p < .05$). These results are in Tables 4.13 through 4.16.

Table 4.13:*Student Attendance Independent Samples T-test*

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Interval	Confidence of the Difference
	F	Sig	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal Variance Assumed	36.17	.000	-5.18	3,320	.000	-.0155	.0030	-.0213	-.0096
Equal Variance Not Assumed			-6.57	1,726.77	.000	-.0155	.0024	-.0208	.0108

*Note. p < .05***Table 4.14:***Student Attendance Normality Test – Shapiro-Wilk Test Results*

	n	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Non-resident	710	1,846.19	1,311,082.50
Resident	2,612	1,611.19	4,208,420.50
Total	3,322		

*Note. p < .05***Table 4.15:***Attendance – Mann Whitney Test*

	Attendance
Mann-Whitney U	795,842.50
Wilcoxon W	42,088,420.50
Z	-5.81
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

Note. Non-resident and Resident (p < .05)

Table 4.16:*Attendance – Shapiro-Wilk Test Results*

	Statistic	df	Sig
Attendance	.55	3,322	.000

Note. Grouping Variable: Non-Resident and Resident ($p < .05$)

Research Question Four

To determine whether a difference in in-school suspension placements existed between non-resident students and resident students, a Pearson Chi-Square test was conducted to compare the two student groups (Tables 4.17 and 4.18)

Table 4.17:*In-School Suspension (ISS) – Chi Square Test Crosstabulation*

	ISS no	ISS yes	Total
Non-Resident	647 (91.1%)	63 (8.9%)	710 (100%)
Resident	2,133 (81.7%)	479 (18.3%)	2,612 (100%)
Total	2,780	542 (16.3%)	3,322 (100%)

Table 4.18:
In-School Suspension (ISS) – Chi-Square

	<i>Value</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Asymp. Sig.(2-sided)</i>	<i>Exact Sig (2-sided)</i>	<i>Exact Sig. (1-sided)</i>
Pearson Chi Square	36.63*	1	.000		
Continuity correction	35.94	1	.000		
Likelihood ratio	41.09	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
N of valid cases	3,322				

Note. p < .05

The Pearson Chi-Square test indicated a significant difference in the proportion of nonresident students assigned to ISS and the proportion of resident students assigned to ISS Fisher's Exact Test (Table 4.18) indicated the non-resident group had a lower proportion of ISS placements.

Research Question Five

To determine whether there is a relationship between student achievement, student attendance, and in school placement Algebra I, a Multiple Linear Regression Analysis test was conducted to compare non-resident and resident students. The Multiple Linear Regression ANOVA test (Tables 4.19-4.21) indicated the significance of independent variables resident/nonresident, attendance, ISS, and economically disadvantaged are significant for predicting student scores ($p < .001$); however, the independent variable, ethnicity, was not a significant indicator of predicting student

scores ($p = .238$). Given the lower R square values, this model should not be used to predict the students Algebra I score.

Table 4.19:
Algebra I – ANOVA Model Summary

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	.39 ^a	.16	.15	425.03

Note. ^aPredictors: (Constant), Eco Dis, ISS, Ethnicity, and Attendance

Table 4.20:
Algebra I – ANOVA

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig
1 Regression	70,236,882.50	5	14,047,376.50	77.76	.000 ^a
Residual	3.81	2,111	180,64621		
Total	4.52	2,116			

Note. ^aPredictors: (Constant), Eco Dis, Resident/Non-Res., ISS, Ethnicity, Attendance.

Table 4.21:*Algebra I – Significance of Independent Variables for Predicting Student Scores*

	Model	Understanding B	Coefficients std. error	Standardized coefficients beta	t	Sig
1	(Constant)	2,266.30	161.15		14.06	.000
	Res/Non-res	57.04	23.53	.05	2.43	.015
	Attendance	1,892.02	160.37	.24	11.80	.000
	ISS	-254.11	23.18	-.23	-10.96	.000
	Ethnicity	7.39	6.26	.02	1.18	.238
	Eco Dis	-62.43	19.80	-.07	-3.15	.002

*Note. p < .05***Research Question Six**

To determine whether there is a relationship between student achievement, student attendance, and in school placement English I, a Multiple Linear Regression Analysis test was conducted to compare non-resident and resident students. The ANOVA test (Tables 4.22-4.24) indicates the significance of independent variables for predicting student's scores ($p < .001$) for these data. All independent variables were indicators of predicting student's scores ($p < .05$). Given the lower R square values, this model should not be used to predict the students English I score.

Table 4.22:*English I – ANOVA Model Summary*

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	.407 ^a	.17	.16	442.47

Note. ^aPredictors: (Constant), Eco Dis, In-School Suspension, Ethnicity, and Attendance

Table 4.23:
English I – ANOVA

	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig
1	Regression	1.19	5	23,844,539.70	121.79	.000 ^a
	Residual	6.01	3,070	195,778.21		
	Total	7.20	3,075			

Note. ^aPredictors: (Constant), Eco Dis, Resident/Non-Res., ISS, Ethnicity, Attendance

Table 4.24:
English I – Significance of Independent Variables for Predicting Student Scores

	Model	Understanding B	Coefficients std. error	Standardized coefficients beta	t	Sig
1	(Constant)	2,184.80	152.94		14.29	.000
	Res/Non-res	61.21	19.46	.05	3.15	.002
	Attendance	1,829.35	152.58	.21	11.99	.000
	ISS	-279.16	22.38	-.21	-12.47	.000
	Ethnicity	34.89	5.34	.11	6.53	.000
	Eco Dis	-121.75	17.74	-.12	-6.87	.000

Note: $p < .05$.

Summary of Findings

Students who participated in an interdistrict transfer program outperformed resident students in Algebra I, English I, student attendance, and in-school suspension (ISS) placements at a significant level. These results held true to the hypothesis that students performing in an interdistrict transfer program would have higher academic achievement in both Algebra I and English I, higher student attendance, and lower ISS

placements. While the Multiple Linear Regression ANOVA indicated the significance of the independent variables for predicting student scores for both Algebra I and English I, the R square value was too low to predict either Algebra I or English I scores.

While the mean scores between the non-resident and resident student groups in research questions one and two showed the non-resident students scored higher on the English I and Algebra I end-of-course STAAR tests these results do not necessarily relate to higher campus and/or district academic ratings. The state of Texas academic ratings is calculated using numerous variables such as academic growth; college, career and military readings (CCMR); and graduation rates. These variables are calculated on a per student basis and the rating also considers the socio-economically disadvantaged percent of the campus, the CCMR score, and the STAAR score for all tests. The total number of STAAR tests used to determine a campus rating is five and this study only looked at two of these tests. The most important criteria for a campus and/or district academic rating is the individual growth of the student from one school year to the next.

CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter reviews the results of the six research questions and the six hypotheses, and explores the implications of these results. The results of the dissertation are summarized including implications to the literature, implications for practice and future research as well as limitations of the study. Research questions 1 through 4 addressed whether students participating in an interdistrict transfer program had higher academic achievement, higher attendance rates, and lower discipline placements than resident students. Research questions 5 and 6 sought to compare student achievement, student attendance, and in-school placement to determine whether a relationship exists between students participating in an interdistrict transfer program and resident students. The research was conducted to make informed decisions concerning school choice programs.

Summary of the Findings

These results held true to the hypothesis that students performing in an interdistrict transfer program would have higher academic achievement in both Algebra I and English I, higher student attendance, and lower ISS placements. The findings were in line with the findings from the Massachusetts study which showed students participating in choice programs scored higher than students not participating in choice programs as the students participating in the interdistrict transfer program had higher academic achievement, higher attendance rates, and less discipline placements than students who resided in the district (Hatch, 2018). The data also showed the independent variables of resident/non-resident, attendance, ISS, ethnicity, and economically disadvantaged are significant for predicting students' English I and all were significant for Algebra I except

ethnicity. However, given the R square values on both research questions, this model should not be used to predict the English I or Algebra I scores.

The findings of this study support what school proponents call “matching” which states if parents and students are allowed to choose their school, they will choose schools with programs that interest them, which may result in higher attendance in school and thus decrease the likelihood of dropping out (Alther, 1994; Vaughn & Witko, 2013). Higher attendance has been linked to higher academic achievement, greater participation in school programs, and greater chance of graduating (Benson, 2012). The findings further showed students who participate in an interdistrict transfer program (non-resident) had higher academic achievement, higher attendance rates, fewer discipline placements and, as such, it would benefit legislatures, educators, and parents to further study interdistrict transfer programs which are a form of school choice to provide other options for school choice proponents. Implementing an interdistrict transfer program may enhance student diversity, increase funding, and provide a type of school choice option that will appease students, parents, school districts, and legislatures while increasing the academic achievement for students.

State legislatures may want to study legislation to allow and/or incentivize districts to implement interdistrict transfer programs. Doing so will increase the school choice opportunities for both students and parents. Parents who participate in school choice tend to be more satisfied with the education their children receive than parents of students who do not participate in school choice (Jimerson, 2002; Gill et al., 2001; Lee et al., 2021).

Contributions to the Literature

This study was undertaken because of a growing interest in school choice and connecting academic achievement with students participating in school choice. Districts offering interdistrict transfer programs are participating in a form of school choice. The study showed students who participated in this interdistrict transfer program had higher academic achievement, higher study attendance, and fewer discipline referrals. Parents and students chose to participate in this program and in making this choice parents were more vested in their children's education and their children were more apt to attend school, have fewer discipline issues and, as a result, have higher academic achievement. Research shows when parents and students can choose to participate in school choice programs, they are apt to be more satisfied with their education (Daring, 2005; Gill et al., 2001; Jimerson, 2002; Lee et al., 2021). This next section will revisit the relevance of the literature concerning interdistrict transfer which is a type of school choice programs.

Implications for Practice

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine whether students participating in an interdistrict transfer program had higher academic achievement, higher attendance rates, and lower discipline placements than resident students and thus make better informed decisions concerning school choice programs. The study supported these outcomes.

As the demand for school choice continues to grow stronger, educators have the opportunity to market schools to parents and students similar to charter and private schools. This provides competition both within and without the public education sector and brings Friedman's premise of school choice in a free-market system to the forefront. Parents and students want choice and interdistrict transfer programs may meet the parents

and students' needs in finding schools that match their interests whereby increasing parent and student satisfaction and involvement through school choice opportunities.

School choice proponents believe having high quality schools of choice will force other schools to improve or close, which will improve all schools for all students (DeAngelis & Erickson, 2018; Forster, 2016). This study showed students who participated in an interdistrict transfer program outperformed resident students academically, improved attendance rates, and had fewer discipline placements. Further research should be done to determine whether the districts' students who transfer out of are focusing on improving academics and the other characteristics parents are looking for in a school for their children.

With parents identifying academic achievement as their top priority, both public and private schools also have the opportunity to market their academic achievement to parents to showcase the school's academic priority and align their school with what parents are wanting, much like a business marketing its product to a customer in a free market system.

Implications for Future Research

This study indicated students who participate in an interdistrict transfer program attained higher scores on both the End-of-Course Algebra I and English I state exams, attained higher student attendance rates, and had fewer discipline placements than resident students. Future research to consider is to replicate this study at different sized districts to determine whether there is a significant association. If this future research did confirm the existence of a significant association existed, it would provide an important impetus for lawmakers, educators, and researchers to begin implementing an incentive for interdistrict transfer programs to appease the lawmakers and parents interest in school choice programs.

Further research opportunities would be to survey or interview students, parents, teachers, campus administrators, and district administrators to gain their perspectives and views on interdistrict transfers. Surveying or interviewing students who participated in an interdistrict transfer program would gain their perspective on how they felt being a transfer student. For example, were they readily accepted by their peers in the new district? Why did they choose to participate in an interdistrict transfer program? Their answers would provide a deeper context of how (or whether) interdistrict transfer programs are beneficial and whether they should be pursued. Surveying or interviewing parents of students who participated in an interdistrict transfer program may provide a deeper context as to why the student participated, or whether providing transportation was deterrent. Would the parents participate again, and would they recommend it to another parent/student?

Surveying or interviewing teachers who teach students participating in an interdistrict transfer program and resident students would provide feedback for any differences the teacher observed in academic achievement, acceptance, and stressors. Surveying or interviewing campus administrators may provide further insight into discipline issues between students participating in an interdistrict transfer program and resident students. They might investigate what did students participating in an interdistrict transfer program provide to the overall culture of the campus and student leadership.

Another area of future research to consider would be to repeat this study with districts at differing low socio-economic percentage of students or student demographics to determine whether the results are similar. These results will aid further discussion of interdistrict programs to address the desire for more school choice options. Surveying or interviewing school choice advocates and legislators would gain a better and more

thorough understanding of what is being sought. What are the misunderstandings of interdistrict transfer programs and will these programs fulfil what is being sought?

Certain research claimed there was no academic achievement difference between vouchers and public schools; however, the cost of the voucher programs was less than the cost to educate a student in public education (Center on Education Policy, 2011). It is worth researching to determine whether there are cost efficiencies in voucher programs that can be verified and/or implemented in public education. As voucher programs become more mainstream, further research should be done to determine changes occur in academic achievement. There are opportunities to conduct studies to determine whether voucher interventions may strengthen education's understanding of achievement impacts (Shakeel, 2021).

Parents want their children to attend schools with strong academics (Bell 2009; Carrasco & San Martin, 2012; Catt & Rhinesmith, 2017; Jochim et al., 2014; Kelly & Scafidi, 2013; Wolf et al., 2000; Zeehandelaar & Winkler, 2013), with a safe environment (Bell 2009; Jochim et al., 2014; Kelly & Scafidi, 2013; Stewart et al. 2009), and in a school close to their home (Jochim et al., 2014; Stewart et al., 2010; Zeehandelaar & Winkler, 2013). Future research should focus on opportunities for public schools to compete for students by marketing their academic achievements, safety, and proximity to parent residences.

Limitations of the Study

There are at least five limitations to this study. First, the sample consisted of participants from only one district, making it difficult to generalize these results to national comparisons and thus lowering external validity. Second, internal validity is also limited due to lack of control of confounding variables such as teacher quality. Third, individual student interest while participating in the interdistrict transfer program was not

determined. Fourth, non-resident students with discipline issues at their district of residence are typically not accepted into the interdistrict transfer program. Fifth, if a non-resident student becomes a discipline problem the student increases their chances of not having their application renewed for the following school year.

Conclusion

Numerous school choice options are available, some more political than others. Parents want their children to attend a school have quality academics (Bell 2009; Carrasco & San Martin, 2012; Catt & Rhinesmith, 2017; Jochim et al., 2014; Kelly & Scafidi, 2013; Wolf et al., 2000; Zeehandelaar & Winkler, 2013), where they feel safe (Bell 2009; Jochim et al., 2014; Kelly &

Scafidi, 2013; Stewart et al. 2009), and are in close proximity to their home (Jochim et al., 2014; Stewart et al., 2010; Zeehandelaar & Winkler, 2013). Districts with strong academic programs, culture, and/or reputation will be destination districts for students via a school choice programs such as an interdistrict transfer program. Understanding Friedman's free-market education system theory will allow districts to participate in and/or offer school choice programs which may increase enrollment and funding by attracting students (aka customers).

This study shows students who participate in an interdistrict transfer program have higher academic achievement, higher student attendance rates, and lower discipline placements and, as such, districts should seek to attract non-resident students. Research by Shakeel in 2016 and followed up in 2021 provided inconclusive results when comparing student achievement in public schools and voucher programs and as such vouchers and school choice in general should be further studied to determine whether there are academic achievement differences (Shakeel, 2016; Shakeel, 2021).

Historically, public schools have operated under monopolistic conditions and focused only on educating students. However, with the increased competition among schools, public charter schools, private schools, virtual schools, and voucher programs, schools are now forced to compete with other types of schools for students. Public schools are also dealing major political parties with school choice in their platform (Meckler & Natanson, 2023; Stanford, 2023). One way to provide parents a choice in their child's education and have students remain in the public school domain is to offer programs parents and students want, followed by implementing and marketing programs via interdistrict transfer programs.

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