

# NOTE TO USERS

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A COMPARISON BETWEEN PARENTS OF STUDENTS IN  
CATHOLIC PAROCHIAL AND CHARTER SCHOOLS REGARDING  
CUSTOMER FOCUS, CUSTOMER SATISFACTION, AND  
FACTORS USED TO SELECT THEIR CHILDREN'S SCHOOLS

by

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## Dedication

This research is dedicated to my husband,

John,

and my daughter,

Christine,

for their loyal support and belief in me.

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I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the many people who provided encouragement and assistance to me throughout this research study. The study evolved as a result of many ideas, insights, and suggestions from professors, colleagues, friends, and family members. A special note of thanks goes to my doctoral committee:

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## Table of Contents

Dedication .....	ii
Acknowledgments .....	iii
List of Tables .....	vi
List of Figures .....	viii
Chapter 1 – Background .....	1
School Reform .....	2
Purpose of the Study .....	6
Research Questions .....	7
Significance of the Study .....	7
Assumptions of the Study .....	8
Limitations of the Study .....	8
Definition of Terms .....	9
Organization of the Study .....	10
Chapter II – Review of the Literature .....	11
Introduction .....	11
Charter Schools .....	11
Summary .....	17
Catholic Parochial Schools .....	18
Summary .....	20
Customer Focus and Customer Satisfaction .....	20
Summary .....	24
Effective Schools .....	24

Chapter III – Methodology .....	38
Restatement of the Problem .....	38
Research Design .....	38
Setting for the Study .....	38
Livingston County .....	39
Wayne County .....	40
Population .....	42
Sample selection .....	43
Instruments .....	43
Customer Focus in Education .....	43
School Quality Satisfaction Survey (SQSS) .....	45
Indicators of Effective Schools .....	48
Demographic Survey .....	49
Data Collection Procedures .....	49
Data Analysis .....	50
Chapter IV – Results of Data Analysis .....	53
Demographic Characteristics .....	54
Research Questions .....	65
Research Question 1 .....	65
Research Question 2 .....	67
Research Question 3 .....	69
Research Question 4 .....	71
Qualitative Analysis of Comments .....	75
Summary .....	79

Chapter V – Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations .....	80
Summary .....	80
Methods .....	81
Research questions .....	82
Conclusions .....	85
Limitations .....	88
Implications for Educators .....	88
Recommendations for Further Study .....	89
Appendix A – Power Analysis .....	91
Appendix B – Instruments .....	95
Appendix C – Correspondence .....	106
Appendix D – Parent Comments .....	110
References .....	125
Abstract .....	136
Autobiographical Statement .....	138

## List of Tables

<u>Table</u>	<u>Page</u>
1 Comparison of Most Important Indicators of Educational Quality .....	29
2 MEAP Test Results .....	42
3 Survey Distribution and Return .....	54
4 Crosstabulations – Sex of Child and Parent by Type of School .....	55
5 Crosstabulations – Relationship to Child by Type of School .....	56
6 Crosstabulations – Marital Status by Type of School .....	57
7 Crosstabulations – Parent’s Ethnicity by Type of School .....	58
8 Crosstabulations – Parent’s Educational Levels by Type of School .....	59
9 Crosstabulations – Family Income by Type of School .....	60
10 Crosstabulations – Children’s Report Card Grades by Type of School .....	61
11 Crosstabulations – Child’s Academic Ability by Type of School .....	62
12 Descriptive Statistics – Time Spent Doing Homework by Type of School ....	63
13 Crosstabulations – Curriculum Focus of School by Type of School .....	64
14 Crosstabulations – Children Ever Enrolled in Public School by Type of School .....	64
15 One-way Multivariate Analysis of Variance – Importance of Indicators of Effective School by Type of School .....	65
16 Univariate F Tests – Importance of Indicators of Effective Schools by Type of School .....	66
17 One-way Multivariate Analysis of Variance – Customer Focus in Education by Type of School .....	68
18 Univariate F Tests – Customer Focus in Education by Type of School .....	69

19	One-way Multivariate Analysis of Variance – Satisfaction with School Quality by Type of School . . . . .	70
20	Descriptive Statistics – Satisfaction with School Quality by Type of School . . .	71
21	Discriminant Analysis – Type of School . . . . .	73
22	Discriminant Analysis – Standardized Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients and Structure Matrix By Type of School . . . . .	74
23	Discriminant Analysis – Classification Results – Catholic Parochial and Charter School Group Membership . . . . .	75
24	Strengths of Catholic Parochial Schools . . . . .	76
25	Strengths of Charter Schools . . . . .	77
26	Weaknesses of Catholic Parochial Schools . . . . .	78
27	Weaknesses of Charter Schools . . . . .	79

## List of Figures

<u>Figure</u>		<u>Page</u>
1	Dimensions of Customer-Focus in Education .....	44
2	School Quality Satisfaction Survey .....	46
3	Statistical Analysis .....	51

## Chapter I

### Background

The nature of conducting business in K-12 education is changing rapidly. Over the past two decades, public, governmental and business communities have resoundingly called for educational reform. Dissatisfied with evidence on low student achievement, there has been increasing pressure to improve public education. While private or parochial schools have always been an option for families, new opportunities are emerging, with competition and market-driven enrollment having a significant impact on educational reform.

Dating back to the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), evidence has mounted suggesting that students are not graduating with skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in the workforce. In 1991, the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS, 1992) called upon an American educational system to better prepare students to be workers, parents and citizens. The Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994) provided a broad-based approach to improve student learning through a long-term effort that promoted improvements in education at the national, state and local levels. According to Murnane and Levy (1996), approximately half of all 17 year olds have difficulty reading or doing math at a level necessary to obtain a job in a modern automobile plant and they lack skills to maintain a middle-class lifestyle in the present economy. The increasing evidence of failure along with mounting criticism from the public, government and business communities has provided the impetus for educational reform across the country. In a 1997 survey, 71% of the public strongly supported reform of the existing public school system (Phi Delta Kappa Gallup Poll, 1997). Changes are occurring so rapidly, that research on the impact

of these reform efforts is sparse.

### *School Reform*

Many different opinions exist regarding what constitutes effective school reform. In 1955, Friedman proposed economic educational reform that included the implementation of standards through governmental policy and distribution of vouchers to help families send their children to private schools. The government's role in standards-based reform raises policy questions for families, as well as educators. Some states have sought to establish a common set of standards and goals for education. Goertz (2001) examined the role of government in standards-based reform that included the complex interface among federal, state, and local education policy makers. She argued that states and districts may have embraced the idea of standards-based reform, their interpretations of the standards have resulted in differential application in their areas.

Other educators (Elmore & Fuhrman, 2001) questioned performance-based reform. They noted that performance-based reform caught the attention of teachers and administrators, but does not develop the instructional capacity to support the new accountability measures.

Cohen (2001) added that reform is not only based on high quality teachers, materials, and students, but it also requires an interface between stakeholders to be effective. They contend that instruction must be more fully understood to impact student learning if education is going to improve.

President George W. Bush (Enda & Koszczuk, 2001) listed education as one of his primary objectives. One of his first major policy proposals outlined a plan to provide vouchers, averaging \$1,500, to students from low-income families who attend failing schools. He argued that when schools do not provide instruction effectively and do not

change, parents and students must be allowed to pursue other meaningful options. As a result, a market-driven approach to education has emerged.

Public school systems are recognizing the pressure to reform. New educational options (e.g., charter schools and magnet schools) are available now for families, along with the traditional options of private or parochial schools. Some public school districts now recruit students on the radio, television, and in local newspapers. They advertise with graduation rates, exemplary programs, and distinctive brands. Parents are looking for public information that assists in clarifying why their child should or should not attend a particular school. Excellent schools must identify what makes them effective. "Customer satisfaction" could well become the watchword of K-12 education in the future.

In the past, the primary alternative to the local public school for most families was a parochial school. However, the new influx of educational alternatives may impact both parochial and public school enrollments. Research is limited on effects of recent school reform measures on parochial schools. Chubb and Moe (1988) conducted a study that compared parochial and public schools. They found that school organization played an important role in educational effectiveness.

#### *Competition Among Schools*

Competition in K-12 education appears to be growing. Across the country, the number of students enrolled in public schools of choice grew 2.5 million from 1993-1999. Currently, one in four American children attends a school other than their neighborhood school (Wilgoren, 2001). In the past nine years, and since the first charter was established in St. Paul, Minnesota, approximately 1,700 charter schools have been established in 34 states and the District of Columbia. (*Education Week*, 2000). In an

article printed in the *Detroit Free Press*, Ross and Walsh-Sarnecki (2001) reported that the State of Michigan saw a 300% increase in the number of students crossing districts in the past four years. In a similar article, the *Chicago Sun Times* (Rossi, 2000) reported that magnet schools are drawing more students than they are able to enroll.

Competition is affecting more than public schools. According to an article in *The Detroit News and Free Press* by Walsh-Sarnecki (2002b), nine Catholic schools are closing due to declining enrollments. Catholic school enrollment has been experiencing a steady decline from 1 to 2% a year nationwide for several years. A spokesperson for the Detroit Archdiocese indicated that changes in public schools, including charter schools, are attracting families who previously had sent their children to Catholic schools.

In the city of Detroit, charter schools entered the arena in 1995. According to an article by Walsh-Sarnecki (2002a), by the 2001-2002 school year, more than 19,000 students were attending charter schools in Detroit. Another 18,000 students were enrolled in suburban charter schools.

School districts are changing. In the state of Michigan, choice and competition is providing many districts with incentives to improve (Michigan Education Report, Fall 2000). Some districts no longer view parent satisfaction as simply a matter of good public relations. Instead, parental satisfaction in some areas may be a matter of survival.

Some states have already adopted new forms of accountability and have responded resoundingly to the need for educational reform. Some states, such as Wisconsin and Florida, permit school choice in some instances. Other states are granting charter schools, within-district and/or cross-district enrollment. Others have implemented state-wide achievement tests for students and provide a "report card" on each school district. In some states, including Michigan, Standard & Poors is providing

comprehensive reports for each school district, using a similar format to reports they issue for industries and corporations. Using the Internet, such outcome measures are increasingly available to the public and create more knowledgeable consumers and increase competition among school choices.

Olson (2000) suggested that charter schools have created competition for public schools. Particularly in small or medium sized districts, the impact of losing students to a charter school may lead to reform simply because of competitive pressures as well as accountability measures. Currently, in the state of Florida, any child who attends a school that receives an "F" from the state for two out of four years is eligible for a voucher to attend to attend a public, private, or religious school of their choice. Failing schools are now taking measures to improve student outcomes by adding tutorials, providing additional instructional time each day, as well as extending the classroom academic year.

Competition in K-12 education means that schools need to be well aware of their strengths and weaknesses. They should have well-organized academic programs, strong outcome measures, and attend to the importance of external constituents. Attention to parents and customer satisfaction is becoming increasingly important.

The concept of customer-focus in education is not new. Although it was originally borrowed from the business community (Desatnick, 1987), some educators have sought to integrate a customer focus into educational settings. Arcaro (1995) suggested that a "customer-focus" should be one of the five pillars of quality schools. However, in a survey of 150 superintendents, only 65% believed that schools should have customers. Arcaro indicated that parents and children must be valued as customers to create a quality educational system. Similarly, a Kettering Foundation survey of Newark citizens found that the only consistent supporters of public schools were those

that viewed themselves as partners in educating their children and building community (Mathews, 1999).

Increasingly, school districts are recognizing the need to strengthen their customer-focus. For example, the San Juan Unified School District, a large suburban school system near Sacramento, California, used a customer satisfaction model in their strategic planning process (Olebe, Maas, & Jeffers, 1992). In addition, the state of Florida initiated a customer satisfaction survey in their Florida School Year 2000 Initiative. A customer satisfaction survey was used to assess satisfaction levels of students, families, parents, public organization and private organizations (Lowe, Funk, & Altreche, 1996). Their results provided evidence of differences between businesses and parents , with one third of both groups indicating dissatisfaction with the school district.

#### *Purpose of the Study*

With the myriad of information regarding individual schools and school districts available on the Internet and through the Freedom of Information act, school districts need to understand those factors that are important to parents in making decisions regarding educational choices for their children. Some parents who originally chose to send their children to parochial school for specific reasons (e.g., religious training, values-based education, discipline, class size, etc.) may now be making decisions to send their children to charter schools because of tuition and fees or location of the school. If the mission and vision of the charter schools are similar to parochial schools, parents' decisions to send their children to a particular school needs to be examined. These decisions may impact enrollment in the parochial school, especially if the parochial school is located in urban or lower socioeconomic areas. The purpose of this study is to compare the perceptions of parents whose children attend parochial and charter schools

to examine reasons why they choose these schools using three customer-focused survey instruments: "Customer-Focus in Education" survey (Pando, 1992), "Indicators of Effective Schools" survey (Bloetscher, 1994) and "School Quality Satisfaction Survey" (SQSS) survey (Wunder, 1997) and a short demographic survey.

### *Research Questions*

The following questions were addressed in this study using data collected from parents with children enrolled in second through fifth grades at four schools, including two charter and two parochial.

1. Is there a difference between parents of children in charter schools and parents of children in Catholic parochial schools on the importance of indicators of effective elementary schools?
2. Is there a difference between parents of children in charter schools and parents of children in Catholic parochial schools on the importance of customer focus provided by the staff of their children's school?
3. Is there a difference between parents of children in charter schools and parents of children in Catholic parochial schools on the importance of school quality satisfaction provided by the staff of their children's school?
4. Can school choice by parents of children in charter schools and parents of children in Catholic parochial schools be predicted from demographic characteristics, indicators of effective schools, customer focus in education, and school quality satisfaction?

### *Significance of the Study*

As continuing options for education become more available to parents, competition between schools also increases. Educational leaders are going to be increasingly called upon to develop and market innovative, unique, and distinctive aspects of their school and the curriculum. They need to understand what service areas are required to support student achievement and which of these services are perceived as valuable to their external customers – parents and students. By using a customer-focused approach to education, educational leaders can glean information regarding their

strengths and any gaps in service or curriculum and design appropriate corrective strategies.

Two educational alternatives, Catholic parochial schools and charter schools, are the focus of this study. Parents are electing to send their children to these schools, generally because they may believe that some benefit, unavailable in public schools, can be attained in these types of schools. The parents may also perceive that the parochial and/or charter school provides a safer environment for their children. It is important to study the parents' perceptions to determine what features, including customer focus and customer satisfaction, may be attracting parents. Once these features are known, public school administrators can attempt to replicate them within their schools and school districts to maintain their enrollment and attract additional students whose parents may have opted for alternative educational choices.

#### *Assumptions of the Study*

The following assumptions were made for this study:

- Parents are knowledgeable about school choices available for their children.
- Parents are concerned consumers of education that provides them with an impetus to examine school choices before enrolling their children in an educational program.

#### *Limitations of the Study*

The following limitations were acknowledged for this study:

- The study is limited to parents of students in second through fifth grades enrolled in either charter or Catholic parochial schools. As a result, the findings may not be generalizable to other grade levels or other types of schools.

### *Definition of Terms*

The following terms were defined specifically for this study:

*Magnet schools.* Magnet schools or “specialized” schools have surfaced to meet the needs of children and school districts. Magnet schools are open to all children in the school district, although some may have entrance requirements (e.g., examinations, talent auditions, etc.). These schools often are developed to respond to a particular interest area of children and/or their parents (i.e., schools focusing on technology or music as well as experimental schools are often described as magnet schools).

*Charter schools:* Charter schools are considered public schools by the state, but operate under a charter from a university, intermediate school district, or school district. These schools may provide a “specialized” curriculum with an emphasis in a particular area. They may be managed by a private business (e.g., Edison Project) or may be formed by a group of parents who are dissatisfied with their public schools. They often attempt to fill a void that public school districts fail to meet. Charter and magnet schools are publicly funded and have been expanding in more states during the past 10 years.

*Intra and Interdistrict schools of choice:* Intradistrict school choice now permits students to attend any school they wish within their district. The State of Michigan then opened interdistrict schools of choice to include attending school at any school within the intermediate school district in which the student resided. In 1999, interdistrict schools of choice was expanded to include attendance at school districts in other intermediate school districts as long as the school districts were contiguous. The decision to participate in either intra- or interdistrict schools of choice is up to the school district to which the student is transferring. State funding for that student would be in the amount of state foundation for the home district which would then be paid to the new district.

*Nonsecular schools.* Nonsecular schools are choices for families who choose a school that is affiliated with a religious organization (e.g., Catholic, Islamic, Jewish, Lutheran, Christian, etc.). These schools may be partially funded by their congregations and partially funded by families whose children attend them.

*Secular schools:* Secular schools are private schools that provide choices for families who want a specific type of education for their children. These schools often focus on liberal arts or science education to prepare children for college. They can also be special education schools for children with disabilities. The parents are expected to

pay full tuition for their children as these schools receive no external support from the government. Outside support in terms of grants and community fund-raising provide potentials for additional support.

*Vouchers:* Vouchers are now used in several states to provide families with opportunities to send their child to the school of choice, regardless of district. In some states (e.g., Minnesota), any family can use their voucher to choose a district of their choice. In other states (e.g., Florida), only families in districts with less than satisfactory performance can use vouchers to change schools.

*Home schooling.* Most states permit home schooling with varying amounts of regulation. Home schooling does not receive public funding from the state; however, they do receive support in terms of curriculum suggestions and activities that provide a structure to the educational program. In some cases, families can avail themselves of some public school offerings (e.g., vocational education classes, sports, extracurricular activities, etc.). Most parents choose to home school for religious reasons, while others perceive they should be their children's primary teachers. Support groups are available for parents who choose to home school their children.

### *Organization of the Study*

The first chapter provided an overview of schools of choice and the importance of customer satisfaction in determining satisfaction with a school by parents and students. The second chapter includes a comprehensive review of literature on reasons why parents select a particular school for their children, the importance of customer satisfaction, and the effects of customer satisfaction on school reform. The methods used to collect and analyze the data needed to address the research questions posed for this study are presented in Chapter III. The fourth chapter reports results of the data analysis in two sections. The first section describes and compares parents of children in charter and Catholic parochial schools, with the second section presenting the results of the inferential analyses used to address each of the research questions. Conclusions that link the data analysis with previous literature on the topics and recommendations for practice and further research are available in Chapter V.

## Chapter II

### Review of the Literature

#### *Introduction*

Educational choice has become a reality in Michigan. Parents can decide to use educational alternatives beyond public neighborhood schools (i.e., charter schools, parochial schools, private schools, magnet schools, home-schooling). The focus of this study is on two alternative educational choices: charter schools and Catholic parochial schools. This chapter provides a review of relevant research literature on a) charter schools, b) Catholic parochial schools, c) customer focus and customer satisfaction in education, and d) effective schools.

#### *Charter Schools*

Across the country, a proliferation of charter schools has been noted during the past decade. Beginning in 1991, the state of Minnesota enacted the first charter school law. The law was originally developed to give teachers an opportunity to “charter” schools that might be free of most governmental regulations. By lifting bureaucratic regulations, legislators sought to give teachers the chance to create models that fit the needs of the district or area they served. Of the first 100 schools in Minnesota, researchers learned that charter schools’ focus was primarily on curriculum (i.e. an “interdisciplinary curriculum.” or “technology” or “back to the basics;” University of Minnesota, 1995).

By the end of the decade, nearly 300,000 students were enrolled in 1,205 charter schools (Wronkovich, 2000). Presently, 37 states have enacted legislation for charter schools (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). Most charter schools seek a new vision of schooling and that may be why they can excite communities around them and enlist

support from parents for their development. The charter school may get noticed because its stated vision is different from the schools in their immediate area. Charter schools are publicly funded and must comply with basic federal and state requirements of schools.

While charter school expansion has been fairly rapid across the country, empirical research regarding the success of the schools is sparse. In 1995, the Hudson Institute's Educational Excellence Network began a two-year national study with support provided by the Pew Charitable Trusts (Manno, Finn, & Bierlein, 1998). The five major findings derived from this study included:

1. Charter schools became a haven for children who had prior negative educational experiences (e.g., low income, at-risk children, minority children, and children with learning disabilities and behavioral problems). Students and their parents reported improvements in all areas.
2. Charter schools became very popular with their constituents including the students, parents and teachers.
3. Parents chose charter schools because of their small size, higher standards, educational philosophy, greater opportunities for parental involvement and better teachers.
4. Charter school satisfaction levels are highest for educational matters (e.g., curriculum, teaching, class size, etc) and lowest when it comes to noneducational matters.
5. Teachers in charter schools feel empowered.

Research is emerging that compares aspects of charter schools with traditional schools. Crawford (1999) studied perceived levels of empowerment and six dimensions of empowerment between teachers who work in charter schools and teachers who work

in traditional schools in the states of Colorado and Michigan. In Crawford's study, noncharter teachers perceived themselves as being more empowered than charter schoolteachers. However, results were largely attributed to the difference in ages of the teachers. The teachers in traditional schools were older and more experienced than those teaching in charter schools.

Another study compared leadership characteristics of principals in charter schools and traditional schools (Mestinsek, 2000). This study randomly selected principals of traditional elementary schools in California and Alberta, Canada and compared them to principals of selected charter schools in the United States. The researcher administered the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) to measure transformational leadership, leadership practice, non-leadership and leadership in general. The statistically significant findings indicated that charter school principals were more likely to perceive themselves as transformational leaders than principals in Alberta or California public school principals.

In 1999, Hassan investigated factors that influenced parents to select a charter school rather than a traditional school. Parents were randomly selected from 21 of the 31 charter schools in operation in Pennsylvania. The study findings indicated that parents were interested in a safer environment, better teachers, and smaller class sizes. Parents also indicated that a personalized curriculum emphasizing technology, greater involvement by parents and adults in the school, and access to administrators and teachers were important. Location of the school and socio-economic factors were not important considerations that influenced their choice of a school for their children.

The impact of charter schools on students with disabilities was examined in the state of Minnesota. Lange and Lehr (2000) found that parents (n=608) who identified

their child as having a disability or special needs condition influenced their decision to transfer their child to a charter school. Four reasons parents of both special and general education students indicated they chose to enroll their child in a charter school, include: a) special education services at the charter school, b) special needs of the child, c) dissatisfaction with the former school, and d) a chance for a fresh start at the charter school. Qualitative comments provided by parents suggested a high level of satisfaction related to teachers, curriculum, and administrators.

The full impact of charter schools on local school districts is still emerging. However, some findings have been noted on the effect of charter schools on school districts. Rofes (cited in O'Sullivan, Nagle, & Spence, 2000) researched effects of charter schools on public school districts in eight states and the District of Columbia. Using a case method approach, Rofes reported that charter schools impacted local school districts in five ways, including:

1. loss of students and financing,
2. loss of particular kinds of students,
3. departure of significant numbers of disgruntled parents,
4. shifts in staff morale, and
5. redistribution of administrative time.

According to McLellan (1994), Michigan has additional components that underlie the concept of charter schools. The key components of charter schools in the state of Michigan include:

- The public school academy is exempted from federal taxes and is organized under the Nonprofit Corporation Act with articles of incorporation and bylaws.

- Fifteen public universities in Michigan have the ability to act as authorizing bodies and award contracts to charter schools anywhere in the state.
- The authorizing body of a charter school is charged with supervising the operation of a public school academy by a) examining an annual or semi-annual certification that the school is performing in accord with the contract and laws, b) auditing the school's financial budget, c) notifying the authorizing body that its board members were appointed according to the agreed-upon terms.
- The charter school must meet public sector accounting principles, including use of an authorized body as a fiscal agent, receipt of state aid paid to the authorized body and authorizing employment contracts through the authorizing body.
- The authorizing body must approve the educational goals of the charter school, the curriculum, the school calendar (including school day), and the method of student achievement.
- The School Aid Act (Act No. 336 of the Public Acts of 1993), includes compliance with Public Act 25 of 1990 which required that a charter school be accredited by the Department of Education and a school improvement plan be prepared. If a charter school failed to meet these requirements, 5% of the state aid grant per student would be forfeited, the same as it is for local school districts.

Lin (2001) reviewed school effectiveness in California, Arizona, and Michigan charter schools. Her study examined four aspects of charter school effectiveness including: student achievement, student demographic, school funding, and teaching

efficacy and empowerment. Ratings of Superior (S), Good (G), Meets Expectations (ME), Needs Improvement (NI) and Unacceptable were given to charter schools in each state. Lin did not evaluate individual charter schools, but examined charter schools as a group based on a review of published reports including: the “SRI International Evaluation of California's Charter Schools;” the “Western Michigan University's 2<sup>nd</sup> Evaluation of Michigan Charter Schools” (Final Report, July 2000; Horn & Miron), the Hudson Institute report entitled “Charter Schools in Action and the Educational Policy Analysis study of Ethnic Segregation in Arizona Charter Schools” (Cobb & Glass).

In the area of student achievement, Lin (2001) reviewed several studies and concluded that no evidence was available to support the claim that charter schools could improve academic achievement because data were flawed as a result of using small samples and poor research designs. However, on the basis of the limited data, evidence shows variation in charter schools, but the mean aggregate performance levels in charter schools was lower than public schools. Regarding student demographics, findings from the previous studies suggested that charter schools as a group have increased segregation. Students with similar racial backgrounds and income levels are being taught together in charter schools, increasing racial separation that can lead to inequalities in educational opportunities. In reviewing studies from each of the states, Lin found that substantial amounts of state funding for charter schools has been used for administrative costs rather than instruction costs. Advocates of charter schools assert that this discrepancy in the use of funding is temporary and when administrative start-up costs are completed, more money is expected to be available for instruction. The findings regarding teacher efficacy and empowerment noted that the expectation that teachers would be empowered by a charter school environment have not been validated by the included research reports.

Lin (2001) concluded that charter schools in one state met expectations in the area of student achievement. Two states narrowly met expectations in school funding and teacher efficacy and empowerment, and one needed improvement in the area of student demographics. Lin proposed that charter schools are not as successful as what has been claimed by politicians. Several recommendations were made including:

- Make people interested in starting charter schools compete for charters by giving only the best and most complete proposals state approval.
- Keep management companies out of the business of charter schooling and if they are permitted, monitor them closely to insure that they meet state and federal laws and do not cut corners for profits.
- Make sure that charter directors have a sound financial plan, including a reporting process before a charter is granted.
- Increase ethnic and socioeconomic diversity of students and be sure that charter schools do not increase segregation.
- Support research and development in any proposal to authorize a charter school.

*Summary.*

Charter schools developed as demand for school choice and educational quality increased. According to research, charter schools are meeting the needs of parents and students by offering smaller schools, more personalized attention by teachers and administrators, and specialized curricula that meet the interests and needs of students, although some researchers are indicating that more time is needed to assess the effectiveness of these schools. These schools also provide teachers and administrators with opportunities to be empowered to try innovative instructional strategies.

Specific legislation on the federal and state levels has been passed to control charter schools and ensure that students attending these schools may not have negative experiences. Many of these laws are specific to the 37 states that now have charter schools.

### *Catholic Parochial Schools*

Limited research is available on Catholic parochial schools. Families who have traditionally sent their children to parochial schools opted for an educational environment that included a religious component. However, as information on school performance becomes more available to the public, Catholic and other parochial schools may need to demonstrate additional advantages of an academic education that integrates a religious component in their school curriculum.

A study by Hargis (2001) reported on the effect of Catholic parochial education on student achievement. The study compared academic achievement for the 1995-96 school year between 9<sup>th</sup> grade students who entered from Catholic parochial schools and students entering high school from public schools. He again examined differences in academic achievement from this same group of students during their senior year (1999-2000 school year). The researcher found that parochial school students entering high school had significantly higher mean achievement levels than public school students, with this finding consistent between male and female students. After four years of high school, this difference was no longer statistically significant.

In 1989, Lee and Stewart published a report of research that compared Catholic and public school in the area of mathematics and science. Students in third, seventh and eleventh grades in Catholic schools were compared to the national average based on the National Assessment of Mathematics and Science from 1985 to 1986. The paper

concludes that Catholic school mathematics and science proficiency levels at grades three, seven and eleven were above those of public school students.

College academic achievement was compared between graduates of public and private high schools using their college freshmen grade point averages (Blackstone, 1994). A sample of 14,242 students attending 15 private colleges and 2 public universities participated in this study. Students' freshman grade point averages were compared to their grade point averages predicted from the Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT). The results revealed no significant differences in first year freshmen grade point average between graduates of public or private high schools.

A study of parental involvement and students' performance in suburban and city parochial elementary schools was conducted by Chilampikunnel (1995). Using a sample of 317 elementary school children from six Catholic schools (three in the suburbs and three in the city), he found that parental attitude toward school was significantly correlated with children's performance, attendance and self-esteem. The extent to which parents were involved in school-based activities was the most important predictor of children's performance, attendance and self-esteem. He also found that children in suburban Catholic schools were more likely to have high self-esteem and better attendance patterns than children enrolled in Catholic schools located in the city.

Zhang (1996) reviewed differences in attitudes toward schooling among 20 parents who had transferred their children from one type of school (public neighborhood schools, public magnet schools, and parochial schools) to another type of school. Using structured interviews with these parents as the basis for his findings, Zhang indicated that all parents had similar perceptions regarding education, with the exception of values orientation. Parents who transferred their children to a public neighborhood school were

looking for a school that had diversity in terms of students and curriculum. In contrast, parents who transferred their students to a parochial school were more likely to want a school with a strong emphasis on moral values and religious education.

In the area of customer focus and customer satisfaction, a study was conducted in Michigan to investigate elementary school teachers' perceptions of customer focus as practiced in Islamic schools (Akhtar, 2000). The study compared Islamic elementary school teachers with teachers in public and Catholic parochial schools. The findings suggested that teachers in Islamic schools were generally satisfied with all aspects of their jobs, but their satisfaction was slightly lower than teachers in Catholic parochial schools.

#### *Summary.*

While research on Catholic parochial schools is sparse, an emerging body of information compares parochial schools with other nonparochial schools (e.g., public schools, charter schools, private schools, home schooling). Parents are becoming knowledgeable consumers of education for their children, with access to information on school and school district performance through the Internet (e.g., state reports, Standard and Poors reports). As a result, they are aware of choices they have when selecting a school for their children. Parochial schools have historically attracted families and children because of the religious component integrated into the curriculum. However, with the emergence of competition for students, parochial schools may need to promote other aspects of their learning environment to continue attracting families to their school.

#### *Customer Focus and Customer Satisfaction*

The concepts of customer focus and customer satisfaction are relatively new in the area of education. Both concepts have been popular in business and often drive

outcome measures of a company's success. *Customer focus* is generally defined as the ability of an organization to operate through the eyes of the customer. Linder (1998) defined customer focus as "customer related attitudes, knowledge, and actions that serve to align products and services with the customer's definition of quality" (p. 1). The opposite of customer focus is an internal focus (i.e., when the organization functions on behalf of itself rather than for external constituents). Considering the customer is important to decision-making in organizations that are customer focused. *Customer satisfaction* refers to the experience of constituents, both internal and external to the organization, and whether the experience with the organization met their expectation.

Mink (1996) focused on parents as customers in a study to determine what parents thought were the most important issues of customer service in a public school. The 10 dimensions of customer service measured by Mink were: tangibles (e.g., building, course materials, etc.), courtesy, security, access, communication, reliability, responsiveness, credibility, competence, and understanding the customer.

Michigan elementary teachers in accredited schools were compared to teachers in nonaccredited schools in the area of customer focus and quality schools (Coulson, 1996). Seventy-five teachers, including 47 from accredited schools and 28 from nonaccredited schools and 20 principals, including 8 from accredited schools and 12 from nonaccredited schools participated in the study. Findings indicated that positive correlations were found between leadership (a component of quality schools) and instructional systems, environment – physical, and environment – affective, with significantly more teachers in accredited schools having positive perceptions of customer satisfaction as compared to their counterparts in nonaccredited schools. Teachers in both types of schools did not differ in their perceptions of the elements of quality schools.

Client dissatisfaction measures were used to evaluate a Florida rural/suburban school district's success in a survey distributed to parents and community businesses (Salisbury, Branson, Altreche, Funk, & Broetzmann, 1997). A dissatisfaction survey was distributed to 14,995 parents with children enrolled in the school district and 1,742 businesses located in the community. The instrument measured dissatisfaction with areas that included: transportation, serving individual student needs, school buildings/ground, child safety, communication, discipline, teachers/staff/administration, and food meals. Open-ended questions were included to determine the most serious problem encountered by parents and businesses, and their overall satisfaction with the schools. The findings suggested that approximately one-third of parents and two-thirds of businesses were less than satisfied with the school district. One or more questions or concerns about the school district were noted by 66% of parents and 56% of businesses. Parents were most concerned about teacher-student ratios, length of bus rides, adequacy of textbooks and supplies, one-on-one interaction/attention, disciplinary actions, teaching skills, teacher responsiveness to concerns, and classes too easy and/or not challenging. Although parents and businesses had concerns about the school district, 41% of parents and 55% of businesses had not contacted the school district because they believed the school would not resolve the problem or they were unsure of whom to contact. Many parents who contacted the school were less than satisfied with the actions taken to resolve their problems. The authors warned of inherent dangers in conducting this type of research. They expressed concern that school districts may choose to resolve the problem superficially without addressing the underlying root causes.

Soranno (1997) compared perceptions of customer-focus and school effectiveness between parents of children in charter schools (n=132) and public schools (n=137).

Findings indicated that parents of children in charter schools had significantly higher scores on five subscales including staff responsiveness to external customers, instructional systems, environment-physical, environment affective and communication than parents of children in public schools. The study suggested that parents whose children were enrolled in neighborhood schools were more concerned about indicators of quality education than parents of children in charter schools. Findings suggested that parents of children in charter schools were more interested in a customer focused education, while parents of children in public schools were more concerned about indicators of effective schools.

Research regarding *customer satisfaction* in education is similar. In 1999, Sirko compared parental satisfaction levels using four charter and three noncharter public schools. Findings indicated a greater satisfaction level among parents in charter schools, although parents in both school types were generally satisfied. Some differences were noted between charter school parents and noncharter parents in what they looked for in choosing a school.

Research is emerging in education regarding customer focus and customer satisfaction. Using neighborhood schools and schools of choice, *customer focus* was investigated among teachers and parents (Witherspoon, 2000). Findings showed that teachers had significantly higher scores on perceived staff responsiveness to external customers, instructional systems and physical environment than either parents with children enrolled in neighborhood public schools or with children enrolled in schools of choice. Teachers had the lowest score for the subscale measuring communication, with parents in neighborhood schools having the highest scores on this subscale. Teacher's scores were significantly related in a positive direction to subscales measuring customer

focus in education and satisfaction with the principal. Correlations for parents of children in schools of choice and neighborhood schools were statistically significant in a positive direction for satisfaction with the principal and all subscales of customer focus in education, except for communication.

In a study of parents of high school students in urban charter schools and alternative schools, customer focus was compared as an indicator of effective schools (Wilson, 2000). In this study, parents with children enrolled in charter schools (n=193) perceived the affective environment to be a more important indicator of school quality than parents with children enrolled in public alternative schools (n=336).

#### *Summary.*

Over the past few decades, businesses have endorsed concepts of customer focus and customer satisfaction in their quest for success. Many businesses now use customer focus and customer satisfaction as indicators of quality. As competition increases in the area of education, schools and school districts may increasingly recognize a market niche in being customer focused and responsive to stakeholders. The research is beginning to determine that schools are in the process of changing – particularly with respect to customer service indicators. Some individual schools, and even a few districts, are looking at customer satisfaction as a measure of quality.

#### *Effective Schools*

Interest in school efficacy began in the mid-1960s, originally to address social issues and urban education inequities. The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 provided federal funding for educational programs and services to improve achievement of disadvantaged children. Subsequently, in 1966, a study, *The Equality of Educational Opportunity* (Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Modd, Weinfeld, & York), was

published. This report suggested that student achievement was related to nonschool effects (i.e., family background). Following the publication of the report, educators and educational theorists began to assess the impact of school effectiveness on students and a movement surfaced to identify schools that were successful in educating urban, disadvantaged children.

In 1979, Brookover and Lezotte (cited in Reynolds, 1996) examined schools that had improved achievement scores and compared them with schools with declining scores. Seven factors were found in schools with improved scores on standardized measures of achievement:

1. staff placed more emphasis on basic reading and mathematics;
2. staff and principals supported the notion that all students could master basic learning objectives;
3. staff expected students to graduate from high school;
4. staff believed they could make a difference regardless of the students background;
5. principals were more involved in areas of instruction, discipline, and evaluation of student performance;
6. staff in effective schools were less satisfied with student achievement than staff in declining schools; and
7. parent-initiated contact was more prevalent.

One of the first researchers in the area of school effectiveness was Edmonds, who studied effective schools in Michigan. He found that most effective schools were those that had capable leadership, strong expectations of students, an orderly atmosphere, regular monitoring of outcomes, and a schoolwide focus on the acquisition of basic skills

(cited in Reynolds, 1996).

Edmonds (1981, 1984, 1986) and Edmonds and Frederickson (1979) offered seminal research on school effectiveness. Their studies examined the relationship between student achievement and school characteristics. Findings of the studies indicated that principal leadership, a well-articulated curriculum and instruction, a safe and orderly school climate, high teacher expectations, and assessment are necessary components of these relationships. Their work was responsible for successfully communicating that schools can influence student achievement when characteristics of an effective school are present.

Comer and Edmonds (cited in National Center for Effective Schools Research and Development, 1989) both developed an effective school model based on the belief that all students can learn. Comer's focus addressed parental involvement. Edmonds emphasized equity. Despite their differences, the two researchers concurred that instructional leadership, high expectations, and a positive school climate were essential for effective school performance.

Lezotte (1992, 1996) and Levine and Lezotte (1990) emphasized that effective schools focus on quality and equity, seek measurable results, support change by allowing schools-based professionals to implement change and use outcome results to monitor organizational functions. They also reported on variables that could influence school effectiveness from the student's perspective, including: student sense of efficacy, sensitivity to cultural diversity, personal development of students, policies and practices that address retention and instruction, and high expectations for students.

Educators have differing opinions regarding what constitutes a quality school. Researchers (Stanks, 1992; Willis-Chumbley, 1992) studied "indicators of significance

related to Michigan Public Act 25 of 1990.” Over 150 school superintendents and curriculum leaders from five Michigan counties were queried on indicators. The findings identified 10 indicators that were significant. Although rankings of importance differed between the superintendents and the curriculum leaders, 10 indicators and their definitions were noted.

School climate	factors in the school setting that form the foundation for student success and measurable educational outcomes.
Instruction	the process by which effective teaching and productive learning takes place.
School faculty and staff	collective profiles of school staff that takes into account and provides for highly accomplished practice, resulting in the achievement of student learning.
Curriculum	development and delivery of structured series of activities that meet the common and individual needs of students, with intended learning outcomes and associated learning experiences defined by the school's philosophy, mission and goals.
Student achievement	level of proficiency in regards to measuring performance.
Community	collective profile of the community that provides for partnership between schools, families, businesses and social agencies and other groups to

	foster student growth.
Student outputs	quantitative data that attests to the proficiency of the educational setting.
Financial resources and expenditures	quantitative data that demonstrate support of human and material resources, programs and services in the educational setting.
Student body	collective profile of the student population that regards for societal and academic differences.
School facility	physical environment to support the delivery of education.

Previous studies on indicators of effective schools have been completed using superintendents (Willis-Chumbley, 1992), curriculum leaders (Stanks, 1992), high school principals (Minghine, 1993), and elementary school principals (Smith, 1997). These studies included 11 indicators of effective schools:

1. Student body
2. Community
3. School facility
4. School faculty and staff
5. Financial resources and expenditures
6. Curriculum
7. Instruction
8. School climate
9. Student participation in other programs
10. Student outputs

### 11. Student cognitive, affective, and psychomotor achievement.

In Smith's (1997) study, she compared the rank ordered perceptions of these indicators of educational quality for each of the educator groups. The results of her analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1  
Comparison of Most Important Indicators of Educational Quality

Indicators of Educational Quality	Superintendents	Curriculum Leaders	High School Principals	Elementary School Principals
School climate	1	2	3	2
Instruction	2	1	1	1
School faculty	3	3	2	3
Curriculum	4	6	4	4
Student cognitive and affective achievement	5	4	5	7
Student outputs	6	7	7	5
Community	7	5	8	6
Financial resources and expenditures	8	8	6	10
School facility	9	10	9	9
Student body	10	9	10	11
Student participation in other programs	–	–	–	8

Note: Smith, 1997, p. 79

The first three indicators, school climate, instruction, and school faculty, were rated as first, second, or third by the four types of educational leaders. Small differences were noted in the remaining indicators.

Moran (1995) queried school board members and identified four elements critical to a good school:

1. focusing on the needs of the individual student,
2. promoting a mutually supportive relationship between parents and school

personnel,

3. staffing with teachers who establish affirming, motivating relationships with their students, and
4. having a building administrator who articulates the vision of the school.

Rock (1998) studied the relationship between nine effective school characteristics and the academic achievement of elementary students' reading and mathematics. The effective school characteristics were: a) time on task, b) school climate, c) high expectations, d) student behavior, e) instructional monitoring/feedback, f) instructional effectiveness, g) leadership, h) organization of instruction, and i) parent feedback. Rock found that parental involvement was significantly related to mathematics achievement and that high expectations had a significant relationship to reading.

While some differences have been noted in opinions regarding characteristics of effective schools, many indicators are consistent across three groups of stakeholders, including: students, teachers, and parents. Schools that emphasized: a) academic instruction in a caring and supportive environment, b) a strong relationship with parents and community and c) a sense of community are more effective than schools that do not emphasize these same areas (Pritchett Johnson, Livingston, Schwartz, & Slate, 2000).

*Research on effective schools and parent satisfaction.*

Van Der Burg (1987) focused on differentiating characteristics in effective schools by surveying parents. The following phrases were listed as indicators of effective schools: a) orderly and safe environment, b) regular monitoring of children's progress, c) emphasis on basic skills, d) school climate, e) philosophy and mission of the school, f) time on task, g) high expectations of students, h) socioeconomic variables, i) adequate physical facilities, j) parental involvement, k) strong leadership, l) staff development,

and m) support services. Parents ranked strong leadership first and parental involvement fourth.

In 1987, Mortimore and Sammons published their findings from a four-year study conducted in London that identified 12 factors that distinguished effective elementary schools from less effective ones. They randomly selected 50 elementary schools from a total of 636 schools. Demographic information on social, ethnic, language, and family background was obtained for every child in the 50 schools. They examined math, writing, and communication skills using results of standardized tests. Finally they collected information related to the schools characteristics, organization, and learning environment. The authors determined 12 characteristics associated with effective elementary schools:

1. Purposeful leadership of the staff by the principal
2. Involvement of the assistant principal
3. Involvement of teachers
4. Consistency among teachers
5. Structured sessions
6. Intellectually challenging teaching
7. Work centered environment
8. Limited focus within sessions
9. Maximum communication between teachers and students
10. Record keeping
11. Parental involvement
12. Positive climate.

The authors noted that the 12 key factors of effective schools depend largely on the

behavior and strategies used by the principal and staff. Further when each participant plays a positive role within the school, the result is an effective school.

The State of Minnesota commissioned a research study to examine reasons why high school students and parents chose a particular school. Minnesota has mandatory statewide cross-district enrollment. Their findings concluded that students often transfer to meet a need unrelated to academics. According to Wolk, (1990) nearly 40% of the 1,234 students who gave a reason for transferring to another school indicated they were doing so either because the school in a neighboring district was actually closer to their home or because the school had a day care program available. Twenty per cent of the respondents said they were transferring for academic reasons and 6% stated they changed schools because of athletic, extracurricular or social reasons.

Wilson, Olson and McDowelle (1992) studied factors that influenced parent's selection of schools for their children in a midwestern suburban school district. Wilson et al. used the same factors that were used in the 1990 Phi Delta Kappan Gallup (1990) poll. The survey of 250 parents rank ordered the factors by importance to parents. The factors included:

1. Grades of test scores of the student body.
2. Racial or ethnic composition of the student body.
3. Proximity to home.
4. Extracurricular activities such as band/orchestra, theater, club.
5. Athletic programs
6. Curriculum
7. Social and economic background of the student body.
8. Size of school.

9. Size of classes.
10. Success record of graduates in high school, in college, or on the job.
11. Maintenance of student discipline.
12. Quality of the teaching staff.

Wilson et. al. (1992) found that the two highest rated items on the Phi Delta Kappan Gallop poll survey quality of teaching staff and maintenance of student discipline were the least two important factors based on his research.

Hines (1993) conducted a six-year longitudinal study of enrollment patterns for the Bellevue, Washington School District. The Bellevue district had an open enrollment policy in existence for this 6-year period. Students were able to attend any of the district's 4 high schools, 6 middle schools or 16 elementary schools. The research focused on Interlake High School attendance because of the fluctuation in student enrollment. A total of 553 students and 199 parents completed surveys regarding their reasons for selecting a particular school. Hines drew the following conclusions:

1. Resident students chose not to attend the Interlake High School because of noninstructional factors such as general climate of the school, friends and acceptance of students by other students.
2. Parents of resident students ranked school is close to student's home as the most important reason for attending Interlake High School.
3. Parent of nonresident students who chose Interlake High School ranked treatment of students by faculty, quality of instruction and preparation and experience of faculty as their top factors.

4. Nonresident students ranked number and type of electives, number and quality of extracurricular activities and quality of guidance offered as their top reasons for selecting the school.

Nevelle (1994) used a qualitative case study research design to obtain parents' beliefs of factors that most positively affect student learning and behavior in schools. The three factors most frequently listed by parents were a) positive teacher/staff, b) atmosphere, and c) recognition. Parents perceived that educators in effective schools emphasized the importance of encouraging each child to demonstrate their unique talents and individual contributions.

In 1994, Bloetscher conducted a qualitative research study with low-income parents whose children were attending local public elementary schools to determine the reasons why they chose a particular school. Bloetscher used seven focus groups with 152 participants and followed up with focus group surveys. Parents in the focus groups primarily identified convenience as the primary reason for selecting a school. Parents wanted to send their child to a local elementary school if it was in a safe neighborhood. Prior knowledge of the school was also a factor in their decision making. Their impressions were made based on a) kindergarten round-up, b) previous experience with an older sibling attending the school, c) positive comments made by friends, relatives, or neighbors and d) their own personal experience attending the same school as a child. When referring to school quality, parents determined a school's reputation based on it being known as a good school that was well run, safe and orderly. Teachers' reputation was based on whether they were perceived as flexible, willing to work with students, easy for parents to talk to, and demonstrated a willingness to involve parents in the classroom. The principal's leadership style was defined in terms of being open,

approachable, highly visible, and someone parents could talk to. In this study, parents from low socioeconomic school districts stated that they did not use facts and figures in making their school of choice decision.

Zigarelli (1996) reported on data taken from the National Educational Longitudinal Study for the years 1988, 1990, and 1992. Outcomes from a regression analysis indicated that the effective school characteristics that were considered important included: a) achievement-oriented school culture, b) principal autonomy in hiring and firing teachers, and c) high teacher morale. No evidence was found to suggest that teacher empowerment, teacher education level, most principal influences, and quality of interaction between administration and the school were related to student performance. Zigarelli concluded that an effective school is one where the cultural norm is mastery of course materials, learning is a high priority for students, and sufficient time is allowed in classes to learn. Teacher morale is high, with teachers satisfied with their jobs. Principals have a voice in hiring and firing teachers and parents volunteer their time in the schools.

The National Education Data Resource Center (1995) collected data on differences in parents' perceptions of schools when choosing a school for their child(ren). Parents who chose schools were more likely to be satisfied with the school their children attended than parents who had their children attending the neighborhood public school. Private school parents (82%) and parents who chose a public school (61%) indicated they were very satisfied with schools their children attended. In contrast, 52% for parents with a child in an assigned public school (52%) expressed satisfaction with their children's schools.

In 1996, the U.S. Secretary of Education (Riley cited in Pritchett Johnson et al., 2000) reported findings of 30 years of research on the direct involvement of family and

community members in education. Results indicated that students supported by family and communities a) produce higher achievement scores, b) achieve much higher reading comprehension, c) graduate at higher rates, and d) behave better than unsupported students. Riley described an effective school as a place where the norm was imagination, caring, and creativity, when supported by engagement, security and a sense of belonging.

Griswold (as cited in Pritchett Johnson, 2000) conducted telephone surveys with parents to examine their perceptions of effective elementary school characteristics. The following characteristics of effectiveness were identified: a) building leadership, b) instructional leadership, c) school climate, d) high expectations for behavior and academics, and e) monitoring student achievement. Parents agreed unanimously that schools and classrooms must be safe and comfortable and that parents need to be kept informed of their child's progress.

Bushweller (1995) reported on issues of most concern to parents regarding their children's education, using results of a study undertaken by the Institute for Educational Leadership. Parents emphasized the quality of teachers (64%), concern about classroom size (26%), school safety (20%), teaching materials (18%), availability of computers and technology (18%), budget (10%), and condition of school buildings (3%). Parent involvement was limited by parents' time constraints, although 70% of parents indicated they checked on completion of homework daily.

### *Summary*

Effective schools research, beginning with the Coleman report in 1966 and continuing through both educational philosophers and researchers, remains a priority of educators, legislators, and parents. The studies that have been conducted generally list the same components of effective schools between and within diverse populations. The

concept that all children can learn is not being debated by the researchers, with effective schools viewed as the tool necessary to make this concept a reality.

## Chapter III

### Methodology

The methodology that was used to collect and analyze the data needed to address the research questions and test the hypotheses established for this study. The topics that were included in this discussion are: restatement of the problem, research design, setting for the study, population, sample procedures, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

#### *Restatement of the Problem*

This study compared perceptions of customer-focus and reasons for choosing their children's school between parents whose children attend parochial schools and those whose children attend charter schools.

#### *Research Design*

A nonexperimental, descriptive research design was used in this study. This type of research design is appropriate when the independent variable is not manipulated and no treatment is provided to the participants. Three instruments; the School Quality Satisfaction Survey (SQSS; Wunder, 1997), Customer Focus in Education (Pando, 1992), and Indicators of Effective Schools (Bloetscher, 1994); as well as a short demographic survey developed by the researcher were used to collect the data.

As this study did not involve manipulation of the independent variable, threats to internal validity associated with experimental studies generally do not apply to this type of study. The researcher, however, must be aware of the existence of extraneous variables that could affect parents' responses on the survey and results of the study.

#### *Setting for the Study*

Four elementary schools located in Livingston and Wayne Counties were used in

this study. In each county, one charter school and one Catholic school were selected based on their willingness to allow the researcher to distribute surveys to parents of children in their schools. A brief description of each school is presented to provide the reader with information regarding the general demographics and focus of the schools.

*Livingston County.*

Charter School A provides educational experiences to 422 children in kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. This school is located in an exurban area (area beyond the suburbs, but not considered rural). This school uses a multiage approach where students are allowed to progress between units based on their completion of instructional objectives. Students can proceed at their own pace to achieve academic success. The educational theories of William Glasser form the foundation for the philosophy, mission, and beliefs of the school. Based on the Glasser's quality school concept, the focus of the school is on the quality of students' work and not the quantity. The overall mission of the Charter School A is an enriching place for young children to grow to adolescence, while providing children with specific learning activities that will allow each of them to exceed the minimum academic standards set by the state and local governing bodies.

The school began operating in 1996 and was chartered by Central Michigan University. The school operates under an independent board with an independent council and management team. Students do not pay tuition, with the school funded by the state. Students are drawn from several school districts in the Detroit Metropolitan Area.

Catholic School A is located in the same general area as the charter school. It enrolls 364 students in kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Grades 1 through 8 have a maximum of 32 students in a classroom. Students are admitted in a hierarchical order. First based on family registration in the parish, families must be regular in their

attendance at Sunday mass, have a favorable record of supporting parish-wide fund raising activities, tuition is separate from church support. If openings remain, admission to the school is open to students from outside the parish. The mission statement of the school is: "Catholic School A is a disciple based community of Jesus. Through a faith centered education, [they] recognize and honor the uniqueness of individuals and prepare them spiritually, academically, and socially to meet the challenges of a contemporary world." The school is accredited by the Michigan Association of Nonpublic Schools. It operates under the guidance of the Diocese of Lansing and is subject to the policies of the Office of Education of the Diocese.

*Wayne County.*

Charter School B: A newly formed charter school, located in Dearborn, Michigan with 541 students, was used in this study. The mission statement for this school as included in the Parent/Student Handbook for the 2001/02 school year is:

[Charter School B] is committed and dedicated to the belief that education is fundamental to each individual's success in a free and democratic society. [Charter School B] believes that every individual is capable of learning. The school's goal is to ensure that graduates of the school are capable of performing quality academic work and are equipped to contribute immediately and productively to society. (p. 2)

The curriculum that is used in the schools building upon the requirements of the Michigan Core Curriculum and is enhanced by studies in literary arts, fine arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. According to the principal, all teachers in the school have state teacher certification and are committed and dedicated to the principles that underlie the philosophy of the academy (Personal communication, principal, 04/03/2002).

Catholic School B also is located in Dearborn, Michigan. This well-established Catholic School has an enrollment of 805 students. The philosophy/mission statement of

the school is:

[Catholic School B] is a parish school dedicated to instilling Catholic values and achieving excellence. Its faith-filled environment is conducive to meeting the social, emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual needs of each student, as well as, encouraging the growth of responsible, caring members of the global community.

Catholic School B is an accredited member of the Michigan Association of Nonpublic Schools and the National Catholic Educational Association. Its faculty consists of Bernardine Franciscan Sisters and lay persons, all of whom hold Michigan State certification. The school has a 33:1 student/teacher ratio. Admission priority is given to:

1. Currently enrolled students
2. In-parish students
3. Non-parish Catholic students
4. Non-Catholic students.

The school operates under the auspices of the Archdiocese of Detroit and uses tuition as its primary source of funding for the school.

The core curriculum is similar to that recommended by the Michigan Board of Education with the addition of library skills, art, music, and religious instruction at all grade levels. The students also participate in enrichment and enhancement activities, such as DARE program, Christian service projects, science camp, and Academic Olympics.

Students at the two charter schools and Catholic School B complete the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) for reading and mathematics at the fourth grade level. While Charter School B has only been in operation for a limited period, only MEAP scores for the 2001 school year are available. Catholic School A chose not to participate in MEAP testing. The results of their test scores are presented in Table 2.

Table 2  
MEAP Test Results

School	Percent Satisfactory		Percent Moderate		Percent Low	
	Math	Reading	Math	Reading	Math	Reading
<b>Michigan Nonpublic Schools</b>						
2001	77.9	68.9	15.5	20.6	6.6	10.6
2000	76.5	62.0	16.9	24.9	6.6	13.1
1999	74.8	66.6	17.9	22.8	7.4	10.6
1998	73.6	59.3	18.4	27.1	8.0	13.7
<b>Catholic School B</b>						
2001	84.8	81.0	15.2	16.2	0.0	2.9
2000	89.4	83.7	9.6	13.5	1.0	2.9
1999	78.6	68.4	16.3	28.6	5.1	3.1
1998	89.0	72.0	9.0	22.0	2.0	6.0
<b>Michigan Public Schools</b>						
2001	72.3	60.4	16.9	22.6	10.8	17.0
2000	74.8	58.2	16.2	23.8	9.0	18.1
1999	71.7	59.4	17.7	25.5	10.6	15.1
1998	74.1	58.6	17.7	26.0	8.2	15.4
<b>Charter School A</b>						
2001	88.6	62.9	5.7	25.7	5.7	11.4
2000	73.5	55.9	11.8	25.3	14.7	8.8
1999	62.2	64.9	29.7	21.6	8.1	13.5
1998	66.7	52.8	19.4	27.8	13.9	19.4

Catholic School A does not participate in the MEAP testing. One year test scores were available for Charter School B, but these scores were not presented because they were not representative of how the school was preparing the students academically, but how their previous schools prepared them.

### *Population*

The population included parents of children in second, third, fourth, and fifth grades in charter schools and Catholic schools. These parents have made a purposeful decision to enroll their children in nonpublic schools. The rationale behind selecting the middle grades (2<sup>nd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup>) is that these parents have experience with schools and have a commitment to their child's education at their current school. Parents of children in kindergarten or first grade may lack sufficient experience with their child's school,

while parents of children in sixth grade may be more interested in the next step in their child's education (middle school) than they are in the current school.

*Sample selection.*

One class at each grade level in each of the four schools was selected for inclusion in this study. Random sampling of the classes was not possible as the principal of the school wanted to select the classroom for the study or there was only one class at each grade level in the school. All parents in the selected classrooms received a survey packet for completion. A total of 500 parents were selected to participate in the study.

To determine if the selected sample size is appropriate for this study, a power analysis was completed using SamplePower™ 2.0 (Borenstein, Rothstein, Cohen, SPSS, Inc., 2001). The parameters entered into the analysis included: two levels of the independent variable, an alpha level of .05, and a moderate effect size (.20). The power calculation was .946 for the estimated sample size, indicating that a sample of 160 parents in each type of school would be sufficient to correctly reject the null hypotheses. The obtained sample size of 130 (64 from Catholic parochial and 66 from charter schools) reduced the power to approximately .60. Appendix A includes a copy of the power analysis.

*Instruments*

Three instruments, Customer Focus in Education (Pando, 1992), School Quality Satisfaction Survey (SQSS, Wunder, 1997), and Reasons Parents Choose a School (Bloetscher, 1994), were used in this study. In addition, a short demographic survey developed by the researcher was employed to obtain information about the parents of children attending charter and parochial schools.

*Customer Focus in Education.*

The Customer Focus in Education instrument (Pando, 1992) was developed to obtain information on the service orientation in public schools. The instrument includes 50 statements that are used to measure five dimensions of customer focus. The five dimensions of customer focus are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1

## Dimensions of Customer-Focus in Education

Dimensions of Customer-Focus in Education	Items on Subscale	Test/Retest Reliability
<i>Staff Responsiveness to External Customers</i> : Measures the extent to which staff members in the school treat students and parents as valued customers.	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 24, 27, 37	.88
<i>Instructional Systems</i> : Measures perceptions of the types of instructional systems used in the school are appropriate for students.	13, 14, 20, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 34, 36, 39, 40, 42	.86
<i>Environment - Physical</i> : Measures the school building and physical environment as a place that is conducive to learning.	1, 2, 11, 22, 23, 32, 33, 41, 43	.94
<i>Environment - Affective</i> : Measures the climate of the school and classroom.	38, 44, 48, 49, 50	.77
<i>Communication</i> : Measures the lack of meaningful communication among the school, teacher, and parents.	35, 45, 46, 47	.67

Each item on the scale is rated using a 5-point Likert scale, with a “1” indicating “strongly disagree” and a “5” indicating “strongly agree.” A neutral point of “3” is provided for statements if parents are either unsure of the concept or have no opinion. The dimensions are scored by summing the numerical values associated with each rating on each of the included statements and then dividing by the number of items on the subscale to obtain a mean score for each subscale. The use of a mean score allows comparisons among the subscales using the original unit of measure.

*Reliability.* Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were obtained to determine the internal

consistency on the total instrument as a measure of reliability (Pando, 1992). The alpha coefficient of .94 obtained for this instrument was considered as evidence of good internal consistency.

Test-retest reliability, using Pearson product moment correlations, was calculated for each subscale. The coefficients ranged from .67 for customer-focused communication to .94 for customer-focused environment-physical. The correlation coefficients yielded for each of the five subscales provided support that the instrument can measure customer focus in schools consistently over time.

*Validity.* Content validity was determined by having a panel of experts in effective schools and customer focus research review statements. A consensus was obtained on the statements indicating that they measured customer focus in schools. Support for the construct validity of the instrument was obtained through a factor analysis on the final version of the instrument. Five subscales emerged from the principal components factor analysis used to determine construct validity that explained a total of 47.0% of the variation in customer focus in education. The eigenvalues for each subscale were greater than 1.00, indicating the amount of variation explained by the individual subscales was significant (Pando, 1992).

*School Quality Satisfaction Survey (SQSS).*

The SQSS was adapted from the service organization questionnaire, SERVQUAL, by Wunder (1997) for use in his dissertation. The original survey was designed to measure customer satisfaction in business and industry, with Wunder adapting it for use in educational settings. Consistent with Juran's dimensions of quality, the SQSS measures the gap between expectations of excellent schools and perceptions of actual performance of the school. The difference between the expectations and the actual

performance become the basis for determining the gap in providing quality and improved performance.

Wunder (1997) administered the SQSS to teachers, administrators, and parents to examine their perceptions of school quality at the secondary school level. For use in the current study, the survey was further adapted to allow its use in elementary school settings.

Five general education areas are measured on the SQSS. Figure 2 presents each of the areas and the items on the survey included on each subscale.

Figure 2  
School Quality Satisfaction Survey

Subscale	Items on Survey	Alpha Coefficient
<i>Physical attributes:</i> Personnel, physical plan, and instructional materials.	1, 2, 3, 4	.59
<i>Attention to the needs of individuals:</i> The ability of staff to respond to the needs of students and parents as well as the time it takes to respond to concerns.	5, 6, 7, 8, 9,10, 11,12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 , 21, 22, 23, 24	.91
<i>Instructional leadership:</i> Helpfulness of school staff to the student and the parent.	25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33	.82
<i>Community involvement:</i> Integration of community into goal setting, including curriculum.	23, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39	.86
<i>Learning outcomes:</i> Information on student and school academic performance.	40, 41, 42, 43, 44	.80

*Adaptation of the SERVQUAL instrument.* Wunder (1999) adapted the SERVQUAL (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1990) instrument for use in educational settings by altering the wording of the items to reflect educational perspectives. The original instrument was used to measure discrepancies between expected service and actual service in an organization. Wunder (1999) changed the two expectations to

excellent school and your school. The present study used the instrument to determine the extent to which parents were satisfied with the customer service environment in the school and asked the parents to rate their school once.

*Scoring the SQSS.* The parents were asked to rate each item on the SQSS once using a 6-point scale ranging from 0 for do not know to 5 for strongly agree. A neutral point of 3 was provided to allow parents who were ambivalent in regard to a particular item to rate that item. The numerical values assigned for each rating were summed to obtain a total score for each subscale. To allow comparison across the subscales, mean scores were calculated by dividing the summed score by the number of items included on the subscale. Do not know responses were treated as missing values for the purpose of scoring the subscales.

*Validity.* Four experts in the area of customer service were asked to provide constructive criticism to determine content validity and provide comments on the preliminary draft of the SQSS. Experts provided comments that were incorporated into the final copy of the survey. One comment was concerned with the terminology being too difficult for some parents to understand. As a result of this comment some statements were reworded to be more understandable to parents. Based on their comments and revisions made to accommodate their suggestions, the instrument was considered to have content validity.

Other forms of validity have not been tested. However, this study is using two measures of customer service (SQSS and Customer Service Orientation Scale) and scores on the subscales were correlated to determine if these instruments are measuring similar or different focuses of customer service orientation.

*Reliability.* To determine the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's alpha

coefficients were obtained on each of the subscales (Wunder, 1999). The obtained alpha coefficients ranged from .59 for Physical Attributes to .91 for Attention to the Needs of Individuals. Figure 2 presents the alpha coefficients for each subscale. These coefficients indicated that the instrument has adequate reliability for use in determining parents' perceptions of customer service orientation in their child's school.

*Indicators of Effective Schools.*

Reasons that parents choose a particular school for their children is the focus of the Indicators of Effective Schools (Bloetscher, 1994). Items on the survey were grouped into 10 areas: location of the school, school reputation, principal's qualifications, leadership style, teachers' qualifications, teacher reputation, past experience with the school, extracurricular activities, special programs, and facts and figures. Two to nine items were included on each of the subscales. Parents rate each of these items using a five point Likert scale with a "1" indicating "no importance" and a "5" indicating "highly important."

A score is obtained for each of the 10 subscales by summing the numerical values associated with the rating for each item. The summed score is then divided by the number of items on the subscale to obtain a mean score that allows comparison among the 10 subscales.

*Reliability.* In a study by Wilson (2000), 529 parents completed the Parental Perceptions of Indicators of Quality Schools instrument. Cronbach's alpha coefficient procedures were used to determine the internal consistency of the survey. The obtained alpha coefficient of .95 provided evidence that the instrument had excellent internal consistency for use in this study.

*Content validity.* This instrument was designed to allow for objective

measurement of reasons that parents choose a particular type of elementary school for their child following participation in a focus group on this topic. The items were obtained following completion of pilot focus groups that provided support for these items.

*Demographic Survey.*

A short demographic survey was completed by the parents. This instrument provided data on the personal characteristics of the parents, information about their child(ren) who are enrolled in school, and their perceptions of the school in general. All items on this survey used a forced choice categorical response format to provide consistency in parental responses. In addition, the parents were asked to indicate the strengths and weaknesses in their children's schools.

*Data Collection Procedures*

After the Human Investigation Committee's (HIC) approval of the study, the researcher developed survey packets that included a copy of each survey instrument, an information letter that followed the format of an informed consent form, and a preaddressed, postage-paid envelope for confidential return of the completed surveys. The information letter included the purpose of the study, procedures that the participants used to complete the instruments and return them to the researcher, assurances of confidentiality, benefits and risks to participants, and voluntary nature of participation. As the researcher had no prior knowledge of the number of parents in each school, no coding was used to track surveys that were not returned from the schools.

The researcher contacted each principal who agreed to participate in the study to determine a mutually-agreeable day to distribute the survey packets to parents of second through fifth grade students in their schools. The principal also indicated the number of survey packets that were needed at each school. The parents were asked to complete and

return their surveys within five working days.

Two weeks following initial distribution of the surveys, the researcher sent a reminder letter to the school to be distributed to the parents who received survey packets. The reminder letter thanked those parents who had taken the time to return the surveys and asked parents who had not responded to complete and return their surveys. All data collection was considered complete four weeks following initial distribution of the survey packets.

### *Data Analysis*

The data obtained from the surveys were entered into a computer file for analysis using SPSS-Windows, ver. 11.5. The analysis was divided into two sections. The first section will use descriptive statistics including frequency distributions, crosstabulations, measures of central tendency and measures of dispersion to describe the participants in the study.

The second section of the chapter will report on inferential statistical analyses used to address the research questions posed for this study. The statistical analyses included multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and discriminant analysis. Prior to completing the MANOVAs and discriminant analysis, the data were examined to determine that assumptions of these tests were met. The data were tested for normality using the Explore program to complete a Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic and M-estimators. As the dependent variables met assumptions of normal distributions, the MANOVA and discriminant analysis were used as indicated. A criterion of .05 was used as the alpha level for determining the statistical significance of the findings. Figure 3 presents the statistical analyses that were used to address each of the research questions.

Figure 3  
Statistical Analysis

Research Question	Variables	Statistical Analysis
1. Is there a difference between parents of children in charter schools and parents of children in Catholic parochial schools on the importance of indicators of effective elementary schools?	<p><u>Dependent Variable</u> Reasons that parents choose a school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location of the school</li> <li>• School reputation</li> <li>• Principal's qualifications</li> <li>• Leadership style</li> <li>• Teachers' qualifications</li> <li>• Teacher reputation</li> <li>• Past experience with school</li> <li>• Extracurricular activities</li> <li>• Special programs</li> <li>• Facts and figures</li> </ul> <p><u>Independent Variable</u> Type of School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charter</li> <li>• Catholic parochial</li> </ul>	A one-way multivariate analysis of variance procedure was used to determine if parents of children in the two types of schools differ in their perceptions of reasons they would choose a particular type of school for their children. If a statistically significant difference was found on the subscales, the univariate F tests were examined to determine which of the subscales are contributing to the significant results. The mean scores on the statistically significant subscales were used to determine which group had more positive perceptions regarding reasons they would chose a particular type of school.
2. Is there a difference between parents of children in charter schools and parents of children in Catholic parochial schools on the importance of customer focus provided by the staff of their children's school?	<p><u>Dependent Variables</u> Customer Focus in Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff responsiveness to external customers</li> <li>• Instructional systems</li> <li>• Environment – Physical</li> <li>• Environment – Affective</li> <li>• Communication</li> </ul> <p><u>Independent Variable</u> Type of School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charter</li> <li>• Catholic parochial</li> </ul>	A one-way multivariate analysis of variance procedure was used to determine if parents of children in the two types of schools differ in their perceptions of customer focus in a particular type of school for their children. If a statistically significant difference was found on the subscales, the univariate F tests were examined to determine which of the subscales were contributing to the significant results. The mean scores on the statistically significant subscales were used to determine which group had more positive perceptions regarding customer focus.
3. Is there a difference between parents of children in charter schools and parents of children in Catholic parochial schools on the importance of school quality satisfaction provided by the staff of their children's school?	<p>SQSS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical attributes</li> <li>• Attention to the needs of individuals</li> <li>• Instructional leadership</li> <li>• Community involvement</li> <li>• Learning outcomes</li> </ul> <p><u>Independent Variable</u> Type of School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charter</li> <li>• Catholic parochial</li> </ul>	A one-way multivariate analysis of variance procedures was used to determine if parents of children in the two types of schools differ in their satisfaction with school quality in a particular type of school for their children. If a statistically significant difference was found on the subscales, the univariate F tests were examined to determine which of the subscales were contributing to the significant results. The mean scores on the statistically significant subscales were used to determine which group had more positive perceptions regarding school quality satisfaction.

Figure continues

Research Question	Variables	Statistical Analysis
<p>4. Can school choice by parents of children in charter schools and parents of children in Catholic parochial schools be predicted from indicators of effective schools, customer focus in education, and school quality satisfaction?</p>	<p><u>Dependent Variable</u>  Type of School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charter</li> <li>• Catholic parochial</li> </ul> <p><u>Independent Variables</u></p> <p>Demographic Characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family income</li> <li>• Mother education</li> <li>• Father education</li> <li>• Marital status</li> <li>• Family status</li> <li>• Perceptions of child's academic ability</li> <li>• Extent of parental involvement in school</li> <li>• Previously attended public school</li> </ul> <p>Customer Focus in Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff responsiveness to external customers</li> <li>• Instructional systems</li> <li>• Environment – Physical</li> <li>• Environment – Affective</li> <li>• Communication</li> </ul> <p>SQSS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical attributes</li> <li>• Attention to the needs of individuals</li> <li>• Instructional leadership</li> <li>• Community involvement</li> <li>• Learning outcomes</li> </ul> <p>Reasons that parents choose a school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location of the school</li> <li>• School reputation</li> <li>• Principal's qualifications</li> <li>• Leadership style</li> <li>• Teachers' qualifications</li> <li>• Teacher reputation</li> <li>• Past experience with school</li> <li>• Extracurricular activities</li> <li>• Special programs</li> <li>• Facts and figures</li> </ul>	<p>A discriminant analysis was used to determine if customer focus in education, school quality satisfaction, and reasons parents choose a particular school can be used to predict the type of school to which parents were sending their children. Prior to completing the discriminant analysis, a Pearson product moment correlation was obtained to determine which of the independent variables were significant predictors of type of school. Only those independent variables that were significantly correlated with the dependent variable were used in the discriminant analysis.</p>

## Chapter IV

### Results of Data Analysis

The findings of the statistical analyses that were used to describe the sample and address the research questions are presented in this chapter. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section uses descriptive statistics to compare the demographic characteristics of the parents with children attending Catholic parochial and charter schools. A description of the scaled variables (customer focus, customer satisfaction, and reasons for selecting a school) are presented in the second section. Results of the inferential statistical analyses that were used to address the research questions are provided in the third section of the chapter.

The purpose of this study is to compare the perceptions of parents whose children attend parochial and charter schools to examine reasons why they choose these schools using three customer-focused survey instruments: "Customer-Focus in Education" survey (Pando), "Reasons for Selecting a School" survey (Bloetscher) and "School Quality Satisfaction Survey" (SQSS) survey (Wunder, 1997) and a short demographic survey.

Parents whose children were attending one of four elementary schools, two Catholic parochial and two charter schools, were asked to participate in the study. A total of 500 parents received survey packets. Of this number, 130 parents completed and returned their surveys for a response rate of 26%. Table 3 presents the distribution and return of completed surveys by group.

Table 3  
Survey Distribution and Return

Type of School	Survey Distribution and Return				Total Response
	Distribution		Return		
	N	%	N	%	
Catholic Parochial	250	50.0	64	49.2	25.6
Charter Schools	250	50.0	66	50.8	26.4
Total	500	100.0	130	100.0	26.0

The return of completed surveys was similar to the distribution rates. Equal numbers of surveys were distributed to each group, with response rates in the same proportion. The low survey response rate may be a result of distributing surveys at the end of the school year when parents may have lacked sufficient motivation to complete and return them to the schools or researcher.

#### *Demographic Characteristics*

The parents were asked to indicate the sex of the child for whom they were completing the survey and their own gender on the survey. Table 4 presents results of the crosstabulations by type of school that were used to summarize these responses.

Table 4  
Crosstabulations  
Sex of Child and Parent by Type of School

Sex	Type of School				Total	
	Catholic Parochial (n=64)		Charter Schools (n=66)			
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Child						
Male	34	53.1	43	65.2	77	59.2
Female	35	54.7	29	43.9	64	49.2
Parent Completing Survey						
Male	12	18.8	15	22.7	27	20.8
Female	57	89.1	62	93.9	119	91.5

The majority of parents reported their children were male (n=77, 59.2%), including 34 (53.1%) in Catholic parochial schools and 43 (65.2%) in charter schools. Of the 64 (49.2%) parents who reported their children were female, 35 (54.7%) were enrolled in Catholic parochial schools and 29 (43.9%) were in charter schools. The number of children reported by parents exceeded the number of parents because some parents reported more than one child enrolled in the school.

The largest group of parents who completed the survey were female (n=119, 91.5%). Included in this number were 57 (89.1%) mothers with children in Catholic parochial schools and 62 (93.9%) in charter schools. Twelve (18.8%) fathers of children in Catholic parochial schools and 15 (22.7%) fathers of children in charter schools had completed the survey. The number of parents included in this analysis exceeded the number of parents in the study because in some cases, both the father and mother worked together to complete the survey.

The parents were asked to indicate their relationship to the child. Their responses were crosstabulated by type of school for presentation in Table 5.

Table 5  
Crosstabulations  
Relationship to Child by Type of School

Relationship to Child	Type of School				Total	
	Catholic Parochial		Charter Schools			
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Mother	57	90.5	59	90.8	116	90.6
Father	6	9.5	3	4.6	9	7.0
Female Guardian	0	0.0	2	3.1	2	1.6
Grandmother	0	0.0	1	1.5	1	0.8
Total	63	100.0	65	100.0	128	100.0

Missing Catholic parochial schools 1  
Charter schools 1

The majority of the parents responding to the survey (n=116, 90.6%) reported they were the children's mothers. This number included 57 (90.5%) of children enrolled in Catholic parochial schools and 59 (90.8%) of children enrolled in charter schools. Six (9.5%) participants from Catholic parochial schools and 3 (4.6%) participants from charter schools indicated they were fathers of the children. One parent from Catholic parochial schools and 1 parent from charter schools did not provide a response to this question.

The marital status of the parents was obtained on the survey. The responses were crosstabulated by type of school for presentation in Table 6.

**Table 6**  
**Crosstabulations**  
**Marital Status by Type of School**

Marital Status	Type of School				Total	
	Catholic Parochial		Charter Schools		N	%
	N	%	N	%		
Married	60	95.2	54	81.9	114	88.3
Single	0	0.0	2	3.0	2	1.6
Divorced	3	4.8	9	13.6	12	9.3
Widowed	0	0.0	1	1.5	1	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Missing Catholic parochial schools 1

The majority of the survey respondents (n=114, 88.3%) reported their marital status as married. This number included 60 (95.2%) parents of children in Catholic parochial schools and 54 (81.9%) in charter schools. Three (4.8%) parents of children in Catholic parochial schools and 9 (13.6%) parents of children in charter schools were divorced. One parent in Catholic parochial school did not provide a response to this question.

The ethnicity of the mothers and fathers were obtained on the survey. Their responses were crosstabulated by type of school. Results of these analyses are presented in Table 7.

Table 7  
Crosstabulations  
Parent's Ethnicity by Type of School

Parent's Ethnicity	Type of School							
	Catholic Parochial				Charter Schools			
	Mother		Father		Mother		Father	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
African American	0	0.0	0	0.0	8	12.7	6	10.0
American Indian	1	1.6	1	1.8	2	3.2	0	0.0
Hispanic	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	3.2	1	1.7
Middle Eastern	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.7
Multiethnic	1	1.6	1	1.8	1	1.6	1	1.7
White/Caucasian	58	95.2	54	94.6	50	79.3	51	84.9
Other	1	1.6	1	1.8	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	61	100.0	57	100.0	63	100.0	60	100.0

Missing Mother

Catholic parochial schools	3
Charter schools	3
Father	
Catholic parochial schools	1
Charter schools	6

The majority of the mothers (n=58, 95.2%) and fathers (n=54, 94.6%) with children in Catholic parochial schools reported their ethnicity as White/Caucasian. A lower number of mothers (n=50, 79.3%) and fathers (n=51, 84.9%) of children in charter schools indicated their ethnicity as White/Caucasian. None of the parents in Catholic parochial schools reported their ethnicity as African American, while 8 (12.7%) mothers and 6 (10.0%) fathers of children in charter schools indicated they were of this ethnic group. Three mothers of children in Catholic parochial and 3 mothers of children in charter schools did not provide a response to this question. Responses were unavailable for 1 father of a child in Catholic parochial schools and 6 fathers of children in charter schools.

The educational levels of the mothers and fathers of children in Catholic parochial and charter schools were obtained on the survey. These responses were crosstabulated by type of school for presentation in Table 8.

Table 8  
Crosstabulations  
Parent's Educational Levels by Type of School

Parent's Educational Level	Type of School							
	Catholic Parochial				Charter Schools			
	Mother		Father		Mother		Father	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Some high school	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	4.5	6	9.5
High school diploma	3	4.8	6	9.8	7	10.6	8	12.7
Some college	14	22.2	6	9.8	18	27.3	16	25.5
Associate degree	14	22.2	9	14.8	6	9.1	8	12.7
Bachelor degree	20	31.7	31	50.8	20	30.4	13	20.6
Graduate degree	10	15.9	7	11.5	9	13.6	8	12.7
Other	2	3.2	2	3.3	3	4.5	4	6.3
Total	63	100.0	61	100.0	66	100.0	159	100.0

Missing Mother

Catholic parochial schools 1

Father

Catholic parochial schools 3

Charter schools 3

The largest group of participants in the study reported they had completed bachelor degrees. Twenty (31.7%) mothers and 31 (50.8%) fathers of children in Catholic parochial and 20 (30.4%) mothers and 13 (20.6%) fathers of children in charter schools had completed this degree. Some college was reported by 14 (22%) mothers and 6 (9.8%) fathers of children in Catholic parochial schools. Eighteen (27.3%) mothers and 16 (25.5%) fathers of children in charter schools had completed some college. Three

(4.5%) mothers and 6 (9.5%) fathers of children in charter schools had some high school, while none of the parents of children in Catholic parochial schools reported this level of education. One mother and 3 fathers of children in Catholic parochial schools, as well as 3 fathers of children in charter schools, did not provide a response to this question.

The participants were asked to report their household income on the survey, using predefined categories. Their responses were crosstabulated by group. Table 9 presents results of this analysis.

Table 9  
Crosstabulations  
Family Income by Type of School

Family Income	Type of School				Total	
	Catholic Parochial		Charter Schools		N	%
	N	%	N	%		
\$20,000 and under	0	0.0	8	14.0	8	7.3
\$20,001 to \$30,000	1	1.9	5	8.8	6	5.5
\$30,001 to \$40,000	0	0.0	6	10.5	6	5.5
\$40,001 to \$50,000	4	7.5	6	10.5	10	9.1
\$50,001 to \$60,000	7	13.3	4	7.0	11	10.0
\$60,001 to \$70,000	6	11.3	6	10.5	12	10.9
Over \$70,000	35	66.0	22	38.7	57	51.7
Total	53	100.0	57	100.0	110	100.0

Missing Catholic parochial schools 11  
Charter schools 7

The majority of the participants (n=57, 51.7%) who reported their family incomes had income over \$70,000 annually. Included in this number were 35 (66.0%) parents of children in Catholic parochial schools and 22 (38.7%) of children in charter schools. None of the parents of children in Catholic parochial schools and 8 (14.0%) parents of children

in charter schools reported income less than \$20,000 annually. Eleven parents of children in Catholic parochial and 7 parents of children in charter schools did not provide a response to this question.

The survey respondents were asked to provide their children's report card grades on the survey. Their responses were crosstabulated by type of school, with results presented in Table 10.

Table 10  
Crosstabulations  
Children's Report Card Grades by Type of School

Children's Report Card Grades	Type of School				Total	
	Catholic Parochial		Charter Schools			
	N	%	N	%	N	%
All As	11	19.0	7	14.6	18	17.0
Mostly As and Some Bs	24	41.4	23	47.9	47	44.3
Mostly Bs and Some As	13	22.4	5	10.4	18	17.0
Mostly Bs and Some Cs	4	6.9	7	14.6	11	10.4
Mostly Cs and Some Bs	4	6.9	5	10.4	9	8.5
Mostly Cs	2	3.4	0	0.0	2	1.9
Mostly Cs and Some Ds	0	0.0	1	2.1	1	0.9
Total	58	100.0	48	100.0	106	100.0

Missing Catholic parochial schools 6  
Charter schools 16

Eighteen (17.0%) parents reported their children received all As on their report cards. This number included 11 (19.0%) parents of children in Catholic parochial and 7 (14.6%) parents of children in charter schools. Among the 47 (44.3%) parents who reported their children received mostly As and some Bs on their report cards, 24 (41.4%) had children in Catholic parochial schools and 23 (47.9%) had children in charter

schools. One (2.1%) parent in a charter school and none of the parents in Catholic parochial schools reported their report card grades as mostly Cs and some Ds. Six parents of children in Catholic parochial and 16 parents of children in charter schools did not provide a response to this question.

The survey respondents were asked to indicate their perceptions of children's academic ability on the survey. Their responses were crosstabulated by type of school for presentation in Table 11.

Table 11  
Crosstabulations  
Child's Academic Ability by Type of School

Child's Academic Ability	Type of School				Total	
	Catholic Parochial		Charter Schools		N	%
	N	%	N	%		
Well above average	12	19.4	7	10.8	19	15.0
Above average	37	59.7	37	56.9	74	58.3
Average	11	17.7	12	18.5	23	18.1
Below average	1	1.6	6	9.2	7	5.5
Well below average	1	1.6	3	4.6	4	3.1
Total	62	100.0	65	100.0	127	100.0

Missing Catholic parochial schools 2  
Charter schools 1

The majority of parents (n=74, 58.3%) reported their children's academic ability was above average. Included in this number was 37 (59.7%) parents of children in Catholic parochial schools and 37 (56.9%) parents of children in charter schools. Of the 19 (15.0%) participants who reported their child's academic ability was well above average, 12 (19.4%) had children in Catholic parochial schools and 7 (10.8%) had children in charter schools. Two parents of children in Catholic parochial schools and 1

parent of a child in a charter school did not provide a response to this question.

Participants were asked to indicate how much time they spent with their children doing homework. Their responses were summarized using descriptive statistics for presentation in Table 12.

Table 12  
Descriptive Statistics  
Time Spent Doing Homework by Type of School

Type of School	Number	Mean	SD	Median	Range	
					Minimum	Maximum
Catholic Parochial Schools	64	4.16	4.12	3	0	23
Charter Schools	66	3.89	4.87	2	0	25

The mean number of hours that parents of children in Catholic parochial schools spent helping their child with homework was 4.16 (sd=4.12) hours per week, with a median of 3 hours. The range of time spent in these endeavors was from 0 to 23 hours per week. Parents of children in charter schools reported that they spent from 0 to 25 hours per week helping their children with homework. The mean number of hours spent on homework for this group was 3.89 (sd=4.87) hours, with a median of 2 hours a week.

The parents were asked if the curriculum focus of the school made a difference in selecting their child's school. Their responses were crosstabulated by type of school. The results are presented in Table 13.

Table 13

Crosstabulations  
Curriculum Focus of School by Type of School

Curriculum Focus of School Made a Difference in School-type Selection	Type of School				Total	
	Catholic Parochial		Charter Schools			
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	43	72.9	54	83.1	97	78.2
No	16	27.1	11	16.9	27	21.8
Total	59	100.0	65	100.0	124	100.0

Missing Catholic parochial schools 5  
Charter schools 1

The majority of the parents (n=97, 78.2%) reported that the curriculum focus of the school made a difference in selecting their children's school. Included in this number were 43 (72.9%) parents of children in Catholic parochial schools and 54 (83.1%) parents of children in charter schools. Five parents of children in Catholic parochial schools and 1 parent of a child in charter schools did not provide a response to this question.

The parents were asked if their child had ever been enrolled in public schools. The results of the crosstabulation of their responses by type of school are presented in Table 14.

Table 14

Crosstabulations  
Children Ever Enrolled in Public School by Type of School

Children Ever Enrolled in Public Schools	Type of School				Total	
	Catholic Parochial		Charter Schools			
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	24	38.1	40	60.6	64	49.6
No	39	61.9	26	39.4	65	50.4
Total	63	100.0	66	100.0	129	100.0

Missing Catholic parochial schools 1

The majority of parents of children in charter schools (n=40, 60.6%) reported their children had been enrolled in public schools, with the majority of parents of children in Catholic parochial schools (n=39, 61.9%) indicating their children had not been enrolled in public schools. One parent of a child in a Catholic parochial school did not provide a response to this question.

### *Research Questions*

Four research questions were posed for this study. Inferential statistical analyses were used to address these questions, with a criterion alpha level of .05 used to make decisions regarding the statistical significance of the findings.

*Research Question 1:* Is there a difference between parents of children in charter schools and parents of children in Catholic parochial schools on the importance of indicators of effective elementary schools?

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to determine if there was a difference in the importance of the indicators of effective elementary schools. The independent variable in this analysis was type of school, with the 10 indicators of effective schools used as the dependent variables. Table 15 presents results of this analysis.

Table 15

#### One-way Multivariate Analysis of Variance Importance of Indicators of Effective School by Type of School

Hotelling's Trace	F Ratio	DF	Sig of F
.20	2.53	10, 115	.019

A Hotelling's trace of .20 was obtained on the indicators of effective schools. The associated F ratio of 2.53 was statistically significant at an alpha level of .05 with 10 and 115 degrees of freedom. This result indicated that parents of children in Catholic

parochial schools and charter schools differed significantly in their perceptions of the importance of indicators of effective schools. To further investigate this significant difference, the univariate F tests were examined. Table 16 presents results of these analyses.

Table 16  
Univariate F Tests  
Importance of Indicators of Effective Schools by Type of School

Indicator of Effective Schools	Number	Mean	SD	DF	F Ratio	Sig of F
Location of school						
Catholic parochial schools	61	2.91	1.06	1, 124	.06	.811
Charter schools	65	2.87	.85			
School reputation						
Catholic parochial schools	61	4.54	.55	1, 124	.70	.406
Charter schools	65	4.46	.59			
Principal qualifications						
Catholic parochial schools	61	4.41	.57	1, 124	.26	.611
Charter schools	65	4.35	.65			
Leadership style						
Catholic parochial schools	61	4.34	.57	1, 124	.11	.746
Charter schools	65	4.37	.50			
Teacher qualifications						
Catholic parochial schools	61	4.39	.56	1, 124	<.01	.995
Charter schools	65	4.38	.67			
Teacher reputation						
Catholic parochial schools	61	4.03	.57	1, 124	5.68	.019
Charter schools	65	4.25	.47			
Past experience with school						
Catholic parochial schools	61	4.09	.61	1, 124	1.67	.199
Charter schools	65	4.22	.53			
Extracurricular activities						
Catholic parochial schools	61	3.74	.83	1, 124	3.42	.067
Charter schools	65	3.99	.69			
Special programs						
Catholic parochial schools	61	3.05	.91	1, 124	9.18	.003
Charter schools	65	3.53	.87			
Facts and Figures						
Catholic parochial schools	61	3.74	.67	1, 124	.25	.620
Charter schools	65	3.82	.93			

Two of the 10 indicators of effective schools, teacher reputation and special programs differed significantly between parents of children in Catholic parochial schools and charter schools. The remaining 8 indicators of effective schools did not differ significantly between the two groups.

The obtained F ratio of 5.68 for the comparison of teacher reputation between parents of children in Catholic parochial schools ( $m=4.03$ ,  $sd=.57$ ) and charter schools ( $m=4.25$ ,  $sd=.47$ ) was statistically significant at an alpha level of .05 with 1 and 124 degrees of freedom. This result indicated that parents of children in charter schools perceived that teacher's reputation was more important as an indicator of effective schools than parents of children in Catholic parochial schools.

The comparison of the mean scores for special programs between parents of children in Catholic parochial schools ( $m=3.05$ ,  $sd=.91$ ) and charter schools ( $m=3.53$ ,  $sd=.87$ ) produced an F ratio of 9.18, which was statistically significant at an alpha level of .05, with 1 and 124 degrees of freedom. Based on this finding, it appears that parents of children in charter schools have more positive perceptions of the importance of special programs as an indicator of effective schools.

The findings of these analyses indicated that parents of children in Catholic parochial schools and charter schools were generally in agreement regarding the importance of indicators of effective schools. The two statistically significant differences found for teacher reputation and special programs were reflective of the importance that parents of children in charter schools place on these indicators.

*Research Question 2.* Is there a difference between parents of children in charter schools and parents of children in Catholic parochial schools on the importance of customer focus provided by the staff of their children's school?

The perceptions of the five subscales measuring customer focus in education were

used as the dependent variables in a one-way MANOVA. The type of school was used as the independent variable. Table 17 presents results of this analysis.

Table 17

One-way Multivariate Analysis of Variance  
Customer Focus in Education by Type of School

Hotelling's Trace	F Ratio	DF	Sig of F
.16	4.01	5, 124	.002

A Hotelling's trace of .16 was obtained on the one-way MANOVA. The F ratio of 4.01 obtained on this analysis was statistically significant at an alpha level of .05 with 5 and 124 degrees of freedom. This result indicated that parents of children in Catholic parochial schools differed from parents of children in charter schools in regards to customer focus in education. To further investigate this difference, the univariate F tests were examined. Table 18 presents results of this analysis.

Table 18  
Univariate F Tests  
Customer Focus in Education by Type of School

Customer Focus in Education	Number	Mean	SD	DF	F Ratio	Sig of F
Staff responsiveness to external customers						
Catholic parochial schools	64	4.15	.53	1, 128	.51	.477
Charter schools	66	4.07	.65			
Instructional systems						
Catholic parochial schools	64	3.90	.55	1, 128	.37	.543
Charter schools	66	3.96	.72			
Environment – Physical						
Catholic parochial schools	64	4.14	.44	1, 128	4.18	.043
Charter schools	66	3.95	.60			
Environment – Affective						
Catholic parochial schools	64	4.19	.57	1, 128	.32	.575
Charter schools	66	4.12	.73			
Communication						
Catholic parochial schools	64	2.48	.52	1, 128	1.22	.272
Charter schools	66	2.59	.55			

The examination of the univariate F tests indicated that a statistically significant difference was found for the physical environment as a measure of customer focus in education. The comparison between parents of children in Catholic parochial schools ( $m=4.14$ ,  $sd=.44$ ) and parents of children in charter schools ( $m=3.95$ ,  $sd=.60$ ) yielded an F ratio of 4.18, which was statistically significant at an alpha level of .05 with 1 and 128 degrees of freedom. This result indicated that parents of children in Catholic parochial schools had more positive perceptions of the physical environment of the school than parents of children in charter schools.

*Research Question 3.* Is there a difference between parents of children in charter schools and parents of children in Catholic parochial schools on the importance of school quality satisfaction provided by the staff of their children's school?

The mean scores for the five subscales included on the School Quality

Satisfaction Survey were used as the dependent variables in a one-way MANOVA. The type of school, Catholic parochial or charter school, was used as the independent variable in this analysis. Results of this analysis are presented in Table 19.

Table 19

One-way Multivariate Analysis of Variance  
Satisfaction with School Quality by Type of School

Hotelling's Trace	F Ratio	DF	Sig of F
.09	2.03	5, 118	.079

A Hotelling's trace of .09 was obtained on the analysis. The associated F ratio of 2.03 was not statistically significant at an alpha level of .05 with 5 and 118 degrees of freedom. Based on this finding, parents of children enrolled in Catholic parochial schools and parents of children enrolled in charter schools did not differ in their level of satisfaction with school quality. To further examine the lack of a statistically significant difference, descriptive statistics were obtained for each of the five subscales. Table 20 presents results of these analyses.

Table 20  
Descriptive Statistics  
Satisfaction with School Quality by Type of School

Satisfaction with School Quality	Number	Mean	SD
Physical attributes			
Catholic parochial schools	61	4.59	.39
Charter schools	63	4.42	.53
Attention to the needs of the individuals			
Catholic parochial schools	61	4.36	.52
Charter schools	63	4.40	.59
Instructional leadership			
Catholic parochial schools	61	4.35	.44
Charter schools	63	4.20	.60
Community involvement			
Catholic parochial schools	61	4.17	.66
Charter schools	63	4.10	.74
Learning Outcomes			
Catholic parochial schools	61	4.42	.63
Charter schools	63	4.36	.63

The mean scores for each of the five subscales indicated that the parents of children enrolled in Catholic parochial schools and charter schools had similar levels of satisfaction with their schools. The mean scores for both groups provided evidence that both groups appeared to be satisfied with the quality of their schools.

*Research Question 4.* Can school choice by parents of children in charter schools and parents of children in Catholic parochial schools be predicted from demographic characteristics, indicators of effective schools, customer focus in education, and school quality satisfaction?

To determine which of the independent variables could be used in a discriminant analysis to predict membership as a parent of a child enrolled in a Catholic parochial school or a charter school, an intercorrelation matrix was developed using point-biserial correlations. The independent variables included: marital status, mother's educational level, father's educational level, household income, report card grades, perceived academic ability of the child, number of hours spent doing homework per week,

curriculum focus of the school, and previous enrollment of the child in a public school. In addition, the five subscales measuring satisfaction with school quality (physical attributes, attention to the needs of individuals, instructional leadership, community involvement, and instructional systems), customer focus in education (staff responsiveness to external customers, instructional systems, environment – physical, environment – affective, and communication), and 10 indicators of effective schools (location of school, school reputation, principal qualifications, leadership style, teacher qualifications, teacher reputation, past experience with the schools, extracurricular activities, special programs, and facts and figures). The results of these correlations indicated that marital status ( $r=.20$ ,  $p=.024$ ), father's education ( $r= -.23$ ,  $p=.012$ ), household income ( $r= -.40$ ,  $p<.001$ ), child's academic ability ( $r= .19$ ,  $p=.032$ ), previous enrollment in public schools ( $r= -.23$ ,  $p=.010$ ), physical environment ( $r= -.18$ ,  $p=.043$ ), teacher reputation ( $r= .19$ ,  $p=.029$ ), and special programs ( $r= .27$ ,  $p=.002$ ) were significantly related to type of school. The remaining correlations were not statistically significant, indicating they were not related to the type of school.

The discriminant analysis used these eight independent variables, with type of school, parents of children enrolled in Catholic parochial schools and parents of children enrolled in charter schools, used as the dependent variable. Table 21 presents results of this analysis.

Table 21  
Discriminant Analysis  
Type of School

Number of Variables	Eigenvalue	Canonical Correlation	Wilk's Lambda	Chi-square	DF	Sig
8	.36	.51	.74	30.01	8	<.001

An eigenvalue of .36 was obtained on the discriminant analysis. The amount of variance in the type of school that was explained by the 8 variables was .26. A Wilk's lambda of .74 was produced for the analysis. The associated chi-square value of 30.01 obtained on this analysis was statistically significant at an alpha level of .05 with 8 degrees of freedom. This result indicated that the eight variables were accounting for a statistically significant amount of variance in type of school.

The standardized canonical discriminant function coefficients and the structure matrix were obtained for the seven variables that were included in the analysis. Table 22 presents these results.

Table 22  
Discriminant Analysis  
Standardized Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients and Structure Matrix  
By Type of School

Independent Variable	Standardized Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients	Structure Matrix
Household income	.73	.70
Special programs	-.46	-.64
Teacher reputation	-.16	-.38
Father education	-.11	.41
Enrolled in public schools	.32	.33
Child's academic ability	-.20	-.31
Environment physical	.34	.28
Marital status	.32	-.27

In examining the standardized canonical discriminant function coefficients, it appears that household income (.73) is the strongest predictor of type of school, Catholic parochial or charter schools; followed by special programs (-.46), physical environment of the school (.34), enrolled in public schools (.32), and marital status (.32). Father education (-.11), teacher reputation (-.16), and child's academic ability (-.20) were the weakest predictors of type of school, Catholic parochial or charter schools. The positive factors were more likely to be stronger predictors of Catholic parochial school enrollment, while negative factors were stronger predictors for children's enrollment in charter schools.

The included cases were examined to determine the percentage of cases that could be correctly classified using the standardized discriminant function. Table 23 presents results of this analysis.

Table 23

Discriminant Analysis  
Classification Results – Catholic Parochial and Charter School Group Membership

Type of School	Predicted Group Membership					
	Catholic Parochial		Charter School		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Catholic Parochial	39	76.5	12	23.5	51	100.0
Charter Schools	16	30.2	37	69.8	53	100.0

73.1% of original cases were correctly classified

Of the 51 parents of students in Catholic parochial schools, 39 (76.5%) were correctly classified in this group. Thirty-seven (69.8%) of the parents of children in charter schools were correctly classified into their original group. The overall classification rate of 73.1% indicated that the eight variables included in the discriminant analysis were good predictors of type of school, Catholic parochial or charter schools.

*Qualitative Analysis of Comments*

The parents were asked to indicate what they perceived were the strengths and weakness of their children's schools. Their responses were summarized using content analysis.

Parents whose children attended Catholic parochial schools cited many strengths of their schools. Table 24 presents results of this content analysis.

Table 24  
Strengths of Catholic Parochial Schools

Strength (N=64)	Number	Percent
• Discipline	13	20.3
• Academics	6	9.3
• Quality of education	4	6.2
• Caring staff and teachers	15	23.4
• Excellence in school athletics	2	3.1
• Safe environment	3	4.6
• Quality of students	1	1.6
• Quality of staff	1	.6
• Kindergarten	1	1.6
• Curriculum	5	7.8
• Good male teachers	1	1.6
• Value system	11	17.1
• Religious teaching	17	26.6
• School leadership	5	7.8
• Teachers	2	3.1
• Community involvement	2	3.1
• Clean environment	1	1.6
• Conduct, manners	1	1.6
• Christian environment	1	1.6
• Reading, writing and math program	2	3.1
• Highly educated staff and administration	1	1.6
• High academic expectations	3	4.6
• Reputation for excellence	1	1.6
• Ability to provide extra work for a gifted child	1	1.6
• Organized school	2	3.1
• Dedicated teachers	1	1.6
• Respect for child and parent	1	1.6
• Parental involvement	9	14.1
• Uniforms	1	1.6
• Grounds are beautiful	1	1.6
• Equipment is in good condition	1	1.6
• Team teaching in grades 4 and up	1	1.6
• Great facilities	1	1.6
• Philosophy of homework	1	1.6
• Sense of community	2	3.1
• Kindergarten through 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	1	1.6

Parents whose children were enrolled in charter schools noted the strengths of the school. Table 25 presents results of the content analysis that was used to summarize their responses.

Table 25  
Strengths of Charter Schools

Strength (N=66)	Number	Percent
• Good curriculum	3	4.5
• Quality education	2	3.0
• Good male teachers	1	1.5
• Multicultural	4	6.0
• Safe environment	3	4.8
• Staff are attentive to children	2	3.0
• Good after school program	2	3.0
• Accountability	1	1.5
• Very good teachers	3	4.5
• Creative	2	3.0
• Teamwork	1	1.5
• Caring teachers and staff	14	21.2
• Good communication with parents	1	1.5
• Continually works to improve	1	1.5
• Low student-teacher ratio	3	4.5
• Respect for parents	2	3.0
• At-risk children given more attention	1	1.5
• Small school	1	1.5
• Offer early language program	2	3.0
• Close to home	1	1.5
• Excellent leadership	3	4.5
• Progressive learning system	8	12.1
• Parental involvement	10	15.2
• Open classrooms	1	1.5
• Hot lunch program	1	1.5
• Extra-curricular activities	1	1.5
• Positive learning atmosphere	4	6.0
• Children respect adults	1	1.5
• Reading, writing and math - basic programs	1	1.5
• Devoted teachers	1	1.5
• Good facilities	2	3.0
• Good amount of homework	1	1.5
• High academic expectations	1	1.5
• Very disciplined	3	4.5
• Friendliness of teachers and staff	2	3.0
• Runs like a private school	1	1.5
• K-3 grades	1	1.5
• Independent of most public school scrutiny	1	1.5
• Tolerant of a child's faith	1	1.5
• Math program is excellent	1	1.5

The second qualitative question posed in the demographic survey asked parents to describe any weaknesses of the school. Parents whose children were enrolled in Catholic parochial schools listed several factors they considered as weaknesses. Table 26 presents results of this analysis.

Table 26

## Weaknesses of Catholic Parochial Schools

Weaknesses (N=64)	Number	Percent
• Large class sizes	9	14.0
• Ability to attract and keep good teachers	3	4.7
• Ability to respond to special needs children	3	4.7
• Not enough elective classes (languages, music, art, computers)	1	1.6
• Too much emphasis on athletics	1	1.6
• Not enough time for lunch	1	1.6
• Math program	2	3.1
• Restrooms in the elementary school	1	1.6
• Amount of homework	1	1.6
• Communication with parents regarding contagious illnesses	1	1.6
• Early dismissal on some Fridays of the month	1	1.6
• No after-school program for younger children	1	1.6
• Student-teacher ratio	2	3.1
• Teachers do not have enough time due to large classes	3	4.7
• Limited resources	1	1.6
• After school program is crowded	1	1.6
• Children need recess	1	1.6
• Unwilling to discharge teachers because of length of service	1	1.6
• Pressure of sports on boys	1	1.6
• Needs a stricter dress code	1	1.6
• Communication with parents regarding failing student	1	1.6
• Grading is too hard (A=93-100)	1	1.6
• Overcrowding	1	1.6
• Not creative enough environment	1	1.6
• The principal fostered antagonism between staff and parents. Principal is gone now-hopefully will improve.	1	1.6
• Low teacher pay	1	1.6
• Not enough homework	1	1.6
• Principal, burned-out teachers	1	1.6
• Building is older and needs some updates	1	1.6
• Would like to see teacher evaluation by parents	1	1.6
• We have had many problems with our school this past year. I am hoping for better next year.	1	1.6
• Not enough homework	1	1.6
• Art, music and foreign language is missing from curriculum	1	1.6

Parents of children enrolled in charter schools provided their concerns regarding weaknesses of their children's schools. Their concerns are presented in Table 27.

Table 27  
Weaknesses of Charter Schools

Weaknesses (N=66)	Number	Percent
• Sometimes the children watch movies during the music class	1	1.6
• The children need instruments in music	1	1.6
• Better bus service	3	4.5
• More sports programs	3	4.5
• More educational field trips	1	1.6
• Troublemakers should not be tolerated	1	1.6
• Some teachers lack professionalism	1	1.6
• Lunch food is not good	1	1.6
• Lack of funds for extracurricular activities	1	1.6
• Art and music. Music is offered after school but not during school.	1	1.6
• Writing program	1	1.6
• No lockers	1	1.6
• Large classes	4	6.1
• Hard for teachers to address different learning levels	1	1.6
• Students are not on computers on a daily basis	1	1.6
• Principal - no tolerance motto	1	1.6
• Classrooms are messy due to absence of lockers	1	1.6
• Periodic testing of student's ability not performed	1	1.6
• Administration and office staff are not approachable	1	1.6
• Peer pressure and student harassment	1	1.6
• Poor communication with parents	1	1.6
• Need for more enrichment programs	3	4.5
• Low teacher pay	1	1.6
• Special education program needs more staff	2	3.0
• Low accountability for work not done	1	1.6
• Reading program	1	1.6
• Recognizing student learning problems	2	3.0
• Lack of tests make it hard to judge performance	1	1.6
• Lack of grades in elementary school make it hard to judge student achievement	1	1.6
• Parent opinion is encouraged but it doesn't make a difference	1	1.6
• Poor discipline methods	2	3.0
• Unqualified, uncaring teachers	1	1.6
• Not enough homework	1	1.6
• Writing and reading in the 1 <sup>st</sup> -2 <sup>nd</sup> grades	1	1.6
• Not enough emphasis on spelling	1	1.6
• Too much freedom in the classroom	1	1.6
• High teacher turnover rate	1	1.6
• Too much free time	1	1.6
• Too much time without teacher supervision of the learning process	1	1.6

### Summary

The results of the data analysis that were used to describe the sample and address the four research questions have been presented in this chapter. The qualitative analysis of the comments are also included in this chapter. Conclusions and recommendations that can be obtained from these analyses can be found in Chapter V.

## Chapter V

### Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

#### *Summary*

The purpose of this study was to examine customer satisfaction (referred to as parent satisfaction with the quality of their children's schools), customer focus and reasons for selecting schools in a comparison of Catholic parochial and charter elementary schools. In the past decade there has been a proliferation of educational choices. From charter schools to magnet school, cross-district options, intra-district options, to name just a few, have given parents new options in the selection of schools for their children. Parents who previously had the option of sending their children to the local public school or paying for a private/parochial religious school or independent school can now often consider several options for their children. The new wave of school choices has meant that there is new competition for traditional systems. Some public schools have seen a decline in student enrollment and claim that the alternative schools have helped to erode their student base. This descriptive study of four Michigan schools, including two Catholic parochial and two charter schools, examines parental satisfaction with the quality of their children's schools, customer focus and reasons why parents select a school. The study was based on three primary elements:

- Schools need to increasingly distinguish themselves as parents seek information on which to base their choice of a school;
- Parents seek a school that they believe can support their child's achievement; and
- Schools may need to increasingly adopt a customer orientation in order to attract and enroll students.

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected to examine these three elements and respond to four research questions.

Customer satisfaction and customer focus appear to be integral components of an effective educational organization. Customer satisfaction has been referred to as the experience of constituents, both internal and external. Customer focus is generally referred to as the ability of the organization to operate through the eyes of the customer. Both concepts are used heavily in the areas of business and are often considered measures of an organization's success. The effective schools movement often refers to external involvement as one measure of success. However, historically schools have not sought out feedback from parents and the community. There are also noted differences in what constitutes an effective school, particularly when surveying internal constituents vs. external constituents (i.e., family). This study aims to shed additional information on customer satisfaction, customer focus and reasons why parents select a particular school, especially as they relate to Catholic parochial and charter schools.

#### *Methods.*

By reviewing available lists charter elementary schools and Catholic parochial elementary schools in two separate Michigan counties were identified. The schools were identified because of similarities in location and school size. Four schools agreed to participate in the study. Parents whose children were enrolled in grades 2 through 5 were surveyed using 4 different surveys. The Customer Service Orientation Scale (Pando, 1992), the School Quality Satisfaction Survey (Wunder, 1997) and the Indicators of Effective Schools (Bloetcher, 1994) along with a short demographic survey were sent to 500 parents whose children were enrolled in two charter and two Catholic parochial schools. The demographic survey included two qualitative items asking parents to cite

the strengths of their children's school and the weaknesses of the school. One hundred thirty surveys were returned, a response rate of 26%, with nearly equal numbers returned from parents whose children were enrolled in Catholic parochial schools and parents whose children were enrolled in charter schools.

The majority of children in both types of schools were living in homes with both parents. The ethnicity of the parents in both types of schools generally were White/Caucasian. The parents' educational levels were higher in Catholic parochial schools with most of the parents having completed college degrees, including graduate degrees, while parents of children in charter schools were more likely to have some college or a bachelor's degree. The family income levels were higher in Catholic parochial school with the majority of parents indicating annual incomes in excess of \$70,000. In contrast, nearly 50% of the parents whose children were enrolled in charter schools had incomes that ranged from under \$20,000 to \$50,000.

Parents of children in Catholic schools were more likely to report higher academic achievement and academic ability than parents of children in charter schools. When asked about the number of hours spent in a typical week helping their child with homework, parents of children in Catholic parochial schools tended to spend more time than parents of children in charter schools. The majority of parents in both schools indicated that the curriculum focus of a school made a difference in their selection of a school for their children. While most of the parents of children in charter schools indicated that their children had previously attended a public school, the majority of parents of children in Catholic parochial schools had never attended a public school.

*Research questions.*

Research question 1. Is there a difference between parents of children in charter schools and parents of children in Catholic parochial schools on

the importance of indicators of effective elementary schools?

A one-way multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to explore differences between parents of children in Catholic parochial and charter schools on their perceptions of the importance of indicators of effective elementary schools. The omnibus F obtained on the MANOVA was statistically significant. When the subscales were examined, statistically significant differences were found for teacher reputation and special programs. Parents of children in charter schools considered these two indicators of effective schools more important than parents of children in Catholic parochial schools.

*Research question 2.* Is there a difference between parents of children in charter schools and parents of children in Catholic parochial schools on the importance of customer focus provided by the staff of their children's school?

The results of the one-way MANOVA that used type of school as the independent variable and scores on the five subscales measuring customer focus in education was statistically significant. In examining the univariate F tests, one subscale, physical environment, was found to differ significantly among parents in the two schools. Parents of children in Catholic parochial schools had significantly higher scores on the physical environment of the school than parents of children in charter schools.

*Research question 3.* Is there a difference between parents of children in charter schools and parents of children in Catholic parochial schools on the importance of school quality satisfaction provided by the staff of their children's school?

The five subscales measured on the School Quality Satisfaction Survey were used as dependent variables in a one-way MANOVA. The type of parent was used as the independent variable in this analysis. Results of the MANOVA was not statistically significant, indicating that parents of children in Catholic parochial schools and those in

charter schools did not differ significantly in their satisfaction with the quality of their children's schools.

*Research question 4.* Can school choice by parents of children in charter schools and parents of children in Catholic parochial schools be predicted from demographic characteristics, indicators of effective schools, customer focus in education, and school quality satisfaction?

A discriminant analysis with simultaneous variable entry was used to determine if specific variables could be used to predict the type of school in which a parent would choose to enroll his/her child(ren). An intercorrelation matrix was developed to determine which of the variables would be included in the discriminant analysis. Only those independent variables that were significantly related to type of school were included in the discriminant analysis. These variables included marital status, father's education, household income, child's academic ability, previous enrollment in public schools, physical environment of the school, teacher reputation, and special programs. The discriminant analysis was statistically significant indicating these variables could be used to predict type of school. The strongest predictors were household income, special programs, previous enrollment in public schools, physical environment of the school, and marital status. The results of the classification of cases included in the study indicated that the discriminant equation correctly predicted 73.1% of the original cases, with 76.5% of parents of children in Catholic parochial and 69.8% of parents of children in charter schools correctly classified.

*Qualitative analysis of comments.* The parents were asked to indicate what they perceived to be the greatest strengths and weaknesses of their children's schools. Parents of children in Catholic parochial schools generally indicated that religious teaching, caring staff and teachers, discipline, value system, and parental involvement were strengths of their schools. Other strengths with fewer responses included: academics,

school leadership, quality of education.

Parents of children in charter schools reported that good communications with parents, parent involvement, and progressive learning systems were the primary strengths of their children's charter schools. The remaining responses were unique to most parents and reflected the educational focus of the school.

In examining the weaknesses of Catholic parochial schools as reported by the parents, the largest group indicated that large class sizes were the greatest weakness. The remaining responses were specific to parents and reflected their personal interactions with the school and staff.

More parents of children in charter schools reported weaknesses of charter schools than parents of children in Catholic school. Most of these weaknesses, with the exception of large classes (n=4) were answered by a single respondent reflecting the problem may have been between the parents and the school rather than a general weakness of the school.

### *Conclusions*

The landscape of K-12 education is rapidly changing. The last decade brought with it a myriad of school choices to many families. Intra-district school choice, cross-district enrollment, charter schools, magnet schools, and home schooling have changed the face of K-12 public education. Enrollment patterns suggest that parents are no longer routinely electing to send their child to the neighborhood school, as nearly 1 out of 4 children attend a school of choice. Competition in education is real. Private and parochial schools historically were the only alternative for parents. However, a steady decline has been noted in student enrollment in Catholic schools. Many public school districts are advertising to draw students to their schools due to changing enrollments and decreasing

state funding for their programs.

The purpose of this research is to compare perceptions of parents of children enrolled in Catholic parochial and charter elementary schools on customer focus, customer satisfaction, and indicators of effective schools. Some findings from the research were consistent with previous research by Manno, Finn & Bierlein (1998 ) and Lange & Lahr (2000). Similar to the present study, these researchers found that parents who elect to send their child(ren) to charter schools reported that special programs and teacher reputation were more important than parents who elected to send their child(ren) to a Catholic parochial school.

In regards to customer focus, a statistically significant difference was found for physical environment of the school between parents who send their child(ren) to charter schools and parents who send their children to Catholic parochial schools. This finding may be indicative of the fact that charter schools often are started in older, vacant buildings. The outdoor facilities (e.g., playgrounds, landscaping, building exterior) may be in need of repair or rehabilitation. Parents who send their children to charter schools may place less emphasis on the physical facilities and more on the instructional content in the school curriculum. In contrast, parents who send their children to Catholic parochial schools, and who pay for their child's education, may expect better facilities and grounds.

The study examined the lack of statistically significant differences in parent perceptions of staff responsiveness to external customers, instructional systems, affective environment, and communication and inferred that these areas of customer focus were not issues for parents whose child(ren) were in either type of school. As both educational systems were elected by families, it was not surprising that parents who enrolled their

children in Catholic parochial and charter elementary schools found customer focus equally important.

Satisfaction with the quality of their children's schools did not differ significantly between parents of children in Catholic parochial and charter elementary schools. This lack of difference may be indicative that parents who select alternatives to their neighborhood public school may have similar concerns about their children's education. In selecting these types of schools, they may feel that the quality of their children's schools are better than that available in their local school district. As a result, they are expressing similar levels of satisfaction with the schools they have selected for their children.

The research attempted to identify factors that may be predictors of the type of school to which a parent would elect to send their child to a Catholic parochial school or a charter school. Factors including household income, special programs, previous enrollment in public schools, the physical environment of the school, and marital status were examined. These findings suggested that Catholic parochial schools and charter schools differed in the types of parents and students that were enrolling in their schools. Parents who were married, had higher incomes, and were concerned about the physical environment of the school were more likely to send their children to Catholic parochial schools. In contrast, parents whose children had been enrolled in public schools prior to charter school enrollment and were concerned about special programs available in the school tended to choose a charter school for their children.

Qualitative findings suggesting that religious teaching, a caring staff and teachers, discipline, value system and parental involvement were noted as strengths by parents who sent their child to Catholic parochial schools. These findings are consistent with

Zhang's (1996) findings that parents who send their children to Catholic schools were interested in values and religious education.

Qualitative findings from parents who enrolled their children in charter schools cited charter school strengths as good communication with parents, parental involvement and progressive learning systems. These comments were consistent with customer focus and customer satisfaction definitions in education and supported the conjecture that parents who send their children to charter schools placed higher emphasis on customer focus and satisfaction with the quality of their children's schools.

Findings from this study were consistent with results of previous studies that examined indicators of quality schools and customer focus and customer satisfaction (Akhtar, 2000; Soranno, 1997; Wilson, 2000; Witherspoon, 2000). Although these studies compared different types of schools, findings support parents' search for the best educational fit for their children.

### *Limitations*

The primary limitation of the present study was the use of four schools, two Catholic parochial and two charter schools located in two counties. The sample may not be representative of parents of children enrolled in the two types of schools.

The small response rate relative to the number of questionnaires sent out may reflect the length of the instruments or the lack of motivation on the part of parents to complete this type of survey at the end of the school year. Sending out fewer survey instruments or sending them during the school year (e.g., February or March) may have increased sample size.

### *Implications for Educators*

The results of this study have provided information that educators can use when

trying to develop educational programs that can compete for students who are attending public school alternatives. The physical environment of the school appeared to be a consideration of parents, especially those in Catholic parochial schools. Educators in trying to start a charter school should seek clean, pleasant surroundings that provide an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning.

Based on the results of this study and recent changes in the ways that education is delivered to students, all schools are being pressured to implement school reforms that can promote quality and successful educational outcomes. Because of increased competition among these schools, teachers and administrators must be aware of the need to use a customer focus approach to provide a quality educational experience for all students. To determine what parents believe is needed in a quality educational program, a needs assessment needs to be completed on a regular basis and curriculum offerings adjusted to meet their needs. In addition, educators need to be aware of current research and theory on new trends in education to provide instruction to students that is “cutting edge.”

Most charter schools are organized around a special program (e.g., arts, sciences, technology, etc.). While Catholic parochial school leaders continue to focus on the religious values and discipline that is a hallmark of their educational programs, they should consider opportunities to expand their curriculum to include special programs as a means of increasing enrollment. For example, a special program can prepare an elementary school child to study in a science-related field, while in high school, a theater program for high school students could be used to recruit students.

#### *Recommendations for Further Study*

Further study is needed on the impact of the new alternatives in K-12 education.

Some suggestions for further study include:

- Replicate the present study by expanding the number and types of charter schools and parochial schools to determine if parents are choosing their children's schools based on the same criteria as parents in the present study.
- Replicate the present study using a public school population as a comparison group to determine if parents who send their children to their neighborhood schools differ from parents who send their children to charter or Catholic parochial schools in the reasons they select a school for their children.
- Examine the relationship between satisfaction with the quality of educational experiences and staff customer focus in education to determine if schools that exhibit excellent customer focus are attended by students whose parents are satisfied with the quality of their educational experiences.
- Investigate parents' reasons for transferring their children from a public school to a charter school or a Catholic parochial school to determine which factors were contributing to their dissatisfaction with public schools.
- Conduct a longitudinal study of children in Catholic parochial and charter schools to determine if parent perceptions of customer focus and satisfaction with the quality of their children's schools change as time in the school increases.

Appendix A  
Power Analysis

## Power for a test of the null hypothesis

This power analysis is for a oneway fixed effects analysis of variance with 2 levels. The study will include 160 cases per cell for a total of 320 cases.

The criterion for significance (alpha) has been set at 0.05. The analysis of variance is non-directional (i.e. two-tailed) which means that an effect in either direction will be interpreted.

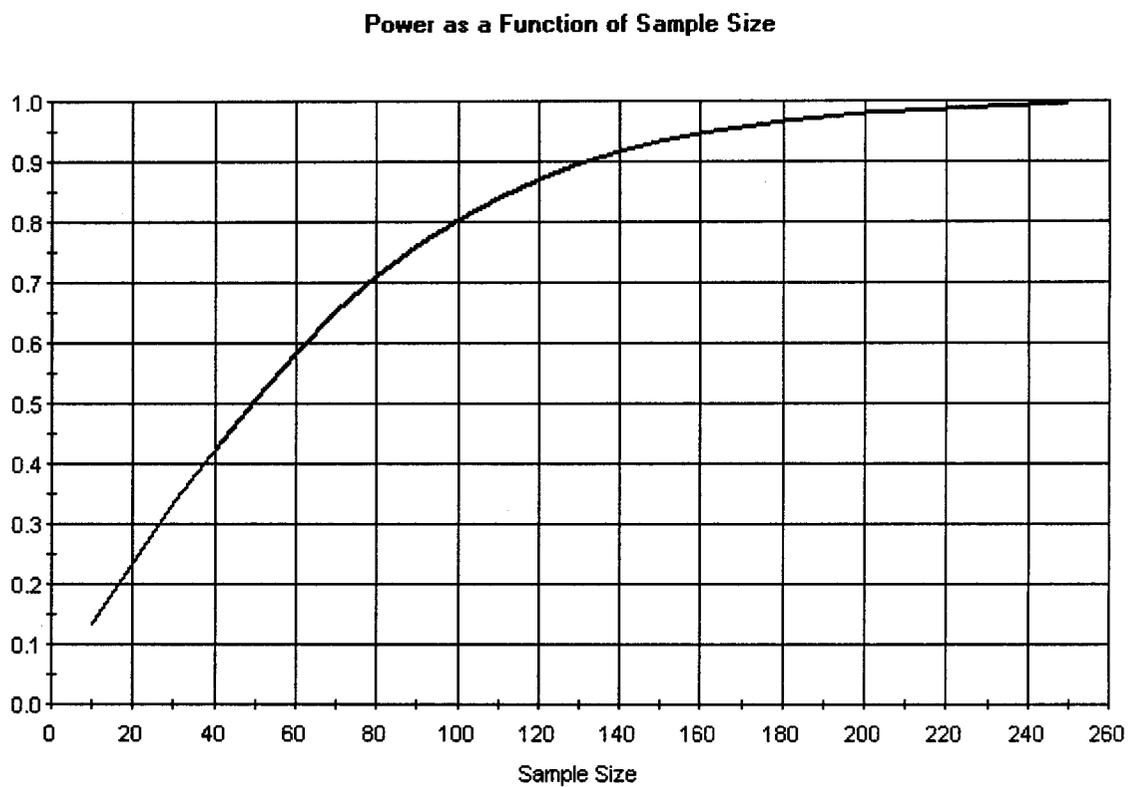
### Main effects

Factor A will include 2 levels, with 160 cases per level. The effect size (f) is 0.20, which yields power of 0.95.

Factor Name	Number of levels	Cases per level	Effect size f	Power
Factor A	Levels= 2	160	0.20	0.95

Within cell SD= 1.00, Variance= 1.00  
 Cases per cell= 160, Total N of cases= 320  
 Alpha (2-tailed)= 0.05

## Power as a Function of Sample Size



Alpha = 0.050, Tails = 2

Power as a Function of Sample Size  
for Analysis of Variance

N per cell	Power
10	.135
20	.234
30	.332
40	.424
50	.508
60	.584
70	.652
80	.710
90	.761
100	.804
110	.840
120	.870
130	.895
140	.915
150	.932
160	.946
170	.957
180	.966
190	.973
200	.979
210	.983
220	.987
230	.990
240	.992
250	.994

Factor A,  $f=0.2$  Levels=2 Alpha=.05 Tails=2

Appendix B

Instruments

## Customer Service Orientation Scale

Please respond to the statements concerning your feelings about this school's orientation toward its customers (students, parents, and community). There are no right or wrong answers.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

<b>Using the scale shown above, please place a check mark (✓) in the column that most closely matches your feelings about each of the following statements.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
1. High quality instructional material are utilized in this school.					
2. There is an adequate variety of instructional materials.					
3. Student achievement is monitored closely.					
4. Teachers appear to enjoy their chosen field of work.					
5. The school uses many forms of communication with parents.					
6. Parents are encouraged to be involved with their child's education.					
7. Parents can ask any school employee a question and expect to be directed to someone with the correct answer.					
8. Students receive recognition for their accomplishments.					
9. Parents are informed of changes in policy that affect their child.					
10. Student input is welcomed.					
11. Teachers are involved in inservice activities.					
12. The atmosphere is conducive to learning.					
13. Staff inservice activities focus on ways to increase student achievement.					
14. Parents are encouraged to make suggestions for improvement.					
15. Teachers communicate frequently with parents.					
16. There is an agreed upon mission statement that guides decision making.					
17. Teachers use a variety of instructional methods.					
18. Teachers can influence student learning.					
19. School time is managed effectively.					
20. There is a well-defined school improvement process in place.					
21. Teachers know what is expected of them in the school setting.					
22. Teachers are recognized for their work.					

Using the scale shown above, please place a check mark (✓) in the column that most closely matches your feelings about each of the following statements.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Programs are available to help all students meet the school's learning objectives.					
24. School employees are capable of being responsive to student needs.					
25. School employees want to be responsive to student needs.					
26. School employees believe that all students can learn.					
27. Teachers make their students and parents aware of their expectations.					
28. The staff is committed to student learning.					
29. Parents have input in school improvement planning.					
30. School employees are encouraged to "think for themselves" and make decisions when necessary.					
31. Students are treated as valued customers.					
32. The school building is a comfortable place in which to learn.					
33. The school building is a pleasant place to be.					
34. Every school employee believes that it is his/her responsibility to promote excellent education.					
35. Students do not appear to understand what is expected of them.					
36. A goal of the principal is to enhance instructional effectiveness.					
37. Students are treated with respect.					
38. Students feel comfortable in this school.					
39. Teachers believe that they can improve their students' educational environment.					
40. Written communications are timely.					
41. The building is attractive.					
42. Instruction is goal oriented.					
43. Requests for information are answered in a timely manner.					
44. This school aims to satisfy parents and students.					
45. Home contacts are made when a child is having academic problems.					
46. There is limited communication between the school and the community.					
47. Parents are not utilized as resources.					
48. Teachers praise their students for work well-done.					

<b>Using the scale shown above, please place a check mark (✓) in the column that most closely matches your feelings about each of the following statements.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
49. The school staff is friendly.					
50. The principal is very visible throughout the school.					

Indicators of Effective Schools

1	2	3	4	5
No Importance	Little Importance	Some Importance	Important	Very Important

Please place a checkmark (✓) in the box on the right to represent the degree of influence each of the following indicators would have on your selection of an high school.	Level of Importance				
	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Location of the School</b>					
Close to home					
Close to work					
Close to child care provider					
<b>School Reputation</b>					
Known as a good school					
Award winning					
Accredited					
<b>Principal's Qualifications</b>					
Degree - schooling					
Years of Service					
<b>Leadership Style</b>					
Friendly					
Approachable					
Highly visible					
Past experiences with principal					
Students like the principal					
<b>Teacher Qualifications</b>					
Degree - schooling					
Years of service					
<b>Teacher Reputation</b>					
Flexible - works with students					
Popular with children					
Returns telephone calls					
Past experience with a teacher					

Please place a checkmark (✓) in the box on the right to represent the degree of influence each of the following indicators would have on your selection of an high school.	Level of Importance				
	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Past Experience with School</b>					
Positive - comfortable - felt welcomed					
Friends - relatives experience					
Neighbors experience					
General treatment of students by staff					
<b>Extra curricular activities:</b>					
• Type					
• Quality					
• Number					
Special parent group activities					
<b>Special Programs</b>					
Latch key					
Day care					
Gifted/talented					
Art					
Music					
<b>Facts and Figures</b>					
School wide M.E.A.P. test results					
Standardized test scores					
Racial/ethnic balance					
<b>Other: (Please List)</b>					

### SCHOOL QUALITY SATISFACTION SURVEY

**Directions:** You are asked to respond to a series of statements relating to secondary school characteristics. For each statement, consider the aspects both of an excellent secondary school in general, and for your child's secondary school in particular.

Not At All	Rarely	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	5	6

Physical Attributes	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Schools have modern-looking equipment.						
2. The school's physical facilities appear to be safe and in compliance with building code regulations.						
3. Teachers and staff are neat in appearance.						
4. The school's physical facilities provide a neat and clean educational environment.						
Attention to Needs of Individuals	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. The school staff carries out promised actions such as educational activities, by the time agreed upon.						
6. The school responds correctly to the needs of a parent or student the first time.						
7. Teachers and staff inform students and parents of the date and time of educational activities.						
8. Teachers and staff give prompt and accurate information to students and parents.						
9. Teachers and staff are respectful with the students.						
10. Teachers and staff are respectful with their students' parents.						
11. Informational materials associated with the education (such as pamphlets and letters) received by parents are visually appealing, grammatically correct, and factual.						
12. The school gives students individual attention.						
13. The school gives parents individual attention.						
14. The school hours are convenient for their students.						
15. The school hours are convenient for the parents.						
16. The teachers and staff understand the specific needs of their students.						
17. The teachers and staff understand the specific needs of parents.						
18. The teachers and staff are helpful to their students.						
19. The teachers and staff are helpful to parents.						
20. Teachers and staff respond to parent questions in a timely manner.						
21. Students feel safe in their interactions with the school staff.						
22. Parents feel safe in their interactions with the school staff.						

23. When a student has a problem, the school shows a sincere interest in solving it.						
24. When a parent has a problem, the school shows a sincere interest in solving it.						
<b>Instructional Leadership</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
25. The school has a curriculum that is meaningful and relevant to the students and to the community.						
26. The school has a curriculum that encourages the students becoming involved in their education.						
27. Homework is required to be performed by the students on a regular basis.						
28. Homework is assigned as a review of the instructional activity in the classroom.						
29. Homework is assigned which may require further guidance and assistance from the parent.						
30. The behavior of teachers and staff instills confidence in students.						
31. The behavior of teachers and staff instills confidence in the parents.						
32. Teachers and staff have knowledge to answer parents' educational questions.						
<b>Community Involvement</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
33. The school includes the community in the development of the curriculum.						
34. The school works with the community as equal partners to set and meet goals for the school.						
35. The school works with the students and their parents as equal partners to set and meet goals for the students.						
36. The school has individuals in leadership positions who invest time to develop a common sense of purpose in the school community.						
37. The school promotes parental involvement in the education of their child (for example by volunteering).						
38. The school offers parenting skills classes to the parents on a voluntary basis.						
<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
39. The school maintains accurate and up-to-date student performance records (for example assessment tests and report cards).						
40. The school's primary purpose is to assist the students in achieving the district's academic goals.						
41. The school promotes methods that focus on teaching the basic content areas (for example reading, math, science, and social studies).						
42. Teaching methods are utilized to foster creative thinking skills.						

43. Student achievement results are used to assess the overall academic performance of the school.						
44. Students achieve at or above an average level in their academic subjects.						

**Directions:** Listed below are five general features pertaining to excellent schools and the education they offer. We would like to know how important each of these features is to *you* when you evaluate an excellent school's education. Please allocate a total of 100 points among the five features *according to how important each feature is to you* (the more important it is to you, the more points you should allocate to it). Please be sure that the point total for all five features adds up to 100. Place your number of points on the line next to the feature.

- |  | <b>POINTS</b> |
|--|---------------|
| 1. The appearance of the excellent school's physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials.  | _____         |
| 2. The excellent school has the ability to provide caring and individualized attention to its students.              | _____         |
| 3. The knowledge of the excellent schools' teachers and staff and their ability to provide instructional leadership. | _____         |
| 4. The excellent school's willingness to involve the community in developing an educational environment.             | _____         |
| 5. The excellent school's attention to the academic performance of its students and its own quality standards.       | _____         |
| <b>TOTAL POINTS =</b>  | <b>100</b>    |

### Demographic Survey

Please answer the following items as they apply to you and your child. There are no right or wrong answers.

My child is:  Female  Male

Sex of the person completing survey (if both parents are completing the survey, check both boxes):

Female  Male

Your relationship to your child:

- Mother  Father  Male Guardian  
 Female Guardian  Grandmother  Grandfather  
 Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

How would you describe your marital status?

- Married  Single  Divorced  
 Separated  Widowed

What is your ethnicity?

Mother	Ethnicity	Father
	African American	
	American Indian	
	Asian American	
	Chaldean	
	Hispanic	
	Pacific Islander	
	Middle Eastern	
	Multi-Ethnic (Please specify)	
	White/Caucasian	
	Other (Please specify)	

Please indicate your educational level:

Parent	Some High School	High School Graduate	Some College	Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate Degree	Other
Mother							
Father							

Would you please indicate your household income from all sources for calendar year 2001.

- \$20,000 and under
- \$40,001 - 50,000
- Over \$70,000
- \$20,001 - 30,000
- \$50,001 - 60,000
- \$30,001 - 40,000
- \$60,001 - 70,000

My child's report card grades are:

- All A's
- All B's
- All C's
- All D's
- Mostly A's and Some B's
- Mostly B's and Some C's
- Mostly C's and Some D's
- Mostly D's and Some E's
- Mostly B's and Some A's
- Mostly C's and Some B's
- Mostly D's and Some C's
- Mostly E's and Some D's

How would you describe your child's academic ability?

- Well Above Average
- Below Average
- Above Average
- Well Below Average
- Average

On the average, I help my child with homework \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week.

Does the curriculum focus of the school make a difference in your selecting your child's school?

- Yes  No

Were your children ever enrolled in public schools?  Yes  No

Strengths of the School:

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Weaknesses of the School:

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Thank you for completing this survey.

Appendix C  
Correspondence

## INFORMATION SHEET

**Title:** A COMPARISON BETWEEN PARENTS OF STUDENTS IN CATHOLIC PAROCHIAL AND CHARTER SCHOOLS REGARDING CUSTOMER FOCUS, CUSTOMER SATISFACTION, AND FACTORS USED TO SELECT THEIR CHILDREN'S SCHOOLS

**Principal Investigator:** Aloha Van Camp

### **A. Introduction and Purpose**

With the myriad of information regarding individual schools and school districts available on the Internet and through the Freedom of Information act, school districts need to understand those factors that are important to parents in making decisions regarding educational choices for their children. Some parents who originally chose to send their children to parochial school for specific reasons (e.g., religious training, values-based education, discipline, class size, etc.) may now be making decisions to send their children to charter schools because of tuition and fees or location of the school. If the mission and vision of the charter schools are similar to parochial schools, parents' decisions to send their children to a particular school need to be examined. These decisions may impact enrollment in the parochial school, especially if the parochial school is located in urban or lower socioeconomic areas. The purpose of this study is to compare the perceptions of parents whose children attend parochial and charter schools to examine reasons why they choose these schools using three customer-focused survey instruments: "Customer-Focus in Education" survey (Pando, 1992), "Indicators of Effective Schools" survey (Bloetscher, 1994) and "School Quality Satisfaction Survey" (SQSS) survey (Wunder, 1997) and a short demographic survey.

### **B. Procedure**

The participants will be asked to complete three questionnaire developed by the researcher. The questionnaire should not require more than 30 to 40 minutes to complete.

### **C. Benefits**

There are no benefits to the participants.

### **D. Risks**

No risks or additional effects are likely to result from your participation in this study. In the unlikely event of an injury arising from participation in this study, no reimbursement, compensation, or free medical treatment is offered by Wayne State University or the researcher.

### **E. Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal**

Your participation in this study is voluntary, with the return of your completed questionnaire evidence of your willingness to participate in the study. As the questionnaires will not be coded in any way, you cannot withdraw from the study once you have returned your completed questionnaire.

## INFORMATION SHEET

**Title:** A COMPARISON BETWEEN PARENTS OF STUDENTS IN CATHOLIC PAROCHIAL AND CHARTER SCHOOLS REGARDING CUSTOMER FOCUS, CUSTOMER SATISFACTION, AND FACTORS USED TO SELECT THEIR CHILDREN'S SCHOOLS

**F. Costs**

There are no costs involved in your participation in the study.

**G. Compensation**

There is no compensation being offered for participation in the study.

**H. Confidentiality**

All information collected during the course of this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. All identification in the research records will be by code number only. All information will be presented in aggregate, with no individual participant identifiable in the study.

**I. Questions**

If you have any questions regarding the items on the questionnaire or the purpose of the study, please feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience. I can be reached at (313) 993-6211. If you would like information regarding your rights regarding participation in this study, please contact the Chairperson of the Behavioral Investigation Committee, Wayne State University Behavioral Investigation Committee at (313) 577-1628.

**J. Consent to Participate in a Research Trial**

The return of your completed questionnaire is evidence of your willingness to participate in this study. Please retain this information sheet in case you have any questions or would like additional information regarding this study.



Appendix D  
Parent Comments

*Strengths of the School*

Focus on love of God / treating others with respect (ie. Religious Aspect). Teachers' experience. Academic focus. Leadership.

Discipline/academics.

Public school. Proximity - free education #1. School A: Quality of education - concern and involvement of staff and teachers. Excellence in school athletics. Friendly and safe environment. Quality of students. Quality of staff.

Kindergarten

The material is good and most of the staff.

I like the curriculum that they have it could be a little better, but I'm ok with it.

Good make teachers. Decent racial balance, of students and teachers. Safe atmosphere for students.

Staff attentive to child's learning. Learning diversified programs for after school staff very helpful to parents needs. Good curriculum.

Creativity, accountability.

I prefer teachers who are a little more experienced and more tolerant of children, I felt my child had a second grade teacher who was great, she was older and really helped bring out my child's strengths while working on his weaknesses.

Ideas, concepts.

Our school does an excellent job of promoting team work. My son's self esteem has greatly improved I love the strong emphasis on time management, goal planning and striving for quality work.

Caring staff. Interested in children and their education Great communication with parents Loving environment Continually trying to improve

Strong, concrete value system. Incorporation of moral, theological teaching in curriculum.

The multicultural environment promotes awareness of self and others in the world.

How student teacher ratio. The respect and want parents input. Children are given more individual attention! I believe that at risk children are given more attention, training socially, caring, and positive experiences them when in public school.

Smaller school, good facility, good academic curriculum, the children don't run the school! Yet offers early language classes. It's close to home.

Progressive learning system. Parental involvement encouraged. Focus on basics. Reading, math etc. Low child/teacher ratio.

Teachers are devoted to education and willing to work harder to make sure children are learning and understanding what they are teaching.

Communication as relates to Teacher/Parent Excellent after school activities and programs Patience of teachers according to children's level of learning Parent involvement committee.

New building/facilities. We've experienced some teachers who have complete control over class/exercise self-restraint when disciplining/and enjoy their work and treat their students as people.

My daughter has learned to say and write in another language. She's more organized and she is constantly wanting to learn more.

Child learns at his level. Teachers work well with all student levels.

Good learning atmosphere, children receive good amount of homework, care in the school, The children love attending there. Very good teachers.

Diverse ethnic backgrounds of students, a good mix. Children respect adults and are relatively well behaved.

Focus on academics.

School leadership, teachers, community involvement, parents

Good teaching, conduct/manners, clean environment, religious teachings, content of subjects, challenging basics reviewed.

Parents are very involved.

Loving, caring Christian environment. Strong academics - approachable teachers and principal - wonderful school all around.

Highly educated, dedicated staff and administration. Up to date materials, beautiful campus. High academic expectations. A staff willing to work with parents and children on individual problems. Strong parental involvement.

Religion, reading, writing and math programs. Very caring staff. Wonderful school atmosphere.

1) Reputation for excellence 2) Ability to provide extra work to a gifted child 3) Offering extra help to a LD child 4) Having a school counselor

This school (School A) is very organized and the teachers are very helpful in the students learning.

Great resources, dedicated teachers and staff.

Good curriculum, religion, values.

Curriculum; dedication to students; commitment to religious morays; dedicated teachers; strong attachment to basics (reading, math, spelling)

Morality taught in religion classes (very important)

School A is very structured in it's academic and athletic programs. It is an honor to be a part of it's fine structure and devoted religious programs. The staff (teachers, principals, admin. Assist) are all to be commended for it's high achievement.

Strong focus on religion, discipline, academic excellence; STRONG leadership from pastor and principal.

School A is a very well-rounded school. The strengths are discipline and religion. They have a strong staff, beginning with the principal. The staff cares about the students. Many "extra" programs are offered, like art, music, computer, band and sports - making something available for all students.

Small community with strong parental base involvement. Good teachers with wonderful ability to relate to the students.

Organized Academic Program, Dedicated Teachers, Strong Principal, High Moral and Religious Programs

I've sent all of our children to this Catholic school for it stands for discipline, good moral standards and for the focus on an excellent education, always striving for the best!

Religious training and value based education reinforces home taught values - commitment of faculty.

Faith based, High academic expectations, Caring atmosphere, Large parental involvement

Strong academic and religious focus. The school encourages and challenges my child with intense but strong academic activities and work. My child is already accomplishing great tasks with his strong academic upbringing that DC has a large part of.

Very disciplined

A very well structured school that fosters a sense of safety and genuine concern for the children.

Christian teaching - quality academics, Respect for child and parent, Caring teachers, Strong community support

The staff and principal have an excellent behavioral management control over the students. The academic are above the public school systems while morals are being taught and shown.

Discipline, They sail a strong ship

Strong morals and values, good discipline techniques, require parental involvement.

Values-based education, religious training, academic excellence

Religious curriculum, uniforms, emphasis on educational basics, strict discipline.

Great education

Discipline and structure - Positive learning environment. Expectations for behavior are well known and enforced. Strong visual presence of authority figures! Offer many enrichment opportunities. Caring and supportive environment.

Promotes faith-based education; Catholicism is always first and foremost; excellent reputation; excellent test scores; accredited; academics are stressed; many activities for parental involvement.

Learning respect and religion

This school is good for the high achiever. The grounds are beautiful. The school is very orderly. The equipment is in good condition.

Cooperation between parents and staff. Principal who is outstanding. Father K's love of school. Presence of nuns.

Focus not only on growing on the Catholic faith but also on Christian living and following the ten commandments. Nurtures students in strong, faith-filled community and environment without neglecting importance of academic instruction. Team teaching grade 4 and up - each teacher teaches two subjects therefore get best math, science, English, etc of all 3 instructors for that grade.

Close to home, religious education, offer computer, art and other extra curricular activity.

Religion program and discipline. Don't need to go chatechism.

Discipline, parent involvement. One goal - "student education". Great caring staff

The school has great programs, teachers and facilities.

We like the religion education they receive, along with the tough grading scale. Teachers and students expect to do well.

Small, well supported school. Kids ready and anxious to learn.

Move up academically at her own pace no pressure / happy environment.

Loving staff

Encouragement (of students and parents) deal with less wordly issues, (no fighting and hurting) kindness of environment, friendliness of teachers, parental involvement.

Teachers are dedicated to students, quality education, choice theory creating a loving safe and comfortable environment for my children to learn in.

Children progress at their own rate.

Children can move up at their own rate without having the feeling of failing. Open - not extremely structured.

Religious value, Curriculum, Philosophy of homework, Parental involvement

1. The staff and principal are kind, caring, sincere and approachable, and genuinely seem to value my child. 2. The parents are committed to education and the needs of the school. 3. High standards are set for academic achievement. 4. Overall atmosphere of school is academic achievement but also warmth, acceptance and fun.

Strict policies, Religious community spirit.

Parent involvement

Run like a private school seems to have more diversity.

Children can move at own pace. Parent involvement - children feel safe - they like school.

Principal and staff are top notch. They show on a daily basis how thrilled they are to be teaching our children. Classrooms are totally open and parental involvement is strongly encouraged.

Variety of extra curricular programs, hot lunch program, more art and music activity (gym) class

Staff, religious ed, morality education

Caring attitude, family oriented.

Sense of community / parent involvement, religion, small school.

K-3rd grade.

1) Various methods of teaching. 2) Number of students vs. teachers/adults. 3) Instilling a sense of responsibility and choice of students success in school. 4) Caring attitudes of teachers and staff. 5) Students sense of ownership of the school and success in class.

Children can accelerate at their own pace. Hi moral character. Individual attention.

Close to home. Programs available to help all students meet standards friendly, unified staff. Excellent principal.

1) Safe, small, especially in the middle school (0 pregnant teens, 0 smoking, 0 drugs). 2) Academics - fair, they seem to teach to the average child with little concern for the struggling or talented. 3) Affordable

Strong academics / very good environment to learn.

We have loving teachers and staff that care (truly care) about the success of their students. We have an extraordinary principal that is always available, giving her full attention. My needs are never put second. We have great parents that give many hours of themselves for the success of our school.

Loving, caring atmosphere. Children are not made to feel they are important. Good math program choice theory.

One on one with student.

The warm and safe environment. A staff of caring and devoted individuals. A strong parental involvement.

The K-3 grades are good. Good teachers. After that it is a bit questionable. But I still feel it is better than public.

Small child to teacher.

Dedicated staff, feelings of love/belonging, strong teachers.

Very parent involved - always aware of individual progress and achievement. Lots of rewards. Positive influences.

Charter school; independent from most public school scrutiny; very tolerant of a child's faith. Allows the child to move up when ready. Does not hold child back if child excels.

Charter School A provides a very safe and loving environment, that is conducive to learning.

Caring atmosphere, my child feel comfortable going to school. Different learning techniques.

Loving, caring atmosphere. Children feel empowered. The math program is excellent.

*Weaknesses of the School*

Class sizes a bit large.

Vouchers would help schools and parents.

The principal is not very friendly towards students or parents. When a child has a special it takes to long for the resource room to do an evaluation and get help for the student.

I don't like that the music class sometimes they watch movies instead of learning music and I don't like that they don't have instruments for the kids to learn to play.

Better bus service (to and from school and field trips). More field trips educationally. Better and more sports programs.

Troublemakers should NOT be tolerated. Some teachers lack professionalism and should not be teaching there or anywhere! Lunch food is not good.

No buses.

No after school sports of any kind. They have clubs for other things. I would like to see a sports program for after school held at the school.

Teachers and administration.

As with most schools I feel funding is always an issue. I do feel that money is used much better at our school than other public schools.

Lack of funds for extra activities. Lack of funds to expand. Transportation - buses.

Ability to attract and keep good teachers in all areas. Ability to respond to special needs children.

The food; my children complain about the lunches.

Art and music. Music is offered after school but not during school. Academic strength could be increased at junior high level in writing and cursive writing.

Music classes, I don't like that they watch movies instead of learning music, and they don't have any instruments to learn to play in school.

Doesn't have good physical education program. No music equipment or department. What activities and teams they do have are male oriented! Dress codes don't apply to a certain ethnic group. School lunches are horrible and inadequate. No lockers.

It is hard at times for the teachers to address the different learning levels of the children. Large classes.

Inadequate staffing. Prices for latch key. Class sizes (too large).

Too many movies watched. School shows PG movies without parental knowledge or consent. No lockers. Students not on computers on a daily basis.

Principal - no tolerance motto, principal did not dish out punishments well and did not take responsibilities very seriously.

None really.

Classrooms cramped and messy due to absence of lockers. Periodic testing or assessment of student's ability level not performed.

Administration and office staff does not convey a warm, friendly feeling to parents and students. Very unapproachable!

Need to have "para-pro's" in some classrooms to help teachers. Class size, too large.

More class electives (languages, music, art, computer) - too infrequent, not enough time available in busy schedules to accommodate.

Puts too much emphasis on being athletic. "Clicks" tend to begin in early grades. Students are not given enough time to eat their lunches. Many parents complain of their children getting stomach aches. The math program beginning in fourth grade seems to be far behind that even of the public schools. Algebra is not even taught, parents have to pay for their children to be tutored on the side. Math is so important! This needs to be looked into!

Large classroom size.

Art and music. Elementary restrooms need work (outdated), very dark lighting.

1) Some of the teachers don't have patience. 2) Class sizes way too large. 3) Amount and type of homework given - I feel like I'm back in school. 4) The attitudes of some kids they don't respect others and their belongings.

Color coded bulletins should be sent to the parents, when a child is diagnosed with illness that is contagious. This should be specified by the teacher to the students that this needs to be given to their parents.

Students continue to have early dismissal on some Fridays of the month. That is very challenging for working parents. Also no after school care for younger students presents an issue. Suggestion: Having the ability to purchase a second set of books to keep at home would greatly reduce the weight of backpacks.

Class size.

Number of students / classroom (= 32)

Junior high classes do not offer enough in comparison to public schools - they are behind in math "algebra".

Teachers inability (maybe lack of time) to understand how to channel the energy of an active child (not always behaving to specifications of the teacher). Teachers not being positive and not pegging a child as a "problem." Giving the child an opportunity for benefit of doubt.

Student-teacher ratio. Concerned only about lack of social studies and science in son's 3rd grade year. Seemed to be heavily weighted toward math, reading, English - not as balanced as anticipated.

Unable to have an intermarl program - to run after school to get all the kids involved in sports. "Not enough gym time or space for all the kids" - Would like to see sports used as a learning tool. Less competitive at this level and fun for all to enjoy.

Parents feel a little out of school programs.

Weaknesses; I feel would have to be only on my childs part. We feel they are getting an excellent education and anything regarding to a weakness would be that they are not applying themselves.

No latch key; after school care over crowded.

Limited resources.

My child has some difficulties with peer pressures and harrassment. We teach our children to forgive and not to retaliate but we have had difficulties with the treatment by other students in the school. The staff, in my opinion, needs to strongly address the treatment of the students with their peers. Recognize that this is a serious matter and not dismiss it being an unimportant issue that the children undergo. This is an unnecessary stress the children should not have to bear.

Very poor communication with parents. Does not offer much outside the "box" in learning. Very few enrichment programs and no real interest in fostering them.

The evident pressure of sports on the boys. The children do not receive any recesses in the a.m. or p.m.

Unwilling to discharge teachers who have failed to keep up a high standard of academics (esp. in math due to length of service). Not listening to parent input when necessary. Putting problems on the back burner instead of investigating and solving them.

The school could be stricter in the 7 & 8th grades with a no-make-up tolerance and a stricter dress code.

Big classes.

Very large class size, limitations for expansion.

Lack of individual attention due to large class sizes, bad experience with one teacher who bullies and belittles the students, lack of personal contact between parents and teachers due to large class size.

No daycare.

Variety of instructional methods are not utilized - too much rote memorization. Teacher(s) on staff hired without teaching degree. Many children in the classroom, this does not allow for movement by children. Children are expected to be quiet too often. Technology not utilized in classrooms.

Some teachers/staff don't seem to respect/care about students - maybe at job too long. Some teachers need more patience - less "yelling". Trouble children need to be dealt with more effectively after certain length of time; class size is a little large.

Class sizes too large.

For the child who struggles academically, socially or in sports. They don't find their way easily here. They struggle and have low self worth. There isn't enough encouragement for the less than above achiever!

Parents are not informed soon enough when child is failing or falling behind. Some staff members are sub-standard.

This school has lost two excellent science teachers - one to retirement and one to another school system (public).

Some teachers are not committed to the education of child. Only teaches and test children in one way. Teachers should try different evaluation techniques. Only make over achievers feel successful. Average students don't feel they are successful in school. Grading is too hard 93-100 is an A (a 7-point scale) where some kids are getting D & C should be B & C's.

Overcrowding. Not enough attention to those kids with a higher academic potential. Not creative enough environment. Teachers put movies on and correct homework instead of utilizing parents as classroom assistants. Not willing to work or communicate with parents and/or bring them into classrooms on a daily basis. Not willing to change and modernize programs. There's such a demand for private education at this school, that they do not have to evolve in order to keep their people. They can always get more people because of their solid reputation. This makes them work less at improving their curriculum and stay status quo. D.C. needs to start their language program earlier also.

I wish parents can be more involved in the classroom.

Over crowded classroom. Would like to see less students per room/teacher.

The principal fostered antagonism between staff and parents. An us-us-them attitude. Principal is gone now - hopefully will improve.

Teacher pay. Special ed program. Full inclusion need more support staff.

Low accountability for work not done or turned in.

Academics (especially reading). Recognizing students learning problems. Academic performance of students (test scores/knowledge of students level).

Not enough parking, not every parent is satisfied, some rules are not enforced.

Identifying children who can benefit from extra help.

Lack of tests make it hard to judge performance. Lack of actual grades in the elementary school level also makes it hard to judge student achievement. Since children can move up at their own rate - they don't seem to be challenged as much - or pushed to achieve more - so may become lazy and not fulfill their full potential.

Principal, burn-out teachers, poor staff morale.

Physical appearance, building is older and could use some updates.

Original ideas seem to be changing worried parents are losing sight of the curriculum goals.

Class size and no foreign language.

Parent opinion is encouraged - but rarely does it make a difference. Children that are being disruptive in the classroom are not made to leave the class but are dealt with in front of class and for the other students learning time is wasted. When children are having a hard time with reading, parents need to know and homework is never sent home?? Our child is below average and feels that more encouragement from teachers would benefit.

Extra activities are limited. They try to introduce other activities as allowed.

Lack of personal attention. All slow learners are "special needs". Poor discipline methods.

Time management, staff not managed to high standards.

Lack of end of year teacher evaluations by parents - would like to see them. Individual academic performance not followed closer.

We have had many problems with our school this past year. Bad teaching ability, rude teachers I am hoping for good replacements.

Unqualified, uncaring teachers and staff. Unruly children, chaos in the classroom.

More classroom discipline needed.

Special programs: Art music PE and sports as part of curriculum.

Didn't emphasize the basics (a lot of "extracurricular" activities during school hours. Didn't use traditional textbooks (more class discussion vs. individual written work). Not much homework. Mainstreamed kids with emotional and learning disabilities into regular classroom.

As a parent, I am not aware of the impact of inservices or teacher recognition: Extremely long masses for the students, with inappropriate content at times. The atmosphere is sometimes hostile (between the staff)... an abrupt firing of a well liked 8th grade teacher, unfriendly toward parents ("we don't need your input").

I have not notice[d] anything at all.

Art, music, and foreign language is missing from curriculum. We are not able to get funds for new buildings, playground, cafeteria and/or auditorium, unless fundraising efforts are made. Parents can only pitch in so much, we need more state funding.

Not enough homework sent home. Report cards are not based on a grade scale. Curriculum could be harder. Testing not done on a regular basis.

Writing and reading in 1st/2nd grade. Teaching proper way to hold a pencil. Not enough emphasis on proper writing - not enough emphasis on learning to spell words. Too much freedom/chaotic atmosphere in classroom. Too much time emphasis on the child learning/challenging themselves. If they are not made to do the work - aren't going to do even if they are capable. Out of a 20 lists of words to learn, my child master 2 in 2 years at that rate she'll be in 1st/2nd grade for 10 years!

Need more music, gym, band class.

Lack of funds.

Better academics, more communication with parents less play time (too many fun days - need to be in school learning!!). More communication with test results, more welcoming (rule don't go past office!!)

After school classes and clubs. Small 7-8 grade.

Used equipment. Old building.

High teacher turnover.

No specific textbooks used at school. Mostly on paper and handouts.

Sometimes the teachers are not aware if a child is falling behind.

A music program or art program with a certified teacher in that area.

Too much free time. Too much time without teacher supervision in the learning process. Not enough emphasis on proper writing techniques in early classes (ie. 1st, 2nd grade). How to properly hold a pencil, using lined paper. The school seems to use the developmental approach as a scapegoat for not teaching in a timely fashion. Instead of the teacher challenging the student, they are required to challenge themselves - at 5, 6, 7, 8 years old... that's ridiculous! The entire class should be working on the same thing more. Children are given instructions (quickly) on workshops and no one is available to help or oversee that they are actually working and not just playing around with their friends - the teacher has 6 students with them (for 40 min a day) and an aid has 24 students to help this is impossible. First and second graders tell the teacher when they want to take a spelling test and if they never say they want one - it's okay - until some report needs to be turned in.

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## Abstract

A COMPARISON BETWEEN PARENTS OF STUDENTS IN  
CATHOLIC PAROCHIAL AND CHARTER SCHOOLS REGARDING  
CUSTOMER FOCUS, CUSTOMER SATISFACTION, AND  
FACTORS USED TO SELECT THEIR CHILDREN'S SCHOOLS

by

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May 2003

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Major: Educational Evaluation and Research

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*As parents have more choices in selecting the type of educational venue they want for their children, it becomes important to examine factors that could influence their decisions for choosing a particular type of school. The purpose of this research was to increase the understanding of elements of customer satisfaction, customer focus and indicators of quality schools that influence parents choice of either an elementary Catholic parochial school or elementary charter school for their children.*

A customer satisfaction survey instrument (School Quality Satisfaction Survey), a customer focus survey instrument (Customer Service Orientation Scale), a school selection instrument (Indicators of Effective Schools) and a short demographic survey were used to survey parents whose children were enrolled in Catholic parochial schools and charter schools. Two Catholic parochial elementary schools and two charter schools in two different counties in southeastern Michigan participated in the research project. Five hundred parents whose children were enrolled in grades 2 though 5 received survey packets. Of this number, 130 parents returned the surveys, with nearly equal

representation from both Catholic parochial (n=64) and charter school (n=66) parents.

The study found significant differences between parents in the two types of school on the indicators of effective schools. Parents of children in charter schools considered teacher reputation and special programs more important than parents of children in Catholic parochial schools. On the Customer Service Orientation Scale, a statistically significant difference was found for the physical environment of the school, with parents of children in Catholic parochial schools perceiving this subscale as more important than parents of children in charter schools. No statistically significant differences were found between parents of children in the two types of school on the School Quality Satisfaction Survey. Using a discriminant analysis, type of school could be predicted from household income, special programs, physical environment of the school, marital status of the parents, and previous enrollment in public schools. The discriminant function was able to predict group membership correctly for 73.1% of the cases.

## Autobiographical Statement

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Education	<p>2003 – Doctor of Philosophy Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan Major: Educational Evaluation and Research</p> <p>1972 – Master of Social Work Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan Major: Social Work Practice</p> <p>1970 – Bachelor of Arts Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan Major: Liberal Arts</p>
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