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Online Public School: A Study of the Parent's Perspective

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ONLINE PUBLIC SCHOOL: A STUDY OF THE PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE

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Approved by
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APPROVAL OF DISSERTATION

We, the faculty supervising the work of **Valery Harper**, affirm that the dissertation, *Online Public School: A Study of the Parents Perspective*, meets the high academic standards for original scholarship and creative work established by the EdD Program in **Leadership Studies** and the College of Education and Professional Development. This work also conforms to the editorial standards of our discipline and the Graduate College of Marshall University. With our signatures, we approve the manuscript for publication.

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DEDICATION

For my sons, Tyler and Noah, may you always find curiosity in the world and the power, willingness, and desire to make our world just a little bit brighter. Because of the two of you, you have made my world better, brighter, and full of joy.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to identify the influences that lead parents to choose and support an online education as an alternative method of learning for their children. Parents ultimately decide to support and permit their son or daughter to participate in online learning. Parents also possess the authority and influence to determine whether their child will continue utilizing this nontraditional method of learning (Joshi, 2014). In the field of education, there is a need to understand the rationale why parents support online instruction and programs. Data were collected from a cross-sectional survey instrument using a 4-point Likert-type scale and multiple-choice responses from the parents in Kanawha County, West Virginia who have a child in the online program. The results of the study led the researcher to conclude that the majority of the parents participating in the study perceived that their child needed to consider changing from the traditional classroom setting to alleviate problematic issues that were negatively affecting academic achievement. Parents surveyed had a strong positive response regarding their child being academically more successful in the online program as compared to the traditional face-to-face method of instruction. Not only are these findings important for district leaders and parents, but they are vital for principals, teachers, school counselors, and other school personnel.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

America's public schools are now offering online programs compared to the brick and mortar school. Online courses do two things: They allow students to take courses at their convenience and provide a variety of learning styles. Students receiving their education in an online format can generally participate in school functions and graduate with their peers.

Florida established the first online state program in 1997 (Roblyer, 2006). As online education continued to progress and increase, there were 20 states that offered full-time online programs in 2012 (Campbell, 2012). The Evergreen Educational Group conducted a study that revealed that 30 states in 2018 provided an online program (2018). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2018), in 2002 less than 50,000 students were taking online courses nationwide. Within ten years, the online numbers increased to 1,816,400 enrolled students. The enrollment of students had already more than doubled to over 4.5 million in 2018 (Evergreen Educational Group, 2018). Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Michigan, and Virginia require all their students to take at least one online course to graduate (Garthwait, 2014). As online learning continues to evolve, the research-based literature relating to this topic is minimal. In contrast, a significant amount of research is available at the post-secondary level, but studies regarding the K - 12 setting is limited (Bryans-Bongey, 2015).

Online education in West Virginia began with the creation of West Virginia Virtual in 2000. Students in grades six through 12 are eligible to take one or two classes on a tuition-free basis. Each school district can decide to permit students to participate in online courses during or outside the school day. On April 8, 2017, West Virginia lawmakers passed Senate Bill 630

allowing counties to permit students to receive their education online for all their classes. The bill and related policies state the following features:

> "(1) County school districts have called for more local control and flexibility to meet the educational needs of their communities;
> (1) Students, parents, and teachers are seeking alternatives to the traditional classroom delivery of education that better fits the educational needs of students;
> (2) Public schools should be able to provide a variety of instructional delivery models;
> (3) The county school districts can enhance educational opportunities for students using technology;
> (4) Using technology to deliver instruction can provide flexibility and increase options for instruction;
> (5) Giving county school districts the flexibility to create innovative programs will provide teachers with new instructional opportunities;
> (6) This action is not intended to save money through the reduction of school personnel positions;
> (7) The purpose of this bill is to enhance access and equity in public education in West Virginia (Accessibility and Equity in Public Education Enhancement Act, 2017)."

The bill authorized the local county superintendents to adopt their own online policy and the ability to select a program provider, as noted. The bill did not have specific requirements for online courses, with one exception; school districts are required to review the contents of each course to ensure alignment with state standards. A district may begin their program with middle or high school age students. In accordance with Senate Bill 630, after two years of implementation, a county may then launch an online program for students in the elementary grade levels.

Middle and high school students in West Virginia can take all of their courses virtually; however, only a few counties are participating in an online format according to the West Virginia Department of Education representative (E. Crowder, personal communication, April 3, 2019). In the spring of 2019, Greenbrier County had 10 high school students enrolled in an online program, whereas Logan County operated a pilot program that consisted of 25 high school

students. Kanawha County began an online pilot program in the spring of 2018 comprised of 25 students. As of the spring of 2019, Kanawha County had 137 online students enrolled in grade levels six through 12. Eighteen counties are developing or have submitted proposals to implement online programs and online opportunities for students (E. Crowder, personal communication, April 3, 2019). West Virginia has experienced a shift in online learning that changed how, where, and when students will learn (R. Duerring, personal communication, February 5, 2018).

The traditional public education enrollment in West Virginia has declined over the past several years. In 2012, the state enrollment was 282,309 and in 2018, the numbers decreased to 265,755 students (ZoomWV, 2019). Kanawha County has experienced a similar trend with 28,548 students in 2012 that declined to 25,686 in 2018 (ZoomWV, 2019). According to Crockett, students are not always content with the traditional method of learning because they are either bored or academically falling behind (2017). In addition, homeschool families are also looking for a free online curriculum, which includes an opportunity to participate in school athletics (McConnell, 2017). West Virginia has now embraced a new era of full-time online programs that could be a solution to declining enrollment. Online programs have affected homeschool students returning into public education as well as preventing currently enrolled students from leaving public education (Quinn, 2017). Utilizing newly developed online alternatives have increased student enrollment and improved the state's graduation rate while better meeting the needs of all students (Tuck, 2013).

Since online education is a relatively new concept for West Virginia, it has become essential and timely to understand the unique characteristics and rationale of the state's students who participate in the program. In retrospect, poor implementation, planning, and support to

parents and students have contributed to the failure of online programs in various states or districts (Morgan, 2015). This study will investigate and identify the reasons why parents support online programs as an alternative method of learning for their children. The results of this study are intended to assist district administrators to form a better understanding of the parents' support of online programs. This study is significant because many counties in West Virginia have begun implementing full-time online programs. In addition, there is limited research from the parents' perspective toward their knowledge and understanding of online programs.

Statement of the Problem

The shift to online learning indicates a pivotal development for West Virginia public schools due to the declining enrollment and shortage of certified teachers (R. Duerring, personal communication, February 5, 2018). For the past several years, the population of West Virginias has decreased 2% annually (Wiederspiel, 2018). While the state's population is declining, there has been an increase in the number of students who enter the nontraditional route by becoming homeschooled (Jarvis, 2018). In addition, families leaving the state or choosing to homeschool their children have led to a decline in public-school enrollment. Most noteworthy, West Virginia homeschool student enrollment exceeded private school enrollment in 2016 reaching more than 11,000 (Jarvis, 2018). West Virginia public schools are primarily funded by student enrollment; therefore, declining enrollment has a direct impact on public school funding (EdBuild, 2018). As there remains a direct correlation between enrollment and public school funding, the results of attrition factors have impeded the financial support provided to West Virginia schools. Diminishing school funds will result in a reduction of staff and will negatively affect both the curriculum and extracurricular programs. As an outcome to balance a school district's budget,

the decisions to layoff or terminate teachers and personnel, close schools, and reduce programs will occur because of declining enrollment.

Presently, West Virginia is facing a shortage of teachers in the subject areas or disciplines of mathematics, science, and special education (Nelson, 2018). In the 2018-2019 school year, West Virginia had over 600 classrooms without a certified teacher (Plummer, 2018). During this timeframe, the number of students who were taught the subject of mathematics by a substitute teacher was 38% (Quinn, 2018). Counties that face a shortage of certified teachers have remedied this challenge by providing online courses as an alternative for their students.

Additional education issues exist in small rural districts in West Virginia. Rural districts face a variety of curriculum challenges of not being able to offer Advanced Placement courses and other specialty courses such as physics and foreign language to their students because of low interest and demand (Wiederspiel, 2018). All students throughout West Virginia are entitled to an equal opportunity to take courses of their choosing, while meeting their academic needs and interests (R. Duerring, personal communication, February 5, 2018).

One solution to address declining enrollment and teacher shortages is to support and implement online educational opportunities (Schachter, 2012). Online learning programs and offerings will not specifically prevent people from leaving the state, but it can provide a viable educational option to help divert students from withdrawing from a public school. Online programs can alleviate the issues, causes, or reasons that contribute to a student's decision to drop out of school. In addition, online provides students the opportunity to seek an education at their own pace. An online school can help stem the flow of students from leaving public education to attend a private school or to be homeschooled. Online learning has been proven to promote equity across the board no matter where they live or what school they attend (Morgan,

2015). The adverse effects on students not having the opportunity to be instructed by a certified teacher are addressed by utilizing online courses (Ajimatanrareje, 2014). A certified teacher teaches every online course in West Virginia (E. Crowder, personal communication, April 3, 2019). There is a need for online programs in West Virginia, and such offerings will begin to proliferate as compared to the nation (Quinn, 2017).

Parents make the decision to support and permit their son or daughter to participate in online learning and they possess the authority and influence to determine whether their child will continue utilizing this nontraditional method of learning (Joshi, 2014). There is a need to understand the rationale and reasons why parents support online instruction and programs.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to identify and describe the perceived influences that cause parents to choose and support online education as an alternative method of learning for their child or children.

Research Questions

The study will answer the following research questions regarding the parents' perception:

1. What are the significant factors that influence parents to choose and support their child to enroll in online learning?
2. Do the factors identified by parents vary by one's educational level?
3. Do the factors identified by parents vary by one's income level?
4. Do parents view their child as having received and earned a quality education through their online experiences as compared to the traditional face-to-face method of instruction?

5. Has student success, as measured by grade point average (GPA), increased upon entering the online program?

Significance of the Study

The importance and need for this study is significant. Online school for K-12 students is an alternative for students to earn their high school diploma. Before the passage of Senate Bill 630 in 2017, students have been permitted to take one or two online courses since 2000. Students being able to take all their courses online without attending school is a newly implemented program in West Virginia beginning in the spring of 2018. Superintendents, principals, counselors, online teachers and coordinators can utilize the results of this study to assist in meeting the needs of parents who have a child in an online program.

Online programs can be one of the answers to keep students enrolled in public education by providing students and families the flexibility to overcome many obstacles. An online program can deliver a solid education comparable to the traditional method of learning across the nation (Campbell, 2012). Knowing the parents' perspective toward online programs will assist counties to support students and parents' needs. Students experiencing success in online learning may prevent them from dropping out or seeking the homeschooling alternative (Tuck, 2013). Online education is in its infant stage and only shows signs of gaining enrollment. The purpose of this study is to investigate why parents choose and support online instruction. The results of this study can also assist county and district personnel in making necessary changes and improvements to meet the needs of their future online students while preventing students from leaving the public-school system.

Definitions of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following theoretical definitions are provided:

Asynchronous learning. A method of learning where students learn at their own pace. The beginning date is the first day of school, and the ending date is the last day of school.

Disability. A student who has been diagnosed and is under the umbrella of care with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Homeschooling. A student who has been removed from public education by the parent who takes sole responsibility for the education of their child.

Internet. The wide world web which provides a variety of information through an electronic device with wi-fi access.

Learning Management System. A software program that hosts/delivers curriculum online through the internet to all.

Learning Preferences. The methods by which students prefer to learn.

Online School. Students can work outside the traditional school setting. Other names that have the same meaning include virtual, cyber, distance, or e-schools (Watson & Ryan, 2007).

Synchronous Learning. A method of learning where all students begin and end at the same time. Due dates for all assignments exist.

Traditional Education. Students physically attend a public school each day at the same time and receive direct instruction in a synchronous learning environment.

Delimitations

This study will focus upon parents who have a child participating in the online program in Kanawha County, West Virginia. The survey is limited to a single period of 14 days beginning January 27, 2020 and ending on February 10, 2020. The study is restricted to the 221 parents in Kanawha County, West Virginia. On March 16, 2020, all schools in West Virginia

were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This research only includes the parents who permitted their child to become an online student prior to the schools closing.

Organization of the Study

Chapter II reviews the literature surrounding online schools in grades K-12, the graduation rate for public education students, homeschool students, students with disabilities, the opposing views, and the declining enrollment in West Virginia. Chapter III outlines the methods and instrumentation used for the study. Chapter IV describes the quantitative data and findings of the research. Chapter V will provide conclusions and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this study is to identify and describe the reasons why parents choose and support an alternative method of learning for their child or children via online programs. Florida established the first online state program in 1997 (Roblyer, 2006). As online education progressed, there were 20 states offering full-time online programs in 2012 (Campbell, 2012). The Evergreen Educational Group conducted a study that revealed that 30 states in 2018 provided an online program (2018). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2002 less than 50,000 students were taking online courses nationwide. Ten years later the online numbers increased to 1,816,400 enrolled students. The enrollment of students has already more than doubled to over 4.5 million in 2018 (Evergreen Educational Group, 2018). Currently, Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Michigan, and Virginia require all their students to take at least one online course to graduate (Garthwait, 2014). As online learning continues to evolve, the research-based literature relating to this topic is minimal. In contrast, a significant amount of research is available at the post-secondary level, but studies regarding the K-12 setting have been limited (Bryans-Bongey, 2015).

The literature review provided in this chapter will explore online programs in more detail. The review will also illustrate the student and district's need for online schools, critics of online schools, the student dropout crisis, students with disabilities, and homeschooling. The chapter concludes with a summary of the literature review.

Benefits of Online Schools

Many benefits exist for students in the online program. Parents who travel now have the option and opportunity to bring their child to events and offer enriching experiences during school time without worrying about their child missing school (Friend & Johnston, 2005). Students who are focused on athletics can join traveling teams while still enrolled in school (Andrus, 2009). Parents who work from home can also have their child complete their schoolwork at home (Grubb, 1998). In addition, health issues that may cause students to miss instructional time will no longer prevent a student from completing their schoolwork because of an online schooling option (Rice, 2006). Online schools provide the flexibility of when to work, where to work, and offer more course selections (R. Duerring, personal communication, February 5, 2018). Some districts require students to log in daily, but other programs do not. Either way, it is crucial for districts to monitor and support online students just as they would in a traditional setting. It is predicted by 2020 that more than half of all high school students in the United States will take a course online (Toch, 2010).

Due to online programs, students can take courses that are not taught at the school, thus promoting equal access to courses across many school districts (Morgan, 2015). In addition to meeting students' needs, online courses also help school districts solve teacher qualification or certification issues for various course options (Beem, 2010). For example, the shortage of certified teachers in the fields of mathematics, science, and special education exists (NACTAF, 2010), and can be remedied through online education.

Another problem exists; teachers who are beginning their careers are leaving the classroom at a faster rate than any other period according to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2010). The National Education Association (NEA) reports 20%

of new teachers will leave the classroom within three years. Additionally, the NEA predicts that 50% of all teachers will exit the profession within five to seven years. The loss of teachers will make an even more profound impact with the steady increase in nationwide student population predicted to occur. The National Center for Education Statistics (2018) is projecting a 3% increase in public school enrollment from 2015 to 2027 with an overall increase of 1.4 million students. The most significant increases in student enrollment will emerge in Nevada (37%), Utah (35%), and Texas (31%). Utilizing online courses to alleviate the burden of unfilled vacancies is a benefit for school systems, parents, and students (Ajimantanrareje, 2014).

Some districts believe online schools cost less than educating students in the traditional brick and mortar environment (Brady, 2010). This reduced cost is a desirable option for districts where the overall expense can be decreased by more than a third (Schachter, 2012). Public school funding comes from property taxes, the federal funding formula, and additional funds collected for students who are identified to receive special education services (EdBuild, 2018). In West Virginia, online students receive the same amount of funding as traditional students (Accessibility and Equity in Public Education Enhancement Act, 2017). Budget cuts and raising costs lead board members and superintendents to find alternative ways to make ends meet (R. Duerring, personal communication, February 5, 2018). Online students do not require building maintenance, transportation, and supplies (Barbour, 2012). In Florida, the Florida Tax Watch Center for Educational Performance and Accountability conducted a study that found Florida Virtual School cost $5,243 per student, whereas the cost for a traditional school student is $6,291 resulting in an overall cost difference of 17% (2007). This group also found that the virtual students received better grades and performed with higher test scores in addition to the lower

cost. Online schools have shown to assist with budget balancing with a significant reduction in cost-per-pupil (Barbour, 2012).

Five main variables can influence the cost of online programs: management, instruction, course development, technology setup, and additional expenses (Brady, 2010). Management has the costs associated with the person or people who oversee the program like the principal of a traditional school. This cost includes supplies, travel, public relations, and program development. Another expense is instruction; some districts will employ online teachers, and other districts utilize a company who will take care of this for an associated fee. The third factor is course development. Districts can employ teachers to create courses, or lease courses from a company for a fee; for example, Florida Virtual School is a provider of these services that provides the curriculum and teachers, if desired (McNally, 2012). Technology setup depends on how the district is going to provide an electronic device to access the content. Additional expenses may occur if the district adds additional support or programs associated with the online school. In summary, districts and states determine the cost of the online program by the methods it is managed, implemented, and any additional services provided to support students.

Opposition to Online School

Critics of online school dispute that learning without a teacher in the room is morally unacceptable (Queen & Lewis, 2011). The opposition believes students should receive instruction through the traditional school setting, and the best way for a student to learn is by a teacher physically being present in the room with the student (Queen & Lewis, 2011).

Another opposing viewpoint to online learning is that students will only acquire social skills by interacting with their peers in a traditional school environment (Dreyer, 2017). Social interaction on adolescents is essential. There is a misconception that students who do not attend

school physically during the day will not acquire the social skills they need (Dreyer, 2017). However, research shows that forcing a student to attend in the traditional setting can be counter-productive to the student (McLean, 1998). Public school is not the only way to provide socialization skills to adolescents (Romanowski, 2006). Students can obtain socialization skills from various methods through interactions with their family, church, and other activities outside the home. Over 97% of homeschool students are involved in two or more activities and mature more rapidly compared to students in the traditional method of schooling (McLean, 1998).

Critics argue there is little evidence that online students perform academically better than traditional students (Pandolfo, 2012). However, a 2009 study of online learning conducted by the United States Department of Education found that online students score, on average, 59% higher than, on average, traditional students on performance tests (Campbell, 2012). Florida Virtual School has proven to produce excellent academic results (Morgan, 2015), and further research reveals that online learning can provide the same results as the traditional method of learning by attending school (Wicks, 2010). In South Carolina, research concludes that there is no statistical difference in the graduation rates between online and students who traditionally attended school (Montgomery, 2014).

Concerns of Online Programs

Some students have the misconception that an online course will be easier than physically attending a class (Taylor, 1997). At Stanford University, the attrition rates for online courses are 90% (Kokemuller, 2017). This viewpoint can lead students to spend less time on academic work as they would in the traditional manner (Glass, et al., 2009). In addition, some students are not self-directed enough to handle the flexibility that comes along with an online course, which leads them to fail or withdraw from the course (Kokemuller, 2017).

Colorado is having a negative experience with virtual schools leading to dismal results. They use a K-12 software company, and the online achievement scores are consistently 14 to 26 percentage points below the state's average (Mitchell & Hubbard, 2011). When an online program has poor results, it is usually because of poor implementation, planning, or support (Morgan, 2015). Out of all the schools and districts that were low performing, only 70% of schools check online attendance, 56% monitor online activity, and 49% monitor the time the student spends in the course platform (Morgan, 2015). More research is needed to develop intervention strategies for students who are not being successful in an online program (Roblyer & Marshall, 2003).

A child's chance of success decreases if their parent does not provide supervision and encouragement in their online program (McLean, 1998). Therefore, parents have more responsibility for their child's education when they become an online student (Morgan, 2015). Even though parent involvement declines as children get older (Eccles & Harold, 1996), there is a direct correlation between the quality of parent involvement and a student's success in an online program (Black, 2009). This correlation is still not well researched according to David Figlio, education and social policy researcher at Northwestern University in Chicago, who states, "The research literature is extremely thin" regarding all aspects of K-12 online school (Campbell, 2012).

At-Risk Students

Seven thousand students drop out of school each day in the United States or almost 1.3 million students annually (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010). The national graduation rate in 2012 was 68%, and various reasons exist for why students drop out (Dicksteen, 2012). According to Alivernini & Lucidi, the factors associated with dropping out are "low

socioeconomic status, low grades, academic self-efficacy, and motivation (2011)." To predict who will drop out is very difficult, but the best predictor is student achievement or student engagement in the school (Bowers et al., 2013). For example, a student's mathematics achievement can often predict their potential to drop out (Muthen, 2004). A student does not decide to quit school overnight; it is a long-term process of the student experiencing low grades, poor motivation, and academic self-efficacy of traditional school settings that ultimately lead them to drop out (Dupere et al., 2015).

In the beginning, online courses were only used for high performing students who were seeking courses that could not fit into their schedule or not offered by the school (Robyler & Marshall, 2003); presently, it is also used as an alternative to keep at-risk students in the system (Repetto, et al., 2010). It is also an expectation for online programs to have a broad range of students including those who are at-risk for failing or dropping out of school (Roblyer & Marshall, 2003). Students who are unsuccessful in the traditional school setting need an alternative means to prevent them from becoming a dropout statistic (Tuck, 2013). In 2009, the Alliance for Excellent Education calculated that if the dropout rate in the 50 largest cities reduced by half, this would have an impact in increasing wages by $4.1 billion a year; thus keeping students in school and having them graduate would have an enormous effect on our economy (Alliance For Excellent Education, 2010).

A study conducted by Ahmal Tuck at Capella University (2013) also concluded placing at-risk students in online programs could prevent students from dropping out of school. The participants in the study had an overwhelming response, stating the flexibility of online learning, the ability to focus, and the ability to work at their own pace made it possible for them to be successful in the online environment versus the traditional method of school.

A successful classroom student does not necessarily equate to a successful online student (Roblyer & Davis, 2008). Dropout and failure rates for online programs can be as high as sixty to 70% in some locations (Roblyer, 2006). It is essential to understand why students do not remain in the online program after they begin. A misconception does exist that online schools' curriculum is less challenging than what a traditional student would receive (Taylor, 1997). It is necessary for schools, districts, and states to create support and interventions to increase the success rate for online students. Florida Virtual School, the leading pioneer for online programs, stresses the need for monitoring and progress reporting to all stakeholders (Friend & Johnston, 2005). Many districts are turning to learning management systems to assist with tracking and monitoring students (Watson & Ryan, 2007), as it is vital for online programs to evaluate the outcomes for every type of student enrolled in online courses (Institute of Education Sciences, 2008). In addition, the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) stresses the importance and the need to use data as a guide to monitor learning (2009). The information gained from this monitoring allows school officials to create interventions and support systems, which can raise the achievement and course completion rate (Repetto et al., 2010).

Students with Disabilities

Students with a disability are at-risk to drop out of high school (Repetto et al., 2010). In 2006-2007, 14% of students in grades K-12 had a disability (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). In West Virginia, 20% of students possess a disability (ZoomWV, 2019). Students who have a disability, which prevents them from attending school, can benefit from an online program (Morgan, 2015). Students with a disability qualify for the Individual Education Program (IEP); this program was created and mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1990). To develop and monitor the IEP, a team of school officials, the

student, and the parent come together annually to review the current status of the student and to create a plan of support for the student with the disability. In addition to the base plan, it can also include modifications; for example, extended time, test read aloud, preferential seating, retake failed tests, and other individual accommodations to meet the students' need (Repetto et al., 2010).

Currently, West Virginia's overall graduation rate is 89.4%, but in contrast, for students with a disability, it is only 77.8% (ZoomWV, 2019). In the 2007-2008 school year, 9% of all online enrollments were students who had an IEP for their disability (Repetto, et al., 2010). As enrollment of online students with disabilities is continuing to increase (Allday & Allday, 2011), more research needs to be conducted on how many students with a disability are successful in the online program (Repetto, et al., 2010).

The benefits of online school for students with disabilities are the flexible pacing, work at preferred times, extended time, ability to take breaks, and the ability to choose the environment to work in (Allday & Allday, 2011). Extended time for a student with an IEP is a standard accommodation; a student in an online class can have assignments repeated as many times as needed and obtain more immediate feedback than they would in a traditional classroom (Carter & Rice, 2016). One study discovered students with and without an IEP take the same amount of time to complete an entire course and have similar achievement rates (Allday & Allday, 2011). The more individualization of the course platform may contribute to the overall success of the student (Carter & Rice, 2016).

Two leading researchers, Roblyer and Marshall (2003), have completed a study using the Educational Success Prediction Instrument (ESPRI) to test whether it correctly predicts if a student will be successful in online learning. The researchers organized the survey into four

parts: achievement and self-beliefs, responsibility and risk-taking, technology skills and access, and organization and self-regulation (Roblyer & Marshall, 2003). The results of predicted success were 95%; the students the survey selected to be successful indeed ended up being successful. However, the results for predicting failure was not significant, which means some of the students were successful even though the survey administered did not select them to be. Another researcher (Barbour & Reeves, 2008) found a limitation to Roblyer's prediction model by noticing 80% of the students who participated in the research were planning to attend a 4-year college. This percentage of students planning to attend college is not representative of the student population in other online programs. Schools should not solely rely on a survey to decide if a student may participate in an online program (Barbour & Reeves, 2008). Students not identified will lose the opportunity to become an online student. To predict success or failure, additional research with larger samples of online programs is needed (Rankin, 2013).

Homeschooling

Previous homeschool students have made history in the United States. Some of these figures are Abraham Lincoln, teacher and author Booker T. Washington, Woodrow Wilson, writer C.S. Lewis, physicist Albert Einstein, and Pulitzer winning author Pearl Buck (Kulp, 2015). Homeschool parents have chosen not to send their child to a public, charter, or private school; instead, the parents provide course curriculum and instruction to educate their child. Homeschooling began to be more popular starting in the 1980s (Weller, 2018). Various reasons exist as to why parents decide to homeschool. The most recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2018) provides the following reasons why students are homeschooled:

- Concern about the environment of other schools – 34%
- Dissatisfaction with academic instruction – 17%
- A desire to provide moral instruction – 5%

- A desire to provide religious instruction – 16%
- A desire to offer a nontraditional approach – 6%
- A child had a physical or mental health problem – 6%
- A child had other special needs – 6%
- Other reasons – 11%

Additionally, parents that homeschool their children want more involvement in their child's education and generally have the time and resources to devote to it (Green, 2007).

The benefits of homeschooling are personalized learning, choice of the course curriculum, a more harmonious environment, and an opportunity to achieve more (Weller, 2018). Another benefit is that parents can customize the curriculum they provide based on the natural talent, strengths, and future goals of their child (Romanowski, 2006). All these factors continue to occur when a student becomes an online student; however, the courses are now free to family, they receive additional support, and the parents have assurances that their child is provided with the appropriate grade level curriculum.

According to the Coalition for Responsible Home Education, abusive parents do withdraw their children from school to conceal the abuse and prevent school officials from notifying agencies (2018); 47% of severe abuse cases reported in 2014 were homeschooled. Other disadvantages of homeschooling include concerned parents who do not have a lot of free time to devote to their children, and the inability to purchase costly curriculum to use to educate their children in comparison to it being free if their child would attend school (Grubb, 1998). Providing quality curriculum is indeed a challenge for homeschool families (Clemens, 2002). It is sometimes arduous for parents to know the curriculum alignment by grade level, what skills need to be taught, where to obtain curriculum, and the affordability to purchase curriculum (Wagner, 2008).

Socialization skills are another disadvantage of being homeschooled (Clemens, 2002). Parents need to find activities for their child to participate in to meet the unique needs of their child. They can provide more socialization skills through local churches and community activities including recreational sports (Clemens, 2002).

Research has shown the benefits of homeschooling are many, including personalized learning, choice of the course curriculum, a more harmonious environment, and an opportunity to achieve more (Weller, 2018). Parents are provided the opportunity to choose the curriculum and customize it to meet the needs of their child who may work at a quicker pace than a traditional environment (Romanowski, 2006). All these factors continue to occur when a student becomes an online student except the courses are now free to the family. The families also receive more support and do not have to worry about appropriate grade level curriculum (Demski, 2010). Homeschooling parents appreciate and prefer online learning as an additional opportunity for student learning (Barthe, 2013).

Summary

The literature provided in this chapter described the students' and districts' need for online schools, critics of online schools, the student dropout crisis, students with disabilities, and homeschooling. It is essential to understand the different dynamics of students who are entering online schools to support and recognize their needs fully. West Virginia's online program is a method to reduce the rapid and steady decline in student enrollment as well as the teacher shortage the state is facing. Online learning programs and offerings will not specifically prevent people from leaving the state, but they can provide a viable educational option to help divert students from withdrawing from a public school. Online programs can alleviate the issues and

causes that attribute a student to drop out of school by providing them the opportunity to maintain interest and desire to work whenever and wherever possible.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

The presence of online programs, a recent development in education throughout the United States, is becoming a new option for students in West Virginia. Many students possess learning challenges that contribute to their learning needs. These challenges can be in the form of a learning disability, mental illness, as well as family or personal dynamics that contribute to their learning needs. The option for online programs can have a tremendous impact on reducing the dropout rate and increasing public school enrollment. It is the intent of this study to survey parents in West Virginia who have a child participating in an online program. The overall goal is to obtain why parents choose and support online instruction.

The research in the Chapter 2 literature review clearly articulated the need for more research conducted on every aspect of online programs. The results of this study will discover the parents' perception to assist and decipher the needs of West Virginia online students and parents. This study was designed to identify and describe the reasons why parents choose and support an alternative method of learning for their child via online programs.

Research Questions

1. What are the significant factors that influence parents to choose and support their child to enroll in online learning?
2. Do the factors identified by parents vary by one's educational level?
3. Do the factors identified by parents vary by one's income level?
4. Do parents view their child as having received and earned a quality education through their online experiences as compared to the traditional face-to-face method of instruction?

5. Has student success, as measured by grade point average (GPA), increased upon entering the online program?

Population and Sample

The target population for the study was middle and high school students who participated in the online program in the Kanawha County School District. In 2019-20, Kanawha County had 25,373 students enrolled in grades K-12. The study population (N = 221) represented parents who have a child in the online program either at the middle or high programmatic level. The parents represent each of the eight high schools (n =156) and the middle school parents comprise 12 of the 13 middle schools in the county (n = 65). The parents surveyed had a child either in the full-time online program taking six online courses or in the part-time online program taking four or fewer classes. Of the sample population, 130 parents chose to participate which yielded a 58.8% return rate.

Instrumentation

The researcher completed the process for permission as required by Marshall University's Institutional Review Board (Appendix A). Before the implementation of the study, the researcher received approval from the Superintendent of Kanawha County Schools (Appendix B).

The parents of online students received an email to make them aware of the purpose and significance of the study. Included in the message was an explanation that there were no foreseeable risks to participating in the research and the participants' responses were completely anonymous. The parents were made aware they will receive no direct benefit from participating, and it is voluntary. The parent or student is not identifiable from the parent's responses to the survey (Appendix C).

A cross-sectional survey instrument was designed to collect data using Likert-type and multiple-choice responses from the parents in Kanawha County, West Virginia who have a child in the online program (Appendix D). A Google Form was used to operationalize the research study. The survey was distributed to the sample population via a hyperlink embedded in an email to the sample population. The researcher received the responses from the participants electronically once the participant clicked submit. The data for analysis will come from the parental reactions to the questions in the survey. The survey was available for the parents to complete for a two-week period. The parents received a reminder email about completing the survey after one week.

Questions 1 through 5 were designed to gather demographic data on the amount of education the respondents have acquired, the gender, the age, the gross income, and the race/ethnicity of the parent responding to the survey. Question 6 gathers data on how the parent first learned about the online program while question seven gathers data on how many total children the respondent has.

The eighth question in the survey was designed to understand the factors that influence parents to choose or support online learning for their child. The researcher utilized an emergent design approach from the literature review by creating a matrix to organize the research (Appendix E). This matrix was utilized to develop 20 factors for the parents to respond. The respondents had a Likert-type scale from one to four to identify. The value of one represented strongly disagree to four representing strongly agree.

The ninth question was designed to identify the category of need influencing the parent to choose or support online learning for their child. The matrix identified five main categories of need emerging from the literature review (Appendix E). The categories are academic needs,

parental needs, social needs, flexibility needs, and medical needs. The respondent had a Likert-type scale from one to four to identify. The value of one represented strongly disagree to four representing strongly agree.

Question number 10 in the survey was designed to gauge if the parent identified their child as being more successful in the online program than the previous learning experience. The respondent had a Likert-type scale from zero to four with zero representing no factor to four representing the greatest factor.

The final question, number 11, in the survey was designed to gauge if the parent identified their child as being less successful in the online program than the previous learning experience. The respondent had a Likert-type scale from zero to four with zero representing no factor to four representing the greatest factor.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data was analyzed through the use of The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program, version 25. The data was entered manually and the analysis relied on the frequency distribution and mean of the responses from the respondents.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

Chapter 4 presents a non-evaluative report of the quantitative data collecting the research findings and responses to the survey. The chapter begins with a description of the research, research questions, and a description of the population and sample. The researcher then describes the response rates, and how the data were collected and analyzed. The chapter concludes with the findings and a chapter summary.

The purpose of this study is to identify and describe the perceived influences that cause parents to choose and support online education as an alternative method of learning for their child or children. The study will further identify whether the parent recognizes their child as being successful in online learning as compared to traditional face-to-face instruction. The results of this study will also assist district administrators to form an understanding of the parents' perspective of the online program. In addition, this study can assist school officials as to how parents are finding online program information, and if their child is benefited from such instruction. Utilizing the results in this research may increase student success in online programs and find avenues, opportunities and options to promote the program to children still in need.

Parents inevitably decide whether to support and permit their son or daughter to become a full-time online participant and contribute to whether their child will remain an online student. It is essential to understand the needs of parents whose child is in the online program; the parents' perception is vital to reach supportive conclusions to ensure participation and success for online students. The results of this study can also assist counties and school districts in making necessary changes and improvements to meet the needs of their future online students while preventing students from leaving the public-school system.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were:

1. What are the significant factors that influence parents to choose and support their child to enroll in online learning?
2. Do the factors identified by parents vary by one's educational level?
3. Do the factors identified by parents vary by one's income level?
4. Do parents view their child as having received and earned a quality education through their online experiences as compared to the traditional face-to-face method of instruction?
5. Has student success, as measured by grade point average (GPA), increased upon entering the online program?

Population and Sample

The data were collected from a cross-sectional survey instrument designed to collect data using Likert-type and multiple-choice responses from the parents in Kanawha County, West Virginia, who have a child in the online program (Appendix D). A Google Form was used to operationalize the research study. The survey was distributed to the sample population via a hyperlink embedded in an email to the sample population. The email included a memo to make parents aware of the purpose and significance of the study. Included in the message was an explanation there were no foreseeable risks to participating in the research, and the participants' responses were completely anonymous. The parent or student is not identifiable from the responses to the survey. Parents had the option not to answer any specific question on the survey. The researcher received the responses from the participants electronically once submitted.

A total of 130 responses were received out of the initial 221 families; therefore, the overall participation rate was 58.8%. All participants answered virtually every question, except question number four. This question had four parents elect to not identify their annual total gross income for their household (n = 126), thus yielding a lower response rate of 57%.

Demographic Data

Questions one through five on the survey were designed to gather demographic data on the amount of education the respondents have acquired, the gender, the age, the gross income, and the race/ethnicity of the parent responding to the survey. Table 1 details the level of education the respondent has acquired. The table shows most of the respondents (32.3%) had attended college at one time but did not earn a degree. The second and third highest respectively, reflect high school graduates (21.5%) and those earning a bachelor's degree (20.8%). The smallest category of participants are parents who did not graduate high school and received some schooling in high school.

Table 1

Respondent's Level of Education

Education	*n*	Percent
Some High School	3	2.3%
High School Graduate	28	21.5%
Trade School Certification	10	7.7%
Some College	42	32.3%
Bachelor's Degree	27	20.8%
Master's Degree	15	11.5%
Post Master's	5	3.9%
Total	130	100.0%

Table 2 details the gender of the parents responding to the survey comprising 86.9% female and 13.1% male. All respondents chose to identify their gender in the survey.

Table 2

Respondent's Gender

Gender		*n*	Percent
Male		17	13.1%
Female		113	86.9%
Choose Not to Identify		0	0%
	Total	130	100%

The findings in Table 3 are the survey results identifying the parents' category of age from the survey participants. The findings show 57.7% are between the age of 36 and 45 years. The second-highest classification of age falls in the range from 46 to 55 years (23.8%). Two groups have the same results on both ends of the spectrum with 9.2% of the respondents being 35 years of age or less, as well as 9.2% being 56 years of age or older.

Table 3

Respondent's Age Group

Age Groups		*n*	Percent
35 years or less		12	9.2%
36 to 45 years		75	57.7%
46 to 55 years		31	23.8%
56 years or older		12	9.2%
	Total	130	100.0%

The parent's category of gross income was collected in Table 4, showing 48.4% earned $60,000 or more a year. This survey question had four participants opt out; therefore, the sample size is 126 for this question yielding a lower response rate of 57%. The second-highest range of

income is $30,000 or less, whereas 19% of the participants identified being in this group. The other two group ranges had the least number of parents with 17.5% earning $30,000 to $44,999, and 15.1% earning $45,000 to 59,999.

Table 4

Respondent's Gross Income

Income Ranges		*n*	Percent
$30,000 or less		24	19.0%
$30,000 to $44,999		22	17.5%
$45,000 to $59,999		19	15.1%
$60,000 or more		61	48.4%
	Total	126	100.0%

Respondents also identified their race/ethnicity in the survey, with 97.7% being White/Caucasian. Only 1.5% of the respondents are Native American, and one participant characterized himself or herself being Black/African American. No one is identified as being Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino, or other.

Table 5

Respondent's Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity		*n*	Percent
Asian/Pacific Islander		0	0%
Black/African American		1	.08%
Hispanic/Latino		0	0%
Native American		2	1.5%
White/Caucasian		127	97.7%
Other		0	0%
	Total	130	100.0%

Question number six gathered data on how the parent first learned about the online program. This data is organized in Table 6. Most parents received information about the program from the school counselor comprising 24.5%. Other highly used sources are the parents' child (21.4%) and friend (18.4%). In terms of the least reported sources, 2% reported they received information from a television newscast, 2.3% from the newspaper, and 3% from a letter.

Table 6

Method Respondents Initially Received Information About Online Learning

Variables	*n*	Percent
Television Newscast	2	2.0%
Newspaper	3	2.3%
Letter	4	3.0%
Social Media	6	4.6%
Website	13	10.0%
School Administrator	18	13.8%
Friend	24	18.4%
My Child	28	21.4%
School Counselor	32	24.5%
Total	130	100%

Table 7 shows the percentages and number of respondents who selected they have one, two, three, or four or more children participating in the online learning program. The majority of the parents consisting of 87.7% have one child in the program. No one reported having three children in the program, and 11.5% of the respondents have two children participating. Only one parent had four or more children participating in the online program.

Table 7

Respondent's Total Number of Children Participating in Online Learning

Number of Children	*n*	Percent
One	114	87.7%
Two	15	11.5%
Three	0	0%
Four or more children	1	0.8%
	Total 130	100%

Findings

RQ1: What are the significant factors that influence parents to choose and support their child to enroll in online learning?

The information provided in Table 8 was created from the responses received in question eight in the survey instrument. The eighth question in the survey was designed to understand the factors that influence parents to choose or support online learning for their child. The researcher utilized an emergent design approach from the literature review by creating a matrix to organize the research (Appendix E). This matrix was utilized to develop 13 factors for the parents to respond based on the research. The respondents had a Likert-type scale from one to four to identify for each factor. The value of one represented strongly disagree to four representing strongly agree. Table 8 shows frequencies and percentages of extreme end responses to strongly agree (i.e., point 4 on the Likert scale). Since the respondent responded to each factor, the table will not show a demonstrate sum of 100%.

Table 8

Identified Influences Impacting Parents to Choose or Support Online Learning

Influences	Frequency (n = 130)	Percent
Child's school does not have certified teachers	8	6.2%
Child has health issues or disability preventing attendance	23	17.7%
Child can take courses not offered at school	26	20.0%
Child would have dropped out without online option	26	20.0%
Child is academically behind and not successful previously	31	23.8%
Child lacks success in previous environment	36	27.7%
Parent wants to be more involved with child's education	51	39.2%
Child can repeat instruction and assignments	57	43.8%
Free online curriculum	59	45.4%
Child can participate in athletics and clubs	60	46.2%
Child can focus more with online learning	69	53.1%
Child can work at own pace and take breaks	78	60.0%
Alleviates issues that were occurring at the school	79	60.7%

The findings in Table 8 reported 60.7% of the respondents identified the most prominent influence to permitting their child to participate in the online program was to alleviate issues that were occurring at the school. The second most significant contributing factor was the child can work at their own pace and take breaks, which has a "strongly agree" response of 60.0%. The third highest factor was the child could focus more with online learning (53.1%). Only 6.2% of the parents strongly agreed their child not having a certified teacher at the school was a factor in choosing the online experience.

The information provided in Table 9 was created from the responses received in question eight in the survey instrument. The eighth question in the survey was designed to understand the factors that do not influence parents to choose or support online learning for their child. The

researcher utilized an emergent design approach from the literature review by creating a matrix to organize the research (Appendix E). This matrix was utilized to develop 13 factors for the parents to respond. The respondents had a Likert-type scale from one to four to identify. The value of one represented "strongly disagree"; four represented "strongly agree." Table 9 shows frequencies and percentages of extreme end responses to "strongly disagree" (i.e., point 1 on the Likert scale).

Table 9

Identified Influences Not Impacting Parents to Choose or Support Online Learning

Influences	Frequency (n = 130)	Percent
Child can work at own pace and take breaks	9	6.9%
Parent wants to be more involved with child's education	14	10.8%
Child can focus more with online learning	16	12.3%
Free online curriculum	21	16.2%
Alleviates issues that were occurring at the school	22	16.9%
Child can repeat instruction and assignments	22	16.9%
Child can participate in athletics and clubs	34	26.2%
Child lacks success in previous environment	48	36.9%
Child can take courses not offered at school	51	39.2%
Child is academically behind and not successful previously	66	50.8%
Child would have dropped out without online option	77	59.2%
Child has health issues or disability preventing attendance	81	62.3%
Child's school does not have certified teachers	94	72.3%

The findings in Table 9 reported 72.3% of the respondents reported their child not having a certified teacher at the school was not a factor in permitting their child to become an online student. In addition, 62.3% of the participants reported health issues or a disability was not an

influence. Also, 59.2% of the respondents "strongly disagreed" that their child dropping out of school was not a factor in their decision.

The ninth question in the survey was designed to identify the category of need influencing the parent to choose or support online learning for their child. The matrix identified five main categories of need emerging from the literature review (Appendix E). The categories are academic, parental, social, flexibility, and medical needs. The respondents had a Likert-type scale from one to four to identify. The value of one represented strongly disagree to four represented strongly agree. Table 10 shows frequencies and percentages of extreme end responses to "strongly agree" (i.e., point 4 on the Likert scale).

Table 10

Identified Category of Need for Parents

Overall Need	Frequency (n = 130)	Percent
Parental needs	27	20.7%
Medical needs	39	30.0%
Social needs	51	39.2%
Academic Needs	59	45.4%
Flexibility needs	75	57.7%

The findings in Table 10 reported 57.7% of the respondents "strongly agreed" their overall category of need was flexibility, followed by academic needs (45.4%). Only 20.7% of the participants "strongly agreed" parental needs were a factor.

The ninth question in the survey was also designed to identify the category of need not influencing the parent to choose or support online learning for their child. The matrix identified five main categories of need emerging from the literature review (Appendix E). The categories

are academic, parental, social, flexibility, and medical needs. The respondents had a Likert-type scale from one to four to identify. The value of one represented "strongly disagree" while four represented "strongly agree." Table 11 shows frequencies and percentages of extreme end responses to "strongly disagree" (i.e., point 1 on the Likert scale).

Table 11

Identified Category of Least Parent Need

Overall Need	Frequency (n = 130)	Percent
Flexibility Needs	10	7.7%
Social needs	18	13.8%
Academic Needs	19	14.6%
Parental needs	32	24.6%
Medical needs	46	35.4%

The findings in Table 11 reported 35.4% of the respondents "strongly disagreed" their overall category of need was medical, followed by parental needs (24.6%). Only 7.7% of the participants "strongly disagreed" parental needs were a factor.

RQ2: Do the factors identified by parents vary by one's educational level?

The information provided in Tables 12 through 18 was created from the responses received in question one and eight in the survey instrument. The first question in the survey was designed to find the level of education the respondent has acquired. The eighth question in the survey was designed to understand the factors influencing parents to choose or support online learning for their child. The researcher utilized an emergent design approach from the literature review by creating a matrix to organize the research (Appendix E). This matrix was utilized to develop 13 factors for the parents to respond based on the research. The respondents had a

Likert-type scale from one to four to identify. The value of one represented strongly disagree to four represented "strongly agree." The researcher filtered the data from question eight by the respondent's education level in question one. Tables 12 through 18 shows frequencies and percentages of extreme end responses to "strongly agree" by the respondents obtained education level (i.e., point 4 on the Likert scale).

Table 12

Parents' Identified Influences by Education Level: Some High School

Influences	Frequency (n = 3)	Percent
Child's school does not have certified teachers	0	0.0%
Child has health issues or disability preventing attendance	0	0.0%
Child can take courses not offered at school	0	0.0%
Child can work at own pace and take breaks	0	0.0%
Child is academically behind and not successful previously	0	0.0%
Child lacks success in previous environment	0	0.0%
Parent wants to be more involved with child's education	0	0.0%
Child can repeat instruction and assignments	0	0.0%
Free online curriculum	0	0.0%
Child can participate in athletics and clubs	0	0.0%
Child can focus more with online learning	0	0.0%
Child would have dropped out without online option	1	33.3%
Alleviates issues that were occurring at the school	2	66.7%

The findings in Table 12 reported 66.7% of the respondents who did not graduate from high school identified the most prominent influence to permitting their child to participate in the online program was to alleviate issues that were occurring at the school. The second most significant contributing factor was the child would have dropped out, which had a "strongly agree" response of 33.3%. The parents in this category did not identify any other factors.

Table 13

Parents' Identified Influences by Education Level: High School Diploma

Influences	Frequency (n = 28)	Percent
Child's school does not have certified teachers	0	0.0%
Child has health issues or disability preventing attendance	2	7.1%
Child can take courses not offered at school	2	7.1%
Child would have dropped out without online option	7	25.0%
Child is academically behind and not successful previously	7	25.0%
Child lacks success in previous environment	8	28.6%
Child can participate in athletics and clubs	10	35.7%
Parent wants to be more involved with child's education	14	50.0%
Child can repeat instruction and assignments	15	53.6%
Alleviates issues that were occurring at the school	15	53.6%
Free online curriculum	16	57.1%
Child can focus more with online learning	18	64.2%
Child can work at own pace and take breaks	22	78.6%

The findings in Table 13 reported 78.6% of the respondents who earned a high school diploma identified the most prominent influence to permitting their child to participate in the online program was the child can work at own pace and take breaks. The second most significant contributing factor was the child can focus more with online learning, which had a "strongly agree" response of 64.2%.

Table 14

Parents' Identified Influences by Education Level: Trade School

Influences	Frequency (n = 10)	Percent
Child's school does not have certified teachers	1	10.0%
Child lacks success in previous environment	1	10.0%
Child can take courses not offered at school	1	10.0%
Child has health issues or disability preventing attendance	2	20.0%
Child is academically behind and not successful previously	2	20.0%
Free online curriculum	3	30.0%
Parent wants to be more involved with child's education	4	40.0%
Child can participate in athletics and clubs	4	40.0%
Child would have dropped out without online option	4	40.0%
Child can repeat instruction and assignments	5	50.0%
Alleviates issues that were occurring at the school	5	50.0%
Child can focus more with online learning	7	70.0%
Child can work at own pace and take breaks	7	70.0%

The findings in Table 14 reported 70.0% of the respondents who completed trade school identified the most prominent influence to permitting their child to participate in the online program was the child can work at own pace and take breaks. They also identified their child can focus more with online learning at the same rate of 70%. The third most significant contributing factor was the program alleviates issues that were occurring at the school, which had a "strongly agree" response of 50.0%. They also identified their child can repeat instruction and assignments at the same rate of 50%.

Table 15

Parents' Identified Influences by Education Level: Some College

Influences	Frequency (n = 42)	Percent
Child's school does not have certified teachers	4	9.5%
Child has health issues or disability preventing attendance	8	19.0%
Child can take courses not offered at school	10	23.8%
Child would have dropped out without online option	10	23.8%
Child is academically behind and not successful previously	13	31.0%
Child lacks success in previous environment	13	31.0%
Parent wants to be more involved with child's education	15	25.7%
Child can repeat instruction and assignments	17	40.5%
Child can participate in athletics and clubs	18	42.9%
Free online curriculum	19	45.2%
Child can focus more with online learning	22	52.4%
Child can work at own pace and take breaks	24	57.1%
Alleviates issues that were occurring at the school	28	66.7%

The findings in Table 15 reported 66.7% of the respondents who obtained some college experience identified the most prominent influence to permitting their child to participate in the online program was to alleviate issues that were occurring at the school. The second most significant contributing factor was the child can work at own pace and take breaks, which had a "strongly agree" response of 57.1%.

Table 16

Parents' Identified Influences by Education Level: Bachelor's Degree

Influences	Frequency (n = 27)	Percent
Child's school does not have certified teachers	0	0.0%
Child would have dropped out without online option	2	14.8%
Child is academically behind and not successful previously	3	11.1%
Child has health issues or disability preventing attendance	4	14.8%
Child can take courses not offered at school	6	22.2%
Child lacks success in previous environment	7	25.9%
Parent wants to be more involved with child's education	10	37.0%
Child can repeat instruction and assignments	10	37.0%
Free online curriculum	11	40.7%
Child can participate in athletics and clubs	12	44.4%
Child can focus more with online learning	13	48.1%
Child can work at own pace and take breaks	17	63.0%
Alleviates issues that were occurring at the school	18	66.7%

The findings in Table 16 reported 66.7% of the respondents who earned a Bachelor's Degree identified the most prominent influence to permitting their child to participate in the online program was to alleviate issues that were occurring at the school. The second most significant contributing factor was the child can work at own pace and take breaks, which had a "strongly agree" response of 63.0%.

Table 17

Parents' Identified Influences by Education Level: Master's Degree

Influences	Frequency (n = 15)	Percent
Child's school does not have certified teachers	1	6.7%
Child has health issues or disability preventing attendance	2	7.1%
Child would have dropped out without online option	2	13.3%
Child is academically behind and not successful previously	3	20.0%
Child can take courses not offered at school	4	26.7%
Parent wants to be more involved with child's education	4	26.7%
Child lacks success in previous environment	5	33.3%
Child can focus more with online learning	5	33.3%
Free online curriculum	6	40.0%
Child can participate in athletics and clubs	7	46.7%
Child can repeat instruction and assignments	7	46.7%
Alleviates issues that were occurring at the school	9	60.0%
Child can work at own pace and take breaks	10	66.7%

The findings in Table 17 reported 66.7% of the respondents who earned a Master's Degree identified the most prominent influence to permitting their child to participate in the online program was the child can work at own pace and take breaks. The second most significant contributing factor was the program alleviates issues that were occurring at the school, which had a "strongly agree" response of 60.0%.

Table 18

Parents' Identified Influences by Education Level: Post Masters

Influences	Frequency (n = 5)	Percent
Child's school does not have certified teachers	0	0.0%
Child can take courses not offered at school	0	0.0%
Child would have dropped out without online option	0	0.0%
Child has health issues or disability preventing attendance	1	20.0%
Child is academically behind and not successful previously	1	20.0%
Child lacks success in previous environment	1	20.0%
Parent wants to be more involved with child's education	1	20.0%
Child can focus more with online learning	1	20.0%
Free online curriculum	2	40.0%
Child can participate in athletics and clubs	2	40.0%
Child can repeat instruction and assignments	2	40.0%
Child can work at own pace and take breaks	3	60.0%
Alleviates issues that were occurring at the school	4	80.0%

The findings in Table 18 reported 80.0% of the respondents who had a post Master's education level identified the most prominent influence to permitting their child to participate in the online program was to alleviate issues that were occurring at the school. The second most significant contributing factor was the child can work at own pace and take breaks, which had a "strongly agree" response of 60.0%.

RQ3: Do the factors identified by parents vary by one's income level?

The information provided in Tables 19 through 22 were created from the responses received in question four and eight in the survey instrument. The fourth question in the survey was designed to find the respondents' range of gross income. The eighth question in the survey was designed to understand the factors that influence parents to choose or support online learning

for their child. The researcher utilized an emergent design approach from the literature review by creating a matrix to organize the research (Appendix E). This matrix was utilized to develop 13 factors for the parents to respond based on the research. The respondents had a Likert-type scale from one to four to identify. The value of one represented strongly disagree to four represented "strongly agree." The researcher filtered the data from question eight by the respondent's range of income in question four. Tables 19 through 22 show frequencies and percentages of extreme end responses to "strongly agree" by the respondents' obtained education level (i.e., point 4 on the Likert scale).

Table 19

Parents' Identified Influences by Income Level: $30,000 or Less

Influences	Frequency (n = 27)	Percent
Child's school does not have certified teachers	0	0.0%
Child has health issues or disability preventing attendance	1	4.2%
Child can take courses not offered at school	1	4.2%
Child would have dropped out without online option	4	16.7%
Child is academically behind and not successful previously	4	16.7%
Child lacks success in previous environment	4	16.7%
Child can participate in athletics and clubs	6	24.0%
Child can repeat instruction and assignments	7	29.2%
Free online curriculum	9	37.5%
Parent wants to be more involved with child's education	9	37.5%
Child can focus more with online learning	9	37.5%
Alleviates issues that were occurring at the school	10	41.7%
Child can work at own pace and take breaks	13	54.2%

The findings in Table 19 reported 54.2% of the respondents who earned $30,000 or less identified the most prominent influence to permitting their child to participate in the online

program was their child can work at own pace and take breaks. The second most significant contributing factor was the program alleviates issues that were occurring at the school, which had a "strongly agree" response of 41.7%.

Table 20

Parents' Identified Influences by Income Level: $30,000 to $44,999

Influences	Frequency (n = 27)	Percent
Child's school does not have certified teachers	1	4.5%
Child has health issues or disability preventing attendance	4	18.2%
Child can take courses not offered at school	5	22.7%
Child would have dropped out without online option	8	36.4%
Child is academically behind and not successful previously	8	36.4%
Child can participate in athletics and clubs	8	36.4%
Child lacks success in previous environment	9	40.9%
Free online curriculum	12	54.5%
Child can focus more with online learning	14	63.6%
Alleviates issues that were occurring at the school	15	68.2%
Parent wants to be more involved with child's education	16	72.7%
Child can repeat instruction and assignments	16	72.7%
Child can work at own pace and take breaks	16	72.7%

The findings in Table 20 reported there are three prominent influences for the respondents whose gross income was in the range of $30,000 to $44,999. These three influences are the parent wants to be more involved with child's education, the child can repeat instruction and assignments, and the child can work at own pace and take breaks (72.7%).

Table 21

Parents' Identified Influences by Income Level: $45,000 to $59,999

Influences	Frequency (n = 27)	Percent
Child's school does not have certified teachers	1	5.3%
Child would have dropped out without online option	5	26.3%
Child is academically behind and not successful previously	5	26.3%
Child lacks success in previous environment	5	26.3%
Child has health issues or disability preventing attendance	6	31.6%
Parent wants to be more involved with child's education	6	31.6%
Child can take courses not offered at school	7	36.8%
Child can repeat instruction and assignments	9	47.4%
Free online curriculum	10	52.6%
Child can focus more with online learning	10	52.6%
Child can work at own pace and take breaks	10	52.6%
Child can participate in athletics and clubs	11	57.9%
Alleviates issues that were occurring at the school	14	73.7%

The findings in Table 21 reported 73.7% of the respondents whose income was in the range of $45,000 to $59,999 identified the most prominent influence was to alleviate issues that were occurring at the school. The second most significant contributing factor was the child can participate in athletics and clubs, which had a "strongly agree" response of 57.9%.

Table 22

Parents' Identified Influences by Income Level: $60,000 or More

Influences	Frequency (n = 27)	Percent
Child's school does not have certified teachers	4	6.6%
Child would have dropped out without online option	7	11.5%
Child has health issues or disability preventing attendance	10	16.4%
Child can take courses not offered at school	12	19.7%
Child is academically behind and not successful previously	13	21.3%
Parent wants to be more involved with child's education	15	24.6%
Child lacks success in previous environment	16	26.2%
Child can repeat instruction and assignments	22	36.1%
Free online curriculum	25	41.0%
Child can participate in athletics and clubs	28	45.9%
Child can focus more with online learning	30	49.2%
Alleviates issues that were occurring at the school	35	57.4%
Child can work at own pace and take breaks	38	62.3%

The findings in Table 22 reported 62.3% of the respondents who earned $60,000 or more identified the most prominent influence to permitting their child to participate in the online program was to alleviate issues that were occurring at the school. The second most significant contributing factor was the child can work at own pace and take breaks, which has a "strongly agree" response of 57.4%.

RQ4: Do parents view their child as having received and earned a quality education through their online experiences?

The final question in the survey was designed to gauge and determine if the parent identified their child as being successful in the online program compared to one's learning experience. The respondents had a Likert-type scale from one to four to identify. The value of

one represented “strongly disagree;” while four represented “strongly agree.” Table 23 shows the mean and standard deviation for the categories of their child being more successful and less successful.

Table 23

Parents’ Perspective of Their Child’s Success in Online Learning.

Category	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
More successful	130	1	4	3.37	.706
Less successful	130	1	4	1.52	.696

Question 10 in the survey had 45% of the participants “strongly agreed” that their child is more successful in online learning as opposed to their previous learning experience. This response was followed up with 42% “somewhat agreeing” their child is more successful with an overall 87% agreement combined. These results align with the mean value calculation in Table 23 of 3.37. Similarly, there is a 52% response rate from the respondents that “strongly disagree” that their child is less successful. This question also had a 31% “somewhat disagree” response yielding an overall 83% “disagreeing” that their child was less successful in the online program. These results correlate with the mean value calculation represented in Table 23 of 1.52.

RQ5: Has student success, as measured by grade point average (GPA), increased upon entering the online program?

The researcher gathered the grade point average (GPA) of each online student before he or she entered the program to create Table 24.

Table 24

Online Students' Grade Point Average (GPA) Before Entering Online School

Category	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean (GPA)	Std. Deviation
Middle School	65	1	4	1.78	1.245
High School	156	1	4	1.72	1.046
Overall	221	1	4	1.75	1.122

Middle School students had a grade point average of 1.78 before entering the online program along with high school students having a 1.72. Overall, the grade point average for all the online students was 1.75.

In Table 25, the researcher gathered the current grade point average (GPA) of each online student in the program for the third term that ended on March 6, 2020.

Table 25

Online Students' Grade Point Average (GPA) After Entering Online School

Category	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean (GPA)	Std. Deviation
Middle School	65	1	4	2.45	1.114
High School	156	1	4	1.82	1.004
Overall	221	1	4	2.14	1.074

Middle School students had a grade point average of 2.45 after entering the online program along with high school students having a 1.82. Overall, the grade point average for all the online students was 2.14.

Summary

Chapter 4 presented a non-evaluative report of the quantitative data collecting the research findings and responses to the survey. The chapter begins with a description of the research, research questions, and a description of the population and sample. The researcher

then describes the response rates, and how the data were collected and analyzed. The chapter concludes with the findings and a chapter summary. The respondents to the survey were overwhelmingly female comprising of 86.9%. The three major factors that influence parents to permit their child to enroll in virtual school are it alleviates issues that were occurring at the school, the child can work at their own pace and take breaks, and the child can focus more. These three factors are categorized in the academic and flexibility overall need grouping. The research also identified factors that parents had limited concerns about teacher certification, health issues preventing attendance, and course offerings. Parents surveyed had a strong positive response regarding to their child being academically more successful in the online program as compared to the traditional face-to-face method of instruction. Chapter 5 in this study will identify the researcher's conclusions, implications, and recommendations utilizing the findings presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify and describe the perceived influences that cause parents to choose and support online learning as an alternative method of learning for their children. The study will further identify, in accordance with parents, if they view their child received a quality education through their online experience.

Overview of the Problem

Online education is a relatively new concept for West Virginia; it has become essential and timely to understand the unique characteristics and rationale of the state's students who participate in the program. The shift to online learning indicates a pivotal development for West Virginia public schools due to the declining enrollment and shortage of certified teachers (R. Duerring, personal communication, February 5, 2018). For the past several years, the population of West Virginias has decreased 2% annually (Wiederspiel, 2018). While the state's population continues to decline, there has been an increase in the number of students who become homeschooled (Jarvis, 2018). In addition, families leaving the state or choosing to homeschool their children have contributed to a decline in public-school enrollment. West Virginia public schools are funded primarily by student enrollment; therefore, declining enrollment has a direct impact on public school funding (EdBuild, 2018). As there remains a direct correlation with enrollment and public school funding, the results of attrition factors have impeded the financial support provided to West Virginia schools. Diminishing school funds will result in a reduction of staff and will negatively affect both the curriculum and extracurricular programs while impacting students' academic success and achievement. As an outcome to balance a school

district's budget, the decisions to layoff or terminate teachers and personnel, close schools, and reduce programs will occur with declining enrollment.

Presently, West Virginia is also facing a shortage of teachers in the subject areas or disciplines of mathematics, science, and special education (Nelson, 2018). In the 2018-2019 school year, West Virginia had over 600 classrooms without a certified teacher (Plummer, 2018). In the content area of mathematics alone during this timeframe, the number of students taught by a substitute teacher was 38% (Quinn, 2018). Counties who face a shortage of certified teachers have remedied this challenge by provided online courses as an alternative for their students.

One solution to address declining enrollment and teacher shortages is to support and implement online educational opportunities (Schachter, 2012). Online programs can help to alleviate the issues and causes that attribute a student to drop out of school by providing students the opportunity to seek an education at their own pace. An online school can avert or deter students from leaving public education to attend a private school or be homeschooled. Online learning has been proven to promote equity across the board, no matter where they live, or what school they attend (Morgan, 2015).

Parents inevitably decide to support and permit their son or daughter to participate in online learning and they possess the authority and influence to determine whether their child will continue utilizing this nontraditional method of learning (Joshi, 2014). There is a need to understand the rationale and reasons why parents support online instruction and programs.

Research Questions

1. What are the significant factors that influence parents to choose and support their child to enroll in online learning?
2. Do the factors identified by parents vary by one's educational level?

3. Do the factors identified by parents vary by one's income level?
4. Do parents view their child as having received and earned a quality education through their online experiences as compared to the traditional face-to-face method of instruction?
5. Has student success, as measured by grade point average (GPA), increased upon entering the online program?

Population and Sample

The target population for the study was middle and high school students who participated in the virtual program in the Kanawha County School District in West Virginia. In 2018-19, Kanawha County had 26,230 students enrolled in grades K-12. The study population ($N = 221$) represented parents who have a child in the virtual program either at the middle or high programmatic level. The parents surveyed had a child or children either in the full-time virtual program taking six virtual courses or in the part-time virtual program taking four or fewer classes. Of the sample population, 130 parents chose to participate which yielded a 58.8% return rate.

The demographical results of the survey show that most of the parents participating had attended college at some point (32.3%), and 97.7% classified themselves as being White/Caucasian. Other respondents' level of education was 21.5% received their high school diploma and 20.8% of the participants had earned a bachelor's degree. The majority of the respondents were between the age of 36 to 45 years comprising 57.7% overall and 48.4% earned more than $60,000 gross income a year. Demographic data also noted 19% of the respondents had a gross income below $30,000 a year. The United States Census Bureau identifies families earning less than $30,000 with family size consisting of five or less members as being in poverty

(2020). In West Virginia, 17.8% residents were living in poverty (U. S. Census Bureau, 2020). Overall, 87.7% of the respondents had one child enrolled in the online program, 11.5% have two children, and .8% have four or more children participating.

Methods

The researcher completed the process for permission as required by Marshall University's Institutional Review Board (Appendix A). Before the implementation of the study, the researcher received approval from the Superintendent of Kanawha County Schools (Appendix B).

The parents of virtual school students received an email to make them aware of the purpose and significance of the study. Included in the message was an explanation there were no foreseeable risks to participating in the research and the participants' responses were completely anonymous. The parents were made aware they would receive no direct benefit from participating in the study/survey, and it was voluntary (Appendix C). The parent or student was unidentifiable from the participation and responses to the survey.

The data were collected from a cross-sectional survey instrument designed to collect data using Likert-type and multiple-choice responses from the parents in Kanawha County, West Virginia, who have a child in the virtual program. A Google Form was used to operationalize the research study. The survey was distributed to the sample population via a hyperlink embedded in an email to the sample population. The researcher received the responses from the participants electronically once the participant clicked submit. The data for analysis came from the participants' responses to the questions in the survey. The survey was available for the parents to complete for a two-week period. The parents received a reminder email about the survey after one week. The survey is available in Appendix D.

Summary of Findings and Conclusions

Research Question 1: What are the significant factors that influence parents to choose and support their child to enroll in online learning?

The three major factors that influence parents to permit their child to enroll in virtual school are it alleviates issues that were occurring at the school, the child can work at their own pace and take breaks, and the child can focus more. These three factors are categorized in the academic and flexibility overall need grouping. Aligning the results of the survey to compare with the category of need had similar results, whereas the parent identified the need for more flexibility as the greatest overall need for permitting their child to be in the online program followed by one's academic needs. Other high reporting results also identified the child being able to participate in athletics and clubs, and free online curriculum were supportive factors. Therefore, most of the parents perceived their child needed to be removed from the traditional setting to alleviate problematic issues that were occurring at the school, which contributed to various academic deficiencies. Providing the opportunity for parents to utilize a free online program and continuing to permit their child the availability to participate in school functions, clubs, and athletics were contributing factors.

The research also identified factors that parents had limited concerns about. These factors were teacher certification, health issues preventing attendance, and course offerings. The lack of appropriate teacher certification is significant in West Virginia, as over 600 classrooms had a substitute teacher for the 2018-2019 school year. However, certification is not a major factor for parents when deciding to permit their child to become an online student.

Research Question 2: Do the factors identified by parents vary by one's educational level?

The three major factors that influence parents to permit their child to enroll in virtual school were it alleviates issues that were occurring at school, the child could work at his/her own pace and take breaks, and the child can focus better. However, this changed when sorting the data by the parent's educational level. Parents who obtained some high school, but did not graduate, identified the second highest factor as being their child would have dropped out. Parents who had received their high school diploma selected free online curriculum as a more significant influence. All other categories of educational obtainment for the survey participants matched the overall results in research question one.

Research Question 3: Do the factors identified by parents vary by one's income level?

The findings identified some factors that did vary by the parents' income level, and some that remained the same throughout. Parents in the income range from $45,000 to $59,999 identified their child being able to participate in athletics and clubs at the school was a significant influence (57.9%). Whereas the remaining three income levels of parents did not identify this as being highly influential. In addition, 72.7% of the parents in the income range within $30,000 to $44,999 responded they wanted to be more involved with their child's education. All other categories of educational obtainment for the survey participants matched the overall results in research question one.

Research Question 4: Do parents view their child as having received and earned a quality education through their online experiences as compared to the traditional face-to-face method of instruction?

Parents surveyed had a strong positive response regarding to their child being academically more successful in the online program as compared to the traditional face-to-face

method of instruction. Participating parents in the study overall had a positive view of online education and their child's academic success (87%). Parents will keep their child in the educational setting they are in when they view their child being successful (Fisher, 2006). Therefore, it is more than likely that these parents' children will remain in the program, and that they will not seek a different educational route away from public education. In conclusion, online programs in West Virginia can help keep students enrolled in public schools while successfully completing one's academic studies.

RQ5: Has student success, as measured by grade point average (GPA), increased upon entering the online program?

Student grade point averages overall increase after entering the online program at each programmatic level. Middle school students had a greater success with a .67 GPA increase and high school had a .10 increase.

Implications

The results of the study led the researcher to conclude most of the parents participating in the study perceived their child needed to be removed from the traditional classroom setting to alleviate problematic issues that were negatively affecting academic achievement. Parents also maintained a strong need for more academic flexibility, which provides flexibility to permit their child to work anywhere and at any time. Parents participating in the study identified the features to utilize a free online program and the availability for their child to be able to participate in school activities were contributing factors to support online learning. Another important conclusion to the study is parents significantly perceive their child as being more academically successful within an online learning environment.

Eighteen counties in West Virginia have begun implementing full-time online programs. The findings in this study may be relevant to district leaders to consider the need to implement or continue the use of an online program. These findings can also be useful for parents if they are considering another option for their child other than the traditional school setting. A parent pursuing the possibility of permitting their child to become an online student may find reassurance from the results of this research, knowing their child can become more successful while learning in a different, nontraditional, manner.

Not only are these findings important for district leaders and parents, but they may also be vital for principals, school counselors, and other school personnel. The results of the research concluded that 38.3% of the parents first learned about the online program from the child's principal or counselor. These findings may be useful for educators to know that 87% of the participating parents identified their child as being more successful in the online program. Educators also need to understand the significant factors that influence parents to choose and support their child to enroll in online learning. Educators having this knowledge can improve student referral and support of the online program.

Future Research Recommendations

This research focused on the parent's perceived influences that caused them to choose and support online learning as an alternative method of learning for their child. The study further identified, in accordance with parents, if they view their child as receiving a quality education through their online experience. Findings in this study from the survey data analysis have led the researcher to make the following recommendations:

1. The research identified the greatest significant factor that influenced parents to choose and support online learning due to it alleviating issues occurring at the school.

Future research may involve identifying what these specific issues are that have occurred in the school setting.

2. Future research may involve replicating the study in a qualitative format to identify factors regarding why parents decide not to permit their child to become an online student.
3. A limitation of this study is it is restricted to the participants who reside in Kanawha County, West Virginia. Future researchers may consider expanding this study and obtaining a broader approach to include all 55 West Virginia counties and districts in surrounding states.
4. For future studies, it is recommended to replicate the research to include district administrators, principals, teachers, and students.
5. On March 16, 2020, all schools in West Virginia were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic after the data from the survey were collected and analyzed. This research only includes the parents who permitted their child to become an online student prior to the schools closing. Future researchers may consider expanding this study to compare parental viewpoints of online learning before and after the COVID-19 pandemic leading to all schools being closed and all students learning from home.
6. Future research may involve identifying the support and intervention factors that contribute to an online student's success.
7. The research identified a large percentage of parents or guardians who identified themselves being older than the average age range for a child in school (45 years or older). For future studies, it is recommended to expand the study to identify whether or not the respondent is the Grandparent of the child.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

MARSHALL UNIVERSITY
www.marshall.edu

Office of Research Integrity
Institutional Review Board
One John Marshall Drive
Huntington, WV 25755

FWA 00002704

IRB1 #00002205
IRB2 #00003206

January 24, 2020

Tom Hisiro, M.A.
Leadership Studies

RE: IRBNet ID# 1364238-4
At: Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral)

Dear Dr. Hisiro:

Protocol Title:	[1364238-4] VIRTUAL PUBLIC SCHOOL: A STUDY OF THE PARENTS PERSPECTIVE	
Site Location:	MUGC	
Submission Type:	Amendment/Modification	APPROVED
Review Type:	Exempt Review	

The amendment to the above listed study was approved today by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Designee. This amendment is changes to reduce the number of options a parent can select on the Likert scale, an additional question, and edits to some other questions. The survey is still anonymous.

This study is for student Valery Harper.

If you have any questions, please contact the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Coordinator Anna Robinson at (304) 696-2477 or robinsonn1@marshall.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

Sincerely,

Bruce F. Day, ThD, CIP
Director, Office of Research Integrity

APPENDIX B: LETTER OF APPROVAL BY SUPERINTENDENT

MARSHALL UNIVERSITY

A study of the Virtual Students Perspective

I give consent for you to approach parents and students who are virtual students to participate in a study of the virtual students' perspective.

I have read your request and understand that:

- The role of the school is voluntary
- I may decide to withdraw the county participation at any time without penalty.
- Virtual students in grades 6 – 12 will be invited to participate and that permission will be sought from them and also their parents.
- Only learners who consent and whose parents consent will participate in the project.
- All information obtained will be treated in strictest confidence.
- The learners' names will not be used and individual learners will not be identifiable in any written reports about the study.
- Schools will not be identifiable in any written reports about the study.
- Participants may withdraw from the study at any time.
- A Report of the findings will be made available to the County.
- I may seek further information on the project from Valery Harper at (304) 348-7738.

Ronald E. Duerring
Printed Name

Ronald E. Duerring
Superintendents Signature

12/17/18
Date

APPENDIX C: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

A study of the Parents Perspective of Virtual School

Marshall University IRB

Approved on:	12/18/19
Study number:	1364238

Dear Virtual Parent,

We are writing to request for you to participate in a research study in order to complete my Doctoral Studies at Marshall University. The study has been approved by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Dr. Hisiro is the principal investigator and Valery Harper is the co-investigator. The purpose of this study is to identify and describe the perceived influences that cause parents to choose and support online education as an alternative method of learning for their child or children. Read the information below and ask any questions you might have. If you agree to participate there is a link at the bottom for you to begin the survey.

Online learning in K-12 is new in West Virginia and the results of this study may assist counties to support students and parents' needs. The results of this study can also assist county and district personnel in making necessary changes and improvements to meet the needs of their future online students. Your perspective is critical to us in order to make this happen.

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study and it is completely anonymous. The collection of responses will be anonymous therefore there is no way to identify you or your child. You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study.

Your participation is voluntary. We will be very careful to keep your answers to the survey private. Before and after the study we will keep all information we collect locked up and password protected.

If you have questions about the study, contact:

Dr. Tom Hisiro (304) 746-2516
Valery Harper (304)348-7738

If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research participant you may contact the Marshall University Office of Research Integrity at (304) 696-4303

Please print this page for your records.

To agree to be in the research study describe above, and begin the survey, click the link below. By clicking the link, you are agreeing to participate.

APPENDIX D: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Virtual Parent/Guardian Perspective Study
Survey Questions

1. Place a check mark that describes your highest level of education as of today's date.

Some high school	
High school graduate	
Trade school certification	
Some college	
Bachelor's Degree	
Master's Degree	
Post Master's	

2. Place a check mark that describes your gender.

Male	
Female	
Choose not to identify	

3. Place a check mark beside the response item that describes your age group.

35 years or less	
36 - 45	
46 – 55 years	
56 or older	

4. What is your gross household income in 2018 before taxes?

$30,000 or less	
$30,000 - $44,999	
$45,000 - $59,999	
$60,000 or more	

5. Place a check mark by the response item that describes your race/ethnicity.

Asian/Pacific Islander	
Black/African American	
Hispanic/Latino	
White/Caucasian	
Native American	
Other	

6. How did you initially receive information about the online program (Check one)?

Newspaper	
Social Media (Facebook, etc)	
School Counselor	
School Administrator	
Website	
Friend	
Television newscast	
Letter mailed to home	
My child	

7. How many children do you have participating in the online program?

1	
2	
3	
4 or more	

8. Rate the following statements regarding the possible influences that affected why you chose or support online learning for your child or children?

Student lacks success in the traditional educational environment

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

Free online quality curriculum

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

Taking online public education courses allows my child to participate in school athletics and events as well as traveling teams

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

My child's school doesn't have certified teachers in some subjects or fields

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

My child can take courses not offered at the school

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

My child would drop out if they would have remained in the traditional school environment

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

My child is academically behind or not successful in the traditional school environment

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

Online education alleviates the issues that were occurring at the school

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

I want to be more involved with my child's education

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

My child has health issues or a disability preventing him/her from attending school

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

My child can work at their own pace, take breaks, and work anytime the day or night

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

My child can repeat instruction and or assignments as many times as needed to learn from online courses

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

My child can focus more with online learning than attending school

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

9. Rate the following statements on a scale representing your overall reason why online education was chosen for your child.

Academic Needs

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

Parental Needs

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

Social Needs

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

Flexibility Needs

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

Medical Needs

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

10. Rate the following statements on a scale representing your overall reason why online education was chosen for your child

My child is more successful in online learning than their previous learning experience.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

My child is less successful in online learning than their previous learning experience.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

APPENDIX E: ORGANIZATION OF RESEARCH

Parents' Perceptions for choosing online education

1. Student is bored in the traditional educational environment and online keeps my child more interested.
2. Free online quality curriculum
3. Taking online public education courses allows my child to participate in school athletics and events as well as traveling teams
4. My child's school doesn't have certified teachers in some subjects or fields
5. My child can take courses not offered at the school
6. My child would drop out if they would have remained in the traditional school environment
7. My child is academically behind or not successful in the traditional school environment
8. Online education allows my child to work at any location
9. Online education alleviates the issues that were occurring at the school
10. Online education provides support
11. I work from home and can oversee my child's education with online courses
12. I want to be more involved with my child's education
13. My child has health issues or a disability preventing him/her from attending school
14. My child can work at their own pace, take breaks, and work anytime the day or night
15. My child can choose the best environment to work in
16. My child can repeat instruction and or assignments as many times as needed to learn from online courses
17. My child receives more immediate feedback on their progress from online courses
18. My child is not comfortable attending the traditional school setting
19. My child can focus more with online learning
20. My child has anxiety

Category	**Occurrences**
Academic Needs	20
Parental Needs	9
Social Needs	12
Flexibility Need	7
Medical Need	5

Alphabetically Organized

Author(s)	**Year**	**Finding**	**Category**
Allday & Allday	2011	Benefits for students with disabilities	Academic Need

Allday & Allday	2011	Flexible pacing	Flexibility Need
Allday & Allday	2011	Work at preferred times	Flexibility Need
Allday & Allday	2011	Ability to take breaks when needed	Flexibility Need
Allday & Allday	2011	Ability to choose the environment to work in	Flexibility Need
Allday & Allday	2011	Extended time	Flexibility Need
Andrus	2009	Students can participate in traveling athletic teams	Social Need
Barthe	2013	Homeschool parents prefer virtual	Parent Need
Beem	2010	To be instructed by a certified and qualified teacher	Academic Need
Black	2009	Parent is highly involved with child	Parent Need
Campbell	2012	Student's performance tests results are higher	Academic Need
Carter & Rice	2016	Student in a virtual class can have assignments repeated as many times as needed	Academic Need
Carter & Rice	2016	Obtain immediate feedback	Academic Need
Clemens	2002	Providing quality curriculum is a challenge for homeschool families	Parent Need
Crockett	2017	Student not content with traditional education because bored.	Academic Need
Crockett	2017	Student not content with traditional education because academically behind.	Academic Need
Friend & Johnston	2005	Traveling parents can take their child with them	Parent Need
Green	2007	Parents want more involvement with child's education	Parent Need
Grubb	1998	Parents working at home can have their child at home with them	Parent Need
Grubb	1998	Free Curriculum and support	Parent Need
McConnell	2017	Free online curriculum for home-schooled children	Parent Need

McConnell	2017	Taking online public education online courses allows my child to participate in school athletics and activities	Social Need
McLean	1998	Student is not comfortable in the school social environment	Social Need
McLean	1998	Student has anxiety that prevents them from attending school	Medical Need
Morgan	2015	To take courses not offered at the school	Academic Need
Morgan	2015	Online students have excellent academic results	Academic Need
Morgan	2015	Parents have more responsibility for their child's education	Parent Need
Morgan	2015	Students who have a disability or medical condition that prevents them from attending school	Medical Need
Morgan	2015	Medical condition prevents student from attending school	Medical Need
Morgan	2015	Student has a medical condition that prevents them from attending school	Medical Need
NACTAF	2010	Online education can provide certified teachers	Academic Need
Repetto, Cavanaugh, Wayer, Liu	2010	To prevent child from dropping out	Social Need
Repetto, Cavanaugh, Wayer, Liu	2010	Keep at-risk students in school	Social Need
Rice	2006	Students with chronic health issues can benefit	Medical Need
Roblyer, M.D.	2006	Alleviate the issues and causes that attribute a student to drop out	Social Need
Roblyer & Marshall	2003	Course will not fit in child's schedule	Academic need
Roblyer & Marshall	2003	At-risk students can benefit from a virtual program	Social Need
Romanowski	2006	Child works at a quicker pace than a traditional environment	Academic Need
Tuck	2013	To prevent student from dropping out	Social Need
Tuck	2013	Child unsuccessful in the traditional school setting	Academic Need

Tuck	2013	Flexibility of online learning	Academic Need
Tuck	2013	Virtual programs provide the ability for the student to focus	Social Need
Tuck	2013	Work at own pace	Flexibility Need
Tuck	2013	To prevent student from going to homeschool	Social Need
Weller	2018	Personalized learning	Academic Need
Weller	2018	Opportunity to achieve more	Academic Need
Weller	2018	A more harmonious environment	Social Need
Weller	2018	Choice of course curriculum	Academic Need
Wicks	2010	No difference in academic results in comparing online to traditional method	Academic Need
Wiederspiel	2018	Courses not available at the school.	Academic Need

Emergent Design for Parents' Perceptions for Choosing Online Education

Organized by Date

Author(s)	**Year**	**Finding**	**Category**
Grubb	1998	Free Curriculum and support	Parent Need
Grubb	1998	Parents working at home can have their child at home with them	Parent Need
McLean	1998	Student is not comfortable in the school social environment	Social Need
McLean	1998	Student has anxiety that prevents them from attending school	Medical Need
Roblyer & Marshall	2003	Course will not fit in child's schedule	Academic need

Roblyer & Marshall	2003	At-risk students can benefit from a virtual program	Social Need
Clemens	2002	Providing quality curriculum is a challenge for homeschool families	Parent Need
Friend & Johnston	2005	Traveling parents can take their child with them	Parent Need
Rice	2006	Students with chronic health issues can benefit	Medical Need
Roblyer, M.D.	2006	Alleviate the issues and causes that attribute a student to drop out	Social Need
Romanowski	2006	Child works at a quicker pace than a traditional environment	Academic Need
Green	2007	Parents want more involvement with child's education	Parent Need
Andrus	2009	Students can participate in traveling athletic teams	Social Need
Black	2009	Parent is highly involved with child	Parent Need
Beem	2010	To be instructed by a certified and qualified teacher	Academic Need
Crockett	2017	Student not content with traditional education because bored.	Academic Need
Crockett	2017	Student not content with traditional education because academically behind.	Academic Need
NACTAF	2010	Online education can provide certified teachers	Academic Need
Repetto, Cavanaugh, Wayer, Liu	2010	To prevent child from dropping out	Social Need
Repetto, Cavanaugh, Wayer, Liu	2010	Keep at-risk students in school	Social Need
Wicks	2010	No difference in academic results in comparing online to traditional method	Academic Need
Allday & Allday	2011	Benefits for students with disabilities	Academic Need
Allday & Allday	2011	Flexible pacing	Flexibility Need
Allday & Allday	2011	Work at preferred times	Flexibility Need

Allday & Allday	2011	Ability to take breaks when needed	Flexibility Need
Allday & Allday	2011	Ability to choose the environment to work in	Flexibility Need
Allday & Allday	2011	Extended time	Flexibility Need
Campbell	2012	Student's performance tests results are higher	Academic Need
Tuck	2013	Virtual programs can prevent students from dropping out	Social Need
Barthe	2013	Homeschool parents prefer virtual	Parent Need
Tuck	2013	To prevent student from dropping out	Social Need
Tuck	2013	Child unsuccessful in the traditional school setting	Academic Need
Tuck	2013	Flexibility of online learning	Academic Need
Tuck	2013	Virtual programs provide the ability for the student to focus	Social Need
Tuck	2013	Work at own pace	Flexibility Need
Tuck	2013	To prevent student from going to homeschool	Social Need
Morgan	2015	To take courses not offered at the school	Academic Need
Morgan	2015	Online students have excellent academic results	Academic Need
Morgan	2015	Parents have more responsibility for their child's education	Parent Need
Morgan	2015	Students who have a disability or medical condition that prevents them from attending school	Medical Need
Morgan	2015	Medical condition prevents student from attending school	Medical Need
Morgan	2015	Student has a medical condition that prevents them from attending school	Medical Need
Carter & Rice	2016	Student in a virtual class can have assignments repeated as many times as needed	Academic Need
Carter & Rice	2016	Obtain immediate feedback	Academic Need

McConnell	2017	Free online curriculum for home-schooled children	Parent Need
McConnell	2017	Taking online public education online courses allows my child to participate in school athletics and activities	Social Need
Weller	2018	Personalized learning	Academic Need
Weller	2018	Opportunity to achieve more	Academic Need
Weller	2018	A more harmonious environment	Social Need
Weller	2018	Choice of course curriculum	Academic Need
Wiederspiel	2018	Courses not available at the school.	Academic Need

Emergent Design for Parents' Perceptions for Choosing Online Education

Organized by Category

Author(s)	**Year**	**Finding**	**Category**
Allday & Allday	2011	Benefits for students with disabilities	Academic Need
Beem	2010	To be instructed by a certified and qualified teacher	Academic Need
Campbell	2012	Student's performance tests results are higher	Academic Need
Carter & Rice	2016	Student in a virtual class can have assignments repeated as many times as needed	Academic Need
Carter & Rice	2016	Obtain immediate feedback	Academic Need
Crockett	2017	Student not content with traditional education because bored.	Academic Need
Crockett	2017	Student not content with traditional education because academically behind.	Academic Need

Morgan	2015	To take courses not offered at the school	Academic Need
Morgan	2015	Online students have excellent academic results	Academic Need
NACTAF	2010	Online education can provide certified teachers	Academic Need
Roblyer & Marshall	2003	Course will not fit in child's schedule	Academic need
Romanowski	2006	Child works at a quicker pace than a traditional environment	Academic Need
Tuck	2013	Child unsuccessful in the traditional school setting	Academic Need
Tuck	2013	Flexibility of online learning	Academic Need
Weller	2018	Personalized learning	Academic Need
Weller	2018	Opportunity to achieve more	Academic Need
Weller	2018	Choice of course curriculum	Academic Need
Wicks	2010	No difference in academic results in comparing online to traditional method	Academic Need
Wiederspiel	2018	Courses not available at the school.	Academic Need
Allday & Allday	2011	Flexible pacing	Flexibility Need
Allday & Allday	2011	Work at preferred times	Flexibility Need
Allday & Allday	2011	Ability to take breaks when needed	Flexibility Need
Allday & Allday	2011	Ability to choose the environment to work in	Flexibility Need
Allday & Allday	2011	Extended time	Flexibility Need
Tuck	2013	Work at own pace	Flexibility Need
McLean	1998	Student has anxiety that prevents them from attending school	Medical Need
Morgan	2015	Students who have a disability or medical condition that prevents them from attending school	Medical Need

Morgan	2015	Medical condition prevents student from attending school	Medical Need
Morgan	2015	Student has a medical condition that prevents them from attending school	Medical Need
Rice	2006	Students with chronic health issues can benefit	Medical Need
Barthe	2013	Homeschool parents prefer virtual	Parent Need
Black	2009	Parent is highly involved with child	Parent Need
Friend & Johnston	2005	Traveling parents can take their child with them	Parent Need
Green	2007	Parents want more involvement with child's education	Parent Need
Grubb	1998	Parents working at home can have their child at home with them	Parent Need
Grubb	1998	Free Curriculum and support	Parent Need
McConnell	2017	Free online curriculum for home-schooled children	Parent Need
Clemens	2002	Providing quality curriculum is a challenge for homeschool families	Parent Need
Morgan	2015	Parents have more responsibility for their child's education	Parent Need
Tuck	2013	Virtual programs can prevent students from dropping out	Social Need
Andrus	2009	Students can participate in traveling athletic teams	Social Need
McConnell	2017	Taking online public education online courses allows my child to participate in school athletics and activities	Social Need
McLean	1998	Student is not comfortable in the school social environment	Social Need
Repetto, Cavanaugh, Wayer, Liu	2010	To prevent child from dropping out	Social Need
Repetto, Cavanaugh, Wayer, Liu	2010	Keep at-risk students in school	Social Need
Roblyer, M.D.	2006	Alleviate the issues and causes that attribute a student to drop out	Social Need

Roblyer & Marshall	2003	At-risk students can benefit from a virtual program	Social Need
Tuck	2013	To prevent student from dropping out	Social Need
Tuck	2013	Virtual programs provide the ability for the student to focus	Social Need
Tuck	2013	To prevent student from going to homeschool	Social Need
Weller	2018	A more harmonious environment	Social Need

APPENDIX F: VITAE

VALERY HARPER

Core Qualifications

- School Improvement
- Leader of Learning
- Curriculum Design
- IPI Certified
- Data Driven Focus
- Technology productivity for administrators
- School Culture Developer

Achievements

Riverside Results:

- Increased IPI results each year.
- 2011 and 2012 – Decreased number of drop-outs each year.
- 2012 – Increased test scores 11% and Doubled Promise Scholarship Recipients.
- 2013 – Increased graduation rate 10%.
- 2014 – Test scores increased 9% in English, 5 % in math.
- 2015 – Increased ACT scores in all categories. Highest Cumulative score in the history of Riverside. Decreased failure rate in 9th grade 50 %, 10 – 12th grade 32%. Increased graduation rate 7 %

Program Management

- Initiated, managed, and monitored high accountability of all priorities through use of electronic walk-throughs, Warrior Time, and accountability initiative.

Team Building and Leadership

- Created collaboration period for core teacher to track student data, discuss data, and improve results.
- Built foundation of trust and commitment.

Principal Developer

- West Virginia Center of Development Principal Leadership Academy Mentor
- Kanawha County Schools Leadership Academy teacher
- Kanawha County Schools mentor for new Administrators

Professional Experience

Executive Director **10/25/2017 to Current**
Kanawha County Schools

Principal at Riverside High School **07/2010 to 10/24/17**
Kanawha County Schools **Charleston, WV**
Utilized many best practices and cutting-edge approaches of school improvement to initiate change and build a solid and flourishing school.

Assistant Principal at George Washington High School **04/2006 to 07/2010**
Kanawha County Schools **Charleston, WV**
Evaluated and monitored instruction in the building. Worked with students and developed strategies to help students be successful. Presented meaningful staff development and exceeded my job description as posted.

Counselor at Riverside High School **01/2005 to 04/2006**
Kanawha County Schools **Charleston, WV**
Applied Progressive counseling skills to ensure students would graduate high School

Mathematics Teacher **12/1996 to 2005**
Kanawha County Schools **Charleston, WV**
Implemented CSOs within the classroom utilizing various teaching strategies and best practices to ensure student understanding. Taught at Dupont Junior High as a long-term substitute for 1.5 years and Capital High for 1 year. Afterwards, I went to Riverside High School.