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## **Perceptions on Charter Schools in West Virginia**

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# PERCEPTIONS ON CHARTER SCHOOLS IN WEST VIRGINIA

A dissertation submitted to  
the Graduate College of  
Marshall University  
In partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education

In  
Curriculum and Instruction

by  
Donna R. Dixon

Approved by  
Dr. Nega Debela, Committee Chairperson  
Dr. Kimberly McFall  
Dr. Ray Lowther

Marshall University  
August 2022

## APPROVAL OF DISSERTATION

We, the faculty supervising the work of Donna Dixon, affirm that the dissertation *Perceptions on Charter Schools in West Virginia* meets the high academic standards for original scholarship and creative work established by the Curriculum and Instruction program 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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Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my family because I would be nothing without you.

I love you more than words can say.

Kevin

Kayla (Chris) and Rachel

Matthew (Becky)

Mom and Dad

Bubby

Our Stroehman family

My beloved Aunt Cookie

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## ABSTRACT

In 2018 and 2019, the public school teachers in West Virginia walked out of their classrooms to protest charter schools opening in the Mountain State. During a special legislative session in the summer of 2019, the state's first charter school law was passed, paving the way to open West Virginia's first charter school. This research provides data on whether the COVID-19 global pandemic changed how individuals in West Virginia view charter schools. A concurrent nested mixed-method approach was used for this research. A twenty-one-question survey, *Perceptions on Charter Schools in West Virginia*, was developed using both Likert scale and open-ended questions. Personal interviews were conducted using purposive sampling with three individuals possessing unique charter school experience. Five hundred forty-seven individuals responded to the survey. Data indicated a significant difference for eleven survey questions regarding charter schools depending on the respondents' demographic groups. Groups included college student, multiple commitments, teacher, parent/grandparent, and other. Perceptions of West Virginians regarding charter schools vary depending on the demographic group of the survey respondents. Findings also revealed that over 90% of respondents preferred in-person charter schools over virtual charter schools. The open-ended question showed varying opinions for and against charter schools opening in West Virginia.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION OF THE FOUNDATIONAL STUDY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The school choice movement gives parents the right to make educational decisions that determine what school their child will attend (Berends, 2015). In February 2018, Superintendents in all of the state's 55 counties canceled school, allowing the state's 34,000 teachers to demonstrate against actions taken by state legislators regarding education (Camera, 2019). The teachers took to the picket lines to protest the state's inability to pass legislation to give public employees, including teachers and service personnel, a pay raise (Coniglio, 2018). Although the teacher pay raise took center stage and attracted national attention, other underlying issues troubled the striking teachers (Schoen, 2018). Since 2010, lawmakers in West Virginia have pushed legislation that would establish the first charter school in the state (Adams, 2022). West Virginia's teachers were opposed to establishing charter schools and went to battle with the state senate to stop charter schools from coming to West Virginia (Camera, 2019).

In February 2019, education reform was once again on the West Virginia legislative agenda. A bill originating in the Senate Education Committee became known as the Omnibus Education Bill, later called SB 451 (Lee et al., 2019). The bill would allow charter schools in the state and establish a voucher system and plan for educational savings accounts used to cover tuition costs for private schools (Camera, 2019). Dale Lee, president of the West Virginia Education Association (WVEA), stated, "Everyone saw the actions for what they were – retaliation for our actions in 2018 (Lee et al., 2019). Teachers and service personnel voted to walk out of their classrooms for a second straight year to protest SB 451 (Camera, 2019). Again, teachers were willing to take to the picket line and strike for what they believed (Gabor, 2019). Despite the

teachers' best efforts, the law to allow charter schools to open in West Virginia was passed in 2019 (Adams, 2022).

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The problem is a lack of empirical research on West Virginians' perceptions of charter schools. Additionally, there is a lack of empirical research on whether or not West Virginians believe that the COVID-19 global pandemic influenced charter schools opening in the Mountain State. Therefore, this foundational study focused on the school choice movement in the Mountain State, specifically public charter schools, and individuals' perceptions of charter schools coming to West Virginia. Charter schools are publicly funded schools free from traditional public schools' bureaucratic obstacles (Convertino, 2017). A West Virginia State Senator, who served as the education chair during the 2019 session, introduced the first charter school bill and said, "I believe it is good to have options and choices. It will give them [parents and students] the ability to be more flexible and specialized in certain things and so, you know, it's just a great opportunity if anybody wants to follow that road" (Personal communication, April 19, 2021). According to the Senator, the development of charter schools will benefit students and parents who want an option in how a child is educated. When asked what effect charter schools would have on the education system in West Virginia, the Senator said, "It has the potential to have a positive effect, but it also has a very strong potential not to affect whatsoever" (Personal communication, April 19, 2021). In contrast, according to Dale Lee, president of the West Virginia Education Association (WVEA), "WVEA and its members are still opposed to charter schools because charters will take much-needed resources from the public schools in the district and offer no guarantees of equal or better achievement for their students" (Lee, 2019).

State legislators will pass legislation regarding the operations and funding of public schools without asking educators for opinions or considering the consequences of the education bill on the everyday running of the school. (Strauss, 2018). Because of the differences in points of view regarding charter schools, the two groups are making conflicting statements regarding the state's educational system (Adams, 2022). The missing link in this process is the lack of literature review on the perceptions of West Virginians regarding charter schools.

### **PURPOSE OF THE FOUNDATIONAL STUDY**

This foundational study aimed to determine what West Virginians thought of charter schools and if they were in favor of bringing charter schools to the state of West Virginia. Although West Virginians fund public education, their voices are unnoticed by policymakers. Additionally, this research had another purpose: to examine if West Virginians' views on charter schools had changed due to how public schools handled education during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FOUNDATIONAL STUDY**

Charter schools face criticism mainly because people do not understand what they are (Chait, 2021). This foundational study is significant because there is a lack of research studies regarding West Virginians' perceptions concerning charter schools opening in West Virginia. This study provided information regarding what the people of West Virginia think about bringing charter schools into the Mountain State. Since the charter school law passed in 2019, there has been a lack of studies that examine the public perception of charter schools.

Since the COVID-19 global pandemic, some school choice efforts have grown directly out of a need for alternative education (Olneck-Brown, 2021). Variations in available educational choices include traditional public schools, virtual schools, private schools, and public/virtual charter schools (Olneck-Brown, 2021). Another significant aspect of this foundational study was

to determine what role COVID-19 played in changing the opinions of West Virginians regarding charter schools opening in West Virginia. The *New York Post* reported that public schools failed to meet the COVID-19 pandemic's educational challenge (2021). Due to schools being closed to protect against the spread of the virus, remote learning brought the classroom into the student's home. The *New York Post* also stated that the pandemic got parents far more involved in their child's education (2021). Parents took on new roles in their child's education by helping with remote learning, organizing learning pods, and deciding whether or not to have their child return to in-person learning (Olneck-Brown, 2021).

This investigation will provide essential data to allow the researcher to conclude what the perceptions of West Virginians are in relationship to charter schools and the effects of COVID-19 on those perceptions

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research questions were investigated:

1. What are the perceptions of West Virginians regarding charter schools?
2. How did the COVID-19 global pandemic change the way individuals view charter schools?

### **OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF TERMS**

1. Brick-and-Mortar School: refers to a school building where students attend face-to-face instruction.
2. Public Charter School: refers to a publicly funded school that operates under a charter, a contract, and not under the authority of the state and local board of education.
3. School Choice: refers to a parent's ability to decide where to send their child for formal educational instruction.



4. Traditional Public School: refers to a public school that operates under the state and local board of education.
5. Virtual Charter School: refers to a publicly funded online school where students attend school from home, which operates under a charter, a contract, and not under the authority of the state and local board of education.

### **LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE FOUNDATIONAL STUDY**

The foundational study's limitations are those circumstances out of the researcher's control. For example, the researcher's occupation as a public-school teacher in West Virginia limits the foundational study. The researcher will attempt to stay impartial and report information as relatively and unbiased as possible through the research and investigation required for this analysis. The lack of previous research on charter schools in West Virginia is another limitation of the foundational study. The scope of the quantitative investigation is limited to the individuals on the Marshall University listserv, including Marshall University students, faculty, and staff. Also included in the foundational study will be individuals with access to the social media platform known as Facebook. Purposive sampling will be used regarding personal interviews for this foundational study. The Executive Director of Cardinal Institute for WV Policy will be interviewed to learn about the organization's role in bringing charter schools to West Virginia. Next, a former West Virginia public school teacher who taught in Richie County, West Virginia, will be interviewed. The former West Virginia teacher's knowledge of traditional public and charter school experience will provide important information regarding her perception of charter schools. Finally, a West Virginia Senator, who introduced the first charter school bill, will be interviewed to determine what motivated her to introduce legislation to bring charter schools to West Virginia. The delimitations of this investigation are those factors that go beyond the

boundaries of this foundational study. This investigation's delimitations are limited to public and charter school systems in The United States of America, emphasizing the State of West Virginia.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will give important information regarding school choice and, more specifically, the school option of public charter schools. Background information regarding the history of the school choice movement will be provided, along with a historical timeline of the progression of school choice in the United States. Topics covered in the historical timeline include a history of the school choice movement, the American Colonies, community schools, free-market education, freedom schools, school voucher system, magnet schools, homeschooling, charter schools, and of the COVID-19 global pandemic on school choice.

This review of literature will highlight research that discusses considerations of how charter schools/school choice could impact education and the ramifications for society. With the approval of five different charter schools in November of 2021, the literature review can be useful information regarding what the school choice option of charter schools would mean for children. Topics covered include charter schools in West Virginia, what parents should know to choose a charter school, understanding charter schools, and the nature and uniqueness of charter schools. The chapter will also review the literature regarding the operation of charter schools. Topics covered will include charter school authorizers, principals, and teachers. Characteristics of what are considered to be a successful charter school will be addressed, including matters of the best practices of charter schools and creating a successful charter school.

### **A HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL CHOICE MOVEMENT**

Since the formation of the country, local and state agencies have shaped elementary and secondary public education (Barkan, 2018). In recent years, how a child is educated has moved from government officials to parents. Parents' choice of where and how their child is educated can

significantly impact the child's future. Board offices and school district lines are losing influence in determining what school a student will attend, while parents' individual choice is growing (Archbald, 2004). To maintain a robust system of education, there needs to be an embrace of the types of public schools parents say they want (Rees, 2021). Throughout the twentieth century, students' home addresses determined where that student went to school until school reassignment policies went into effect, severing the ties between the place of residence and school placement (Lauen, 2007). School choice was established to provide grassroots and competitive reform efforts to give all families a choice regarding their child's education (Logan, 2018). School choice liberation models assume that free education will reduce economic segregation among children in public schools by creating access from lower-income families to schools outside their neighborhoods (Archbald, 2004). Children from low-income areas are affected the most (Peterson, 2021). School choice is a form of empowerment for all parents regardless of race and socioeconomic status, and it has been a prominent theme in educational policy and legislation (Scott, 2013).

### **The American Colonies**

Parents have decided where and how to educate their children since this country was in its infancy. The history of the school choice movement began in civil society when parents could select educational experiences for their children (Logan, 2018). Wealthier families sent their children "back home" to Europe to be educated, while others brought tutors to the new world to teach their children (Urban & Wagoner Jr, 2014). In some cases, parents homeschooled their children, and other groups sometimes established charity and church schools to educate the youth. Later in the nineteenth century, public agreement grew that the government needed to play a more active role in public education by mandating compulsory attendance, providing funds, and

administering schools (Barkan, 2018). As a result, common schools were established in the New England states to educate children, and the secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, Horace Mann, supported the movement.

### **Community Schools**

Following the American Civil War, community schools were established in Texas (Garrett, 2000). The inception of community schools gave the citizens of Texas a choice as to how to educate their children. Shortly after the war, Texas established community schools contrary to the centralized school system formed by the Reconstruction government (Garrett, 2000). Parents wanted a system with the maximum amount of local control and gave parents a lot of latitude in making educational decisions (Garrett, 2000). Community schools gave parents the ability to make decisions regarding their child's education. The community school gave control to parents and appointed trustees who were in charge of hiring teachers and the school's actual running. Teachers did not have to be trained to teach in the community school, and the schools received funding from the state based on the number of students enrolled. Students did not have to live in a particular area to be part of the school community, and the state would send funding to the school based on how many students were enrolled. Community schools did not succeed in Texas; three years after their inception, the legislature in Texas started procedures to reform Community Schools. The state determined that more qualified teachers, increased supervision, the formation of school districts, and more stable funding sources needed to become part of the schools' public education system (Garrett, 2000).

### **Free-Market Education**

A different public education option was envisioned in the 1950s by free-market economist Milton Friedman. He proposed schools run by organizations: for-profit groups, nonprofit groups,

religious groups, or government agencies. Friedman's plan intended there to be state-approved schools that would be required to meet standards regarding curriculum, but the state would not control the quality of the school (Logan, 2018). Instead, Friedman believed that failing schools should be closed and struggling schools should be forced to improve.

### **Freedom Schools**

School choice played a role in the segregation found in American schools. School choice was the goal of segregationists in the late 1950s and 1960s (Ravitch, 2016). Before the desegregation of schools, Freedom schools were opened to become where students and teachers were free to think, feel, and dream (Logan, 2018). The purpose of the school was to reform the current public school system by working outside the system's borders. The Mississippi Freedom schools brought together northern teachers that volunteered to come to Mississippi to help Black children overcome the inadequacies of the school system in the state. The founders of the schools saw them as a way to operate outside the bureaucracy of the traditional approach that was damaging students academically (Logan, 2018). Desegregation was one of the twentieth century's most dramatic changes in public schools. Studies show that desegregation of schools increased the educational opportunities and test scores of Black students (Baum-Snow & Lutz, 2011).

States that wanted to preserve racial segregation turned to school choice as their first line of defense against segregation laws, and courts understood this tactic to protect school segregation (Ravitch, 2014). The landmark case, *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, increased school choice and the quality of education within a public-school system for all students regardless of race. In 1954 the United States Supreme Court ruled that racially segregated public schools were inherently unequal and unconstitutional (Barkan, 2018). The court decision led to the idea that segregated schools were unconstitutional. However, most large districts did not desegregate

their schools until they were forced to comply with federal court orders (Baum-Snow & Lutz, 2011).

### **School Voucher System**

Another school choice option to help curb the effect of desegregation was the development of a voucher system. The idea of educational vouchers has been in the heat of academic debates since 1955, when they were proposed to end fights over private schools, particularly Catholic schools (Ravitch, 2014). The formation of a voucher system gave families a specific amount of money to be used at either a public or private school of their parent's choosing (Logan, 2018). The voucher system was a way to promote educational opportunities to students who would not otherwise be able to attend a school outside of their neighborhood school. Seventy percent of schools a student could attend with voucher assistance are religious schools that do not adhere to the same standards for curriculum, teachers, testing, or accountability (Ravitch, 2016). School choice advocates saw the voucher programs as a way to increase competition between schools, thereby improving the quality of the schools vying for students. Liberal Democrats, who would generally oppose corporate reform in schools, saw vouchers as a means to promote educational opportunities for people of color (Logan, 2018). Students in low-income neighborhoods could be given a chance to leave their community homeschool, which was often substandard, for a school that was better academically and full of opportunities (Lauen, 2007). However, the school voucher concept has seen opposition from voters at the polls. As a result, the term voucher has been replaced. Instead, vouchers are given names like "opportunity scholarships," "tax credits," or "education savings accounts" (Ravitch, 2016).

## **Magnet Schools**

The school choice movement expanded dramatically in the 1980s with the expansion of magnet schools in intradistrict school-choice programs (Archbald, 2004). Magnet schools evolved out of the civil rights movement to curbe "White flight," which was white families moving out of their neighborhoods to racially segregated neighborhoods and thus segregated schools (Logan, 2018). Magnet schools are required to operate under balanced guidelines for children of all races to give opportunities of school choice to all students (Archbald, 2004). Magnet schools provide parents a choice of education for their child while also maintaining racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic balance (Logan, 2018). Parents could send their child to a magnet school in an urban school district instead of a traditional public school in a suburban community. Magnet schools offer specializations that parents can choose as an alternative to the traditional public school (Archbald, 2004). Magnet schools are structured around specific themes or areas of interest, including science, mathematics, performing arts, and a traditional educational foundational study path (Urban & Wagoner Jr, 2014).

## **Homeschooling**

School choice proponents believe that if parents can choose how to educate their children, they can also educate them at home. Children being formally educated in the home has been around since the beginning of education. In colonial times, parents who had some education would teach their children to read and write at home if they could not afford live-in tutors (Urban & Wagoner Jr, 2014). In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of students educated in the home instead of formal public education. Children being homeschooled in the United States has more than doubled since 1999 (Dill & Elliot, 2019). It is estimated that over 2 million children are being homeschooled in the United States each year (Mazama & Lundy, 2012). Commercial



textbook companies have developed a new curriculum to assist parents in schooling their children at home. Parents choose to teach their children at home for various reasons, including religious and academic reasons (Urban & Wagoner Jr, 2014).

### **Charter Schools**

Compared to students in other countries, the failing academic achievement of students across the United States has fueled the movement for educational reform (Almond, 2013). The 1983 report *A Nation at Risk* was a scathing critique of the public schools in the United States. The report claimed a "rising tide of mediocrity" in the schools across America (Tanner, 2017). From the time *A Nation at Risk* was published till now, there has been an ever-growing sentiment that traditional public schools are failing the youth of America (Ravitch, 2014). The report opened the door to the prospect of schools competing for students through the application of business practice (Renzulli & Roscigno, 2005). Charter schools, which follow the business model, are the fastest growing area of the school choice movement (Berends, 2015). A charter school has increased autonomy and alternative guidance and accountability, setting charter schools apart from traditional public schools (Convertino, 2017).

The idea of a charter school was first suggested by Ray Buddle, a retired public-school teacher who said that schools could conceivably create their own goals and policies (Renzulli & Roscigno, 2005). Buddle first wrote his philosophies in 1974 in a conference paper entitled *Education by Charter: Restructuring School Districts*. Buddle believed that contracts needed to be developed that local boards of education would grant teachers to explore new education approaches (Buddle, 1988). Fourteen years passed from the initial writing of Buddle's report to finally being published in 1988. Albert Shanker, the president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), developed some of his ideas that included a system where a local school board

could "charter" an entire school with the support and approval of both teachers and their unions (Renzulli & Roscigno, 2005). A group of educators took Buddle and Shanker's ideas and proposed the concept of charter schools as educational "labs" in Minnesota. The state passed the first charter school law in 1991, and the first school opened in 1992 (Henig, 2008). In addition, Shanker called for the establishment of publicly funded private schools to function as laboratories for teachers to innovate and investigate the best instructional practices (Barghaus & Boe, 2011).

### **School Choice and the COVID-19 Global Pandemic**

By the end of March 2020, every public school in the United States was closed due to the COVID-19 Global Pandemic, with most remaining closed for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year (Chatterji & Li, 2021). With the global pandemic, parents had to make important decisions about sending their children to school. School systems across the country shut down to flatten the curve to control the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Most schools offered remote learning, but the quality of the schooling was not universally good (Chatterji & Li, 2021). As a result, parents choose to homeschool their children or enroll them in online institutions that do not have students attend school in the traditional sense (Dee & Murphy, 2021).

Before COVID, almost one-third of school-age children attended a school of choice (Peterson, 2021). The pandemic forced parents to seek new solutions to educating their children while also opening their eyes to what was missing in public education (Rees, 2021). Parents found untraditional learning opportunities for their children due to school shutdowns during the pandemic (Dee & Murphy, 2021). Charter schools quickly met the needs of children and parents through remote learning and an adapted curriculum (Rees, 2021). During the pandemic, families shifted their children from traditional public schools to charter schools (Peterson, 2021). As a result, Charter school enrollment rose by 240,000 students, a 7% increase from previous years

(Rees, 2021). Virtual charter schools also experienced a rise in student enrollment due to the pandemic. Stride.Inc, formerly known as K12 Inc., saw a 57% enrolment increase since the pandemic (Kamenetz & Korth, 2020). However, public school enrollment has dropped by more than 500,000 students in 33 states (Dee & Murphy, 2021). In addition, the educational experiences during COVID caused lawmakers to make significant changes to their state's educational offering for the upcoming school year (Olneck-Brown, 2021). COVID may have led parents to choose their child's education they would never have previously considered (Maranto et al., 2021). The pandemic demonstrated the power of parents to make educational decisions for their children when given a chance (Olneck-Brown, 2021).

## **THE CHARTER SCHOOL MOVEMENT IN WEST VIRGINIA**

### **West Virginia Teachers Work Stoppage**

On February 22, 2018, the state's teachers walked off the job in an unprecedented nine-day work stoppage (Bidgood, 2018). The teachers in the state's 55 counties took to the picket lines to protest the state's inability to pass legislation to give public employees, including teachers and service personnel, a pay raise (Rhodan, 2018). Although the teacher pay raise took center stage and attracted national attention, other underlying issues troubled the striking teachers. For several legislative sessions, the lawmakers in West Virginia have pushed legislation that would establish the first charter schools in the state (Slocum et al., 2018).

A year later, in February 2019, the West Virginia State Senate pushed through an omnibus bill using an arcane procedural maneuver to bypass various senate committees. There were not enough votes for the bill to get out of committees (Jamieson, 2019). The bill would establish charter schools in the state and create a new voucher system to divert money from public schools to private schools (Campbell, 2019). Along with educational policies teachers were opposed to,

the bill also gave teachers a five percent raise and other incentives, including bonuses for unused sick days in a school year (Lee et al., 2019). Teachers in West Virginia saw the bill as Republican senators attempting to privatize education and retaliation for the 2018 work stoppage that made the senators look foolish on national news (Campbell, 2019). After unsuccessful attempts to lobby support to kill the bill at the end of February, the West Virginia National Educational Association, American Federation of Teachers, and the West Virginia School Service Personnel Association had members give their opinion on another work stoppage by casting their vote (Lee et al., 2019). Teachers and service personnel voted to walk out of their classrooms for a second straight year, showing politicians they were willing to fight for more than a pay raise (Campbell, 2019). Teachers willing to take to the picket line and strike for what they believe in had widespread support (Gabor, 2019). Teachers believed those directly involved in education should have input on any educational reforms that the state would enact (Zuckerman & Quinn, 2019)

### **Establishing Charter Schools in West Virginia**

The original charter school law was passed in West Virginia during a special legislative session in the summer of 2019 (HB206, 2019). The original law gave county boards of education the only power to grant a charter to a potential charter school. However, during the 2020-2021 legislative session, lawmakers made it easier for charter schools to open by expanding those organizations that can grant a charter or contract between the school and the charter school authorizing agency (HB2012, 2021). Charter school authorizers approve charters, monitor school performance, and decide to close a school that is not living up to its charter (Paino et al., 2014). An authorizer can be a local school system, a university or college, the state board of education, a charter management organization, or any other organization allowed by the state's charter school law (Stetson, 2013). West Virginia code states that the West Virginia Professional Charter School

Board (WVPCSB) has the authority to authorize high-quality charter schools throughout the state (WV. Leg. Code ch.18 §18-5G-15).

In September 2021, seven charter schools were looking for approval of their charters by the WVPCSB ("Seven charter schools", 2021). In November 2021, five of those schools' charters were approved by the WVPCSB. Three of the schools approved are brick-and-mortar schools, with the other two schools approved being virtual charter schools. The approval of the charters paved the way for the state's first charter schools to open as early as fall 2022 (Conn, 2021).

## **CONSIDERATIONS IN CHOOSING A CHARTER SCHOOL**

### **Charter School Operations**

A charter school is a publicly funded school run under a charter, a contract, by parents, educators, community groups, universities, or private organizations to increase and encourage autonomy and innovation (Berends, 2015). Charter schools provide more options for parents and increase both parents' and teachers' autonomy (Barghaus & Boe, 2011). The tradeoff for more freedoms is that the charter school is subject to an alternative set of accountability requirements (Ackerman & Egalite, 2017). These schools are independently created and do not operate under the authority of the local board of education and are thus immune to the school board's rules (Frisby, 2019). Charter schools are unique in that if the charter school does not produce the results outlined in their charter, the charter school will be shut down (Paino et al., 2014).

Charter schools are necessary to "induce competition" between public schools to make educational opportunities available to disadvantaged students (Johnston, 2014). When a student opts to attend a charter school over a traditional public school, that child's allotted funds, given to the school system by the state, are diverted to the charter school the student will attend (Peterson, 2021). In the case of a charter school, the state will send allocated money designated for a child's

education to the charter organization rather than the public school district. Charter schools in West Virginia will receive the same amount of money as traditional public schools (WV. Leg. Code ch.18 §18-5G-5). As a result, the student's home school district loses the funds allocated to that student and is obliged to operate with fewer funds from the state (Jason, 2017). Expenditure per pupil refers to the amount of money required for each student to be educated. The funds include dollars spent for administration, building operations, staff support, pupil support, and instructional expenses (DeLuca & Hinshaw, 2006). In most states, the state determines how much money each school district will receive using a state aid formula (EdBuild, n.d.-a). West Virginia uses a state aid formula to determine the funds designated to each county for education (EdBuild, n.d.-b). While traditional public schools and brick-and-mortar charter schools need money for operating costs like school lunch and building upkeep, virtual charter schools do not need funds for such expenses but still receive the same money (WV Senate Democrats, 2021). The debate over school choice rages because of the loss of funding and the lack of oversight by the state where the charter school is located. In addition, Charter school legislation does not require the charter school to employ qualified/certified teachers and deliver a state-approved curriculum (Nairn, Anderson, & Blanch, 2018).

### **Understanding the Uniqueness of Charter Schools**

Charter schools can promote a feeling of empowerment in their students, teachers, and parents (Vergari, 1999). Charter schools were formed due to frustration with traditional public schools (Frisby, 2019). As a result, charter schools appeared across the United States at an unprecedented rate (Renzulli & Roscigno, 2005). Part of the reason the charter school movement is snowballing is the attention paid to meeting the community's needs in which the school is located (Stetson, 2013). Diane Ravitch, a leading expert on school choice, is quoted as saying, "In terms

of quality, charter schools run the gamut. Some are excellent, some are dreadful. And most are somewhere in between" (Berends, 2015). Most charter schools are located in large urban areas and serve low-income students (Almond, 2013). Charter schools provide low-income families with educational opportunities reserved for affluent families in the past (Vergari, 1999).

Charter school advocates claim that traditional public schools lack educational leadership, an educational vision for students, and teachers that possess creativity and innovation, all of which produce schools that will not meet the needs of students (Frisby, 2019). Unlike their traditional counterparts, charter schools allow teachers to become decision-makers by controlling the curriculum and hiring other teachers and administrators (Barghaus & Boe, 2011). Charter schools do not have to deal with bureaucratic guidelines set forth by the current public-school system like school boards, collective bargaining by teachers' unions, and stringent teacher certification requirements (Vergari, 1999). One of the philosophies of charter schools is to select teachers who are masters of the specific content area regardless of whether or not they have a teaching certificate (Frisby, 2019). Teachers in charter schools are not necessarily required to have a teaching certification (Ravitch, 2014). Parents of charter school students enjoy the open communication and input they can share, resulting in a feeling of partnership with the school regarding their child's education (Frisby, 2019).

### **Operations of a Public Charter School**

Many components such as charter school authorizers, charter school principals, and charter school teachers need to come together to make a public charter school function. The West Virginia Senate Omnibus Bill 451 states that authorizers that grant charter applications are responsible for overseeing public charter schools and may receive an oversight fee of up to one percent of each public charter school funding (SB451, 2019). The responsibility of the school authorizers is to

close underperforming charter schools (Karaxha, 2013). West Virginia code gives the state's charter school authorizers the right to close underperforming charter schools (WV. Leg. Code ch.18 §18-5G-10). State agencies will inspect charter schools and rescind charters for those schools that do not attract enough students, show adequate progress on standardized tests, meet specific goals, or are mismanaged (Schwenkenberg & VanDerHoff, 2015). Of the states with charter schools, fifteen have laws requiring the automatic closure of schools that do not meet minimum performance requirements (Carlson & Lavertu, 2016). West Virginia code states, "A charter contract may be revoked at any time if the authorizer determines that the health and safety of students attending the public charter school is threatened, an administrator employed by or member of the governing board over the charter school is convicted of fraud or misappropriation of funds, there is a failure to meet generally accepted standards of financial management, there is a material breach of the charter contract, there is a substantial violation of any provision of law from which the public charter school is not exempted, or there are dire and chronic academic deficiencies" (WV. Leg. Code ch.18 §18-5G-10).

Charter school regulations are not uniform and vary from state to state and school to school (Jason, 2017). In Utah, a charter school can be authorized by a local school board, the Utah State Charter School Board, with recommendations to the State School Board or a higher education institution (Ni & Rorrer, 2012). North Carolina passed its charter law in 1996, allowing local school districts, state universities, or the State Board of Education to approve charter school applications (Paino et al., 2014). In New Jersey, the State Department of Education can issue a 4-year renewable charter to the board of charter schools if consent is given by the host district where the school will be located (Schwenkenberg & VanDerHoff, 2015). Ohio's charter school law lacks regulations since there was little oversight of charter school authorizers (Carlson & Lavertu, 2016).



The West Virginia code gives a charter school a five-year contract to operate in the state that is renewable by application. The West Virginia code states that no later than June 30 of the school year before a public charter school's final year of operation under terms of a charter contract, the authorizer shall issue contract renewal application guidance to the school (WV. Leg. Code ch.18 §18-5G-10).

One of the most important and influential figures in a school is the building principal. The principal has many duties to ensure the success of the students that attend their school. Many charter school principals see their position at the school being more similar to that of a district superintendent (Carpenter & Peak, 2013). Charter school principals must have a working knowledge of both education and business to be successful. Because charter schools are publicly funded, the school's administration must also be mindful of fundraising to ensure students have the best instructional materials available.

Teachers facilitate the learning and the development of knowledge for the next generation (Jabbar, 2018). However, working conditions for teachers in charter schools are sometimes not what you would expect. High attrition rates of students and teachers, widespread student suspensions, harassment of teachers, and fraud are just a few of the situations teachers face working in a charter school (Rodov, 2018). For example, the New Vision Academy Charter School in Nashville operated with a complete lack of regulations. If the teachers at the school had not reported the violations, the school would have continued to operate (Serie, 2019). In South Los Angeles, California, a charter school struggled financially because 202 of 270 students had not returned after the summer break. Because of low numbers, student behavior was overlooked to the point teachers' safety was in question. For example, a student touched a teacher inappropriately and was not expelled because of the fear of losing a student (Rodov, 2018).

Teachers hired to teach in charter schools can be less experienced, not licensed to teach, or have not received training to save money (Jabbar, 2018). Education reformers do not concern themselves with teacher credentials or experience because that information does not raise test scores (Ravitch, 2014). Also, charter schools often have longer school days than traditional public schools. Finding quality teachers willing to work a more extended school day and possibly even Saturdays has proved challenging (Toch, 2010). Charter schools are losing teachers at an alarming rate because of the poor working conditions (Jabbar, 2018).

Teachers' unions have effectively slowed down or prevented liberal state charter legislation (Stoddard & Corcoran, 2007). Teachers' unions are potent in the educational system (Matsudaira & Patterson, 2017). In West Virginia, teachers' unions and service personnel associations have been instrumental in ensuring teachers' voices are heard in educational disputes (Lee et al., 2019). Still, not all people are happy with the power of the unions. Several state legislators have attempted to rein in the power of the academic unions by limiting the scope of their collective bargaining rights (Matsudaira & Patterson, 2017). Charter schools are said to create an anti-teacher agenda, which legislators use to break public school teachers' unions ("Charter School Policy," 2019).

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL CHARTER SCHOOLS**

### **Best Practices of Charter Schools**

Charter schools increase school choice within the public school system without undermining it (Vergari, 1999). Charter schools educate over three million students each year, giving parents a choice about their child's education (White & Hieronimus, 2022). Studies have shown that successful charter schools have similar characteristics, including increased instructional time, better teachers and administrators, data-driven instruction, high-dosage tutoring, and high expectations (Samuels, 2012). Also adding to the success of charter schools are

programs to coach teachers in best practices and high expectation student behavior policies (Zubrzycki, 2012). Additional research shows that if these practices were used in traditional public schools, they would also be successful (Samuels, 2012). How charter schools are managed, and successful educational methods used by teachers can be replicated in traditional public schools (Vergari, 1999). Teachers in charter schools have more freedom to follow their teaching course content instead of the content chosen by the state education agencies (Almond, 2013). Charter schools have greater autonomy than traditional public schools and are held more accountable than traditional public-school counterparts. (Oberfield, 2016). Another best practice that distinguishes charter schools from traditional public schools is that a charter school can be shut down by the charter granting organization. The implication is that charter schools are accountable and maybe even more responsible for student outcomes than traditional public schools (Paino et al., 2014).

Advocates of charter schools claim they are more successful because they can create a better range of opportunities for their students than traditional public schools can (Logan & Burdick-Will, 2016). Charters aim to increase the assurance that the educational demands of students and parents will be met, along with teachers having the ability to innovate in their classrooms (Vergari, 1999). The Pro-charter movement sees the schools as a way to replace the failing schools of the inner city with an alternative system that will give parents a choice as to where their child goes to school. In addition, those schools will be free of the bureaucracy of traditional public schools (Tanner, 2017). Also, some see charter schools preserve conventional public schools by provoking them to change so that they retain students and "head off" the threat of a school voucher system (Vergari, 1999).

## **Creating a Successful Charter School**

Most highly successful charter schools share common characteristics (Chait, 2021). Charter schools with higher academic success than traditional public schools have four things in common. First, successful charter schools have support from parents. Many schools have parents, students, and school personnel sign contracts to commit to excellence in education and maintain acceptable behavior of the students while attending school. Parents must agree to support the educational process and ensure that their child will follow academic guidelines set by the school. Second, many charter schools with high academic achievement have extended school days where students attend classes from 7:30 to 5:00 daily (Stetson, 2013). Third, students in successful charter schools commit to attending school on select Saturdays during the school year. Finally, many successful schools require students to attend summer school to enhance academic achievement (Stetson, 2013). Successful charter schools instill a school-wide culture of respect for learning and an orderly environment (Chait, 2021).

Some of the most successful charter schools are part of a network of charter schools called charter management organizations (CMOs) (Stetson, 2013). CMOs require students and staff to reach high academic standards. Students must exhibit appropriate behavior, and teachers are monitored and receive coaching to ensure that the students achieve academic success. In addition, some schools require students to be accepted to college as a requirement for graduation (Stetson, 2013).

## **SOME UNIQUE ASPECTS OF CHARTER SCHOOLS**

### **Charter School Lottery System**

The West Virginia code states, "A start-up public charter school shall enroll all students who apply and to whom an enrollment preference has been established. If the school has excess

capacity after enrolling these students, the school shall enroll all other students who apply: Provided, that if the remaining applicants exceed the enrollment capacity of the program, class, grade level or building of the public charter school, the public charter school shall select students for enrollment from among all remaining applicants by a random selection lottery. The school's lottery procedures and timelines support equal and open access for all students and take place in an open meeting" (WV. Leg. Code ch.18 §18-5G-11). Public support for charter schools is growing all the time (Keierleber, 2019). Current statistics show that 48 percent of individuals surveyed said they support the formation of charter schools (Keierleber, 2019). In addition, the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools states that the demand for admittance into a public charter school outweighs the space available for students to attend the charter school. Because of the issues with supply and demand, popular charter schools have developed a lottery-type system for students to be admitted into the school. The charter school lottery system is considered equitable because it is random (Chew, 2019). Blind lotteries ensure that every student has an equal chance of being admitted to the desired charter school (Ash, 2014).

In some cases, schools may have as many as 3,000 applications for admission, but the school will only have a few hundred spots for new students (Bauerlein, 2010). The lottery system to select students for admission gives prospective students meager chances of admission. The lottery system works by having all applicants' names put into a device or a computer program. Then, student names are drawn randomly to generate the list of students admitted into the charter school (Chew, 2019).

The lottery system is not a neutral system based on the participants' luck but a competition between prospective students for a spot in the charter school (Chew, 2019). In addition, a lottery system will eliminate unmotivated students and parents for academic excellence, thereby raising

the school's academic achievement (Ravitch, 2016). By weeding out low-achieving students, schools can increase test scores, making the school appear to be more successful than it truly is. Also, not every student selected for admission to the charter school is chosen by the lottery system. Special permission for entry is granted to siblings of current students and children of teachers at the school. West Virginia code gives the charter school permission to have enrollment preferences. Schools are allowed to give preference to "Children of governing board members and full-time employees of the school as long as the number of students enrolled under this preference constitute no more than five percent of the school's total student enrollment" along with "Students enrolled in the public charter school the previous school year and siblings of students already enrolled in the public charter school" (WV. Leg. Code ch.18 §18-5G-11).

### **Academic Achievement of Charter School Students**

The first national comparison of test scores among children in charter and traditional schools shows charter school students often do worse than comparable students in traditional public schools (Henig, 2008). Charter school advocates have promised the public higher student academic achievement to decrease state oversight and regulations (Knight & Karaba, 2010). Charter schools are some of the nation's best and worst academically performing schools (Frisby, 2019). It is difficult to measure the performance of charter schools because there is no single approach used in a charter school due to varying programs, curriculum and instruction (Buddin & Zimmer, 2005). After more than a decade of the charter school movement, charter schools at large have been unable to deliver on the significant promise of increasing academic achievement (Knight & Karaba, 2010). Charter schools' success is generally measured by comparing charter schools with other schools their students might have attended. Research has defined a successful charter

school as a school with test scores higher than they would have been had they attended a traditional public school (Gleason, 2017).

Advocates are driven by intense opinions regarding charter schools, either for or against, highlighting research findings supporting their particular point of view (Frisby, 2019). The test scores of charter school students substantially and predominantly determine the charter school's survival (Schwenkenberg & VanDerHoff, 2015). Charter schools make many claims about their academic success, while numerous studies confirm that charter school achievement is indistinguishable from traditional public schools (Chen, 2020). Charter schools tend not to get different standardized test scores from public schools if they enroll the same kinds of students (Ravitch, 2014). The two sides of the charter school issue disagree on the evidence regarding the outcomes of charter schools (Reckhow et al., 2015). Both sides believe that their position is better and tend to interpret existing data to fit their narrative (Henig, 2008). Most of the existing data suggest that if the sample of students chosen for the investigation is similar, then the charter school performs as well but not better than a traditional public school as far as student achievement is concerned (Gleason, 2017). Investigations conducted by the Center for Research on Education Outcomes showed that students' test scores may prove that traditional public schools are now outperforming charter schools (Chen, 2020).

### **Charter School Legal Battles**

Courts have also weighed in on the legalities of funding charter schools. A four-year court battle ensued in Louisiana because of funds being withheld from charter schools since officials did not recognize the schools as public schools. Louisiana has approximately 80,000 students enrolled in the state's charter schools, and those students were not receiving the state-allocated funds for their education. Type 2 charter schools that receive their charter from the Board of Elementary and

Secondary Education went to court to challenge the charter school's lack of funding (Santora, 2018). In Pennsylvania, PA Cyber Charter School founder Nick Trombetta was indicted on mail fraud charges, bribery, tax conspiracy, and filing false tax returns. Lawmakers cite the case as a reason to address criticisms that online charter schools pocket too much money compared to their operational costs (Harris, 2014). The National Network of Digital Schools is paid \$30 million annually to manage and maintain all PA Cyber Schools offices and inventory. Corporate America sees the formation of charter schools as a golden opportunity to make money (Ravitch, 2014).

### **Closing Charter Schools**

The closure of schools is a crucial factor in charter school success (Flaker, 2014). Teachers, parents, students, administrators, and charter school boards are all responsible for the success of the schools in their districts (Lam, 2014). The Center for Education Reform is responsible for collecting data from and about charter schools. The Center's studies show that the number and percentage of charter school closings are growing (Karaxha, 2013). Charter schools are closing each year not because of academics but because of flawed leadership (Jason, 2017). Charter schools are closing across the country, leaving students and teachers no place to go (Serie, 2019). For example, electronic School of Tomorrow, an online charter school in Ohio, closed and is the largest charter school closed in the state and possibly the nation. The school closed owing to the state of Ohio's \$80 million for inflating enrollment numbers (Bryant, 2018). The school's closing left 12,000 students with no school to attend in the middle of the school year. School officials also used taxpayer dollars to create aggressive marketing techniques to attract students to their schools. Public schools stepped in to offer displaced students entrance to their schools without the assistance of funds from the state (Bryant, 2018). As a result, the students who most likely ended



up in traditional public schools were academically underwhelmed because of the online school's poor academic standing.

Another school, New Vision Academy Charter School in Nashville, closed with one day notice to parents on the last day of school before the students left for spring break. Parents were given one week to find a new school for their children displaced from the school closing. Students were left without a school due to 158 students being enrolled, while New Vision's maximum capacity level is 94 students (Serie, 2019). Along with overcrowding at the school, the school did not have a permit to occupy the building. Concerns were also raised because the academy's executive director's salary was \$300,000 per year (Serie, 2019). The government protects charter schools that mismanage public money, thereby affecting students and teachers (Bryant, 2018). Approximately 200 charter schools close a year due to a lack of demand for entrance to the school or financial instability (Jason, 2017).

### **Virtual Charter Schools**

The first virtual charter school was established in 1997 when the Florida Virtual School was appointed the first online charter school in the United States (Kim, Kim, & Karimi, 2012). A virtual charter school combines homeschooling and a charter school (Waters, Barbour, & Menchaca, 2014). Charter schools can either be brick-and-mortar buildings or, in some cases, an online school called an e-school or a virtual charter school. Students opt for a virtual charter school experience if they desire a school online. Many providers can operate the virtual charter school, including school districts, nonprofit organizations, or for-profit companies (Ahn & McEachin, 2017). Students in virtual charter school work at home and have educational materials mailed to them, although students may attend a physical building for some activities in some cases. Many of the assignments the students complete are comparable to those lessons a student would experience

in a traditional school. Students learn via self-paced instruction with limited student-teacher interactions (Ahn & McEachin, 2017). The number of virtual charter schools and students attending these online schools has been growing steadily since 1997. The enrolled students in virtual charter schools come from predominantly white, well-educated, affluent families (Gulosino & Miron, 2017).

Virtual charter schools continue to grow despite the unimpressive academic outcomes of their students (Gulosino & Miron, 2017). Student outcomes and controversy associated with the management companies running the schools have not been favorable. The literature indicates that students enrolled in virtual charter schools scored significantly lower on standardized tests than in traditional brick-and-mortar schools (Pazhouh, Lake, & Miller, 2016).

One of the challenges that face virtual charter schools is how to manage the growing number of learning opportunities while also ensuring that the students do not get lost in cyberspace (Gulosino & Miron, 2017). Because of a student's lack of commitment to online education, students tend to fail or drop out of their virtual classes at a higher rate than in traditional classes (Roblyer, 2006). Virtual charter schools also rely on the student's parents as "learning coaches" to help deliver lessons to the students, regardless of the parent's experience in education (Waters, Barbour, & Menchaca, 2014). Parents who enroll their child in a virtual charter school do so because they are attracted to online learning and are not concerned if the school increases their child's achievement level (Gulosino & Miron, 2017). Policymakers need to ensure that students in online charter schools receive a quality education in an online setting (Ahn & McEachin, 2017).

### **Charter Schools and Politics**

Charter schools have gotten support from major political parties in the United States (Reckhow et al., 2015). Charter schools prove to be a hot topic that prompts discussion and ignites

various political viewpoints (Nairn, Anderson, & Blanch, 2018). Republicans are usually identified as the strongest advocates of increasing choice and competition in education, and Democrats have viewed charter schools as a compromise approach to reforming education (Reckhow et al., 2015). Federal support for charter schools started under President Bill Clinton (Reckhow et al., 2015). President George W. Bush advocated for school choice with his No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. Only nine years after Minnesota passed charter school legislation, NCLB made it possible for low or underperforming schools to convert into charter schools from traditional public schools (Ravitch, 2014). Race to the Top (RTTT) was the education plan of the Barack Obama administration, and the legislation encouraged states to adopt alternative forms of public education (Johnston, 2014). RTTT was a plan to force competition between states for federal money. RTTT also gave the green light to a bipartisan approval that low-performing schools could be improved by firing all of the teachers and administration, closing the school's doors, and reopening with a new name and a new staff (Ravitch, 2014). In a debate for the 2020 democratic nomination, Presidential candidates touched on charter schools, although they were sensitive to not offending their voters. New Jersey Senator Cory Booker, who has advocated for school choice, said that he saw the anguish in parents' faces whose students did not have access to a school that served their genius (Blad, 2019). On the other hand, Senator Bernie Sanders has aggressively criticized the charter school movement, and Senator Elizabeth Warren said, "Money for public schools should stay with public schools" (Blad, 2019). President Trump's Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, is a prominent charter school advocate as she is on the board of several charter schools in her home state of Michigan.

A bone of contention with educators and those who oppose charter schools is that many charter school executives are taking advantage of the financial opportunities of running a charter

school (Ravitch, 2014). The federal government-sponsored Charter School Program awarded \$1 billion to charter schools that never opened or opened for a brief period before being closed for reasons including poor performance, lack of enrollment, or fraud (Bryant, 2018). The progression of charter schools has attracted more interested individuals in enriching themselves instead of the students they serve (Toch, 2010). Charter schools are big business and are a golden opportunity to make a lot of money (Ravitch, 2014). If you do business with states and those states have a solid treasury, it is wise to invest in charter schools. Charter schools are a half-billion-dollar business opportunity that takes place every year (Ravitch, 2014).

### **CONCLUSION**

The school choice movement is as old as the United States itself. Since the country's infancy, parents have wanted to take an active role in their child's education. Many school choice options are available to parents, including private school, homeschooling, a magnet school, virtual school, or a public charter school. A public charter school can be either a brick-and-mortar school or a virtual school. The 2019 law passed by West Virginia lawmakers paved the way for the state's first charter school law. Subsequent laws were passed in 2021 to make it easier for charter schools to have a charter approved by the West Virginia Professional Charter School Board. In November of 2021, the West Virginia Professional Charter School Board approved the state's first charter schools, including three brick-and-mortar and two virtual charter schools.

A charter school is a publicly funded school free from the typical government oversight of traditional public schools. With the added freedom comes added pressure and responsibility. Charter schools that do not meet standards set in their charter can be closed. The best practices used in charter schools could also be used in a traditional public school to increase student academic success. Successful charter schools are created by using attributes of other flourishing

charter schools. Effective charter schools have the support of parents regarding curriculum decisions made by teachers. Extended school day (classes continue after traditional school hours), Saturday school (classes held on Saturday), and summer school (additional classes during the summer months) are some of the other characteristics of successful charter schools. In addition, many successful charter schools are part of a network of charter schools called charter management organizations. CMOs monitor students and teachers to ensure academic success.

There are drawbacks to charter schools. Not all students that apply to be admitted to a charter school will be able to attend. The popularity of charter schools makes space in the school for students at a premium. Students, in some cases, must enter a lottery system drawing in hopes of gaining admittance to the charter school. There is conflicting evidence regarding students' academic achievement in a charter school vs. students in a traditional public school. Data can sometimes be skewed to benefit one side over the other in the charter school debate. Parents look through all the pros and cons of any option of school choice for their child to find the best fit for their child.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Chapter three summarizes the research methods used to collect data for this foundational study. The research potential was to determine the perceptions of West Virginians regarding charter schools. The research also sought to determine if West Virginians believed that the COVID-19 global pandemic influenced the need for charter schools to open in West Virginia. This chapter will explain the research design, participants' demographics, and instrumentation used to collect data. In addition, the data collection procedure and the data analysis procedure will be explained and discussed.

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

The research design refers to the foundational study's plan, structure, and procedure (McMillan, 2016). This foundational study utilized a concurrent nested mixed-method approach for data collection. This type of investigation aims to develop a more thorough understanding of a phenomenon (McMillan, 2016). Using a concurrent nested design allows qualitative and quantitative data to be collected during the same investigation stage (Castro et al., 2010). Using a mixed-method approach allowed the researcher to maximize the amount of data collected in the foundational study. The mixed-method approach allows for multiple perspectives within a single research foundational study, which is a strength of this design (Mertler, 2019). The combination of a qualitative and quantitative design foundational study provides knowledge and insight that is not attainable using other methods (McMillan, 2016)

The non-experimental quantitative data was collected using descriptive survey research. The essence of a quantitative design is that the researcher has no direct control over the outcome of the results (McMillan, 2016). The survey was developed to ask participants about their opinions

of charter schools and if they believe the COVID-19 Global Pandemic influenced charter schools opening in West Virginia.

Qualitative data were collected via open-ended survey questions. Additional data was collected using purposive sampling to choose participants for personal interviews. Interviews with a few key knowledgeable and articulate participants about the subject will provide insight and understanding (McMillan, 2016).

The researcher was not a participant in the foundational study. Three personal interviews were conducted for the foundational study. With permission from participants in the interview process, a recording of discussions was made to ensure an accurate account of the conversation. In addition, a transcript of the interview was produced and kept secure.

All transcripts will be destroyed upon completion of the research process and when the final dissertation document has been completed. Participants were contacted to ask if they were interested in sitting down for an interview. Once the participant agreed to be interviewed, a decision was made on how the interview would be conducted. Decisions were made based on the interviewee's wishes and schedule if the interview occurred in person, online, through written correspondence, or over the telephone.

Results enabled the researcher to explain West Virginians' perceptions regarding charter schools. Data from surveys provided information to facilitate the interpretation of the level of understanding that residents of West Virginia have regarding charter schools.

## **POPULATION AND PARTICIPANTS**

A population in a research foundational study is the large group of individuals who participates in the foundational study (McMillan, 2016). The population for the survey portion of this foundational study was individuals who are on the Marshall University listserv, including Marshall University students, faculty, and staff. Also, individuals with access to the social media platform known as Facebook were included in the survey portion of the foundational study. The foundational study's goal was to reach 50-200 respondents for the survey portion of the research foundational study.

Purposive sampling will be used to select three interviewees. The three interviews will be conducted with participants who possess unique experiences with charter schools. A participant refers to someone from whom data are collected to be used in a research foundational study (McMillan, 2016). Participants will be able to provide their unique perspectives on charter schools in West Virginia. First, an interview was conducted with a state senator who is the education committee chair. The interviews will be conducted to gain insight into the thoughts and opinions of one of the state officials responsible for the original charter school bill to bring charter schools to West Virginia. Next, an interview will be conducted with a Cardinal Institute for WV Policy representative to gain information regarding the charter school's management. Finally, an interview with an educator who formerly worked as a West Virginia public school teacher and currently is working in a charter school will be conducted to gain a perspective on the impact of charter schools on education in West Virginia.



## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the perceptions of West Virginians regarding charter schools?
2. How did the COVID-19 global pandemic change the way individuals view charter schools?

## INSTRUMENTATION

Surveys collect information from people to describe, explain or compare their knowledge, feeling, values, or behaviors (Fink, 2017). The researcher developed the survey, *Perceptions on Charter Schools in West Virginia* (Appendix B), in association with university professors with educational research experience. Questions for the survey were developed based on the literature review for this foundational study. The survey was prepared using Qualtrics which respondents could access, complete, and submit online. Participants answered a twenty-two-question survey. The survey was divided into five sections; demographics, general knowledge of school choice, opinion of charter schools, charter schools and the COVID-19 global pandemic, and charter schools compared to traditional public schools. The first two questions were used to establish the demographics of the participants. Question one asked how the participant would describe themselves: college student, educator, parent/grandparent, guardian, or other. Participants were allowed to choose all the descriptors that applied to them. Question two had participants identify what county in West Virginia they were from or the choice of other if they were not residents of West Virginia. The remaining eighteen questions were answered using a Likert Scale with options: strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, and strongly agree. A Likert scale is an approach to response categories that measure the extent of a person's satisfaction or agreement with a specific set of statements or questions (Hall, 2018). The ordinal Likert-type scale is used when respondents are asked to tell how closely they agree or disagree with a statement (Fink, 2017). The final question was open-ended to determine if participants preferred brick-and-mortar or virtual charter schools.

## DATA COLLECTION

An initial research request was submitted to the Marshall University Institutional Review Board (IRB) in March 2021 and was approved. Following an adjustment to the foundational study, an amended request for IRB approval was filed in March of 2022. Following the 2022 IRB approval (Appendix A), a request was made to the Director of Editorial Services to request permission for the survey to be sent to the Marshall University listserv. The survey was distributed through the Marshall University listserv to the university's students, faculty, and staff on March 17, 2022. The survey was also posted to the researcher's personal Facebook page on March 10, 2022, and reposted on March 23, 2022. In addition, the survey was shared seventeen times on other individuals' private Facebook pages. The survey was live from March 10 through March 31, 2022. Qualtrics was used to tabulate survey responses. The survey included an anonymous consent form, instructions on participating in the foundational study, and confidentiality information. The survey was completely anonymous, and IP addresses were not recorded for this research. Five hundred forty-seven respondents completed the survey.

Personal interviews were conducted with three individuals. First, a phone interview was conducted with a West Virginia Senator to discuss their role in bringing charter schools to West Virginia. The senator was read the consent agreement and agreed to participate in the phone interview. The interview lasted approximately twenty minutes. At the request of the representative of the Cardinal Institute, interview questions were emailed to him so that he could answer questions at his convenience. Questions were emailed, along with the verbal consent agreement. Responses were returned to the researcher via email. The final interview was conducted with the former West Virginia traditional public school teacher. Before the interview, interview questions and the verbal consent form were sent through email to prepare her for the formal interview. The interview was

conducted with the teacher over the telephone and lasted less than one hour. Transcripts and notes relating to the phone interview were written and stored on the researcher's computer and will be destroyed after the research process is completed.

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

A mixed-methods foundational study gives credibility to findings by strengthening the results' integrity (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010). Survey responses were collected online using the program Qualtrics. Quantitative data was collected using Likert scale responses along with demographic responses. The Qualtrics program provided the mode and standard deviation for each question asked using a Likert scale. In addition, the percentage of respondents that chose a particular response was given to describe response frequency. Demographic data were analyzed using the percentage of respondents answering positively to a specific response. Additional statistics were calculated using SPSS to compute the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis statistic. The data produced with the survey is best analyzed using Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis statistical calculations. The Kruskal-Wallis test is non-parametric, meaning that it does not make assumptions regarding the data parameters (Lomuscio, 2021). Kruskal-Wallis is typically used with three or more independent groups (Lomuscio, 2021). The Mann-Whitney U test is appropriate to determine significance because it enables the comparison of two independent groups (Fink, 2017).

The Qualitative data was collected through two different processes. First, the survey contained open-response questions to allow respondents to express their views on brick-and-mortar vs. virtual schools. Additional qualitative data was gathered during the interview process. Participants' responses in the open-response and interview were indexed and interpreted as text.

The qualitative data were analyzed using qualitative analysis techniques to identify emergent themes.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This foundational study aimed to determine the perceptions that West Virginians have regarding charter schools opening in West Virginia. Also, this foundational study aimed to determine if West Virginians believed that charter schools were opening in West Virginia due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. This chapter will describe the results of the survey *Perceptions on Charter Schools in West Virginia* (Appendix B). This chapter will also illustrate themes and ideas drawn from the free-response survey question regarding charter schools in general, along with virtual vs. brick-and-mortar charter schools and the three personal interviews conducted. The chapter contains the following sections: data collection, descriptive characteristics of participants, major findings, and ancillary findings.

### **DATA COLLECTION**

In March 2021, documentation was submitted and approved by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for data collection to begin on this foundational study. However, aspects of the research foundational study were altered, requiring additional IRB approval. Therefore, on March 9, 2022, the Marshall University IRB granted permission for the modifications/amendments to the IRB documents (Appendix A). Following IRB approval, data collection for the foundational study could continue. Following IRB approval, the research implements protocols and procedures discussed in Chapter 3.

On March 10, 2022, the survey *Perceptions on Charter Schools in West Virginia* (Appendix B) was placed on the researcher's personal Facebook page and was shared seventeen times by other individuals on their personal Facebook page. In addition, the survey was reposted

to the researcher's personal Facebook page on March 23, 2022, to give individuals who had not had an opportunity to take the survey another chance to complete it.

On March 10, 2022, a request was made to the Marshall University Director of Editorial Services to ask permission to send the survey to the Marshall University listserv. Approval was granted after the required documents were submitted, and the survey was distributed through the Marshall University listserv to the university's students, faculty, and staff on March 17, 2022. A request was made to send the survey an additional time through the Marshall University listserv, but that request was not granted.

The survey was live from March 10 through March 31, 2022, and included an anonymous consent form, instructions on participating in the foundational study, and confidentiality information (Appendix C). The survey was completely anonymous, and IP addresses were not recorded for this research. Five hundred forty-seven respondents completed the survey. Of the 547 respondents who accessed the survey, 138 accessed the survey through Facebook and 409 through the Marshall University listserv. Data for how the respondents accessed the survey can be found in Table 1.

Personal interviews were conducted with three individuals. All three interviewed individuals were either read or given a consent agreement and agreed to participate in the foundational study. The interview with a West Virginia State Senator was conducted by telephone. Second, at the request of the Cardinal Institute's executive director, interview questions were emailed to him, and their responses were returned to the researcher via email. Finally, an interview with a former West Virginia public school teacher was conducted through a telephone conversation. Transcripts and notes relating to the phone interview were written and stored on the researcher's computer and will be destroyed after the research process is completed.

## DESCRIPTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS

The survey *Perceptions on Charter Schools in West Virginia* (Appendix B) asked that respondents answer two demographic questions before completing the survey. Question one asked how the participant would describe themselves: college student, educator, parent/grandparent, guardian, or other. Participants were allowed to choose all the descriptors that applied to them. After viewing data for this question, the researcher decided to combine "guardian" with "parent/grandparent" because only two individuals chose "guardian" along with choosing "parent/grandparent." The adjustment was made because a change would not affect the survey results. In addition, multiple individuals chose more than one descriptor to describe themselves. Because of the number of individuals choosing more than one option, an additional category titled "multiple commitments" was created. In some cases, respondents did not select a response, so those individuals are identified as "data missing." Information showing how the respondent identified is provided in Table 1.

Question two had participants identify what county in West Virginia they were from or the choice of other if they were not residents of West Virginia. The percentage data for each county respondents identified as being from can be found in Table 2. Once data was collected, it was determined that some West Virginia counties were underrepresented in the sample. Because of the underrepresentation, the decision was made to group county of residence information for the respondents using the three congressional districts for the state of West Virginia (Young, 2021). Once again, some respondents did not choose a response to identifying what county they were from. So, those individuals are identified as "data missing." Information showing what Congressional district the respondents reside in can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1: Demographic Information**

Characteristic	<i>f</i>	P
How the survey was accessed	n = 547	
Facebook	138	25.2%
Marshall University listserv	409	74.8%
Respondent Descriptor	n = 547	
College Student	149	27.2%
Educator	119	21.8%
Parent/Grandparent	82	15.0%
Multiple Commitments	81	14.8%
Other	64	11.7%
Data Missing	52	9.5%
WV Congressional District of County	n = 547	
District 1	91	16.6%
District 2	83	15.2%
District 3	249	45.5%
Out of State	23	4.2%
Data Missing	101	18.5%

Three individuals were interviewed for the foundational study. Purposive sampling was used to select the three individuals who were interviewed. Purposive sampling is a nonrandom sampling technique used where people are chosen for a particular purpose (Mertler, 2019). Interviewee one, the West Virginia State Senator, has been a member of the West Virginia State Senate since 2016 and chair of the Committee on Education. The Senator introduced Senate Bill 451, which led to the passage of the state's first charter school law in 2019 (personal communication, April 19, 2021). Next, interviewee two from the Cardinal Institute, originally from Parkersburg, is currently the Cardinal Institute's executive director, responsible for the organization's policy, fundraising, communications strategies, and day-to-day operations (personal communication, March 29, 2022). Finally, interviewee three is a former West Virginia teacher



who now teaches at Villages Charter Middle School in Villages, Florida. The teacher has taught for 24 years, with the last two years at Villages Charter Middle School (personal communication, March 30, 2022).

**Table 2: Demographic: What county is the Respondent from in West Virginia**

County	N	%	County	N	%
Barbour	1	0.22	Mingo	2	0.45
Berkeley	3	0.67	Monongalia	4	0.9
Boone	2	0.45	Monroe	0	0
Braxton	0	0	Morgan	0	0
Brooke	0	0	McDowell	1	0.22
Cabell	182	40.81	Nicholas	1	0.22
Calhoun	0	0	Ohio	12	2.69
Clay	1	0.22	Pendleton	0	0
Doddridge	0	0	Pleasants	4	0.9
Fayette	3	0.67	Pocahontas	1	0.22
Gilmer	1	0.22	Preston	1	0.22
Grant	0	0	Putnam	29	6.5
Greenbrier	2	0.45	Raleigh	6	1.35
Hampshire	0	0	Randolph	1	0.22
Hancock	0	0	Ritchie	0	0
Hardy	1	0.22	Roane	3	0.67
Harrison	2	0.45	Summers	1	0.22
Jackson	4	0.9	Taylor	0	0
Jefferson	2	0.45	Tucker	0	0
Konawa	37	8.3	Tyler	0	0
Lewis	0	0	Upshur	1	0.22
Lincoln	12	2.69	Wayne	23	5.16
Logan	3	0.67	Webster	0	0
Marion	1	0.22	Wetzel	1	0.22
Marshall	0	0	Wirt	0	0.22
Mason	7	1.57	Wood	64	14.35
Mercer	1	0.45	Wyoming	1	0.22
Mineral	0	0	Other	23	5.16

n=446

## MAJOR FINDINGS

Two research questions were addressed in this foundational study. This section presents the quantitative data as analyzed using SPSS to generate descriptive statistics and run tests of significant differences as needed. Qualitative data were sorted, organized, and analyzed for emergent themes. The information is arranged by research questions and then subdivided by survey question topics. Research question one will include topics covering general knowledge of school choice, opinions of charter schools, and charter schools compared to traditional public schools. Research question two will include survey questions dealing with charter schools and the COVID-19 global pandemic

### **RQ 1: What are the perceptions of West Virginians regarding charter schools?**

Research question 1 asks, "What are the perceptions of West Virginians regarding charter schools?" Respondents completed the survey *Perceptions on Charter Schools in West Virginia* (Appendix B). The survey answers were recorded using a Likert scale where 1 = "Strongly Disagree" (SD), 2 = "Somewhat Disagree" (SWD), 3 = "Neither Agree nor Disagree" (NA/DA), 4 = "Somewhat Agree" (SWA), and 5 = "Strongly Agree" (SA). Information is arranged by survey question and is grouped by the topic that the question was related to, including general knowledge of school choice, opinions of charter schools, and charter schools compared to traditional public schools. Qualitative data were generated concurrently through a free-response question to identify if the respondent preferred a brick-and-mortar or virtual charter school. Also, personal interviews were conducted with three individuals with unique perspectives on charter schools.

#### **General Knowledge of School Choice**

Those who responded to the survey were asked to choose an answer based on the five-point Likert Scale. Table 3 shows the data for survey questions relating to the general knowledge

of school choice. Regarding the four questions relating to the respondents' general knowledge of school choice, most respondents indicated "Strongly Agree" regarding their understanding of school choice, charter schools, virtual schools, and brick-and-mortar schools. For example, a former West Virginia teacher who was interviewed for this foundational study said that when West Virginia teachers participated in the 2018-2019 work stoppage, they did not have a good understanding of what a charter school was "I don't think I did have a good understanding of what a charter school was at that time. I felt that a charter school was run like a business. The charter schools were supported by the public school system and funded by businesses." One of the survey respondents stated that "Options are good for parents that may be concerned about public education in WV."

**Table 3: General Knowledge of School Choice**

Survey Questions	n	SD	SWD	NA/ DA	SWA	SA	Mode	Std.Dev.
I understand what school choice is	470	4.7%	5.1%	6.6%	30.0%	53.6%	5.0	1.086
I understand what a charter school is	468	4.55%	8.8%	5.8%	34.0%	47.0%	5.0	1.129
I understand what a virtual school is	469	1.1%	3.4%	3.2%	22.6%	69.7%	5.0	0.802
I understand what a brick-and-mortar school is	469	5.3%	4.7%	4.1%	7.5%	78.5%	5.0	1.12

### Significant Differences

Kruskal-Wallis test was used to determine whether there were significant differences between demographic groups regarding respondents' general knowledge of school choice. The Kruskal-Wallis test is non-parametric, meaning that it does not make assumptions regarding the data parameters (Lomuscio, 2021). Kruskal-Wallis is typically used with three or more independent groups (Lomuscio, 2021). Statically significant differences ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) were determined for three questions (see Table 4). A pairwise comparison of the mean rank shows that college students offered significantly lower ratings than educators (0.000), multiple commitments (0.000),

and other (0.016) in their knowledge of school choice. Likewise, parent/grandparent ranked knowledge of school choice significantly below educators (0.000) and multiple comments (0.011) responding groups regarding knowledge of school choice. In the area of understanding what a charter school is, college students again offered significantly lower rankings than educators (0.000), multiple commitments (0.021), and other (0.040). Also, educators ranked themselves significantly higher in understanding what a charter school is as compared to multiple commitments (0.017), other (0.031), and parent/grandparent (0.000). Finally, in their understanding of what a brick-and-mortar school is, college students ranked their knowledge significantly below that of an educator (0.000), multiple commitments (0.000), other (0.000), and parent/grandparent (0.003). Educator ranked significantly higher than the two groups, other (0.009) and parent/grandparent (0.450).

The Kruskal-Wallis test was also used to determine any significant differences in response ranking by grouping respondents using the congressional districts where the county is located that the respondent identified as being where they lived. A significance standard of  $p \leq 0.05$  showed that there was no significant difference found between respondent groups. Finally, the Mann-Whitney U test was used to determine if there was any significant difference in ranks given by respondents regarding how the respondents accessed the survey either by Facebook or the Marshall University listserv. The Mann-Whitney U test was appropriate to determine significance because it enables the comparison of two independent groups (Fink, 2017). A significance standard of  $p \leq 0.05$  was used to determine significance, and no significant difference was found between respondent groups accessing the survey through Facebook or the Marshall University listserv.

**Table 4: General Knowledge of School Choice Significant Differences**

Survey Question/Demographic	n	SD	SWD	NA/ DA	SWA	SA	Sig
I understand what school choice is	470	4.7%	5.1%	6.6%	30.0%	53.6%	0.000
College Student	140	6.4%	8.6%	11.4%	32.9%	40.7%	
Educator	114	3.5%	1.8%	2.6%	22.8%	69.3%	0.000
Multiple Commitments	79	1.3%	6.3%	3.8%	25.3%	63.3%	0.000
Other	57	5.3%	1.8%	3.5%	33.3%	56.1%	0.016
Parent/Grandparent	79	6.3%	5.1%	8.9%	36.7%	43.0%	
Educator	114	3.5%	1.8%	2.6%	22.8%	69.3%	0.000
Multiple Commitments	79	1.3%	6.3%	3.8%	25.3%	63.3%	0.011
I understand what a charter school is	468	4.6%	8.8%	5.8%	34.0%	47.0%	0.000
College Student	140	6.4%	15.0%	5.0%	39.3%	34.3%	
Educator	113	1.8%	2.7%	4.4%	24.8%	66.4%	0.000
Multiple Commitments	79	5.1%	6.3%	8.9%	29.1%	50.6%	0.021
Other	57	1.8%	7.0%	7.0%	36.8%	47.4%	0.040
Educator	113	1.8%	2.7%	4.4%	24.8%	66.4%	
Multiple Commitments	79	5.1%	6.3%	8.9%	29.1%	50.6%	0.017
Other	57	1.8%	7.0%	7.0%	36.8%	47.4%	0.031
Parent/Grandparent	78	6.4%	10.3%	5.1%	41.0%	37.2%	0.000
I understand what a brick-and-mortar school is	469	5.3%	4.7%	4.1%	7.5%	78.5%	0.000
College Student	140	10.7%	10.0%	10.0%	10.7%	58.6%	
Educator	113	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%	2.7%	94.7%	0.000
Multiple Commitments	79	2.5%	2.5%	1.3%	6.3%	87.3%	0.000
Other	57	5.3%	7.0%	1.8%	8.8%	77.2%	0.000
Parent/Grandparent	79	5.1%	1.3%	2.5%	8.9%	82.3%	0.003
Educator	113	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%	2.7%	94.7%	
Other	57	5.3%	7.0%	1.8%	8.8%	77.2%	0.009
Parent/Grandparent	79	5.1%	1.3%	2.5%	8.9%	82.3%	0.450

\*p≤0.05

## **Opinion of Charter Schools**

Respondents were again asked to answer questions about their opinions of charter schools based on the five-point Likert Scale. Table 5 shows the data for survey questions relating to the views of charter schools. Respondents strongly agreed that low-income families are less likely to take advantage of school choice options. The free-response question in the survey did not address low-income families. However, one respondent used the free-response format to address low-income students. "Charter schools are simply a way for wealthy parents to segregate their children from low income, special needs children." Another respondent commented that "Charter schools will not want low-income families." The majority of respondents strongly agree that it is important for parents to have an opinion in making decisions about their child's education. One respondent said, "The variety [charter schools] gives the parents freedom to choose what best fits their children." The executive director of Cardinal Institute said, "An essential key to a better West Virginia is through a robust scholastic foundation that sees children as individuals with unique learning needs."

Respondents strongly disagree that charter schools should open in West Virginia. One respondent quoted the West Virginia constitution by saying, "No independent free school district or organization shall hereafter be created, except with the consent of the school district or districts out of which the same is to be created, expressed by a majority of the voters voting on the question. The public was denied the right to vote on this!" While the state senator who was interviewed said, "I believe it is a good idea to have options and choices. I think charter schools will give them [charter schools] the ability to be more flexible and specialized in certain things." Respondents also strongly disagreed that charter schools are a good option for education reform and that charter schools would benefit school-age children in West Virginia. Once again, respondents took the

opportunity to touch on these issues in the free-response question for the survey. One respondent rejected the notion of charter schools coming to West Virginia by saying, "They [charter schools] should be banned in West Virginia." Another respondent said, "I would not choose a charter school and don't think they are right for West Virginia." The former West Virginia teacher who was interviewed touched on this topic during their interview by stating, "I do not think charter schools are good for West Virginia because we don't have the population for them." Not all respondents agreed that charter schools would be bad for the state. One respondent said, "As a former public school educator and now at a choice school, I see phenomenal academic and personal benefits to children of all ages, colors, and financial backgrounds."

**Table 5: Opinion of Charter Schools**

Survey Questions	n	SD	SWD	NA/ DA	SWA	SA	Mode	Std.Dev.
Low-income families are less likely to take advantage of school choice options	470	4.3%	8.3%	14.5%	35.3%	37.7%	5.0	1.111
I believe that it is important for parents to have an opinion in making decisions about their child's education	458	0.9%	5.0%	5.9%	31.2%	57.0%	5.0	0.873
I believe charter schools should open in West Virginia	457	30.9%	13.3%	19.3%	19.3%	17.3%	1.0	1.487
I believe charter schools are a good option for education reform	457	33.0%	12.5%	19.7%	19.7%	15.1%	1.0	1.473
I believe charter schools will be beneficial to school-age children in WV	458	31.0%	12.2%	24.0%	16.6%	16.2%	1.0	1.454

### Significant Differences

The Kruskal-Wallis test was used again to determine any significant differences in rankings using pairwise comparisons of demographic groups for the set of questions regarding respondents' opinions of charter schools. Statically significant differences ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) were determined for the four questions (see Table 6). A comparison of the mean rank showed the college students significantly lower than both multiple commitments (0.031) and parent/grandparent (0.025)

regarding their belief that it is important for parents to have an opinion in making decisions about their child's education. On the same question, educators ranked lower than multiple commitments (0.026) and parent/grandparent (0.021). Regarding charter schools opening in West Virginia, there was a significant difference in the rankings of educators with a college student (0.004), multiple commitments (0.015), other (0.007), and parent/grandparent (0.001). Educators again had a significant difference in ranking regarding their belief that charter schools are a good option for education reform. Educator differed from college student (0.012), multiple commitments (0.024), other (0.021), and parent/grandparent (0.002). Finally, educators had a significant difference in ranking in their opinion that charter schools benefit school-age children in West Virginia. College student (0.020), multiple commitments (0.047), other (0.019), and parent/grandparent (0.001) were all significantly different than educator. The Kruskal-Wallis test was also used to determine any significant differences in response ranking by grouping respondents using the congressional districts where the county is located that the respondent identified as being from. Using  $p \leq 0.05$  there was no significant difference found between respondent groups. Again, the Mann-Whitney U test was used to determine if there was any significant difference in ranks given by respondents regarding the manner in which the respondents accessed the survey either by Facebook or the Marshall University listserv. Using a significance of  $p \leq 0.05$ , no significant difference was found between respondent groups accessing the survey through Facebook or the Marshall University listserv.



**Table 6: Opinion of Charter Schools Significant Differences**

Survey Question/Demographic	n	SD	SWD	NA/ DA	SWA	SA	Sig
I believe that it is important for parents to have an opinion in making decisions about their child's education	458	0.9%	5.0%	5.9%	31.2%	57.0%	0.036
College Student	133	0.8%	6.8%	7.5%	33.8%	51.1%	
Multiple Commitments	78	0.0%	3.8%	3.8%	26.9%	65.4%	0.031
Parent/Grandparent	77	1.3%	2.6%	3.9%	26.0%	66.2%	0.025
Educator	113	0.9%	6.2%	7.1%	36.3%	49.6%	
Multiple Commitments	78	0.0%	3.8%	3.8%	26.9%	65.4%	0.026
Parent/Grandparent	77	1.3%	2.6%	3.9%	26.0%	66.2%	0.021
I believe charter schools should open in West Virginia	457	30.9%	13.3%	19.3%	19.3%	17.3%	0.005
Educator	112	46.4%	17.0%	8.0%	13.4%	15.2%	
College Student	133	24.1%	12.8%	27.8%	21.8%	13.5%	0.004
Multiple Commitments	78	33.3%	14.1%	9.0%	19.2%	24.4%	0.015
Other	56	26.8%	8.9%	23.2%	19.6%	21.4%	0.007
Parent/Grandparent	77	19.5%	11.7%	28.6%	23.4%	16.9%	0.001
I believe charter schools are a good option for education reform	457	33.0%	12.5%	19.7%	19.7%	15.1%	0.016
Educator	112	47.3%	17.9%	6.3%	13.4%	15.2%	
College Student	133	25.6%	14.3%	28.6%	19.5%	12.0%	0.012
Multiple Commitments	78	35.9%	10.3%	10.3%	24.4%	19.2%	0.024
Other	56	30.4%	8.9%	23.2%	17.9%	19.6%	0.021
Parent/Grandparent	77	23.4%	6.5%	31.2%	26.0%	13.0%	0.002
I believe charter schools will be beneficial to school-age children in WV	458	31.00%	12.20%	24.00%	16.60%	16.20%	0.012
Educator	113	44.20%	12.40%	19.50%	9.70%	14.20%	
College Student	133	25.60%	12.00%	32.30%	18.00%	12.00%	0.020
Multiple Commitments	78	35.90%	10.30%	12.80%	20.50%	20.50%	0.047
Other	56	26.80%	14.30%	23.20%	10.70%	25.00%	0.019
Parent/Grandparent	77	18.20%	13.00%	28.60%	24.70%	15.60%	0.001

\*p<0.05

## **Charter Schools Compared to Traditional Public Schools**

Using the five-point Likert scale, respondents answered questions regarding their opinion of charter schools compared to traditional public schools. The results of the survey can be seen in Table 7. Respondents strongly disagreed that charter schools provide a better learning environment than traditional public schools. The majority of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the belief that academic achievement is higher in a charter school than in a traditional public school. In addition, respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement that teachers are more qualified in a traditional public school than in a charter school. However, the majority of respondents did agree with the belief that charter schools give parents and students more flexibility and that instructors have more freedom to create curricula. Individuals who were interviewed for this foundational study provided insight on these topics. The Cardinal executive director stated, "Innovations like charter schools provide a new way to look at education, reorienting the system around a child's needs. This new culture of education can accurately reflect the lives of students, families, and teachers, apart from "one size fits all" approaches." The former West Virginia teacher said, "Unlike the research says, I do not have the freedom to teach in the charter school that I had in the public school in West Virginia." The Cardinal executive disagreed and said, "Charters will provide more options for students, families, and teachers."

**Table 7: Charter Schools Compared to Traditional Public Schools**

Survey Questions	n	SD	SWD	NA/ DA	SWA	SA	Mode	Std.Dev.
I believe charter schools provide a better learning environment than traditional public schools	425	31.5%	12.0%	29.4%	17.6%	9.4%	1.0	1.338
I believe academic achievement is higher in a charter school than in a traditional public school	425	27.1%	10.8%	29.2%	21.9%	11.1%	3.0	1.346
I believe charter schools give students and parents more flexibility than traditional public schools	424	14.9%	11.6%	27.4%	32.3%	13.9%	4.0	1.248
I believe instructors have more freedom to create curriculum (what is being taught) in a charter school than in a traditional public schools	424	10.6%	6.8%	21.2%	42.2%	19.1%	4.0	1.187
I believe teachers are more qualified in a traditional public school than a charter school	425	8.7%	11.8%	34.8%	12.5%	32.2%	3.0	1.287
I believe that certified educators should make decisions about educational policy	425	3.5%	8.0%	9.9%	23.8%	54.8%	5.0	1.120

**Significant Differences**

The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to determine if there was a significant difference ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) between demographic groups in the foundational study. A pairwise comparison was performed using the mean ranks of respondents' answers to questions regarding charter schools compared to traditional public schools. Results of the statistical calculations can be found in Table 8. The statistical test showed that educators responses to "I believe charter schools provide a better learning environment than traditional public schools" were significantly different than that of college students (0.004), multiple commitments (0.033), and other (0.005). Likewise, there was a significant difference in teachers' responses to the statement "I believe academic achievement is higher in a charter school than in a traditional public school" when compared to college students

(0.004), other (0.022), and parent/ grandparent (0.000). Finally, there was a significant difference in the way teachers ranked the statement "I believe teachers are more qualified in a traditional public school than a charter school" to the way college students (0.003), multiple commitments (0.006), other (0.002), and parent/grandparent (0.004) ranked the statement. The Kruskal-Wallis test was also used to determine any significant differences in response ranking by grouping respondents using the congressional districts where the county is located that the respondent identified as being from. The significance range of  $p \leq 0.05$  was used to determine if a significant difference was found between respondent groups. The Mann-Whitney U test was used to determine if there was any significant difference in ranks given by respondents regarding how the respondents accessed the survey either by Facebook or the Marshall University listserv. No significant difference was found ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) between respondent groups accessing the survey through Facebook or the Marshal University listserv.

**Table 8: Charter Schools Compared to Traditional Public Schools**

Survey Question/Demographic	n	SD	SWD	NA/ DA	SWA	SA	Sig
I believe charter schools provide a better learning environment than traditional public schools	425	31.5%	12.0%	29.4%	17.6%	9.4%	0.001
Educator	108	43.5%	18.5%	20.4%	9.3%	8.3%	
College Student	120	26.7%	11.7%	36.7%	13.3%	11.7%	0.004
Multiple Commitments	76	34.2%	7.9%	27.6%	23.7%	6.6%	0.033
Other	50	26.0%	10.0%	30.0%	24.0%	10.0%	0.005
Parent/Grandparent	70	21.4%	8.6%	32.9%	24.0%	10.0%	0.000
I believe academic achievement is higher in a charter school than in a traditional public school	425	27.10%	10.80%	29.20%	21.90%	11.10%	0.015
Educator	108	39.8%	12.0%	22.2%	18.5%	7.4%	
College Student	120	20.8%	10.0%	35.0%	21.7%	12.5%	0.004
Other	50	24.0%	12.0%	22.0%	30.0%	12.0%	0.022
Parent/Grandparent	70	17.1%	14.3%	30.0%	25.7%	12.9%	0.004
I believe teachers are more qualified in a traditional public school than a charter school	425	8.70%	11.80%	34.80%	12.50%	32.20%	0.003
Educator	109	8.30%	7.30%	22.90%	12.80%	48.60%	
College Student	120	7.50%	11.70%	41.70%	11.70%	27.50%	0.003
Multiple Commitments	75	12.00%	10.70%	37.30%	10.70%	29.30%	0.006
Other	50	6.00%	16.00%	44.00%	14.00%	20.00%	0.002
Parent/Grandparent	70	10.00%	17.10%	32.90%	14.30%	25.70%	0.003

\*p≤.05

### Free-Response Survey Question

The survey *Perceptions on Charter Schools in West Virginia* (Appendix B) contained one question that was an open-ended, free-response question. The questions asked respondents, "If choosing a charter school, would you prefer an in-person, face-to-face school or a virtual school." In addition, respondents were asked to include a statement or two about their preferences. Two

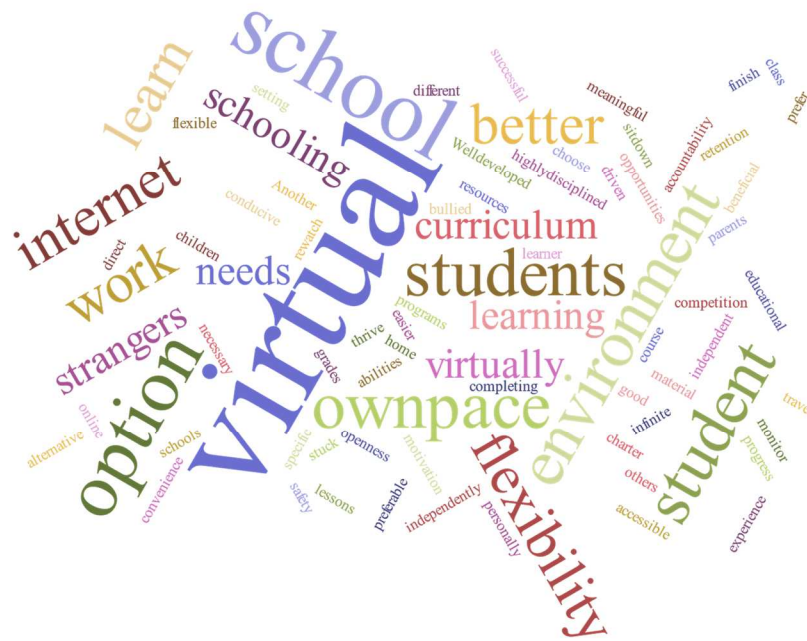
hundred fifty-three respondents answered the open-ended survey question. Of those who responded to the question, 231 (91.30%) favored an in-person, face-to-face charter school. Twenty people (7.91%) said they would prefer a virtual charter school. Two respondents (0.79 %) stated they would like to see a hybrid model, part in-person and part virtual, charter school. Finally, sixty-two people did not give a preference or chose both charter school options.

Statements made by respondents offered an insight into their thought on in-person, face-to-face charter schools. Respondents used words like accountability, body language, communication, engaging activities, relationships, and student/teacher interactions to explain why they preferred an in-person charter school. "I would always choose an in-person school. I believe there is more accountability for students who attend class face-to-face than virtually." is the reason one respondent gave for choosing an in-person charter school. Many respondents used the word social to describe many aspects of face-to-face learning, including social health, social identity, social interactions, and social skills. One respondent wrote, "Attending school in person is crucial for a child's development and social health." Finally, respondents pointed out that students need contact with teachers to increase their clarity of the content, absorb information, and experience hands-on learning. A response stated, "Face-to-face teaching allows for correcting misunderstandings; it will enable the teacher to take into account students' emotional state and eye-to-eye contact."

A data visualization technique was used to depict themes that emerged for the open-ended survey question. A word cloud was used to represent words used more often by respondents. The bigger and bolder the word appears, the more often it is mentioned within a given text (What are Word Clouds, 2014). Figure 1 shows respondents' most frequently used words to describe why they would choose an in-person, face-to-face charter school.



**Figure 2: Respondents Favoring Virtual Charter Schools**



Respondents also expressed why they did not choose a virtual charter school option. Respondents said they did not prefer a virtual learning environment because students are less engaged, less likely to ask questions, and less likely to participate in classroom discussions. Several respondents wrote that "Cheating is easier when students attend a virtual charter school." "It is also more convenient for some to have their work done by someone else if they are completely virtual," one respondent wrote. Another respondent wrote, "Cheating is rampant in virtual school."

A few respondents stated that they saw value in both types of charter schools. Those respondents who wanted an option of both types of charter schools said that a student learning style should be used to determine what is best for them. A respondent wrote that the kind of charter school is "Completely dependent on the child themselves on a case-by-case basis. So many kids



need different things, and even more of them don't even understand their learning styles."

## **RQ 2: How did the COVID-19 global pandemic change the way individuals view charter schools?**

Research question 2 asks, "How did the COVID-19 global pandemic change the way individuals view charter schools?" Respondents completed the survey *Perceptions on Charter Schools in West Virginia* (Appendix B). The survey answers were recorded using a Likert scale where 1 = "Strongly Disagree" (SD), 2 = "Somewhat Disagree" (SWD), 3 = "Neither Agree nor Disagree" (NA/DA), 4 = "Somewhat Agree" (SWA), and 5 = "Strongly Agree" (SA). Information is arranged by survey questions as they were grouped in the survey under charter schools and the COVID-19 global pandemic.

### **Charter Schools and the COVID-19 Global Pandemic**

Respondents were asked to answer questions relating to charter schools and the COVID-19 global pandemic, and respondents chose their answers based on how they agreed or disagreed with the statement based on a five-point Likert scale. The results of the survey can be found summarized in Table 9. Respondents agreed with the statement when asked if they believed that traditional public schools handled education well during the COVID-19 global pandemic. However, respondents strongly disagreed with the words, "Since the start of the COVID-19 global pandemic, I am more likely to send my child to a charter school." Also, respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, "I believe the COVID-19 global pandemic is why West Virginia will have virtual charter schools in the fall of 2022." One respondent felt that COVID-19 should influence virtual charter schools to open in the fall of 2022. The respondent stated, "COVID is still a thing, and people forget that for some reason." Other respondents did not feel the same way about COVID-19 and virtual schools. COVID-19 was one of the reasons that respondents wrote about

their displeasure with virtual charter schools. One respondent said, "Data shows that student grades plummeted during COVID-19 in virtual learning settings." Respondents stated that virtual learning has been very ineffective during the pandemic. One respondent said, "Teachers did their best with virtual school [during the pandemic] and used what they had to work with, but it [virtual learning] still turned out horribly. Students have never been so behind."

**Table 9: Charter Schools and the COVID-19 Global Pandemic**

Survey Questions	n	SD	SWD	NA/ DA	SWA	SA	Mode	Std.Dev.
I believe traditional public schools have handled education well during the COVID-19 global pandemic	443	14.7%	26.2%	16.7%	30.5%	12.0%	4.0	1.279
Since the start of the COVID-19 global pandemic, I am more likely to send my child to a charter school	444	38.1%	10.4%	34.2%	9.2%	8.1%	1.0	1.294
I believe the COVID-19 global pandemic is why WV will have virtual charter schools in the fall of 2022	446	21.1%	13.9%	33.6%	25.1%	6.3%	3.0	1.206

### Significant Differences

The Kruskal-Wallis test was used again to determine any significant differences ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) in the rankings respondents gave in their opinion regarding charter schools and the COVID-19 global pandemic. Pairwise comparison of the mean ranking of responses found significant differences in the statement, "I believe traditional public schools have handled education well during the COVID-19 global pandemic." In addition, the rank college students gave the statement was significantly different than the rank educators (0.000), multiple commitments (0.001), and parent/grandparent (0.001) offered as a ranking. The Kruskal-Wallis test found no significant differences in respondents' rankings when they were grouped by congressional districts based on their country of residence. The Mann-Whitney U test did show a significant difference for the statement when using how respondents gained access to the survey. Respondents using Facebook

and respondents accessing the survey through the Marshall University listserv had a significant difference (0.03) in how they ranked the statement, "I believe traditional public schools have handled education well during the COVID-19 global pandemic."

**Table 10: Charter Schools and the COVID-19 Global Pandemic**

Survey Question/Demographic	n	SD	SWD	NA/ DA	SWA	SA	Sig
I believe traditional public schools have handled education well during the COVID-19 global pandemic	443	14.7%	26.2%	16.7%	30.5%	12.0%	0.000
College Student	126	20.6%	38.9%	15.9%	15.9%	8.7%	
Educator	111	9.9%	14.4%	18.0%	44.1%	13.5%	0.000
Multiple Commitments	77	10.4%	29.9%	15.6%	24.7%	19.5%	0.001
Parent/Grandparent	73	9.6%	23.3%	16.4%	43.8%	6.8%	0.001
Educator	111	9.9%	14.4%	18.0%	44.1%	13.5%	
Other	55	23.6%	20.0%	18.2%	27.3%	10.9%	0.009
Facebook	100	10.0%	22.0%	15.0%	41.0%	12.0%	
Marshall University listserv	343	16.0%	27.4%	17.2%	27.4%	12.0%	0.030

\*p≤0.05

### ANCILLARY FINDINGS

Respondents and interviewees offered some opinions that were not expected in the results. Many survey respondents used the free-response chance to voice their displeasure with charter schools opening in West Virginia. When asked if they preferred an in-person or virtual charter school, many responded that they would never choose a charter school. Some reasons were that charter schools are money pits, public money does not belong in private hands, and charters can select or deny students for admission. One respondent stated they would never choose a charter school because "Public monies need to be spent on improving class sizes (reducing), instructor pay and teaching hours, student support, and physical structures, giving more support to instructors for the quantity of paperwork required, and increasing numbers of instructors and curriculum in

the public schools." Another person wrote about money spent on charter schools: "We need to invest more money in our public education system. We do not need to divert funds towards a charter school option that is not an option for everyone." One respondent believes that charter schools are "For-profit schools do not have students' best interests at heart and are more motivated by money than the student's best interest."

The free-response question allowed individuals to voice their displeasure with the West Virginia legislature for bringing charter schools to the state. One respondent said, "Those well connected to the state legislature, particularly those associated with the Republican Party, will benefit financially from virtual schools. This is one more attempt by Republicans to weaken teachers." Another called charter schools "The next wave of Carpet Baggers for West Virginia." One person said, "Charter schools are a political tool used by politicians and special interests to dilute the influence and power of public-school teachers. They are not better than public schools and only serve to dilute the ability of public schools to do a good job." Another respondent commented, "Charter schools in WV were pushed and created by legislators with financial interests and not the interests of children in mind."

The business aspect of the charter school was another emergent theme that surfaced. A survey respondent wrote, "I would never choose a charter school. I believe they are profit-focused, not student-focused." That sentiment was echoed by the former West Virginia teacher interviewed for this foundational study. "The school is run like a business. The school has to retain an A+ rating. My principal was never a teacher, but she has a master's degree in education. However, she was never in the classroom. She is more business-minded because the school is a business."

Teachers' unions were brought up several times during data collection. Respondents were both for and against the teachers' unions and their role in keeping charter schools out of West

Virginia. One respondent said, "Unions spread false fear and are anti-choice." Another respondent wrote, "There should be no Union big enough to shut down a state." A third respondent said, "There is a fear of public educators that they will lose their job and that unions spread false fear to be anti-choice." The Cardinal institute executive said, "Naturally, there is pushback from the state's teachers' unions: WVEA and AFT-WV" because charter schools will open in West Virginia in 2022." Others favored the union and the protection that it offered teachers. The former West Virginia teacher interviewed said, "I do not have the protection [in the charter school] I did in West Virginia with the teachers union. I have a year-to-year contract. I can be let go at any time. I do not have a lot of protection." Another said charter schools are "Designed to break unions, lower teacher pay, and segregate students based on wealth or talent."

The respondents' views regarding charter schools were also expressed in the free-response section of the survey. One person said, "Charter schools are allowed to pick their students, and if they miss too many classes, they are sent back to the public school. This allows charter schools to have higher test scores than public schools, making it look like charter schools perform better while taking public money away from public schools." The interviewed former West Virginia teacher emphasized the expectations of charter school teachers. "Everything at the [charter] school is data-driven. I do not get paid as much as I did as a teacher in West Virginia. Teachers in this school are strongly encouraged to go to school early and stay late each day. In addition, teachers are strongly encouraged to tutor after school." Respondents questioned the certification of charter school teachers. "They [charter schools] do not employ qualified people," and the need for a "School where the curriculum is chosen and developed by certified educators" were some of the remarks written by respondents. The former West Virginia teacher interviewed said that all of the teachers she works with at the charter school in Florida are certified teachers. A respondent with

experience in charter schools stated, "I have seen charter schools in Philadelphia with excellent qualified teachers and high curriculum expectations." Another person with charter school experience said, "I've worked with charter schools professionally, and they work wonders for kids that don't fit the model of [other students]."

The quality of the education system in West Virginia was also a topic respondents touched on. One respondent stated, "West Virginia's education quality is below average. It would be great to see other options for parents and students." Another wrote, "Charter schools are required in WV as the school ratings are not great and opening of the charter school will allow parents to pick between a traditional school and charter school." One respondent was adamant about their feelings on the quality of education in West Virginia stating, "Want better schools? Pay teachers better wages, invest in these schools and classrooms, listen to teachers, hold parents accountable, remove politics from educational decisions, and expand counseling resources. CS [charter schools] will further erode the school systems of WV and beyond."

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter presents a summary and discusses the perceptions of West Virginians regarding charter schools. This chapter will also discuss whether West Virginians believe that the COVID-19 global pandemic is why charter schools are scheduled to open in the fall of 2022. The chapter will review the purpose of the foundational study, research questions, and data collection. The chapter will further provide a summary of the population and findings. Finally, the chapter will discuss the findings, future research recommendations, and a conclusion.

### **PURPOSE OF THE FOUNDATIONAL STUDY**

The purpose of this foundational study was to determine the perceptions of West Virginians on charter schools and if they were in favor of bringing charter schools to the state of West Virginia. Although West Virginians fund public education, their voices are unnoticed by policymakers. This research also examined if West Virginians' views on charter schools had changed due to how public schools handled education during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research questions were investigated:

1. What are the perceptions of West Virginians regarding charter schools?
2. How did the COVID-19 global pandemic change the way individuals view charter schools?

### **DATA COLLECTION**

In March 2021, an initial research request was submitted to the Marshall University Institutional Review Board (IRB). In March 2022, adjustments to the foundational study were made, resulting in an amended IRB approval. The Director of Editorial Services approved sending the survey to the Marshall University listserv. The survey was also posted to the researcher's

personal Facebook page and shared seventeen times on other individuals' private Facebook pages. Qualtrics was used to tabulate survey responses. Four hundred forty-six respondents completed the survey.

Personal interviews were conducted with three individuals possessing unique knowledge of charter schools. A phone interview was conducted with a West Virginia Senator, an interview via email with a Cardinal Institute executive, and a phone interview with a former West Virginia public school teacher.

### **SUMMARY OF POPULATION**

Five hundred forty-seven individuals responded to the survey *Perceptions on Charter Schools in West Virginia* (Appendix B). Of those responding to the survey, 409 accessed the survey through the Marshall University listserv, and 138 individuals accessed the survey via Facebook. Those respondents accessing the survey through the Marshall University listserv and Facebook was a foundational study limitation.

Three personal interviews were conducted for the foundational study. Purposive sampling was used to select the individuals based on their unique knowledge of charter schools. Interviewee one was a West Virginia State Senator, interviewee two was the Cardinal Institute's executive director, and interviewee three was a former West Virginia teacher who teaches at a charter school in Florida.



## **SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **RQ 1: What are the perceptions of West Virginians regarding charter schools?**

#### **Survey Results**

The data from the survey were analyzed and interpreted to determine the perceptions of West Virginians regarding charter schools. There were three survey sections in addition to the free-response questions directly related to research question one.

#### **General Knowledge of School Choice**

Regarding section one of the survey, General Knowledge of School Choice, the data collected showed that most respondents have general knowledge and an understanding of school choice. Although there was a statistically significant difference for three of the four questions under the topic, respondents indicated that they understand school choice, charter schools, virtual schools, and brick-and-mortar schools. Interestingly, there was no significant difference in respondents' mean rank for understanding what a virtual school is. The interpretation of this phenomenon leads the researcher to conclude that due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, West Virginians were familiar with virtual schooling. During the pandemic, most schools offered remote or virtual learning to students (Chatterji & Li, 2021). Therefore, most people understood virtual learning because of how education was handled during the pandemic. However, there may have been a false sense of understanding of what a charter school is. One respondent commented that her husband, who also completed the survey, asked her if a charter school was the same as a private Catholic school.

#### **Opinion of Charter Schools**

Section two of the survey, Opinion of Charter Schools, had four questions showing a statistically significant difference in how respondents ranked the statements. Interestingly, the way

educators ranked the statements is where there was a significant difference. Educators in West Virginia have proven that, as a whole, they do not want charter schools in the state. Since 2010, the West Virginia legislature has tried to pass legislation to establish a charter school law (Adams, 2022). However, because of the 2019 Omnibus education bill (SB451, 2019), West Virginia teachers took to the picket lines to protest the bill. While the teachers won the battle to stop the charter school bill by walking out of their classrooms during the regular legislative session in 2019, the war was lost when Governor Jim Justice signed the first charter school bill into law after a special legislative session in the summer of 2019 (HB206, 2019). The survey results show that West Virginia teachers still do not believe in charter schools and are not in favor of charter schools opening in West Virginia.

West Virginians were forthcoming with information regarding their opinion of charter schools. Many respondents said they would never choose a charter school for their child. Most respondents disagreed with charter schools opening in West Virginia, charter schools being a good education reform for the state, and believing charter schools would benefit school-aged children in West Virginia. One respondent said, "We [West Virginia] do not need to divert funds toward a charter [school] option that is not a true option for very many at all." Based on data from the survey, respondents demonstrated an understanding of how state monies will follow the student to the school they will attend. It is written in WV code that state monies allocated to a student will be transferred to the charter school they will attend instead of the traditional public school (WV. Leg. Code ch.18 §18-5G-5).

The foundational study results show that West Virginians have misconceptions about the process charter schools will take to admit students to the school. Respondents believe that charter schools can choose their students. For example, one respondent wrote, "Charter schools are

allowed to pick their students." However, it is not true that charter schools can hand-pick students or deny students the opportunity to attend a charter school. Any student in West Virginia can attend a charter school either in-person or virtually. According to West Virginia code (WV. Leg. Code ch.18 §18-5G-11), a charter school must admit students who apply unless the school is overcrowded, at which time a blind lottery system will be used to determine if a child will be admitted to the charter school.

The results showed that respondents to the survey agreed that low-income families would be less likely to take advantage of school choice options. However, the survey results show a misconception about some students who may wish to enroll in a charter school. One respondent wrote, "Charter schools spoil rich people and do not teach them about people from lower social status." The literature shows that low-income families are the target audience for charter schools in large urban areas (Almond, 2013). The problem with charter schools opening in West Virginia is that the state is comprised of many small rural communities and not large urban areas where charter schools have been successful. According to the former West Virginia public school teacher interviewed for this foundational study, West Virginia does not have the population to warrant opening charter schools. Money is a genuine issue for some public school systems in West Virginia. Respondents to the survey were concerned about money leaving traditional public schools and being diverted to charter schools. One respondent wrote, "I believe they [charter schools] are a ploy to take public education funding away from the public [school] and divert it to other education options that are inaccessible to low-income kids." The literature showed that money does "travel with the student," so traditional public schools lose money when students leave and enter a charter school (Peterson, 2021). Some smaller counties would not have the funds to operate their local school systems if they were to lose too much money to a charter school.

The foundational study results indicate that West Virginians believe parents should be able to make decisions regarding their child's education. The results show that West Virginians by and large are not in favor of charter schools but despite that, do support a parent's right to choose the school that best fits their child's learning style. One respondent said, "So many kids need different things." Another respondent commented, "I think this [charter schools] offers parents an option who may be concerned about education in WV."

### **Charter Schools Compared to Traditional Public Schools**

The third section of the survey, Charter Schools Compared to Traditional Public Schools, had six statements. Three of the six questions showed a statistically significant difference in the way respondents ranked the statements. West Virginians agree that charter schools allow for more flexibility than traditional public schools and believe that certified educators must make educational decisions. One respondent said, "I prefer the curriculum be chosen and developed by certified educators." Respondents also agree that teachers can create a charter school curriculum more freely. The literature talks about teachers' freedom to decide how and what they teach. Charter schools allow teachers to become decision-makers by controlling the curriculum (Barghaus & Boe, 2011). Surprisingly, the former WV teacher interviewed for this foundational study said she does not have the freedom to decide what she teaches in her Florida charter school and stated that she had more freedom in her West Virginia Classroom.

The result showed West Virginians do not believe charter schools provide a better learning environment for students or higher academic achievement. The literature is not consistent on whether or not students have higher academic achievement in a charter school. The success or failure of a charter school to meet achievement standards largely depends on the author's opinion of the literature in question. If the author is a proponent of charter schools, there is a higher

academic achievement in charter schools vs. traditional public schools. However, if the author is against charter schools, the article will point toward lower academic achievement in charter schools vs. traditional public schools. The data indicates that respondents believe teachers in traditional public schools are more qualified than teachers in charter schools. One respondent stated, "They [charter schools] do not employ qualified people." Another respondent said charter schools are "A for-profit system of less-qualified educators." The literature says charter schools are not required to hire certified teachers (Nairn, Anderson, & Blanch, 2018). Unexpectedly, the former WV teacher said that every teacher she teaches with, in the Florida charter school, has a teaching certification.

### **Free-Response Question**

When respondents were asked, "If choosing a charter school, would you prefer an in-person, face-to-face school or a virtual school," 91.30% of respondents liked a face-to-face charter school, and 7.91% preferred a virtual charter school option. It was not a surprise that respondents would prefer an in-person option. Respondents pointed out that students are less engaged when schooling is virtual. One respondent said, "Virtual schooling has shown to be ineffective in the last two years." Respondents believe that students have more distractions at home and that students who choose virtual education must be highly motivated to succeed. Those who liked a virtual charter school did so because of the convenience virtual school offered to parents and the fact that students could work at their own pace without competing with other students in the classroom.

## **RQ2: How did the COVID-19 global pandemic change the way individuals view charter schools?**

### **Survey Results**

One section of the survey was directly related to research question number two. The researcher wanted to determine if the COVID-19 global pandemic changed the minds of West Virginians regarding charter schools. The data from the survey was analyzed and interpreted to determine the effect of the COVID-19 global pandemic in changing the way West Virginians view charter schools.

### **Charter Schools and the COVID-19 Global Pandemic**

Section four of the survey, Charter Schools and the COVID-19 Global Pandemic, again used a five-point Likert scale to have respondents rank statements on how much or little they agreed with the statement. There were three statements in section four of the survey with only one of the statements showing a significant difference in the way respondents ranked the statement. West Virginians said that the pandemic did not affect the likelihood of them sending their child to a charter school. Also, they disagreed with the statement that the pandemic is responsible for virtual charter schools opening in West Virginia. One respondent said, "Opinions on charter schools have nothing to do with the pandemic." The mean rank results for these two statements were a bit surprising to the researcher. The researcher expected West Virginians to favor education reform because of how public education was handled during the pandemic. There was a lot of criticism of public schools during the pandemic. The literature shows that charter school enrollment grew during the pandemic (Rees, 2021). With the shutting down of public schools across the country, it was surprising that West Virginians were not in favor of charter schools opening in West Virginia.

The only statement that showed a statistically significant difference in the mean rank of respondents was how education was handled during the pandemic. The pandemic brought education into homes when the schools were shut down in the spring of 2020. Parents sat around their kitchen table with their children and helped them with school work. One respondent said, "Data shows that student's grades plummeted during COVID-19." Another respondent said, "My kids did not do well with the virtual learning, and their friends struggled. They did not learn anything. They all just copied papers from each other for grades." The pandemic was hard for children, parents, and educators. A respondent said, "I have two granddaughters. One of them just sat and stared at the computer screen and did not participate in classroom discussions. She also did not ask any questions when she did not understand the work." Teachers were not prepared to teach virtually in the spring of 2020. Things did not get any better when schools opened in the fall. One respondent wrote, "Teachers did their best with virtual school [during the pandemic] and used what they had to work with, but it still turned out horribly. Students have never been so behind."

One of the most interesting aspects of the data collected for the survey was that the way the respondents accessed the survey showed a significant difference for this one statement. The researcher must conclude that college students accessing the survey through the Marshall University listserv was why there was a significant difference in the mean rank for this statement. College students were juniors and seniors in high school when the pandemic hit. The researcher believes that students' experiences more than likely influenced their opinions on how public education was handled during the pandemic.

### **Ancillary Findings**

The free-response question on the survey was written to determine if respondents preferred an in-person, face-to-face charter school or a virtual charter school. However, respondents did not

just write about their opinion on in-person vs. virtual charter schools. Instead, respondents used the free-response question as an opportunity to voice their opinions on topics other than the type of charter school they preferred. For example, one respondent commented, "Since this is the only place I have seen that I get to put my two cents in on charter school, I am going to run with it." As a result, the responses and views of West Virginians regarding charter schools provided unexpected results and clarified how West Virginians feel about charter schools.

### **Never Choose a Charter School**

Many respondents said they would never choose a charter school for their child. Statements like "I would never choose a charter school" and "There is NO WAY I would enroll my child in a charter school in WV" appeared in the free-response section of the survey. Over thirty statements from respondents indicated that charter schools were out of the question when it came to their child's education. Respondents did not like that money would be taken from traditional public schools and diverted to "money pit" charter schools. More than one respondent commented that public money did not belong in private hands. The statements about public money and private hands show a misunderstanding about the nature of charter schools. Some West Virginians perceive charter schools as private schools when they are public schools free for students to attend, meaning the student does not have to pay tuition. This is an unexpected result because the researcher did not expect to discover that people would confuse charter schools with private schools.

### **Displeasure with the West Virginia Legislature**

The survey results indicated to the researcher that West Virginians are not pleased with the state legislature. The comments regarding the legislator were directed more at one political party over the other. Republicans in the West Virginia state legislature were responsible for passing



charter school legislation. One respondent wrote, "If choosing a charter school, I would be giving in to some conservative ideology. I prefer teaching my child at home than being subjected to the educational 'standards' of corporate political sponsorship or conservative indoctrination." Respondents commented that calls to legislators were met with anger and disdain. One respondent commented, "I called my state senators in Charleston about charter schools, and I was treated rudely, and the senators wanted to argue with me, and I was from their political party." Other comments raised concerns about politicians in the state not having the children of West Virginia's best interests in mind when they adopted legislation regarding charter schools. This research shows that some West Virginians perceive charter schools as only endorsed by one political party. Over the years, however, politicians from both parties have supported the school choice movement. Presidents Clinton, Bush, Obama, and Trump supported schools choice, specifically charter schools.

### **Charter Schools as a Business**

The survey results indicated that respondents see charter schools as a business. Charter schools are a yearly half-billion-dollar business opportunity (Ravitch, 2014). Charter schools are run like businesses and not educational centers were some of the participants' sentiments in the foundational study. One respondent commented, "I believe they [charter schools] are profit-focused not student-focused," and another said, "I believe that for-profit schools do not have students' best interests at heart and are more motivated by money than the student's best interest." The teacher interviewed for this foundational study indicated that the charter school she teaches in is run like a business, and the principal is more focused on the business aspect of the school than the educational aspect. Another respondent said, "They [charter schools] are designed to

starve and kill our public school systems and replace them with corporate-funded extremist diploma mills.”

### **Teachers' Unions**

Some respondents to the survey favored charter schools opening in West Virginia. The fact that there was support for charter schools was not unexpected. What was surprising was the animosity of some West Virginians towards the teachers' unions in West Virginia. The West Virginia teachers' unions were criticized for "shutting down" the state in 2019 to protest the Omnibus bill 451. Teachers' unions are seen as anti-choice organizations against charter schools (Matsudaira & Patterson, 2017). One respondent wrote, “There should be no Union big enough to shut down a state for personal gain.”

There was public support when teachers walked out of their classrooms to protest against charter schools. Teachers, who stood on the picket line, received gifts of coffee, hot chocolate, donuts, pizza, etc., from parents, students, and community members. Teachers felt a lot of support from the community for standing up for what they thought was important. So, comments from respondents saying teachers' unions were anti-choice and spread a false narrative about charter schools were a bit of a surprise to the researcher. Respondents felt that the union protected bad teachers. One respondent wrote, “Not everyone is meant to be a teacher, and there are those in that field that should not be, but they cannot be terminated because of unions.”

### **Quality of WV Public School System**

The overall quality of the current education system in West Virginia came under fire from respondents. Respondents said that the education system in West Virginia is flawed and needs to be reformed so that parents have a right to choose what education is best for their children. One respondent said, "I believe that there is a fear of public educators that they will lose their job and

that unions spread false fear to be anti-choice. However, competition is good for any system and the same with schools. If you don't do your job well, why shouldn't I try to find somewhere else to send my kid." Another respondent wrote, "West Virginia's [education] quality is below average at best." The reactions of respondents regarding the current education system in West Virginia were a bit of a surprise to the researcher. West Virginia teachers are doing their best with the hand they are dealt by the legislator and the state department of education. However, charter schools are being held up as the way to fix public education.

In contrast, traditional public schools are not given the freedom or ability to change what is wrong with public education. One respondent wrote, "If you want to fix public education, monies need to be spent on improving class sizes (reducing), increasing instructor pay, increase student and teacher support, reduce paperwork required, and increasing numbers of instructors and curriculum in the public schools." The literature indicates that if charter school practices were used in traditional public schools, it would make the school more successful (Samuels, 2012). The data suggest that the rules and regulations in traditional public schools should be altered so that they have more freedom, which is more in step with charter schools.

## **CONCLUSION**

This foundational study was conducted to determine the perceptions of West Virginians regarding charter schools and if the people of West Virginia believed that the COVID-19 global pandemic had anything to do with the first charter schools scheduled to open in the state in 2022. In West Virginia, the state's teachers are against charter schools, and politicians in the legislature favor charter schools. Therefore, this foundational study was designed to determine the perceptions of regular West Virginians regarding charter schools. Also, due to the criticism public schools

received for how they handled education during the pandemic, this research was able to find out if West Virginians favored charter schools due to the pandemic.

The subject of charter schools has become so politically charged that one must wonder if this topic's political aspect has influenced West Virginians' perceptions regarding charter schools. Based on the data generated from this research, it is safe to say West Virginians have strong opinions regarding charter schools. The foundational study shows that West Virginians' perceptions of charter schools mirror much of the literature on charter schools. Part of the reason West Virginians are opposed to charter schools is that they feel they could not give input on bringing charter schools to West Virginia because they were not allowed to vote on the issue. Data from this foundational study shows that politicians in Charleston followed their own agenda instead of the wishes of their constituents.

The foundational study results show that many West Virginians do not want their children to attend a charter school. This researcher is not convinced that West Virginians fully understand what a charter school is and how they are different from traditional public schools. The survey results showed that respondents largely agreed that they knew what school choice is, but some still said they did not understand it. The question must be asked if both sides of the charter school argument have fully explained what a charter school is and how those schools will affect education in West Virginia. At the same time, West Virginians favor parents being allowed to make educational decisions regarding their children. Parents have shown they are willing to fight to protect their child's educational choices.

Given a choice, West Virginians prefer brick-and-mortar charter schools to virtual charter schools. Many responding referenced COVID-19 and the virtual learning disaster when schools were shut down due to the pandemic. Students lost social interaction with not only peers but also

with teachers. Cheating was rising, and students did not engage in the learning process or get feedback from teachers. Students and teachers were isolated during the school closures during the pandemic. The memories of intense loneliness and despair students experienced during the pandemic will follow them for the rest of their lives.

The research results showed that West Virginians are concerned about charter schools not having qualified instructors in the charter school classroom. Teachers touch lives and make a lasting impression on students. Therefore, teacher education programs are essential for future educators to teach information effectively and train students for academic success. Of all these issues surrounding charter schools, teachers without the proper education and training are the scariest aspect of charter schools, as this researcher sees.

Finally, respondents did not believe that the COVID-19 global pandemic was why charter schools would open in West Virginia. Individuals criticized how traditional public schools handled education during the pandemic but did not think education reform solved the problem. The pandemic caught education off guard. Teachers were unprepared or equipped to teach in a virtual setting in March 2020. However, teachers are resilient and did what they had to do to ensure their students got the best education possible during an unprecedented situation. The COVID-19 global pandemic changed lives and education forever.

The bottom line is charter schools are scheduled to open in West Virginia for the 2022-2023 school year. The researcher for this foundational study was one of the West Virginia teachers to walk off the job in 2019 to protest charter schools coming to the state. This research foundational study started because of the 2019 work stoppage and the assumptions that charter schools were wrong for West Virginia.

This foundational study has shown that there are positive aspects of charter schools along with negative ones. West Virginia teachers fought the good fight to maintain the educational status quo in the state. But in the end, teachers had to concede that educational change had arrived. What is clear is that West Virginians are still learning about the educational changes that are taking place in the state of West Virginia. The learning will continue as education transforms into a newer model for public education. Charter schools are opening in West Virginia, they are here, and West Virginians will have to find common ground to make the new landscape of education work for the state's children. The state motto is "Mountaineers are always free," and in the case of charter schools, Mountaineers are free to make the educational choices that are the best for their children.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

This foundational study illuminates the perceptions of West Virginians regarding charter schools and if West Virginians believe that charter schools are scheduled to open in 2022 because of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Through this research, other research topics emerged for research studies in the future.

1. Replication of this foundational study in other states or on a national level would be helpful to determine what the perceptions of Americans are concerning charter schools.
2. Given that college students disagree that traditional public schools handled education well during the COVID-19 global pandemic, future research could investigate how the pandemic altered their view of traditional public education.
3. Given that charter schools will be opening in West Virginia in 2022, future research could be done to determine the effects of charter schools on traditional public schools in West Virginia.

4. Given that both brick-and-mortar and virtual charter schools are opening in West Virginia in 2022, future research could focus on student's academic achievement in a brick-and-mortar charter school compared to a virtual charter school.
5. Given that charter schools will be new to parents in West Virginia, future research could focus on parents that removed their children from traditional public schools and placed them in a charter school. Research could be done to see if they made the appropriate decision for their child.

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# Appendix A: IRB Approval



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

FWA 00002704

IRB1 #00002205

IRB2 #00003206

March 23, 2021

Nega Debela

MUGC

RE: IRBNet ID# 1725850-1

At: Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral)

Dear Dr. Debela:

**Protocol Title:** [1725850-1] THE CHARTER SCHOOL MOVEMENT IN THE MOUNTAIN STATE, IS IT GOOD FOR WEST VIRGINIA?

**Site Location:** MU

**Submission Type:** New Project APPROVED

**Review Type:** Exempt Review

In accordance with 45CFR46.104(d)(2), the above study was granted Exempted approval today by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Designee. No further submission (or closure) is required for an Exempt study unless there is an amendment to the study. All amendments must be submitted and approved by the IRB Chair/Designee.

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



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

FWA 00002704  
IRB1 #00002205  
IRB2 #00003206

March 9, 2022

Nega Debela  
Elementary and Secondary Education, MUGC

RE: IRBNet ID# 1725850-2  
At: Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral)

Dear Dr. Debela:

**Protocol Title:** [1725850-2] PERCEPTIONS ON CHARTER SCHOOLS IN WEST VIRGINIA

**Site Location:** MU

**Submission Type:** Amendment/Modification

**Review Type:**

The amendment to the above listed study was approved today by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Designee. This amendment is a change in the study title and a change in the survey questions.

The study is for student Donna Dixon.

If you have any questions, please contact the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Coordinator Lindsey Taylor at (304) 696-6322 or l.taylor@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: Survey

# Survey Questions:

### Demographics Section

1. Select the descriptor that best describes you (you may choose more than one option).
  1. College Student
  2. Educator
  3. Parent/Grandparent
  4. Guardian
  5. Other
2. Select the county in which you reside in West Virginia  
( I will list all 55 counties with the addition of OTHER as a choice for people who do not live in West Virginia)

### General Knowledge of School Choice

1. I understand what school choice is
  1. strongly disagree
  2. somewhat disagree
  3. neither agree nor disagree
  4. somewhat agree
  5. strongly agree
2. I understand what a charter school is
  1. strongly disagree
  2. somewhat disagree
  3. neither agree nor disagree
  4. somewhat agree
  5. strongly agree
3. I understand what a virtual school is
  1. strongly disagree
  2. somewhat disagree
  3. neither agree nor disagree
  4. somewhat agree
  5. strongly agree
4. I understand what a brick-and-mortar school is
  1. strongly disagree
  2. somewhat disagree
  3. neither agree nor disagree
  4. somewhat agree
  5. strongly agree



## Opinion of Charter Schools

5. Low-income families are less likely to take advantage of school choice options.
  1. strongly disagree
  2. somewhat disagree
  3. neither agree nor disagree
  4. somewhat agree
  5. strongly agree
  
6. I believe that it is important for parents to have an opinion in making decisions about their child's education.
  1. strongly disagree
  2. somewhat disagree
  3. neither agree nor disagree
  4. somewhat agree
  5. strongly agree
  
7. I believe charter schools should open in West Virginia.
  1. strongly disagree
  2. somewhat disagree
  3. neither agree nor disagree
  4. somewhat agree
  5. strongly agree
  
8. I believe charter schools are a good option for education reform.
  1. strongly disagree
  2. somewhat disagree
  3. neither agree nor disagree
  4. somewhat agree
  5. strongly agree
  
9. I believe charter schools will be beneficial to school-age children in West Virginia.
  1. strongly disagree
  2. somewhat disagree
  3. neither agree nor disagree
  4. somewhat agree
  5. strongly agree

## Charter schools and the Covid-19 Global Pandemic

10. I believe traditional public schools have handled education well during the COVID-19 global pandemic.
  1. strongly disagree
  2. somewhat disagree
  3. neither agree nor disagree
  4. somewhat agree
  5. strongly agree
  
11. Since the start of the global COVID-19 pandemic, I am more likely to send my child to a charter school
  1. strongly disagree
  2. somewhat disagree
  3. neither agree nor disagree
  4. somewhat agree
  5. strongly agree
  
12. I believe the COVID-19 global pandemic is why West Virginia will have virtual charter schools in the fall of 2022.
  1. strongly disagree
  2. somewhat disagree
  3. neither agree nor disagree
  4. somewhat agree
  5. strongly agree

## Charter Schools Compared to Traditional Public Schools

13. I believe charter schools provide a better learning environment than traditional public schools.
  1. strongly disagree
  2. somewhat disagree
  3. neither agree nor disagree
  4. somewhat agree
  5. strongly agree
  
14. I believe academic achievement is higher in a charter school than in a traditional public school.
  1. strongly disagree
  2. somewhat disagree
  3. neither agree nor disagree
  4. somewhat agree
  5. strongly agree

15. I believe charter schools give students and parents more flexibility than traditional public schools.

1. strongly disagree
2. somewhat disagree
3. neither agree nor disagree
4. somewhat agree
5. strongly agree

16. I believe instructors have more freedom to create curriculum (what is being taught) in a charter school than in a traditional public school

1. strongly disagree
2. somewhat disagree
3. neither agree nor disagree
4. somewhat agree
5. strongly agree

17. I believe teachers are more qualified in traditional public schools than charter schools.

1. strongly disagree
2. somewhat disagree
3. neither agree nor disagree
4. somewhat agree
5. strongly agree

18. I believe that certified educators should make decisions about educational policy.

1. strongly disagree
2. somewhat disagree
3. neither agree nor disagree
4. somewhat agree
5. strongly agree

### Free-response Question

19. If choosing a charter school, would you prefer in-person face to face school or a virtual school? Please include a statement or two about your preference.

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# Appendix C: Anonymous Survey Consent

Marshall University IRB



Approved on:	3/9/22
Foundational study number:	1725850

## Anonymous Survey Consent

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled “Perceptions on Charter Schools in West Virginia” designed to analyze public perceptions of Charter Schools.

The foundational study is being conducted by Dr. Nega Debela, Ph.D. and Donna R. Dixon from Marshall University and has been approved by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This research is being conducted as part of the CI797: Dissertation Research for Donna R. Dixon.

This survey is comprised of twenty-two questions which will take less than fifteen minutes to complete. Your replies will be anonymous, so do not type your name anywhere on the form. There are no known risks involved with this foundational study. Participation is completely voluntary and there will be no penalty or loss of benefits if you choose to not participate in this research foundational study or to withdraw. If you choose not to participate you can leave the survey site. You may choose to not answer any question by simply leaving it blank. Once you complete the survey you can delete your browsing history for added security. Completing the on-line survey indicates your consent for use of the answers you supply. If you have any questions about the foundational study you may contact Dr. Nega Debela, Ph.D. at (304)746-8931, Donna Dixon at (304)863-5508.

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.

By completing this survey, you are also confirming that you are **18** years of age or older.

Please print this page for your records.

If you choose to participate in the foundational study, you will find the survey at [https://marshall.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_4PglZnQpeMNot1A](https://marshall.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4PglZnQpeMNot1A)

## Appendix D: Interview Questions

### **Interview Questions for Executive Director of Cardinal Institute for WV Policy:**

1. What is your role with the Cardinal Institute for West Virginia Policy?
2. What is the purpose of the Cardinal Institute for West Virginia Policy?
3. What has been the Cardinal Institute for West Virginia Policy's role in bringing charter schools to West Virginia?
4. What do you see as the future for charter schools in West Virginia?
5. Do you think traditional public schools in West Virginia will be affected by charter schools?
6. How have West Virginians responded to charter schools opening in West Virginia? Has there been any positive or negative feedback?
7. What information do you think I need to know to understand better West Virginians' perceptions on charter schools coming to West Virginia.

### **Interview Questions for a teacher who taught in West Virginia traditional public school and transferred to a charter school:**

1. How many years have you taught school?
2. Where do you teach school now?
3. What influenced your decision to leave Ritchie County public schools and start teaching in a charter school?
4. When West Virginia schools were closed in 2018 and 2019 due to the teacher work stoppage, did you have an opinion on charter schools?
5. With your experience in traditional public schools and charter schools, do you notice any significant differences between the two types of schools?
6. Do you think charter schools will positively impact students in West Virginia?
7. What is some positive experience you have had with charter schools?
8. Have you had any negative experiences with charter schools?
9. Do you think West Virginians have the correct perception of a charter school?
10. What information do you think I need to know to understand charter schools better.

**Interview Questions for West Virginia State Legislator:**

1. What is your background?
2. Do you have a degree in education?
3. What is your opinion of charter schools coming to West Virginia?
4. What will be the effect of charter schools on traditional public schools?
5. Did you do research on charter schools before you decided whether to support or resist charter schools in West Virginia.
6. What would you expect to see from teachers and administrators in a charter school?
7. If the charter school is not meeting the terms of the charter agreement do you think the schools should be closed? What if the infractions happen mid school year?

Follow-up questions will also be asked of the person being interviewed and may veer away from questions stated above.

## Appendix E: Answers to Free-response Survey Question

If choosing a charter school, would you prefer in-person face-to-face school or a virtual school? Please include a statement or two about your preference.

Face-to-face school is much better for school; there isn't social interaction between students in virtual school.

If I had to choose, it would be face-to-face.

In-person Attending school in person is crucial for child development and social health.

In-person because it's easier to assess how someone is doing by looking at their body language. Cameras only give you a small snapshot of the individual.

I would choose in-person coursework always. That is the option that works best for my learning style, and I believe there is more accountability for students who attend class on a face-to-face basis than virtually.

Face to Face. No reason to be virtual.

No to for-profit charter schools!

If I had a child, I would avoid virtual learning as much as possible. I have witnessed school-age children in virtual programs before, and I feel like it doesn't engage students the way a face-to-face course can.

I would not choose a charter school and don't think they are right for West Virginians. Public monies need to be spent on improving class sizes (reducing), instructor pay and teaching hours, student support, and physical structures giving more support to instructors for the quantity of paperwork required, and increasing numbers of instructors and curriculum in the public schools

I would not place my child in a charter school

In-person, Face to Face. Children get more out of education if they are in an environment surrounded by academia. Data shows that student grades plummeted during COVID-19 in virtual learning settings.

Depends on the type of charter school and the goal it is seeking. Some special education should be face-to-face. Other should be virtual and allow the student to work at the student's own pace.

I prefer face-to-face school. I don't think that there is a substitute for the interaction of teacher and student. Face-to-face teaching allows for correcting misunderstandings; it allows the teacher to take into account the emotional state of students and allows for eye-to-eye contact.

In-person face-to-face would be the best learning environment for majority of children. Virtual school is difficult for most, I believe.

In-person works well for hard science classes or for students struggling in certain subjects, provided the ratio of students to teachers is low.

If charter schools are to be implemented, virtual would be the preferable format for their operation. Now that COVID-19 is "behind" us, it is my understanding that virtual learning is less likely to be accommodated by traditional, brick-and-mortar schools. However, it is clear that some children benefit greatly from a virtual learning format. Particularly when it is a

"work at your own pace" style online curriculum, where they can set their own pace for completing the work necessary to finish a course.

In-person. Children need to do more than sit at a computer all day.

I would not choose a charter school for my children. If I had to choose, I would probably choose virtual over face-to-face.

That is completely dependent on the child themselves on a case-by-case basis. So many kids need different things, and even more of them don't even understand their learning styles. I myself would prefer Face to Face for my youngest, who is seven, and my oldest, twelve, would probably do well with either. She is well-versed in many styles, including homeschooling, virtual, blended, and public school. Her preference is usually to interact in person.

I would choose depending on my child. One would thrive in a virtual environment, while my others need the structure of in-person learning

My preference for K-12 teaching and learning is the face-to face school,

Face to Face since my child did not do well with virtual during pandemic.

Probably virtual if I had to go to a charter school because I wouldn't want to go there in person and would prefer to be virtual.

I always prefer in person face to face school whenever possible, most of what is learned in school is how we communicate and get along with others and that is learned in the classroom, on the playroom and in the lunchroom. Important lessons about sharing, adapting to disappointment, getting along with others will be key to future success

If I had to choose, the preference would be face-to-face school. School is not just academic, and other forms are missing in the virtual classroom.

I think either option would be great, but I believe that we are seeing a push for more well-developed virtual programs at all levels of education. I think this offers an option for parents who may be concerned about public education in WV.

I think face-to-face learning is the best for students. It is hard being a full-time working single parent and making sure that my children are getting done the stuff they need for school. 2 of my 3 children are very hands-on learners and benefit greatly from face-to-face learning.

In-person- students need structure and socialization in school. They learn so much more than just academics in an in-person environment.

in-person

in-person only

Face to Face, for my student to get the most hands-on learning experience, I believe that is crucial to the educational process

I will not choose charter schools for my children. We need to invest more money in our public education system to give the amazing teachers in our state better resources and give more support for our children. We do not need to divert funds toward a charter option that is not truly an option for very many at all.

In-person, as this allows students to better absorb information taught. Additionally, this allows students to hone their social skills instead of solely conversing, or not conversing, with their peers online.



I would prefer face-to-face school because I believe in-person instruction is better than virtual instruction.

---

in-person Face to Face

---

in-person schooling would develop better interactions between peers and would allow for more engaging activities to teach students

---

An in-person, face-to-face school. Virtual schooling has shown to be very ineffective in the last two years.

---

If I was choosing a charter school, I would prefer in-person, face-to-face schooling. Having in-person sessions can allow for a diverse learning setting and incorporate visual, auditory, and kinetic learning styles. A virtual setting only allows for an auditorial/visual learning experience.

---

I wouldn't choose a charter school. Public funds don't belong in private hands.

---

In-person face-to-face to better clarify content (assuming instructor is knowledgeable in subject) that is not clear and bridge gaps in knowledge/steps/requirements that cannot be predicted or automated. (experience with teaching remediated courses with struggling students)

---

Face to Face, need to have interactions with other pupils same-aged to fully grow into society.

---

I believe a in-person charter school would be what I want to send my child to. She is currently 4 months old so there is time. I teach at public schools currently. I have attended public schools. I believe that advanced students get held back and can't ascend as rapidly as they could in a smaller private school setting. We do plan to send our daughter to a private school. I believe that there is a fear of public educators that they will lose their job and that unions spread false fear to be anti-choice. However, competition is good for any system and the same with schools. If you don't do your job well, then why shouldn't I try to find somewhere else to send my kid.

---

It would completely depend on my child. Many children need to school environment, its routines and structure, and the social experiences it provides to learn how to function in group environments as well as be motivated to succeed. However, some children can learn these skills through other opportunities outside of a school setting and/or have an innate propensity for academics, an interval drive to succeed, and can adapt to social norms without much external guidance. These children may do well utilizing a virtual option.

---

In-person because I am a hands-on learner. I do not learn well in a virtual classroom environment.

---

Face to Face. Virtual school is not an effective learning environment for every student. I have two granddaughters that I am basing that statement on. One of them just sat and stared at computer screen and did not participate in any classroom discussions. She also did not ask any questions when she did not understand the work.

---

The state constitution says this - "no independent free school district or organization shall hereafter be created, except with the consent of the school district or districts out of which the same is to be created, expressed by a majority of the voters voting on the question." The public was denied the right to vote on this!

---

Person-to-person. Social interaction is part of the education of an individual.

Face to Face. I believe children learn better in a tangible environment like that of a brick-and-mortar school than through an online program. Brick and mortar classrooms provide students with more hands-on activities that are essential for proper education, in my opinion.

My current public school in MD is converting to an Environmental Charter school in the Fall. It was awarded a 900,000 grant for 3 years and will be K-6 next year and then K-7 the following, and K-8 the third year. It will focus on a Classical curriculum while incorporating environmental and agricultural elements.

By far, face-to-face. It is so important for social development. Teachers did their best with virtual school and used what they had to work with, but it still turned out horribly. Students have never been so behind. Aside from that, school can be a place for students to get resources and for teachers to note signs of abuse or neglect, and to receive food. America has very high rates of child poverty. Students need a place to go to where they can feel safe and learn without distractions.

In-person- virtual is not ideal for learning or mental health

I would prefer in-person. I feel virtual schooling lacks the social aspects of traditional schooling and thus, fails to adequately prepare the student to interact socially with others. I feel this is also as important as the academics component of teaching.

I would prefer face-to-face schooling as it is more personal for the student and has a better opportunity for success.

In-person. While I understand the need for remote learning during a pandemic, the better option is face-to-face education.

Face to Face. More beneficial for the teacher and student.

I would prefer in-person Face to Face, when I was in elementary school, I went to an in-person charter school after having some issues with classmates.

In-person face-to-face school, I believe, is best since we humans interact in daily life's Face to Face. Since this is the only place I have seen that I get to put my two cents in on charter school, I am going to run with it. Charter schools are allowed to pick their students as in if a student misses to many classes, then they are sent back to the public school. This allows charter schools to have higher test scores than public schools, make it look like charter schools perform better while taking public money away from public schools.

I would prefer in-person. Students benefit by working with their teachers and their peers in a classroom.

I would never choose a charter school. I believe they are profit-focused, not student-focused. They are designed to break unions, lower teacher pay, and segregate students based on wealth or talent.

I would prefer an in-person, Face to face Charter school. I lived in other states with reputable charter schools, and the variety of it gives the parents freedom to choose what best fit their children. I love the traditional school system. However, West Virginia's quality of education (based on data and experience---lived in CA, WA, NV, OR, CO, and TX) is below average at best. It would be great to see other options for parents and students. Also, more opportunities for more educators, granted there will be a sound educational policy regarding WV educational system.

I prefer in-person, face-to-face school. I feel that it would make it easier to recognize the children that may need further one-on-one attention that could not be achieved through virtual learning.

I do not like or support charter schools. I believe that for-profit schools do not have students' best interests at heart and are more motivated by money than the student's best interest. Charter schools are a political tool used by politicians and special interests to dilute the influence and power of public-school teachers. They are not better than public schools and only serve to dilute the ability of public schools to do a good job. They should be banned in West Virginia.

In-person. I feel that children need the interaction with others. Attending school is as much about the social interaction and learning how to interact with others as it is about standard education.

In-person. I think face-to-face socialization is an important aspect of schooling that is lost or diminished with virtual or homeschooling options.

I would never choose a charter school, but I do believe that in-person is superior to virtual. Students are better able to form relationships with their faculty and with peers when in person.

I believe that in most cases, in-person learning is the most beneficial to students. Actually, my kids are long past college graduation, and I'm not a grandparent yet, so it's hard for me to be completely honest in my answers since I don't have to make any hard choices right now.

face to Face

n/a

I would personally prefer the virtual option because it allows these schools to be accessible for students whose parents may have to travel for work or for students who are bullied or generally prefer a learning environment that doesn't feel like a direct competition with others. While I understand that this can restrict their access to peer groups, some students do not find that enjoyable. I also believe that in-person models would be much more costly and that those costs would be put on the taxpayers rather than investing into the physical structures of the public system that are long past due for updates and have been neglected.

I prefer in-person school because it helps me engage and learn. Virtual school is a nice option occasionally, but I struggle with online classes because of the distractions of being home.

face to Face

Face-to-face learning has been proven to be a valuable asset to the student's education.

If choosing a charter school, I would be a slave to some conservative ideology. I would prefer teaching my child at home than being subjected to the educational 'standards' of corporate political sponsorship or conservative religious indoctrination!

I, for one, do not mind virtual learning opportunities. The younger generations, however, do not have as much discipline or motivation; therefore it is more difficult for them to learn in this environment. I feel they benefit more from in-class options. It is also more convenient for some to have their work done by someone else if they are completely virtual. I would rather my child have access to in-person learning.

I would never choose a charter school. They do not employ qualified people.

In-person. I do not believe virtual school can provide a complete education for a majority of students

In person. Online instruction is subpar, even with experts.

---

Face to Face...Like to see students as individuals in a personal setting

---

First, I will not send my child to a Charter School, but if given no choice it would be Face to Face

---

In-person; it is more effective at teaching and learning than virtual.

---

I need more information on charter schools.

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Face to Face &not virtual. Learning virtually is not the same, especially for younger school-aged children.

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Charter schools are required in WV as the school ratings are not great and opening of charter school will allow parents to pick between a traditional school and charter school.

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In-person Face to Face: My children were enrolled in a virtual program through part of the pandemic and it was clear that there was wide variability in the quality of educators, and there was no recourse for parents to engage with the educators or administrators to address those issues. That said, there is NO WAY I would enroll my child in a charter school in WV.

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In-person Face to Face. Socialization is very important, and it is difficult on working parents to accommodate virtual school.

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I would prefer a face-to-face school. I was an educator for five years and quit last year. Virtual school was not an ideal learning environment for most students, especially neurodiverse students.

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In-person. I feel that it is more difficult to connect with a student virtually. I feel that it is also more difficult to keep a student engaged virtually.

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In-person, face-to-face is ALWAYS the best option.

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Face-to-face. Much more effective than virtual.

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Schools need to be Face to Face. Children need to be in an environment where they not only learn subject material but learn how to behave in a room with their peers.

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It would depend on my child's learning styles and what is best for them. Anecdotally I would imagine that Face to Face would be preferable

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Charter schools are simply a way for wealthy parents to segregate their children from low-income, special needs children. They are also a way to segregate these children by race, religion, gender identity, and any other socioeconomic "other" that "threatens" the middle/upper class. There are countless studies that reveal that CS do not perform, educate children, provide needed resources (i.e. IEDs) that public schools. Want better schools? Pay teachers better wages, invest in these schools and classrooms, listen to teachers, hold parents accountable, remove politics from educational decisions, expand counseling resources. CS will further erode the schools systems of WV and beyond.

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I would prefer in-person Face to face school only because the interaction between teachers/professors and students are better. Majority of the time, students do not want to bother with communicating virtually or even ask questions.

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In-person schools are better because that mode is more experiential. And kids get the benefit of socialization.

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I would choose neither

Under normal circumstances (no global pandemic), I would prefer face-to-face schooling for my children. However, with COVID concerns, I would like to see a virtual option.

Charter Schools are not for rural areas. Please do not bring them here!!! Charter Schools are the next wave of Carpet Baggers for West Virginia.

Face-to-Face schools are better because children need to learn social skills as well as academic schools.

Face-to-face. Social interactions and group work are part of the educational process.

Charter schools in WV were pushed and created by legislators with financial interests and not the interests of children in mind.

Face-to-face since I would like to meet the educators and question them.

I would choose an in-person face-to-face school simply because I learn better in a school environment and in a school.

I believe that both should be an option. I personally believe better education is in person

In-person schools needs to happen. Children need association with their peers.

I would prefer in-person education, especially for younger children. In high school either option is fine.

I would NOT choose a school that could be controlled by flat-earther, anti-vax over science. Public STEM is the way to go.

In-person Face to Face, my kids did not do well with the virtual learning, and their friends struggled as well. They did not learn anything, they all just copied papers from each other for grades.

In-person. Virtual schooling and instruction should be a last resort. While some students have shown levels of achievement under a virtual program, there are many other factors to consider when determining overall achievement of the students in certain age ranges including social interaction, socio-economics, demographics and level of education in the entire family, both direct and extended.

Face-to-face school. This way, students can properly interact with each other and the teacher. As a student myself, it is depressing to sit at a computer, isolated at home, listening to an instructor.

I believe either option could be appropriate depending on the needs of the child. My child prefers in-person education but has better grades with virtual schooling. I would choose the in-person option for my child based on the need for socialization and interactions that can not be obtained in virtual schooling.

virtual

In-person. There are a lot of social interactions that are vital to a child's development that can only happen in person.

Human contact is critical to the well-being of children and adults in any life setting, especially education. Touching, feeling, physical play, physical contact during learning is imperative to human development. Virtual education (except for higher education courses) should never be used unless there is a proven, grave threat to health from human contact.

If I had school-age children now, I would prefer the in-person face-to-face school setting. I have seen charter schools (Philadelphia) have excellent qualified teachers and high curriculum expectations.

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Face-to-face learning. Some life lessons are only taught through practice and experience. Social skills are already lacking in this country due to technological advances and a struggle for a majority of households with children to maintain one person at home. Involvement in music and art should be required participation in groups.

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Face to Face. Kids still need to be with other kids

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In-person Face to Face - my concern would be the other students in the class. Are my children learning with their peers or only selected students that were recruited?

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face to Face has been proven to be the best choice since the COVIC pandemic

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This depends upon the individual and their strengths/weaknesses as a learner. A highly disciplined, driven student could be successful with virtual school, but most students benefit more from in-person learning.

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I would prefer in-person education with small class sizes, differentiated instruction, and the opportunity for engaging experiential learning.

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I would prefer face-to-face learning but would want the school to be adaptable if the health crisis worsens and staying home is a safer option.

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I think both options are important as students flourish in different atmospheres.

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In-person educational settings have much great value beyond instruction. The in-person setting contributes to emotional and social well-being. I do not agree with charter schools as they generally line the pockets of politicians.

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Face-to-face would be a preference. Students need exposure to other students in a variety of settings. Friendships are vital to growth as well as guidance from educators and parents.

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Face-to-face learning is important for the developmental growth of children. Virtual learning does not carry the same impact that physical interactions do when a child is building their social identity. This disconnect from a key aspect of normal human interaction may lead to problems in both a the society as a whole and on an individual basis.

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In-person learning is critical.

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I would prefer a face-to-face setting. Virtual works for a portion of the students in school. The great majority benefits more in the traditional classroom setting. Virtual has its place, however.

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I would not choose a charter school. I believe they are a ploy to take public education funding away from the public and divert it to pay-to-attend options that are inaccessible to low-income kids. If I have to answer the question, I would prefer in-person face-to-face school. I don't believe much learning happens in online classes.

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Would always prefer in-person learning for our children, but want any school to have the sense to recognize a public health safety threat or other things that can come up like weather to provide a virtual option as a contingency.

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I would never send my child to a charter school

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NEITHER!!!! Charter schools spoil rich people and do not teach them about people from lower social status. Virtual is even worse for those whose finances do not require them to intermix with people of lower social status.

In-person. Socialization is as important as most of the curriculum. Learning how to think versus just learning facts is also vital.

face to Face

personal contact. I can read people better that way.

As an online college student, I can attest that you will learn far more face-to-face than online. Online learning, you just do not get the nuances of the subject matter that you get from an instructor in person. Technical classes cannot be taught online, period. Online I do not get the feedback I receive from touching something. When I do online learning, I keep asking myself, why am I paying the college thousands of dollars when I have to teach myself? I spend far more time on YouTube than I ever do with my instructors. I have never had any interaction with any of my instructors, so once again, why am I paying thousands of dollars to teach myself?

I would never choose a charter school for my child! The research is clear that their results are not replicable.

I would prefer in-person, face-to-face school. The children need social skills that are not being developed while they are sitting at home all day, every day. They need interaction with other people besides their immediate family.

I would not support charter schools in any way.

low-income families should have say about children's education, but the charter schools will not want low-income families, so there is no fix other than paying teachers a living wage so they have motivation to become teachers and create fun, motivating learning environments you can't put crap teachers in good schools and expect a different outcome it's like putting a monkey in a suit and giving it a car it's still a monkey but just more sophisticated

I would prefer Face to Face because it allows you to be hands-on in the education you are receiving. While virtual classes, you are more prone to be distracted.

I would choose in person. Though I think charter schools are a scam.

Face to Face more easily reaches students who have different learning styles, disabilities or need more individualized help. It also allows for more social interaction

Face to Face because it is hard for me to learn if I'm not physically in a class

1) I'd never choose a charter school. I've seen the research. 2) If I were forced into that choice, I'd opt for face-to-face.

I think virtual school is preferable due to the openness of the class. I personally learn better when I'm not surrounded by a bunch of strangers and am in the safety of my own home. I can also take the class wherever I go and do not have to worry about staying in one place to sit down and take the class. It is open for opportunities more than being stuck in a room with a bunch of sweaty strangers I'll never interact with outside of where I'm forced to.

The data indicate that virtual schools do not work for children (or adult students, for that matter) as well as in-person face-to-face schools.

I believe that both these options serve specific needs.

Firmly believe in face-to-face education for socialization and supervision

I do not think virtual school should be an option for kids from K-12 grades. At that age, most are not mature enough to keep up with school work, and many parents do not enforce school work as being a priority. I think kids in virtual school at that age are more likely to fall behind.

I'd prefer hybrid Face to Face and virtual for my kids as we're doing now.

In-person school.

Face to Face because it is better for kids instead of staying home and isolating.

In a COVID- free world, I believe an in-person, face-to-face school is better because it allows for more social interaction between students/ peers which boosts student mental health. I don't feel like a teacher can adequately teach concepts through a virtual medium, especially when working with younger children (despite the teacher's best efforts.)

I'd prefer a face-to-face school, as virtual schools discourage participation, attention and do not promote social skills.

Virtual school because it is more flexible with everyone's needs right now.

While Covid is still at large, I think virtual schools are a great option, but I think overall, Face to Face is better for students! Even as an adult, I have a difficult time focusing when it comes to online classes, and I think it's very likely that young students would have that issue as well.

In-person. it would be better for my personal focus

I would choose an in-person school over a virtual school in all situations.

I would not choose a charter school.

A hybrid version

Face-to-face instruction has proven better for the average student. As shown during the COVID-19 pandemic, public school grades have dropped on standardized exams during the time that school were virtual. Students will struggle with this change from Face to Face into virtual school.

I very much prefer f2f because of the richer communication that can take place.

In-person f2f.

It would depend on both the subjects being taught, the student, and the methods being used to teach. Some students perform better when learning virtually, while others require a face-to-face learning approach.

Virtual. If my tax dollars are going to be wasted on a failed alternative to a system that functions perfectly fine, I might as well pick the option that costs less.

II would send my child to an in-person, face-to-face charter school. I believe that it provides a more conducive environment for children to learn in. Another thing is that it also prevents bad educators to remain in teaching positions. Not everyone is meant to be a teacher, and there are those in that field that should not be, but they cannot be terminated because of unions. This limits performance and reduces teachers' accountability. I am for charter schools in person because my child cannot learn virtually.



In person. Virtual schooling is a failure 90% of the time. Fails to provide the social learning needed.

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In person for any kind of elementary or secondary grades. Wait for college, then introduce blended delivery.

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Virtual. I myself attended a virtual charter school and it was an overall good experience but there was a lot lacking and it does not compare to traditional public schools.

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I would never choose a charter school.

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I would prefer virtual personally. Going through undergrad and now in medical school, I believe the world is quickly adapting, and the most important thing for the next generation to learn is how to be an independent learner. The current education system fails to do that. I've seen too many of my highest achieving peers in high school unable to succeed in college because they were used to info being shoved at them and homework forcing them to foundational study. We currently live in a world in which there are practically infinite educational resources via the internet, the next generation's education doesn't need mindless memorization like the current public school system provides; instead, a greater focus should be shifted toward teaching students how to learn by themselves and apply what they learn.

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I would never choose a charter school.

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Would not choose a charter school.

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NA

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In-person. This is because schools' duties are to not only educate children's intellect but to socially and emotionally educate children in a way that is conducive to the betterment of society. This idea of human capital is something that has been around for a long time and is the driving factor of the public education system. Therefore, to effectively educate children, face-to-face would be able to allow children to develop socially and emotionally at a deeper level of understanding.

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I would prefer an in-person charter school because I feel it's easier to learn that way.

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I'd prefer a virtual one so parents can monitor the lessons and progress better

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If I was selecting a charter school, I'd be more interested in the academic programs and quality of the learning experience as primary, with delivery format coming along as secondary, depending on the motivation and abilities of the student.

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I would prefer face-to-face school. This gives students a better experience to interact with educators and peers.

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Virtual. While in some research face to Face had better retention I learned more virtually. I believe this is due to the ability to rewatch lectures and the professor's ability to cover more content, but it depends on the person.

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I would not choose a charter school.

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In-person

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In-person. I believe it's very important for everyone to have social interaction, especially students who are developing many different skills, including communication, interpersonal skills, and teamwork. I believe these are built more successfully in an in-person environment.

Of course, face-to-face, IF it is safe, pandemic-wise

F2F

I would not choose a charter school

Charters are better than regular schools. In-person is best.

Face to Face because the internet here in Clay County is still below the federal minimum standard for "slow internet."

I would think based on what the student needs

In-person education is ALWAYS more beneficial than virtual. Teachers interacting with students in a direct auditory and tactile way is part of a child's educational development and is vital to their lives.

I would prefer in-person Face to face school, given the school was following adequate health and safety protocols, but I imagine that is not the case, but I also think social interaction ( in person) is critical for school-aged kids. If I had a child, it would be very difficult for me to weigh the risk and reward of in-person versus online school.

Neither

During covid, I would like to see more flexibility for students, as parents also have more work flexibility. But we need a stronger curriculum for virtual schooling

Face to Face

I would choose a virtual school.

Face to Face

If choosing a charter school, I may need to be examined psychologically. They are designed to starve and kill our public school systems and replace them with corporate-funded extremist diploma mills

In-person

I think both, so individuals have options for what meets their needs best

I would prefer an in-person approach.

Face to Face when possible, but certainly virtual would still be better than traditional public schools. I've worked with charter schools professionally, and they work wonders for kids that don't fit the model of athlete or cheerleader, which is where the privilege lies in public schools. There should be no Union big enough to shut down a state for personal gain.

Face to Face. I believe child/adolescent learning is best facilitated in person.

I would prefer the option for in-person since it gives the added bonus of building interpersonal skills and social skills to be developed for children.

Virtual because covid is literally still a thing and people forget that for some reason

I would select in person. I would not choose virtual school for my child unless it was a last resort.

In-person, in-person charter schools provide the opportunity for students to engage in hands-on activities with peer learning in the this environment. That is missed or inadequate in virtual schools.

I believe providing the option for virtual can be beneficial for some students. However, I also believe Face to face education works best for most students.

I would prefer Face to face learning

Face-to-Face

Face-to-Face it is good to have interaction for social development virtual is okay for some things. However, humans need to develop empathy, and this is better achieved by developing more meaningful relationships

Face-to-face. even if I do not like charter schools, education will be better for the majority of students in an in-person environment than virtual school

I would lean toward Face to Face. It has been my experience in the last two years as my daughter was subject to "virtual school" for a year that teachers are not aware of the proper amount of homework or information that is given to a virtual student. Maybe in the future, they will be better prepared, but last year, they were not at all prepared.

In-person learning is far less in virtual school, and cheating is rampant.

I believe my decision would depend on the age I/ my child was. Early on in life, I think kids really benefit from being social in an in-person setting and need a teacher to be there for them if they need help with things. This is also catches issues such as abuse from parents. With older age, though, comes more maturity and responsibility. Taking myself as an example, I feel my junior and senior high school years could have been done entirely virtually with basically no detriment. This is because I could fill my extra time with meaningful things such as work, am able to seek help with schoolwork on my own through the internet, and am also able to be social with others through the internet.

It would depend on the environment, now, during covid, I would prefer virtual.

I would prefer for a charter school to be in person. In education, a trend is being seen because of the pandemic/virtual/online learning of students cheating because it is much easier to do so. I am afraid that students would not get the education they need but the (easy) education they want.

Virtual. Students can work at their own pace independently and still learn necessary material.

While I completely disagree with the very idea of charter schools (a for-profit system of educators who are potentially less qualified), I would choose in-person.

Always prefer in-person Face to Face. So much better for students.

Face to Face is so important for training in social settings.

Person to person

Face to Face. Students need the interaction.

Face to Face Charter Schools are in the best interest for West Virginia. As a former public school Educator in West Virginia now an Educator in Florida at choice school (and a mom of

two in the choice schools), I see phenomenal benefits, both academic and self, to children of all ages, colors, and financial backgrounds.

Face to Face is a better education model regardless of the school being charter or traditional. I would not send my child to a charter school.

Face to Face because students are more engaged and also able to socialize/collaborate with classmates.

Face-to-face is preferable for any education setting, but that is not always possible.

Experiential learning is a critical part of the primary and secondary school experience. Purely virtual schools cannot provide that type of learning.

Face to Face. In-person instruction is simply better. And kids need to socialize with other kids.

Face-to-face.

If I were choosing, I would choose a face to Face. I feel that teachers can get a better idea about the child by watching their behavior and how they interact with others. I feel teachers are unable to 'know' the children when it is virtual. By knowing them better they will be able to modify their own behavior in directing or redirecting the child.

My preference is screw charter schools—all PUBLIC money for education should go to PUBLIC schools.

In-person. Learning is a social. Young students need the interaction and need to learn to work with their peers.

In-person face to Face: Students are able to socialize with peers Teachers have more opportunity to catch and remediate student education issues Students have poorer educational outcomes with virtual school (some Cabell schools required students to go in person had they previously failed a virtual class)

No preference. Both could be done well. Both could also be done not well.

I would not choose a charter.

I'd prefer no charter school but I'd rather do in person unless there was a current pandemic happening.

Face to face school would be best for a charter school.

I don't have children but I would prefer in-person. Not only does in-person give more hands on learning opportunities but it allows for social interaction which is crucial to mental and emotional health (even during a pandemic) and also provides opportunities for sports and extracurricular activities.

In person face to Face. It creates bonds between the children and their peers. It is easier to help struggling children in person.

Probably in person, but I highly disagree with the making of charter schools in the first place.

Charter Schools are the result of parents with a personal agenda that conflicts with the public school system and they disagree with the private school's religious beliefs and behavior standards.

In-person option. I believe students learn better in a face-to-face environment.

If I had to choose, I would choose Face to Face, as it is more likely to be effective than virtual, especially for at-risk students or for those who struggle with reading.

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In person

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In person. I wish we had more options for in person learning outside public school.

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In person

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I prefer in person school that the curriculum is chosen and developed by certified educators.

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In person. Kids need to socialize

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In person school. Some kids don't do well virtually and need Face to Face with a teacher.

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Face to Face - children need the physical interaction that only an in person classroom can provide.

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Face to Face

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In-person Face to Face. I believe a traditional face to face learning environment provides more structure and a better learning experience with less distractions.

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Face to Face. Social interaction is beneficial to a child in person.

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In person face to Face allow more dynamic learning and different types of learning than virtual

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I would choose in-person Face to face school. I think Face to Face is better for everyone involved.

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In person. I think it promotes better interactions and students have too much screen time as it is.

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I would prefer in-person Face to face school because I believe that children learn better that way. Children look forward to going to school and seeing their friends and it is difficult for them to sit in front of a computer all day long.

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Would prefer Face to Face. I believe children learn better when they are in a classroom.

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In person face to Face. Working parents don't have the means nor the time to help their younger children navigate virtual school.

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In-person, I feel as though it's easier to learn hands on.

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In-person Face to face school. Infrequent virtual school days in lieu of snow days may be acceptable. But the student-teacher and student-student interaction is necessary for growth and development and the best learning environment.

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In person, small classes, vs. virtual.

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In person would be the best to engage the students and determine if the content has been received and understood. Children need the social interaction as well.

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Everything should be Face to Face. No electronics at all. We used pencil and paper for years. Wasn't hurting anything when we used them. Also less of a distraction.

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If choosing a charter I think Face to Face would be more acceptable than virtual

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I do not prefer a charter school. Charter schools should be Face to Face.

Face to Face

I prefer in-person Face to Face. The child is more accountable, active, receives social /emotional learning, and receives a better education in person.

In-person face-to-face. Learning is best in this environment.

I would never choose a money pit charter school

Virtual school, it would give a different option for students who can't attend school in person.

In person. There is more accountability and you learn a lot from your classmates through discussion. Virtual does not facilitate cooperative learning as well as Face to Face

In person—need personal interaction with others

I would prefer Face to Face. Virtual school has promoted a lack of learning and more of "how quickly can I find the answers online."

face to Face. virtual school should be available for working adults in college or available to high school aged children with a child of their own.

I'd want my child to attend school in person so they can learn social skills from an early age.

I would prefer in-person Face to face instruction. I feel the instructor and the students need that contact.

I would prefer virtual

In-person face-to-face lets the educator not only teach the child, but helps to develop the child's social and emotional skills as well.

Face to face I believe virtual school should only be used in cases of pandemic, or due to chronic illness or emotional needs of child not as a regular alternative .

Would not choose a charter school!

Learning is always better in-person Face to Face.

I would always prefer in-person education (assuming the situation is safe for teachers and students). In my opinion, there is no substitute for hands-on, face-to-face interaction/instruction. It more effectively fosters communication, collaboration, and relationships between educators and children. The most important aspects of education occur inside a classroom.

In person - students need the social benefits that virtual lacks

Person to person especially for early primary grades (k-3) if virtual school it needs to be monitored at least every two weeks

In person face to face school. Personal interaction is always preferable to virtual I think. There is no better place for a child to be Than with his or her teacher. The teacher can understand and address so much more when they are with their students every day. Get to know them on a personal level.

Face to Face. As an educator, visually seeing students and their reactions to instruction allows me to move forward or reteach a concept.

Face to Face

Neither one.

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I think elementary children learn BEST with Face to face instruction. Children's attention spans seem even shorter now because of the video interactions. Therefore face to Face allows the teacher to improvise whenever it seems that the student's focus is waning. There is a better teacher student connection with Face to face learning!

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In-person The interaction between student and teacher cannot be adequately conveyed in any platform other than in-person.

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I would not choose a charter school.

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Face to Face. Learning in an environment where you succeed and fail in a face to face manner can help overcome obstacles because most of your future life will not take place behind a screen and you need to learn to how to handle yourself.

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I would want a face - to - face school. It allows the teacher to know and understand how the student learns and reacts to concepts.

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The concept of virtual charter schools makes me fear for the education of our youth. When we lose the human connection and opt for a screen, we lose the creativity allowed when Face to Face.

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I would absolutely prefer in person/Face to face school because the students are able to interact mor, develop personal connections, and build stronger relationships with teachers and peers, making them more successful. As a teacher, I know the impact I had teaching students when we were virtual was immensely less than any connection and impact I could ever have on a student face to Face.

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In person. Our kids have suffered from this isolation.

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I would prefer either. As long as it is safe for Face to face school, I would like it to happen, but, if it is unsafe virtual school should be utilized to the fullest extent.

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Neither

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Virtual. I feel that virtual school is easier for me.

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Face to Face. Socialization is very important to a child's development.

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Face to Face. Any face to face education is better than virtual for many reasons. Issue I had with charter was that they had low qualifications to be a teacher, but public are now doing the same. Quality of teachers in public is now lacking and lowering expectations to be a classroom teacher. the benefit of charter would be if they only hired the best and they do have a contract in which they may not get to continue teaching. If you are a good teacher then you don't need to worry about your contract if based on work performance. Virtual school demonstrated many that should not be teaching in public schools in which parents were able to see how the teacher conducted themselves many times observing classes.

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Face to Face. I believe children gain more knowledge in a classroom with their piers and direct contact with their teachers.

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As this pandemic has proven virtual is not a good option for most students, Face to Face with the teacher in the same room has benefits that far out weighs the other options.

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Face to Face. There are too many distractions in most homes to make virtual schooling successful. I feel this is even more prevalent in low income and/or rural communities where children are left primarily to themselves as their single parent works or being raised by

grandparents who are not tech savvy and cannot help when problems arise. There are many nuances that that in person instruction can provide and interaction among their peers can not be discounted either .

I would prefer in person. I feel that teachers are better able to gauge student learning and have more meaningful one on one sessions with students who need extra help.

Face to Face I believe students are engaged in Face to face learning

Now that I have experienced the virtual college as an adult, I prefer them due to the flexibility and convenience.

I believe face-to-face is always the best.

Face to Face, virtual does not work well. Students are not engaged. Instruction options are limited.

In-person

Moderation in all things according to the apostle Paul, in reality a balanced combination of the 2 is where the solution lies always has been always will be

In-person. This is how people learn best. Virtual is a joke in most circumstances and kids miss out on developing so many life skills.

Face to Face Education

In my opinion a virtual charter school is nothing more than a method to steal money from the state. It does not take the IQ of a genius to see in WV that those well connected to state legislature particularly those associated with the Republican Party will benefit financially from virtual schools. This is one more attempt by Republicans to weaken teachers.

In person face-to-face school. So much is lost in building relationships and connections when school is virtual. I think it's also easier to learn in an in person setting than online.

In person...my opinions on charter schools have nothing to do with the pandemic.

Face to Face

Face to Face due to the need for personal input.



## Appendix F: Vitae

### **Donna R. Dixon**

329 New England Ridge Road · Washington, West Virginia 26181 ·

(304 )863-5508 · ddixon5508@yahoo.com

#### **Education**

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Marshall University Present  
Doctor of Education (Curriculum & Instruction)  
Currently ABD (expected completion June 2021)  
Emphasis in Charter Schools

Marshall University May 1991  
Master of Arts in Elementary Science Education,

Marietta College May 1996  
Education Certification in Chemistry

University of the Ozarks May 1991  
Bachelor of Science in Chemistry

#### **Teaching Experience**

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1997- present Wood County Schools Parkersburg, WV

##### **Teacher Parkersburg South High School**

- Designed and taught courses in Chemistry, Technical Chemistry, Forensic Science, Environmental Science and Earth Science
- Responsible for lesson planning, instruction, and assessments in the classroom
- Safety Committee
- Senior Class Faculty Advisor 2013-2020
- National Honor Society Selection Committee 2013-2020
- Faculty Senate Vice President
- Textbook Adoption Committee
- Mini Grant funded project: Polymer Day
- Proctor: SAT

Fall Semester 2021 Ohio Valley University Vienna, WV

##### **Adjunct Professor**

- Instructing NSC 148: (General Physical Science)

## **Professional Experience and Awards**

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- Wrestling Coach – Parkersburg South High School 2012-2015 – State Championship 2015
- OVAC AAAAA Wrestling Coach of the Year 2014 and 2015
- WVEA Corma A Mowrey Memorial Award (April 17, 2015)
- Teachers Pay Teacher – Writer and creator of curriculum for Dixon’s Lessons
- Attendee – National Science Teacher Association National Convention
- Attendee – West Virginia Science Teacher Association State Convention
- Presenter West Virginia Science Teacher Association State Convention 2019
- Attendee – Bertino Forensic Science Workshop