SUPERINTENDENT PERCEPTIONS OF OPEN ENROLLMENT TRANSFER POLICIES IN INDIANA AFTER FOURTEEN YEARS OF IMPLEMENTATION
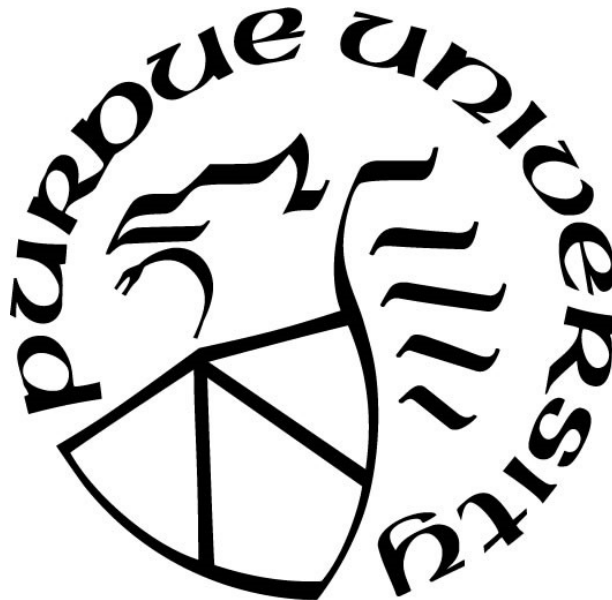
by

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A Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of Purdue University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Educational Studies

West Lafayette, Indiana

December 2022

THE PURDUE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

administrator many years ago. I am fortunate to have been surrounded and exposed to outstanding educators, leaders, and community members. To Cohort #24, we did it together and I am grateful for your encouraging words, support, and teamwork. To my colleagues Aaron Leniski and Seth Molnar, thank you for modeling a strong work ethic and helping me grow professionally. Finally, I would like to thank the study participants for their time and dedication to the school districts they serve.

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ABSTRACT

School choice has expanded during the modern school choice movement and students in Indiana can now choose from several school options including public schools, charter schools, virtual schools, or participate in the Indiana Choice Scholarships program and attend a parochial school. The potential for increased educational stratification across different demographic groups is a concern amongst policy makers and stakeholders committed to providing equitable access to educational opportunities for all. This phenomenological qualitative case study examined how seven superintendents perceive the impact of open enrollment policy in Indiana. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with each superintendent. Four emergent themes were identified: (1) student enrollment and financial instability, (2) marketing and program advancement, (3) meeting student needs, and (4) increased diversity. The results of this study provide a unique perspective of seven practicing superintendents and the effects of open enrollment policy.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

School choice is not a novel concept in America and can be traced back several decades in our country. According to Logan (2018), this level of education reform was born from the perception that everyone has a right to an education combined with policy makers' efforts to find ways to enhance the quality of education in the United States. However, according to Holme and Finnigan (2015), the debate over issues of equity and equality continues as the expansion of school choice legislation in America permeates policy discussion. Metropolitan areas throughout the United States are tackling issues of segregation through regional collaboratives designed to expand equity for historically marginalized students (Finnigan et al., 2015). These inter-district collaboratives have seen encouraging results and are creating demographically diverse schools in these regions. However, the Indiana Choice Scholarship voucher, one form of school choice, is seeing results that conflict with the original goals of these types of programs (Shaffer & Dincher, 2020). Fewer marginalized students are participating in this program. The potential for increased educational stratification across different demographic groups is a concern amongst policy makers and stakeholders committed to providing equitable access to educational opportunities for all.

Indiana is now one of forty-eight states with an established voluntary open enrollment program. Beginning in 2008, students can transfer to any Indiana public school or school district if space is available. In 2011 school choice expanded to include the Choice Scholarship Program. This program added additional choice by providing vouchers to middle- and low-income families to pay the cost of attending a nonpublic school. Consequently, data from the Indiana Department of Education (2021) show a concerning statistic with fewer Black students participating in voucher programs. In 2011, 24.1% of Black students and 46.4% of White students made up the

Indiana Choice Scholarship voucher population. In 2021, 11.9% and 55% of Black and White students respectively are participating in the Indiana voucher program. Relatedly, participation in private school voucher programs has shown that Black students are more likely to submit an application but less likely to accept a voucher offer when compared to White students (Carlson, 2014). Furthermore, Lavery and Carlson (2014) found that English language learners, students with special needs, and gifted and talented students to be disproportionately unlikely to participate in inter-district choice programs. Arguably, a similar trend is playing out with public school district open enrollment programs. At a time when schools are challenged with meeting the needs of diverse student populations, school leaders must navigate the aftereffects of school choice legislation thoughtfully.

Statement of the Problem

School choice has expanded during the modern school choice movement (Logan, 2018). Open enrollment or inter-district transfer policies for public schools, charter school start-ups, virtual school options and choice scholarships for non-public schools have created additional schooling choices for families (Brasington et al., 2016). With the adoption of these inter-district transfer policies, Indiana students can now transfer to any public school district that has elected to participate. As a result, superintendents and school boards are now regularly faced with difficult decisions that impact student demographics, student achievement results, financial outcomes, building operations and school community relations because of these competing educational options. School districts must evaluate the potential advantages and disadvantages of allowing open enrollment students to enroll and navigate the financial and political challenges that emerge due to these evolving policies locally and throughout the state.

Open enrollment policies have created challenges for school districts, especially school districts with higher poverty rates. In some cases, the perceived quality of education from parents declines when evaluated on quantitative student achievement measures in high poverty school districts (Logan, 2018; Holme & Richards, 2009). Studies have also indicated that when parents seek data on the schools they want to attend, racial composition is a dominant factor that is considered (Whitehurst, 2017; Trujillo, 2018). Both findings illustrate the potential for trends in increasing educational stratification levels. At the same time, superintendents are charged with both establishing a learning environment that contributes to increased academic achievement and decreasing and/or maintaining socioeconomic and racial stratification levels. Inter-district enrollment policies make this challenging. Superintendents must balance their own, and their school board's set of values and beliefs with the competitive landscape of school choice, the related financial incentives, and its impact on stratification levels.

Significance of the Study

The intersection of school choice and the potential of demographic segregation trends it creates is an important topic for the education sector in our country to research. The research findings can influence state legislatures to make informed choices regarding school choice policies. Hence, exploring the impact of inter-district transfer policies in our country and specifically in Indiana might contribute to policy development and create better opportunities for students. In addition, discussions on how inter-district transfer policies impact student achievement and enrollment for minority and economically disadvantaged students in school districts across our country should be carefully considered as our country continues to work to create learning environments that interweave equity with school choice initiatives. One area of school choice that produces inequities is residential choice (Peterson, 2010): the community in

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which a family chooses to live. According to Peterson, residential choice as one of the oldest school choice policies in America perpetuates an avenue for inequity to persist and perpetuates racial and socioeconomic segregation. While this finding is concerning, additional research is necessary to investigate how inter-district policy and residential choice connect (Reback, 2005; Reback 2008; Rincke, 2006). Learning from Indiana superintendents who have lived through school choice legislative changes in Indiana that began in 2008 is an important first step in assessing the impacts of open enrollment policies on Indiana public schools.

The overall goal of this research is to understand superintendent's experiences, views, and interpretations formed during the last fourteen school years of open enrollment in Indiana. With a major focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the state of Indiana (IDOE, 2021), it is critical that school districts are not implementing policies that might potentially be increasing demographic stratification levels across our state and negatively impacting historical and current marginalized students. The Indiana Arts Commission in partnership with the Indiana State Government, recently adopted the principles of inclusion, diversity, equity, and access to address structural inequalities and help institutions foster cultures that minimize bias and address systemic inequities (Indiana State Government Arts Commission, 2017). It is important to better understand how superintendents perceive the effects of open enrollment and specifically understand how they perceive the impact of these inter-district policies contributing to the potential of systemic inequalities within school corporations locally and throughout the state of Indiana (Cory, 2019).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe, through phenomenological inquiry, the participants' experiences, views, and interpretations of inter-district choice policy

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development.   Specifically, this research study examines superintendents' perceptions as they relate to inter-district transfer policies and the effects on demographics, learning environments and policy development. According to Bentze and Shapiro (1998), phenomenological inquiry helps "obtain knowledge about how we think and feel in the most direct ways" (p. 96). Seven veteran superintendents who have been working in this role since 2008 and have lived through and experienced the changes in school choice legislation were interviewed. Through these superintendent interviews, the researcher sought to describe their experiences, feelings, and perceptions of inter-district transfer policies and how these experiences might influence future local policy decision making. Finally, the researcher examined the beliefs these superintendents hold pertaining to managing schools effectively amidst inter-districts transfer policies.

Research Question

Experienced superintendents understand the impact of inter-district transfer policies on their schools. By interviewing superintendents who have served in this capacity for the past ten years, there were opportunities for greater exploration into the effects of school choice and open enrollment policies in Indiana. The following question served as the focus for this qualitative study:

1. How do Indiana superintendents perceive the effects of school choice and open enrollment?

Limitations of the Study

Qualitative research involves several complexities that emerge during data collection and sampling design. These limitations were considered in an attempt to eliminate sample bias (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). According to Tuckett (2004), establishing a purposeful sample

contributes to increased rigor in the research process and was examined throughout the study to ensure researcher credibility. In addition, qualitative research is typically only generalizable within the scope of research and may be limited in its application to additional sample populations. According to Caine et al. (2019), the intention of phenomenological inquiry is not to establish a single truth which could lead to methodological issues in the data collection and analysis process. However, the process of using phenomenological inquiry allows these superintendents to describe their experiences navigating these tough political issues. This allows their narratives to underpin a story that might justify or shape the development of ideas that could strengthen educational outcomes for students if applied appropriately. Ultimately, this qualitative research provides a contextual understanding of a unique sample set and analyzes how school superintendents navigate policy decision making and make meaning of their role during this collaborative process.

Summary

As educational reform continues to be discussed in state and federal policy dialogue, school choice is one avenue used to address school improvement initiatives. State efforts to create educational opportunities and experiences for students that are equitable but also eliminate systemic barriers is important to be studied and understood. States must balance the pressures to advance school choice opportunities with the overall academic success of students locally, regionally and throughout the state. Superintendents have a unique perspective and can describe how open enrollment is impacting their school community.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

School choice and open enrollment policies have complicated the public education systems. We must turn to the literature to evaluate inter-district transfer reform and studies that have reviewed the impact of various open enrollment programs and initiatives in Indiana and across the United States of America in public schools. There are bodies of research addressing these policy efforts and the perceived benefits and problems that emerge throughout the country with limited research in Indiana. Geopolitical fragmentation, overcoming racial animus and localism are all potential problems that are discussed in the literature in addition to the perceived positive outcomes of creating competitive markets for educational sectors and improved accountability systems (Finnigan et al., 2015). According to Finnigan et al., addressing geopolitical fragmentation can foster conversations about race and wealth differences that develop as a result of "territorial segregation and fiscal separation" (p.221). Policy efforts that analyze and consider issues of fragmentation in education are less common (Holme & Finnigan, 2018). In addition, advocates of school choice need to address the concerns and overcome the status quo that can form around a segregated society (Orfield, 2015). In the United States, forty-eight states have some form of open enrollment policy ranging from school vouchers to another form of school choice and research that explains why school districts elect to participate in inter-district transfer policies is nonexistent. The superintendent's role in this process is also important to consider as inter-district policy decisions are made. This review of literature discusses the historical and political underpinnings of the modern school choice movement, summarizes inter-district desegregation research, and describes Indiana's journey with open enrollment policy development. Each of these reviews point to the importance that continued research is necessary

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to better understand the various perceived versus actual outcomes of these policy initiatives that are unfolding in Indiana and throughout the country.

Historical and Political Look at the Modern School Choice Movement

As schools started to develop in the 18th and 19th centuries, families with financial resources would send their children to schools based on personal beliefs, religious affiliation, or geographical location (Logan, 2018). This concept of school choice still happens today. School choice has expanded during the modern school choice movement with many states adopting inter-district transfer policies in recent years that allow students to choose their public school of choice. No longer is school choice only accessible to families of wealth, but school choice is now accessible to most students and families in our country. But is this a reality? According to Shaffer and Dincher (2020), except for White and Asian student populations, most other demographic groups have seen a decline in participation in open enrollment and choice scholarship voucher programs. The biggest reason for these changes in policies was to encourage a competitive market in the public education sector while at the same time ensuring that students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds are no longer isolated within their own schools (Lavery & Carlson, 2014). Equitable educational reform began in 1954 with the *Brown v. Board of Education* case which is considered the launchpad that propelled the modern school choice movement (Logan, 2018).

According to Sweetland (2002), access to public school systems with increased quality started to be in high demand and as a result, forced legislators to consider how expanded school choice options could be facilitated within governmental structures and policy implementation. This movement was born under the perceived notion that greater choice would increase diversity efforts and provide better opportunity to students throughout the country while at the same time,

creating healthy market competition between school systems (Logan, 2018; Finnigan & Holme, 2015). In addition, the idea of educational autonomy and parents executing their freedoms to make decisions in the best interest of their child have created systems within school choice legislation that put competitive pressures on the educational market (Finn, 2005). According to Kane & Wilson (2006), liberals and conservatives have discussed that the First Amendment can be used to argue issues of equity and justice within the educational system. Because of these varying opinions and approaches to tackling this topic, one cannot understand it fully without attending to the historical and political heritage of inter-district and open enrollment policy formation since the 1954 Brown decision.

School choice is typically defined in the literature by a description of a family's educational values, proximity to a school or location or a focus on a religious belief of educational methodology (Kane & Wilson, 2006). Initially, common schools were made available to families of wealth to children of European ancestry. These schools were locally funded and available to White children. During this time in history, Catholic immigrants were in search of a system to educate students in the Catholic faith. According to Mondale and Patton (2001), schools began to form that honored the Catholic traditions and practices. This resulted in the earliest alternative to a public education. Catholic schools were privately funded in an attempt to advance the Catholic faith. In the centuries and decades since, school choice has grown to include schools of multiple faiths, charter schools, online or virtual schools and the introduction of inter-district school choice and open enrollment policy.

Minnesota was the first state to establish legislation and policy that allowed open enrollment to occur in school districts beginning in 1988. Students could attend or transfer to any public school district within the state if the school of choice had space to enroll students (Logan,

2018). In five short years after Minnesota's decision, fourteen additional states had adopted some form of inter-district or open enrollment legislation that allowed school districts to make this decision at the local level whether they would participate in open enrollment legislation (Smith, 1995). It is now 2022 and forty-three states now have open enrollment policies that allow students to enroll in school districts across district boundary lines without having to move geographically (Education commission of the States, n.d.). Conservatives argue that school choice values the freedom of choice in a competitive market. Liberals argue that school choice creates an avenue to address social equity (Smith, 1995). The perceived advantages of both ideologies of school choice legislation have been faced with counter arguments as the actual outcomes of these choice legislations are studied empirically and quantitatively by measurable metrics.

Educational equity and quality public schools became the desired result across the nation after the Brown decision. Legislators believed that creating a competitive educational market that provided families with choice would improve schools and allow for school communities to work collaboratively on school reform efforts (Lavy, 2010). In 1990, educational vouchers were discussed and started to build momentum within the legislative process where families could use a certain amount of money provided by the state to attend a state-approved school. Originally proposed by Milton Friedman, these initiatives started to gain support in the cities of Milwaukee and Cleveland (Witte & Thorn, 1996). Friedman's original plan was to focus these efforts on all students but in recent years, these programs have moved towards focusing on economically marginalized student populations. According to Logan (2018), there is "limited evidence as to whether such programs promote competitive school reforms for traditional public schools" (p. 2). Further, both liberal and conservatives supported the idea that expanding free choice and charter

schools would benefit diverse student populations, students of color and economically disadvantaged families. However, the expansion of charter schools has not proven to decrease racial and academic stratification levels and has essentially created another set of public schools since these schools are now part of the established educational bureaucracy (Rapp & Eckes, 2007).

In addition to open enrollment policies, inter-district transfer policies, charter and parochial school choices, virtual school choices are becoming a more popular educational choice for families especially since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The emergence of virtual schools is creating a competitive factor that is creating challenges for traditional public schools to maintain enrollment and financial stability. Many public-school systems are beginning to create their own virtual programming that meets the needs of not only students in their own district but districts surrounding them and throughout the state to compete with virtual schools. The impact that online or virtual schools is having on school demographics and issues impacting marginalized students is still unknown and further research is necessary to understand these impacts (Weiss, 2018). The focus on charter schools, voucher programs and virtual education will continue to present real challenges to school districts as state funding policies move towards supporting these programs.

The efforts to expand educational choice to students as an attempt to provide equity and equal access to great schools and positive learning experiences had great intentions. However, residential choice continues to present racial and socioeconomic stratification concerns that ultimately contribute to segregated school communities and learning environments (Potter, 2014; Putnam, 2016). According to Putnam, "opportunity" is central to America and our progress as a nation. Americans who work hard can dig themselves out of difficult situations and struggling

educational environments. However, opportunity gaps are emerging across the country as school communities become more segregated attributable to differences between the rich, middle class and poor. Putnam argues that as a country, we are becoming a two-class society and the middle class is disappearing. As a result, the school communities that represent these two social classes reflect demographics that in most cases have highly concentrated areas of marginalized and economically disadvantaged families.

According to Saporito and Sohoni (2007), efforts to create neighborhoods that are demographically diverse across multiple domains do not always generate matching demographics in the elementary and secondary schools that serve a particular school community. This finding is contrary to the belief that as our nation becomes more ethnically diverse, our schools will follow this same pattern. Orfield et al. (2012) emphasize the importance for housing and educational policy makers to collaborate on these issues with the hope of achieving their desired goals of decreased racial and socioeconomic stratification levels. The literature on this topic does not demonstrate that these types of collaboratives are occurring throughout Indiana or across the country even though there is a belief that segregated schools will contribute to disparities within historically marginalized populations (Tegeler & Siegel-Hawley, 2015).

It is now 2022 and the state of education seems to be wrestling with similar challenges involving the segregation of marginalized student populations that were discussed during the *Brown vs. Board of Education* Supreme Court's ruling many years ago. Open enrollment, school choice vouchers, inter-district policies, parochial schools and the increase in virtual schooling options has made it difficult for school communities and state legislators to address the systemic barriers that might perpetuate inequitable access to high quality schools and educational

opportunities. Inter-district desegregation plans have been implemented in an attempt to address these potential inequities. These regional collaboratives have produced mixed results but provide strategies that ultimately could counteract systems that increase stratification levels (Holme & Finigan, 2015).

According to Holme and Finnigan (2015), the debate over issues of equity and equality continues as the expansion of school choice legislation in America permeates policy discussion. The potential for increased educational stratification across different demographic groups is also a concern amongst policy makers and stakeholders committed to providing equitable access to educational opportunities for all. While there is evidence of increased stratification levels along academic, socioeconomic and racial dimensions, the reasons for these stratification levels can be difficult to pinpoint (Carlson, 2014; Holme & Richard, 2009). In contrast, supporters of school choice contend that educational stratification levels actually decrease due to expanded educational access and the ability of marginalized groups to have additional opportunities to choose the schools they want to attend (Viteritti, 1999). In theory, both sets of outcomes seem reasonable on the surface, but the true outcome is most likely contextualized based on a variety of factors and circumstances that are unique to the students' demographic region.

Students from different socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds due to geographical and boundary determinations are now being isolated across district boundary lines (Finnegan et al., 2018). However, the relationship between district and state school choice policies along academic, racial, and socioeconomic indicators is unclear. According to Carlson (2014), "the literature has focused less on gaining a theoretical understanding of the conditions that produce increases or decreases in stratification and more on the empirical question of how school choice

programs affect stratification levels" (p.271). Inter-district policies can create challenges for school districts with higher-poverty rates as the perceived quality of education from parents declines when evaluated on quantitative student achievement measures (Duman et al., 2018; Trujillo, 2018).

Inter-District Desegregation Plans

Inter-district desegregation plans have been implemented in various regions in the United States in an attempt to address concerns with social stratification levels. According to Finnegan and Holme (2018) "as a nation we have struggled to address segregation, despite multiple studies, presentations of data, and calls to action" (p.368). There have been several regional collaboratives that have worked to tackle this issue with mixed results. While today's school segregation levels are paralleling the pre-Brown era, school demographics have shifted since that time (Finnegan et al, 2015). Commonly referred to as inter-district school integration policies, thirteen metropolitan areas across ten states adopted these policies between the 1960s and 2000s. These inter-district collaboratives were formed because of the idea that "segregation and racial isolation between school districts are a fundamental cause of educational inequality" (Finnegan et al., 2015, p. 369). These programs sought to address the academic concerns of struggling students by creating systems to allow students access to greater resources including opportunities for improved academic and social environments, and networks within a metropolitan region.

The majority of students resided in metropolitan areas in the 1940s and 1950s and few students lived in surrounding suburban districts. At that time, these metropolitan areas in many cities were demographically diverse and according to Finnegan et al., (2015), contained students of color, economically disadvantaged and a substantial portion of white and middle-class

students. However, in some cases, students would often be placed into school buildings because of district policies that resembled segregating practices (Clotfelter, 2004). When inter-district collaboratives started to emerge in the mid-1960s, regional collaboratives were created to counteract intra-district plans that were perceived would not work effectively as urban areas were seeing increases in marginalized student populations (Wells et al., 2009). Rury & Saatciogula (2011) described this phenomenon as "opportunity hoarding" as suburban districts both allowed white middle class families to separate themselves from urban challenges and provided these districts with a way to hoard resources. Over the last several decades, thousands of students have participated in inter-district desegregation programs.

The very first inter-district program was the Urban Suburban Inter-district Transfer Program (USITP), created in 1965 in Rochester under a New York state law (Wells, et al., 2009). This program was initiated by state law to address the racial imbalance between school districts. Similar plans were enacted in Boston (1966), Hartford (1966) and Milwaukee (1976). A federal court order updated Milwaukee's plan in 1979 after U.S. district Judge John Reynolds ruled Milwaukee Public Schools were unlawfully segregated. Indianapolis (1981) and St. Louis (1983) had similar federal court orders establish inter-district transfer plans at that time. East Palo Alto (1986), Hartford (1998) and Minneapolis (2001) were mandated by state court order to integrate schools across separate and unequal school districts. Finally, research on the stratifying effects has been conducted in several metropolitan areas including St. Louis, MO, Hartford, CT, Minneapolis, MN, East Palo Alto, CA, Rochester, NY, Boston, MA, Omaha, NE and Milwaukee, WI. (Holme & Richards, 2009).

After decades of policy implementation, research on Rochester, Omaha, Minneapolis, Denver, and Palo Alto cases report findings and recommendations for future policy

consideration. Inter-district choice can contribute to between-district stratification and research (Holme & Richards, 2009). Typically, students with higher socio-economic status are more likely to transfer to a school with less poverty and in some cases, students of color are transferring to schools in Denver, where most students are from the same background. In the Omaha and Palo Alto school districts, one of the challenging components of their inter-district plans is the issue of power dynamics. Finnigan et al. (2018) discuss the best way to address uneven power dynamics by implementing plans that build civic capacity to address political geography and unequal power dynamics. Finnigan and Holme (2015) and Finnigan et al. agree with their analysis of the inter-district arrangements in Rochester, Omaha, Minneapolis', and Palo Alto's that engaging the community beyond district boundaries can help formulate a shared vision and increase the likelihood of meaningful change. Participating in discussion on civic capacity can allow for communities to think differently about equity-minded policies and address the unintended consequences of political geography. Finnigan and Holme (2015) also point out that political headwinds need to be addressed if sustainable progress is going to be made and aspects of these programs could be applied strategically to other settings.

In Rochester, for example, the superintendent's capacity to be actively involved in the application of policies and procedures can lead to systemic change (Finnigan et. al, 2015). This history of cross-district collaboration can not only prompt a discussion on regional equity but allow regional superintendents and school boards the opportunity to leverage resources and ideas that could strengthen inter-district transfer reform. This research cites a few items for consideration as metropolitan areas work to strengthen existing collaboratives including: the lack of a two-way transfer structure, limited space available, non-existent supports for students and training for teachers in the suburban districts. Financial support from state agencies needs to be

included as a way for school districts to incentivize the expansion of regional programming that works to reduce segregation.

While the specifics of each collaborative vary, several benefits have resulted from these inter-district desegregation plans. Growth in student achievement, increased student agency, improved racial attitudes and reduced dropout rates are positive outcomes of these initiatives (Finnigan & Holme, 2015; Lavy, 2010; Welch & Zimmer, 2012). A summary of this research also highlights the social benefits along with improved college and career readiness benchmarks. While the research literature and educational reform efforts have produced mixed and contradictory results, inter-district desegregation policies often yield academic benefits and provide additional opportunities for students to develop socially and emotionally. However, there are still challenges that need to be met related to the socioeconomic divide in America.

The efforts to expand educational choice to students to provide equity and equal access to great schools and positive learning experiences has great intentions. However, residential choice as another form of choice, continues to present racial and socioeconomic stratification concerns that ultimately contributes to segregated school communities and learning environments (Potter, 2014; Putnam, 2016). According to Putnam, opportunity is central to America and our progress as a nation. Americans who work hard can dig themselves out of difficult situations and struggling educational environments. However, opportunity gaps are emerging across the country as school communities become more segregated because of the differences between the rich, middle class and poor. Putnam argues that as a country, we are becoming a two-class society and the middle class is disappearing. As a result, the school communities that represent these two social classes reflect demographics that in most cases have highly concentrated areas of marginalized and economically disadvantaged families.

Indiana is one of the many open enrollment states that have adapted school choice policies in recent years to reflect increased flexibility in school choice options for families. Indiana offers students and their families a variety of school options including open enrollment choices for participating schools, school choice scholarships for access to non-public schools, charter schools and virtual school options. Indianapolis, the capital of Indiana, was also one of a few cities that was sued to force desegregation of its schools in 1968. Within the context of school choice, Indiana has gone through many changes during its history.

School Choice in Indiana

There are many forms and variations of school choice in the state of Indiana. Publicly funded school choice options include magnet schools, charter schools, non-public choice scholarship vouchers and inter-district open enrollment plans (Linkow, 2011). An analysis of school choice has provided mixed results in Indiana and across the country (Lubienski & Weitzel, 2008). Research studies have discussed that improvements in graduation rates and college and career readiness are positive outcomes of school choice and voucher programs (Cowen et al., 2013). Studies by Lubienski and Weitzel have shown no negative academic outcomes. Taken together, the lack of negative consequences documented in research combined with the positive benefits support the notion that school choice programs are not going away, especially with the increased demand by parents for choice. However, in 1968 Indianapolis, Indiana was forced to desegregate their schools and collectively, Indiana has experienced issues of segregation as a result of participation in non-public choice scholarship programs (Shaffer & Dincher, 2020). These stories are important to understand in the context of Indiana school choice programs and the emergence of potential unintended consequences. Each school choice option in Indiana has undergone several changes during the recent decades.

Magnet Schools

Magnet schools are a form of school choice that was designed to attract a more diverse student body throughout a school district. These schools are typically specialized and emphasize a particular method of teaching or pathway of study and are often the result of a community effort to increase racial integration and academic achievement (Wang et al., 2018). The first magnet school, established in 1968, was designed to minimize segregation in Tacoma, Washington. In Indiana, there are currently twenty-eight (28) magnet schools serving close to 14,000 students. Magnet schools were designed to provide choice and attract students from surrounding geographic areas and schools but as magnet schools have evolved, they are not serving the original goal for racial integration (Linkow, 2011). According to Linkow (2011), the original goal was to create innovative school environments that attracted new White families and retained existing White families living in urban neighborhoods and decrease racial stratification in struggling school communities.

Magnet schools have the following characteristics in common: (a) a particular theme to the curriculum, such as performing arts, science, or technology; (b) admission intended to aid in voluntary desegregation; (c) families get to choose the school; and (d) students from neighboring districts are eligible to attend (Robelen, 2008; Linkow, 2011). Transportation provisions are also typically included with magnet school programming to encourage families from other communities to participate (Finnigan & Holme, 2015). However, as recently as June of 2021, concerns with magnet schools in the city of Indianapolis persist. Parents and district administrators are currently challenging the Indianapolis Public Schools to change its enrollment policies as a result of some of the highest performing magnet schools benefiting mostly the white, middle-and high-income families (Gabriel, 2021).

Choice Scholarship Vouchers

Choice scholarship vouchers are Indiana state government-funded scholarships that allow public school students to attend private schools (Austin et al., 2019). These vouchers allow families to utilize public funding as tuition costs. Milton Friedman is discussed in the research as the first to suggest that vouchers should be made available to all families to allow parents to choose the best options to meet the needs for their students while also providing a model for public schools to be privatized (Robelen, 2008). Robelen described Milton's ideology that the public education sector was becoming a monopoly and reform was necessary to enact change. Also, school vouchers were intended to improve America's schools as a result of the competitive markets that would play out in education regions across the United States. Other researchers advocated for a competitive marketplace in public education but concurred that there should be parameters or qualifiers. According to Coons et al. (1971), they believed that education vouchers should only be used for economically disadvantaged students. As such, the first such voucher program that allowed economically disadvantaged students access to school choice vouchers was established in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1990 (Greene et al., 2010; Welch et al., 2010). This voucher program allowed poor students to attend a non-public school and utilized state tuition dollars. As of 2021, sixteen states have passed voucher laws. Indiana is one of these states.

The Indiana choice scholarship program was enacted in 2011 to middle- and low-income families to attend a non-public school of their choice (Indiana Code 20-51-4 & 20-51-4, 2011). Students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch initially were able to receive a voucher worth up to 90 percent of the state per student allocation for the sending school district. Students from families earning 150 percent of the free and reduced-price threshold can receive a voucher worth up to 50 percent of the state per-student funding allocation for the sending district. This amount was changed in 2021 and now families can meet the income requirement by earning 300 percent

of the federal Free and Reduced-price income eligibility for a school meal program if they also meet one of 8 pathways (Indiana Code 20-51-2-5, 2021):

- Two Semesters in a Public-School Track – The student attended an Indiana K-12 public school (including a charter) for at least two semesters immediately preceding the first semester of receiving a Choice Scholarship.

- "F" Public School Track – The student would be required to attend a specific public school based on his/her residency that has been assigned an "F" grade.

- Special Education Track – The student has a disability that requires special education services and has an individualized education plan (IEP) or service plan (SP).

- Pre-K Track – The student received an Early Education Grant (On My Way Pre-K) and is attending kindergarten at the same school that they attended for preschool.

- Foster Care Track – The student is in foster care.

- Sibling Track – The sibling of the newly applying student received either a Choice Scholarship or an SGO Scholarship in a previous school year, including a school year that does not immediately precede the school year for which the student is applying for a Choice Scholarship.

- Previous Scholarship Granting Organization (SGO) Track – The student received an SGO Scholarship in a previous school year, including a school year that does not immediately precede the school year for which the student is applying for a Choice Scholarship.

- Previous Choice Scholarship Student Track – The student received a Choice Scholarship in the school year immediately preceding the school year for which the student is applying for a Choice Scholarship.

The Indiana voucher program has unique characteristics when compared to other states (Austin et al., 2019). Over time, more families have been able to access Indiana's voucher program as a result of changes in the policy and additional pathways. Beginning in 2011, when the program began, students were required to attend a public school before being eligible to utilize a voucher to attend a private school. However, two years later, the criteria for eligibility expanded to include kindergarten students, siblings of voucher students, special education students, and families who would be required to attend a failing public school according to their residential choice. A program once established as a way for students to escape failing schools has transformed into what advocates describe as focusing "squarely on the value of parental choice (Malin & Mensa-Bonsu, 2020, p.134).

This expanded choice also created concerns that funding religious schools was unconstitutional. On July 1, 2011, Indiana taxpayers challenged Indiana's voucher program in court (Meredith v. Pence, 2013). After two years of litigation, on March 26, 2013, the Indiana Supreme Court ruled in a landmark 5-0 decision that the Choice Scholarship Program did not violate the state constitution. The court ruled that government funding of religious entities does not apply to entities providing primary and secondary education. The Court elaborated on their ruling by describing the intent of the program is not to benefit religious schools but to serve economically disadvantaged children by providing them expanded options to attend a non-public school.

With these additional pathways, and for the first time in the history of the Choice Scholarship Program, student participation has decreased (Choice Scholarship Program Annual Report, 2021). During the 2019-2020 school year, 36,707 students and 326 schools participated. During the 2020-2021 school year, 35,698 students and 324 schools participated compared to

3,911 students who participated when the program began in 2011. Additionally, in the 2020-2021 school year 61 percent of students receiving a voucher have never attended a public school up from 57 percent in 2018 (Indiana Department of Education, 2021). This trend will likely continue to grow as students continue to access the program through the available eight tracks that were established in 2013. Lastly, recent data shows a concerning statistic with fewer Black students participating in voucher programs. In 2011, 24.1% of Black students and 46.4% of White students made up the Indiana Choice Scholarship voucher population. These percentages shifted to 11.9% and 55% of Black and White students respectively in 2021 (Indiana Department of Education, 2021).

In the eight years of the existence of the Choice Scholarship Program in Indiana, researchers have indicated the results of this legislation are not favorable academically (Barnum, 2017; Colombo, 2017), and shows fewer Black students participate with each passing year (Shaffer & Dincher, 2020). Colombo reports voucher students experience losses in mathematical achievement. In addition, Shaffer and Dincher, report "segregation academies" (p.1) are being represented in the form of private schools. The authors define segregation as any non-public school comprising of 80% or more of a relevant group and as of 2018, 46% of the 318 voucher schools were 80% or more White. Welner and Green (2018) argue vouchers are designed to rescue poor students and students of color from failing schools. Yet, Black families are less likely than all other groups to keep their children in voucher schools or utilize a voucher (Gooden et al., 2016). Understanding the impact of a free market approach to school choice will need further interpretation and analysis to determine if the original intent is providing economically disadvantaged and historically marginalized access to better schools.

Charter Schools

Charter schools are now integrated into the public-school systems and are viewed as another free market approach to address failing schools (Clark et al., 2015; Linkow, 2011). Charter schools are organized between a group of individuals who have an interest in designing a high-quality school in partnership with a public entity, typically a school board or college university sponsor. The first charter school was established in 1992. This form of school choice has grown rapidly and as of 2020, there are more than 7400 charter schools serving more than 3 million students throughout the nation. (White et al., 2020). Indiana is one of 45 states, including the District of Columbia, that permit charter schools.

Indiana's charter law was enacted in 2001 (Indiana Code 20-24). In 2002, eleven charter schools opened and as of 2021, 112 charter schools are open across the state of Indiana (IDOE, 2021). Indiana law requires that any student who is a resident of Indiana is open to attend a charter school (Indiana Code 20-24-7-5-5). Indiana charter schools receive funding in the same manner that traditional public schools do and are held accountable to their governing body and the state. Charter school legislation was enacted to provide another way to address failing public schools and these schools are expected to design innovative approaches that result in better student outcomes when compared to traditional public schools. Increased competition is described as a way to raise the bar for traditional public schools to improve (Clark et al., 2015) but opponents view charter schools as draining resources from traditional public schools and believe insufficient oversight will result in low-performing results (Viteretti, 2010). Charter schools in Indiana are serving a greater number of economically disadvantaged students and students from an ethnic minority (Indiana State Board of Education, 2018).

According to the Indiana State Board of Education (2018), most of the students enrolled in a charter school, approximately 70 percent, are either Black, Hispanic, Asian, Multi-race, or

other. In contrast, approximately 47 percent of students from feeder school districts are members of an ethnic minority. This trend plays out with free and reduced lunch data as well. In 2008, the percentage of students who received free or reduced lunch services in the state of Indiana was 39.1 percent, while the percentage of low-income students in the feeder corporations was 49 percent. In 2008, over 60 percent of students attending charter schools received free or reduced lunch.

While charter school success nationally has seen indistinguishable results when compared to public schools, Indiana charter schools have seen some positive gains academically. Compared to public schools, students enrolled in traditional charter schools in 2017 demonstrated slightly greater student growth in grades 4-8 and significantly greater academic growth in high school (IDOE, 2021). In the same year high school students in charter schools outperformed their peers in public schools on the ELA and math ISTEP 10 assessments. When student proficiency is disaggregated by race/ethnicity, the White population were the only students who outperformed their peers in traditional charter schools. However, in both ELA and math, minority students in traditional charter schools outperformed their peers when compared to traditional public schools. Black students had the smallest gap, with performance being similar across both school types (Indiana State Board of Education, 2018).

Open Enrollment Plans

Open enrollment plans allow students the opportunity to transfer to any other public school (Tefera et al., 2011). Intra-district and inter-district are two different forms of open enrollment plans that can either be mandatory or voluntary based on state legislation and policy. Mandatory plans require participation of school districts and voluntary plans permit school districts the option of choosing to participate or not. In both cases, participation would depend on

available open seats (Linkow, 2011; Tefera et al.). Open enrollment school choice plans are discussed as one possible solution for failing schools throughout the country and Indiana is one of forty-eight states that allows open enrollment across geographical boundaries.

Indiana's voluntary open enrollment program was established in 2008 (Indiana Code 20-3.1-6.1-3). Under the original open enrollment policy, receiving school districts were able to set policies about which students they would accept, including standards based on test scores or disciplinary records. Some members of the public expressed concerns that school districts were setting selective criteria that restricted the enrollment of students with special needs or academic challenges. However, in 2013, House Bill 1381 set formal guidelines that the governing body of a school district may not deny a transfer request for any reason other than capacity or if a student has been suspended or expelled in the year preceding the transfer request and must hold a public lottery for the available openings (Indiana Code 20.26). This policy was enacted at the same time as public-school financing shifted from relying mainly on local property taxes to state sales and income tax revenues.

History of Indiana School Finance

The process for funding Indiana's schools has gone through several changes over the last century. As early as the mid-nineteenth century, the Indiana Constitution of 1851 included a provision that established a system in which school tuition would be free and open to all students throughout the state (Boone, 1892). As part of this provision, The School Law of 1852 established a common funding model that would be supported through state taxation in which schools would be locally financed and controlled (Madison, 2014). At that time, schools were charged with levying additional school taxes to supplement revenue to establish funding for facilities. Additional tax levies to support schools continued to be challenged throughout the state

with the Indiana Supreme Court eventually granting authority to local school districts to levy additional taxes to support school corporations and generate revenue for school buildings and other operational supplies (Greencastle Township v. Black, 1854; Thornbrough, 1965).

Education funding for schools continued to come from local sources through the end of the nineteenth century but concerns throughout the state started to emerge as a result of the inequities developing as a result of varying degrees of financial wealth in different parts of the state (Madison, 2014). State legislation was passed in 1905 that allowed a portion of state taxes to be distributed to schools with greater need and not just based on student enrollment. This legislation provided a model for Indiana's current funding formula that allows for additional dollars to be distributed to schools based on complexity factors including school corporations who educate a significant portion of students from low-income families to help equalize the funding variability situation (Senate Bill 368, 2022).

School funding continued to mostly come from local taxation through the twentieth century with several changes to the funding formula during that time (Theobald & Taylor, 2001). However, in 2008, the Indiana school system moved away from relying on revenues generated by local property taxes (Michael et al., 2009). Before 2008, revenue sources for K-12 education were more balanced with state income and sales tax funding 85% and local property tax funding 15% of general operations. Since 2008, the state has assumed the responsibility for funding 100% of K-12 education through state income and sales tax (Public Law 148, 2008). Around the same timeframe, the General Assembly made changes to the local property tax limits in 2008 through what is known as the Circuit Breaker Law (House Enrolled Act 1001, 2010). This law capped property taxes to 1% of property values for owner-occupied residences, 2% for other residential property and farmland, and 3% for commercial land and all other property. These

changes in tax cap limits in 2008 provided challenges for school corporations to continue funding building improvements and the operational needs of the district. Despite these changes in tax caps, the new school funding formula continues to help support school districts serving a greater number of students with financial needs (Michael et al., 2009).

This switch from schools being funded by local tax revenue to state sales tax revenue has provided more control at the state level to control school policy. In 2008, Indiana's voluntary open enrollment program was established allowing students the opportunity to attend any school in the state that accepts out of district students (Indiana Code 20-3.1-6.1-3). As a result of this change in open enrollment policy, school funding has shifted due to school corporations receiving funding for students attending their schools, which now can benefit from students who live outside of district boundaries. A student's address no longer determines the school the student will attend and creates a factor of instability as school districts look to predict the number of students who will attend their schools and establish budgets based on anticipated funding streams. The state provides tuition support for every student who is enrolled in a school regardless of where they live, and families can now choose the school district of their choice. Superintendents must now navigate the impact open enrollment has on their school district's finances due to student enrollment numbers contributing to the financial stability of the school district. Indiana superintendents typically look to find ways to increase funding for their school district and open enrollment policy provides this opportunity.

Summary

Indiana is considered a leader with school choice policy legislation. The availability of magnet schools, charter schools, open enrollment and school choice vouchers provide many options for families who wish not to attend the public-school corporation where they reside.

However, research on the impact of open enrollment policy is limited (Holme & Richards, 2009; Potter, 2014). In 2020-2021, 73,506 students participated in the open enrollment program in Indiana and transferred to another public school outside of their own district. This number is up from 53,423 students in 2018. Finnigan and Holme (2013) describes that desegregation is not typically addressed in open enrollment plans and concluded that desegregation and transportation should be explicitly addressed because they are crucial to ensuring plan success and decreasing socioeconomic and demographic stratification levels. More students are participating in open enrollment programs than ever before and further research is needed to examine the impact of open enrollment policies impacting on school demographics, school finances, learning environments and local policy development. Superintendents have a unique understanding of these impacts within the local context.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research Design

To enhance the understanding of the experiences of superintendents who have served in this capacity since 2008 and who have navigated the changes in school choice legislation since its inception, the phenomenology research method was chosen as the mode of inquiry. Husserl, the principal founder of phenomenology, developed this systematic foundational science around the description and analysis of consciousness and the understanding of one's perceptions (Zahavi, 2003). Phenomenological inquiry can be used to obtain knowledge about how we "think and feel in the most direct ways" about a particular topic or experience (Bentz & Shapiro, 1999, p. 96). Phenomenological inquiry also provides a unique way to understand the explicit experiences of human beings and how their institutional and professional narratives have shaped them (Lindsay & Schwind, 2016).

Phenomenological inquiry can produce a variety of study results including experiences ranging from perceptions, thought memory, imagination, emotion, and desire. This study focuses on participants' experiences, views, and interpretations formed from those experiences as superintendents during the last fourteen school years. Through phenomenological inquiry, a greater understanding of the perceptions and experiences of school choice policy in Indiana could be identified from superintendent responses. This research served as an investigation into superintendent experiences who were leading school districts from 2008-2022 and have lived through the changes in open enrollment and school choice legislation during that time. The purpose of this phenomenological approach was to describe personal perspectives and interpretations and "gain insights into people's motivations and actions" (Lester, 1999, p.1)

Finally, phenomenological research seeks to describe rather than explain, and needs to begin without any preconceptions or hypothesized results (Laverty, 2003).

This phenomenological inquiry was conducted during a time when school districts are in a continuous battle for educational dollars to support the needs of their individual school districts in a competitive marketplace. While this might be true at any time looking forward, inter-district transfer policies provide a challenge for school corporations, especially considering the health emergency brought on by the pandemic and the rise in the number of students moving to online schooling options. These conditions may or may not influence superintendent responses.

Given the limited theoretical frameworks available for this research topic, the researcher sought to contribute to new theories based on the authentic evidence drawn from practicing school superintendents who have lived through the changes in school choice legislation in Indiana. Merriam & Tisdell (2016) describe that inductive and deductive analysis helps the researcher interpret findings into meaningful theories.

Role of Researcher

The researcher served as an interviewer and the instrument for gathering and analyzing data. The researcher must have the ability to establish a positive relationship with the participants and safeguard participants and their data (Xu et al., 2020). Finally, researcher bias needs to be attended to. It will be important that the researcher acknowledges that he approached this research without predetermined expectations and results to ensure important findings are not overlooked within the data collections process (Chenail, 2014).

The researcher entered the researcher role as a white male with over nineteen years of experience working in public education. The researcher has spent fifteen years working in a variety of public-school administrative roles. The researcher began his career as a middle school

math teacher for three years and then transitioned to a high school as a math teacher for four additional years. The researcher then served as a dean of students for three years and then an assistant principal for three years before becoming a principal. For the past nine years, the researcher worked as a building-level principal at a suburban middle school for four years and the last five years as a high school principal in an affluent school district. All the researcher's experiences as an administrator had been in the same school district. In the researcher's time as a principal, he has witnessed the impact of open enrollment and inter-district transfer policies. As a part of the district's administrative team, efforts have been put in place to navigate the changes in open enrollment legislation in Indiana. The researcher's school district is now the top public school district in the state of Indiana in terms of the number of students transferring into the researcher's district. Coming into the research as an employee of a district who has benefited from open enrollment legislation, it will be necessary to disclose that the data is being collected with anonymity. The researcher works for a public school district that has received approximately 1600 incoming public transfer students which is currently the third highest in the state of Indiana when compared to all school types. The researcher will disclose any preconceived notions about what he believes the impact of open enrollment is having on the education system and reiterate to the research participants his role is to be impartial.

Context and Participants

Due to ongoing concerns with the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews were conducted virtually and recorded through Google Meet with superintendents. Meeting virtually with superintendents provided greater flexibility for the participant and the researcher to identify a mutually agreed upon time and avoid the need to travel. The nature of this study is qualitative so purposeful sampling was employed. According to Palinkas et al. (2015), purposeful sampling

allows for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest. As such, interviews took place with seven superintendents who have served in the role of superintendent for at least 10 years and have experienced open enrollment legislation and the related changes since the state of Indiana began to allow inter-district transfers. The rationale for selecting superintendents who have served in this capacity during this time is due to their firsthand knowledge of the direct impact that these policies have had on their current district or previous districts they worked in. Through the Indiana Association of Public School Superintendents (IAPSS) the researcher identified superintendents who met the established criteria. Each potential participant was contacted by email requesting their participation in the study. Attempts were made to select participants diverse in gender, age, race, and ethnicity. In addition, efforts were made to select superintendents of districts with varying demographic or geographic characteristics. Demographics and geographical distributions are discussed in the findings. Once participants were selected and agreed to participate, unique identifiers were recorded and tabulated for data analysis.

Ethical Consideration and Confidentiality

The researcher established a trusting relationship with each participant. Each participant was provided with the purpose of the study and the process for conducting interviews. To assure confidentiality for participants, each were assigned a number preceded by an S for superintendent for identification purposes in the study. Participants were identified as S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6 and S7. Comments from interviews do not contain names of individuals or include identifiable information that might enable the reader to easily identify the participant. Efforts were made to preserve confidentiality in the analysis and reporting of results.

Each participant was reminded that participation in the study was voluntary, and each participant could withdraw from the study at any point if they deemed it necessary. Participants were also informed of the developing findings based on the qualitative interview and were able to clarify any misinterpretations before the data were finalized. Once the final report was complete, the analysis of results and findings were made available to the participants.

Data Collection Procedures

The participants of this study consisted of superintendents representing school districts from across the state of Indiana. Data were collected through one-on-one interviews and discussions. An examination of the results outlines the perceptions and experiences for each superintendent that was interviewed on their perceptions of open enrollment and inter-district transfer policies. Participant responses were analyzed to determine an overarching set of meanings.

Participants in this study engaged in one-on-one, semi-structured interviews that were done virtually. Semi-structured interviews were chosen for this study as this process allowed the researcher greater flexibility in asking follow up questions that could provide a deeper response to predetermined questions. Semi-structured interviews offer a process that can gain a better understanding of the research question (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Semi-structured interviews would allow for a much deeper understanding of the perceptions and experiences of superintendents on open enrollment policies. The researcher probed for further explanation or clarification on any responses that are unclear.

Phenomenological inquiry as a methodology has been moving towards connecting research to forward looking stories (Rosiek, 2013; Starks & Brown, 2007). While this may not be a limitation of the study, findings could produce results as the researcher moves beyond lived

or present inquiries and more towards future possibilities for experience through the questions posed. This type of research could provide greater credibility or at least challenge the responsibilities of the researcher to produce findings that have long-term impact. Through this study, the researcher sought to identify significant statements, themes, and similar experiences that each participant describes.

Interviews

Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with each superintendent to accommodate their availability. The semi-structured interviews were recorded, through Google Meet, with the consent given of the participants and lasted around 60 minutes. Recordings of the interviews remained confidential and were deleted after transcription. All interviewees were asked to respond to the same open-ended prompts, but the researcher asked additional probing questions for clarification as needed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Interview data were kept in the researcher's personal possession on Purdue Box, a secure cloud-based file storage requiring dual-authorization and Purdue University credentials for access, to allow them to be analyzed. After each interview was concluded, transcriptions were created and stored on Purdue Box. Intelligent transcription was performed by transcribing every word and making interpretations to exclude pauses, status, and filler words. The researcher took detailed notes, paraphrased responses, and identified themes during data analysis. Participants were asked if they would be available for follow-up phone conversations, if clarification was needed on any responses given. Transcripts of the interviews were recorded and shared with each participant to ensure validity and accuracy in their responses. The researcher sought to determine significant statements, themes, and organized the responses according to important takeaways that each superintendent discusses related to their perceptions on the impact of open enrollment policy.

Establishing a positive interviewing environment was important. Cresswell (2003) warns the participants in qualitative research are not free of biases or preconceived ideas and should be considered. Advantages to qualitative research include the ability of participants to provide detailed information about their perspectives and allowing the researcher to have a degree of control over the line of questioning. Disadvantages include biases held by participants and the researcher as a result of their own experiences and how they view the world. Furthermore, not all participants are able to equally articulate their perceptions. Another disadvantage is that participants may be affected by the researcher's presence, by the idea of being interviewed, and by being a part of the study (Creswell, 2003). Seidman (1998) explained how this can be alleviated if the researcher makes an effort to build a healthy and comfortable relationship with each participant. Seidman stressed developing rapport between the researcher and the person being interviewed is a good thing, and also explained how developing good interviewing skills is important in this process. The researcher deliberately practiced good listening skills and was cognizant of maintaining a positive energy level throughout each interview.

Data Analysis Procedures

Johnson and Christensen (2020) describe the process of phenomenological research to make meaning and extract deeper understandings of how participants think about research topics. Participants were asked to reflect on their experiences as a superintendent during the open enrollment chapter occurring in public education in the state of Indiana. Semi-structured interviews provided data specific to each participant's response and allowed the researcher to look for themes related to stratification levels and the potential aftereffects of open enrollment policy from their perspective. The researcher transcribed the results and identified common themes that emerged with each superintendent's response. The researcher employed member

checking to increase trustworthiness in the analysis of responses. Each participant was provided with a response of the summary of the researcher's interpretation of the interview and an analysis of the derived themes from all the interviews.

Coding and Analysis

During data analysis, it is important to let the data tell the story and speak for itself. Creswell (2003) articulates the importance of organizing and analyzing qualitative data using coding strategies. The benefits of qualitative coding include increased validity, decreased bias, accurate representations of the participants and enhanced transparency (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). The researcher applied coding practices that allowed for future analysis, interpretation, and the development of significant findings (Merriam, 1998). The researcher began by labeling specific parts of the interview transcripts and categorizing the results. Coding data allows the researcher to be reflexive, critical, and rigorous with the findings as emerging themes and significant statements are formed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Emerson et al. (1995) concur that results should emerge from the data naturally and that there are not predetermined results identified by the researcher. Merriam & Tisdell also conclude that through inductive and deductive analysis, the researcher will also be able to reveal abstract concepts, categories and emerging patterns and interpret them into meaningful theories. Significant findings, statements and thematic consistencies from the data are presented and discussed in Chapter 4, followed by interpretation and discussion of the findings in Chapter 5. Three different types of coding were used either sequentially or as independent methods to transcribe the data: theoretical coding, open coding, and axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). The researcher will start by applying these coding strategies and then creating a narrative of findings by connecting the codes and theories grounded in data.

Theoretical coding

During theoretical coding, the researcher looks to integrate and refine categories to form a theory (Johnson & Christensen, 2020). The researcher used both inductive and deductive coding strategies to analyze participant responses. The researcher started with a set of codes based on the research questions and then allowed for inductive analysis through determining new codes as data were analyzed. The researcher started without any preconceived notions and allowed the narrative to help develop new theories, ideas, or concepts. The researcher reviewed categories and determined if meaningful relationships were present. The researcher looked for centralized themes of superintendents' perceptions of open enrollment policies over the last decade.

Open coding

Open coding allows the researcher to break down the data into discrete parts and allows the initial results to be loose and subject to change as further coding practices are applied (Maher et al., 2018). Throughout this process, the researcher collated all pieces of the data based on participants' responses into meaningful categories for comparison and analysis. Line-by-line analysis of the transcriptions allowed the researcher to compare and contrast superintendent's responses. Through the line-by-line analysis, the researcher categorized and color-coded specific words or phrases for each participant to develop common themes or concepts related to superintendent perceptions of open enrollment. Axial coding was performed next in the analysis of responses to refine themes and concepts into categories.

Axial Coding

The process of axial coding allowed the researcher to draw connections between the codes and organize the codes derived during the open coding process. Through axial coding, the researcher organized initial codes and grouped them into categories by combining several existing codes. Key concepts developed during open coding were brought back together to determine if relationships or commonalities exist.

Addressing Quality

Qualitative research needs to be sensitive to bias (Johnson & Christensen, 2020). The reliability of the findings will be a result of the process and methodology applied to collecting and analyzing the data. Establishing trustworthiness and understanding the limitations of this study will add credibility to its findings.

Trustworthiness

In a phenomenological study, the researcher will collect participant feedback (member checking) and practice researcher flexibility to help increase the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings. Data collected were based on the researcher's understanding and interpretation of interview data collected and were clear of preconceived thoughts and bias. Member checking allowed for credibility and consistency in the data analysis. The researcher identified themes based on the responses and had each participant review them for accuracy (Johnson & Christensen, 2020).

Limitations

Qualitative research involves several complexities that emerge during data collection and sampling design. These limitations need to be considered in an attempt to eliminate sample bias (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). According to Tuckett (2004), establishing a purposeful sample will contribute to increased rigor in the research process and will need to be examined throughout the study to ensure researcher credibility. In addition, qualitative research is typically only generalizable within the scope of research and may be limited in its application to additional sample populations. According to Caine et al. (2019), the intention of phenomenological inquiry is not to establish a single truth which could lead to methodological issues in the data collection and analysis process. The process of using phenomenological inquiry allowed for these superintendents to describe their experiences navigating tough political issues and allowed these narratives to underpin a story that shaped the development of ideas (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Ultimately, this qualitative research provided a contextual understanding of a unique sample set and analyzed how school superintendents navigated policy decision making and how they made meaning of their role during this collaborative process.

Summary

Chapter three outlined the methodology, procedures of data collection, participants, data collection and analysis techniques. Through the phenomenology framework and semi-structured interviews, the experiences of seven superintendents who have served in this role since 2008 were examined to determine common themes and potential aftereffects related to their perceptions of school choice policy in Indiana. Participants were selected based on specific criteria set forth for the study. Coding was used to analyze the data collected.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate superintendent's perceptions about the impact of inter-district and open enrollment transfer policies in the state of Indiana. The research for this qualitative study was collected in May of 2022 by conducting individual semi-structured interviews with participants who have served as superintendents for more than ten years. The findings from this study provide additional insight into how superintendents perceive how open enrollment policies are shaping the landscape of K-12 education in the state of Indiana.

Participants were asked to reflect on the impact open enrollment policies are having on their school, schools in their region and schools throughout the state. Specifically, participants reflected on the impact open enrollment has had related to their school district's mission and vision, school improvement plan or initiatives, partnership with parents and community members, and demographics. Questions were not shared with participants in advance to assist with an unbiased response from each participant and prevent contrived responses. Four themes emerged from the data. These include (1) enrollment and financial instability, (2) marking and program advancement, (3) meeting student needs, and (4) increased diversity. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. After interviews were conducted, the researcher transcribed the recordings. The transcribed recordings were then shared with each participant to confirm their accuracy. Each superintendent confirmed that the transcripts were correct and a true representation of the interview.

Participants

The details of this study were shared with a representative from the Indiana Association of Public School Superintendents (IAPSS) who emailed every superintendent in the state of Indiana with the details of this study and the established criteria for participation. Seven superintendents responded and all seven participated in the study representing school districts in north central Indiana, central Indiana, and east central Indiana. All seven participants were male. To assure confidentiality and anonymity for participants, each participant was assigned a number preceded by an S for superintendent for identification purposes in the study. Participants were identified as S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6 and S7. Table 1 provides background information on the participants.

Table 1. Participant Information

Participant	Total Years as Superintendent	Served in Multiple School Districts	Total Years at Current School	School District Enrollment
S1	10	Yes	1	3431
S2	16	Yes	9	2291
S3	11	No	11	463
S4	14	Yes	5	2695
S5	12	No	12	16,473
S6	13	Yes	1	8443
S7	17	Yes	8	2455

The average number of years of experience for the seven participants was thirteen years in the state of Indiana. All the participants currently serve in school districts that accept transfer students with six out of seven of the school districts benefiting from open enrollment legislation with a positive net public transfer total for the fall of the 2021-2022 school year. Spring data for

the 2021-2022 school year was not available at the time of these interviews. Table 2 provides

fall membership count data for the school districts in which each superintendent serves.

Table 2. Participant Fall Membership Count 2021-2022

District	State Funded Students with Legal Settlement	Resident Enrollee	Public Transfers In	Public Transfers: Out	Net Public Transfers	Non-Public Choice Scholarship Transfer Out	Net Public and Choice Scholarship Transfers
S1	3342	2901	375	347	28	94	-66
S2	1998	1880	324	90	234	28	206
S3	440	365	114	74	40	1	39
S4	2358	2083	613	238	375	37	338
S5	16178	14899	1436	744	692	535	157
S6	9054	8659	78	299	-221	96	-317
S7	2554	2334	208	180	28	40	-12

Adapted from Indiana Department of Education Fall 2021-2022 Public Corporation Transfer Report
(2022). https://www.in.gov/doe/it/data-center-and-reports/

Coding for Superintendent Interviews

Each interview was completed virtually and recorded digitally. Otter Voice Real-Time

Transcription Software was used to transcribe the data. After each interview, transcripts were

reviewed and cross-checked against the audio recording. Each transcript was then shared with

individual participants for member checks and to ensure accuracy of each script. The researcher

started the process of coding by using open coding strategies to begin organizing and analyzing

participant responses. This process allowed the researcher to develop emerging themes through a

reflexive and rigorous analysis of the data. The researcher read through each transcript multiple

times and began the process of highlighting meaningful responses common between each

participant and developed centralized themes. This analysis allowed the researcher to draw

connections between the open coding results and organize them based on the relationships

between the codes. NVivo12 qualitative software was used to upload the transcripts during data analysis and code evidence that emerged during the open and axial coding process.

Research Question

The research question guiding this study was to explore how Indiana superintendents perceive the effects of school choice and open enrollment. Seven interview items were created to help investigate this research question in addition to several other probing questions if the initial interview items did not produce a rich data response. Appendix B outlines the research items. Themes developed were based on an analysis of participant responses. To enrich this qualitative study, direct quotes and salient responses were used to support these themes. The following themes emerged regarding how superintendents perceive open enrollment is impacting their school districts and school districts throughout the state of Indiana.

Enrollment and Financial Instability

The data indicated enrollment and financial instability were important factors for Indiana school superintendents to consider as they evaluate open enrollment policy and decision making in their school district. Participants in this study all spoke to the reality of open enrollment helping support or sustain the financial goals of the school district by increasing their enrollment. Six out of seven of the superintendents work in school districts with a positive net public transfer total. Public net transfer totals are calculated by subtracting the sum of the public transfer outgoing and transfer students from the resident enrollee's total. Table 2 describes the total number of students with legal settlement in each school district and the total number of students participating in the Indiana Choice Scholarship program. Table 2 indicates that four out of the seven school districts still have a positive net transfer total after factoring in the total number of

students who participate in the scholarship program. The following excerpt from the interviews provides a snapshot of what each superintendent was thinking and the most salient response.

Salient Response:

Superintendent S4:

For example, for my colleague in a neighboring school district, open enrollment for them has been a very different kind of equation. And I don't know how many students they lose, but it's thousands. From a funding and staffing capacity issue, there are some real challenges there on the other side, as long as you have the right to set caps and kind of control the flow of students in so that you're not overwhelmed with enrollment growth…We have the highest salary schedule for teachers and our district has one of the highest in the state. And that honestly is attributable to the fact that the district is growing, and we've been able to manage that growth largely within our physical space that we have and have set some targets…in terms of a financial sense, but to manage your budget in such a way that you're just creating the opportunities that you need with the stream of enrollment. And so definitely in terms of size, this would be a district just above two thousand if it weren't for open enrollment and now, we are at two thousand seven hundred students, and that means something very different, in terms of what type of curriculum you can offer, and retaining teachers' salaries, all those kinds of things. And so, from my perspective, it's positive…Our district, for lots of factors, has been a winner because of open enrollment.

Table 3 provides a summary of each participant's perspective.

Table 3. Superintendent Commentary on Financial Stability

Theme #1: Enrollment and Financial Instability	
Superintendent: S1	In my previous district, our enrollment was decreasing. The actual number of kids that were within the school district would have dwindled down to about 1,000. However, by having transfers, we were able to maintain about 1,200 and we were just under 1,300 when I left. We were fairly aggressive about stealing kids from the south side of a nearby school district. We put basically two and a half buses that went up there. We had a wait list for several more who came to us. They drove down themselves. So, we were a little bit more aggressive there. We did some marketing to let people know that we were open to maintaining around 1,300 kids.
Superintendent: S2	It's really helped us to keep a static enrollment…We did set capacity limits at every grade level. We will not add teachers to accept transfers. Typically, what we do is in the early spring and will staff for the following upcoming school year. We'll base that on the demographic study.

Table 3. continued

Superintendent: S3	It's just been frustrating that you're competing every year to stay afloat. And what we do is we educate kids…from my standpoint, look at money. We have to look and see what we have available and what we can offer from an academic standpoint. Of course, larger school districts are going to be able to offer a lot more things than we can but with the collaborative we have with other school districts...we can offer a very similar academic program…The funding kind of lags behind right there and then if they stay with you, or they don't stay with you, these are all the factors that go into open enrollment. We have to count days. You have a count day, so I literally gave our teachers a pay raise based upon our financial funding in September…then we have a second count day. We lost six kids which was $24,000 and from the pay raise that I just did in September, and February rolls around again and now I'm getting deducted for those kids now…In a small school like ours, you take six kids out of the mix…six times $6,500 is close to a teacher's salary.
Superintendent: S5	I think most districts have realized that this is a necessity and important to their financial stability…I don't believe we have a choice on whether or not we allow out of district enrollment if we're going to continue to operate. This has been one of the first years in just a handful of years where we've actually been on the positive side of transfer students…So this past year, even though our enrollment has been down due to the pandemic, we saw a positive increase into our district from out of districts versus the students who transferred out of our district…so if I did not accept out of district students, and I still had, in this case about 1200 students who are transferring to another school in the state of Indiana, that is a $700,000 - $800,000 shift in my revenue and so allowing students to come in obviously offsets the students that are leaving.
Superintendent: S6	When I would talk to different stakeholders, I would tell them "If I eliminate these 1,000 transfer kids, I'm willing to do that. But you realize we're going to eliminate every elective in our three elementary schools and middle schools because we can't afford it." ...I had to make sure that my association leadership and key teachers understood why we took transfer kids. It was the money to fund other programs for all kids in the school district.
Superintendent: S7	I will tell you when I was at my previous school district, we received all that we could because with students came revenue, so that helped us to balance our books and fill our classrooms. But again, as communities evolve, as you know, the amount of transfer students that we can accept or choose to accept is going to change with that…I would say in both districts I have been in, open enrollment has allowed us to maintain student enrollment more consistently, and fill out some classrooms where perhaps we would have had lower enrollment or lower revenue as a result of that in the past.

Marketing and Program Advancement

The study participants emphasized the importance of creating plans to better market their school corporations that were not needed prior to school choice legislation. Study participants spoke specifically about how their school district is marketing their school district's success and advertising to help attract nonresident students to sustain or improve the enrollment and programming of their schools. Study participants also spoke about how program improvement is a result of increased enrollment which allows school districts to offer additional programming that was not possible before. The following excerpt from the interviews provides the most notable response.

Salient Response:

Superintendent S5:

Open enrollment has caused us over the last several years to truly market and rebrand what we do because we have to be that school of choice for other students as well as our students who live within our own districts. We've had to do a lot more in the marketing space. We are focused on where our footprint is on the west side of X county and the east side Y county, which is predominantly where your children are either coming from. We have a greater presence in those spaces as well without being as blatant as putting a billboard up in their district which we used to do. We need to be more creative, to be visible or to have our school district visible in those spaces, and to have it visible in a positive light. I often say to ourselves that about 75% of our community does not have children in our schools and what they might see at dismissal was our kids running all over the place and running across the street and being silly, is what they perceive what's happening inside of our schoolhouses. How do we get that message out to them? And how do we help our families who are out of district families when they are at the barbecue in their neighborhoods, to have a positive outlook and a positive conversation about the school district and I say the same thing about our staff. We only have about 25% of our teachers who live in our district. That means 75% of our teachers are out and about living in other districts and working with other parents in their neighborhood. So, what is their response? What is their elevator speech… we work hard with our teachers to also make sure that they're communicating a positive message about their school when their neighbors are asking about our school district.

Table 4 provides a snapshot of each participant's perspective.

Table 4. Superintendent Commentary on Marketing and Program Advancement

Theme #2: Marketing and Program Advancement	
Superintendent: S1	We were a little bit more aggressive there [marketing]. We did some marketing to let people know that we were open…We're actually working with the city on a marketing scheme for all of us for businesses within the community…so we are trying to be really good at as many things as you possibly can be good at, because that's the true marketing for a school…you can also do that [marketing] by running campaigns and we're still doing that kind of thing as well…We've really worked hard with Career and Technical Education (CTE) programming here, we're trying to put together a career center. We need to attack that and get a better program.
Superintendent: S2	I think it has also made us careful to not compete with the nearby school district but we're also very purposeful about making sure that we are on par with them. Facility wise it's really helped us push through some of our facility enhancements because we don't want to say that our district has nicer buildings than nearby school districts, but we do want to make sure that people understand that they're as good as those school districts and the same academic wise.
Superintendent: S3	We are going out and traveling, to get students to come to our district and we're becoming marketing agents trying to sell ourselves and trying to sell our school why we are the best…we've had to think outside the box a little bit and look at trying to market our school a little bit, you know, but some folks have distinct advantages over us and other folks may have an advantage because of housing because of locations to certain geographic places within this state…we started sending out flyers and well and having someone create the flyer...it goes back to marketing.
Superintendent: S4	Funding follows the child gives you the opportunity to create more programs with more students…and one of the things I would say is we live in a very consumer driven culture…think about how you choose your phone plan or what you choose to watch on television, and you can do that on demand and how people go to church or choose their faith or choose what grocery store to go to or anything. It's all very consumer driven. And so, a system that says you're bound by these hard geographic lines is really probably archaic. It's archaic to say, I know you own property over here, but you can't come here, and the legislature has been chipping away at that for quite a while before they finally threw in the towel…then it also creates just

Table 4 continued

	the literal financial capital and human capital to try to extend programs. Philosophically, I think what people in this community expect is lots of opportunities to do lots of different things. And so, we have Project Lead the Way K through 12. We have a comprehensive music program K through 12. We have all those things that we would expect kind of a high-quality district offer. And again, that's because the district is growing. We have the funding to be able to do that and open enrollment helps with these goals.
Superintendent: S6	I think it [open enrollment] is a great opportunity to expand the marketing and spread the great word about what's going on in your district…And I just think it's marketing, especially when you have to have won a referendum. Those people can't vote in the referendum extended outside of the district, but they just they're out there talking about all the great things the school district is doing...we have kids that come from X township and other districts that want to come for academic programs, and then they go back and tell the people what we got…I think what's happened is that it allows all the good things we're doing…I had to make sure that my association leadership and key teachers understood why we took transfer kids. It was the money to fund other programs for all kids in the school district…I think we're already striving for greatness. I think as the financial resources improve, we are going to have more academic programs, which then improve.
Superintendent: S7	Did not speak directly to marketing or program advancement

Meeting Student Needs

The evidence is this study suggests the importance of being data informed and responsive to the needs of the student population to improve schools. In some cases, participants indicated that their school improvement plans have not changed while in other cases, school improvement plans have had to shift significantly due to increased numbers of students with individualized education plans (IEPs), traditionally marginalized students or students on free and reduced lunch. Each participant indicated with a shift in their student population, there was an increase in individualized needs. The data also shows participants believe in most cases classroom instruction is not improving but teachers are having to work differently due to the changes in the

student population. In some cases, students who participate in open enrollment are doing so for non-academic reasons involving athletics or school size. The following excerpt displays the most salient response.

Salient Response:

Superintendent S6:

I think it really comes down to your goals and your strategies, I think it's a type of transfer kid you have...So at my previous school district, we were bringing in more kids in poverty, so our allocation of resources and counselors and things like that changed because we had more kids with different needs...But I think by bringing in transfer kids, you have more resources to offer more programs for all kids.

Table 5 provides a snapshot of each participant's perspective.

Table 5. Superintendent Commentary on Meeting Student Needs

Theme #3: Meeting Student Needs	
Superintendent: S1	Overall, that we can have the flexibility to have this kind of competition to make us better…I think that you should have to compete for kids, and I think that really makes you take a harder look at everything. You know, it really makes you get organized, and get a plan and try to do what's right by kids…So you know that we feel like there's a group of kids that are just missed, and we need to attack that and get a better program for them to get out and then stay in our community because you know, you're going have those college kids that everybody's going to have right and they're going to go on to college. Those kids tend to not come back as much.
Superintendent: S2	It goes back to keeping up with the Joneses for us…We really want to be on par with the rest of them in the county with our data and it is not and a lot of that has to do with the makeup of our communities…We are challenged to keep up with that data…Our best and brightest kids can compete with anybody anywhere…But we do have kids that are really pushing to hit the pass line or whatever line you have. It's really a twofold type of school improvement. We have to make sure that we're meeting the needs of every single kid that crosses our threshold. Some of our kids need more help than others, but some of our kids plan to go and become astronauts. And so we have to make sure we're providing that for them.

Table 5 continued

Superintendent: S3	I don't really see much of an impact on curriculum and instruction…From a school improvement standpoint, we also have children that come to us, woefully behind…and so we're playing catch up from the moment they walk in, because they've been moved. You know, for example, I went to the same elementary school, my entire kindergarten through sixth grade…That stability was remarkable. I never changed school districts at all. But open enrollment, just think about moving in your house, and all the things that you have to do when you move from one place to think about a child. Our school improvement plan has definitely had to modify and address the needs of children that come to us. Our special education count is up.
Superintendent: S4	I would say that just in terms of our poverty rate, that it's probably increased because of our transfer status. And so, what I think that forces us to do is to be more intentional about how we use data in the district. And, again, the previous district I was in was right at 50% free and reduced lunch and when I came here, the number was about 30%... Then you can't help but be successful as a teacher if you're serving kids like that. So, I think bringing in kids maybe who come from more challenging homes and that's not everybody, and again, I'm generalizing but I think that sometimes requires a little bit more intentional skill and professional practice, which is good, and everybody benefits from that. I think it's been good for us to think about how we are going to address the needs of all learners on the continuum.
Superintendent: S5	I would argue that school improvement hasn't changed because of open enrollment…Our school improvement efforts are based on our data and our focus has been based on what we believe is going to help our students to gain the most success and the most academic and social emotional success…Because of our mobility, which in a given year could be 30% to 35% of our children…we just have to be flexible and nimble and meet kids where they are.
Superintendent: S7	We've seen students coming in for academic reasons, but we also see them coming in for special programming such as special education needs. We've seen them coming in for athletic and extracurricular wants and desires, looking for that smaller school setting. In our case, we would get a lot of transfer students from X district. We would see students coming to us for that smaller school setting, and kids were able to participate in other extracurriculars they may not be able to in a larger high school setting. We've seen students coming from schools to our west that are smaller, looking for more programming and more diversity of academic offerings that we can offer them because we're a little bit larger school. I think it helped make us a little bit more competitive in some areas academically and extracurricularly.

Increased Diversity

All but one of the research participants in this study discussed the positive impact of open enrollment helping their school district become more diverse racially and socioeconomically. In addition, research participants discussed the positive outcomes of a more diverse student population leading to positive social outcomes and increased culture awareness among staff and students. The following excerpt displays the most salient response.

Salient Response:

Superintendent S6:

I think it's provided the opportunity to create some diversity. Our district has more minority students now than we ever have had and that's good for kids. I think those things have been really good, so I think it helps schools create a more diverse and a more worldly environment by bringing transfer kids in both from a socioeconomic standpoint and minority standpoint. In a way and again, it's not always just kids from poverty, that transfer. We had salutatorians and valedictorians, great athletes that went to a nearby district and transferred to our school… And, you know, I just think it gives you a much more diverse student population from all aspects. I think the other thing is that for our kids that grew up in our school district, and that's all they know, when they have other kids that come to the district, they become friends and they go to their houses and they meet their family, I think it expands the peer relationships. I think it just gives them a worldview outside where they are right now.

Table 6 provides a snapshot of each participant's perspective.

Table 6. Superintendent Commentary on Diversity

Theme #4: Increased Diversity	
Superintendent: S1	We didn't have a lot of different races when I first got there [previous school district]. So, I think there was a little bit more of that as time went on because we drew lots of kids from a nearby urban school district. I think we had a good mix from that area...I think we did take a few more Hispanic and African American students…I thought it made us a little bit more unique, more well-rounded.

Table 6 continued

Superintendent: S2	I'd say overall, it's been a positive for us. It has brought different kinds of students here that maybe we wouldn't traditionally serve…but we don't get a lot of diverse transfer students and I think that probably is because they don't think that our district is very diverse…In fact, our transfers make us better in terms of how we look at this centralized data tests, but they don't make as much more diverse. In fact, I can think of very few of our transfer students that would qualify as diverse.
Superintendent: S3	I think it makes us a bit and has made us a bit more vibrant…We have to look at that in terms of our demographics and diversity and make sure that we can address the diversity that not only that growth brings by accepting nonresident students…I will tell you this year we saw a significant jump for us in our demographics, traditionally, in terms of race and ethnicity. We have been in that 95% White Caucasian segment for as far as our students with small percentages for Black, Hispanic, Pacific Islander other ethnic groups represented. This year, we actually dropped just below 90% In terms of white Caucasian students… we're seeing increases in all areas in Asian, Hispanic, Black, biracial, all those areas have grown for us slightly.
Superintendent: S4	I think honestly, if you went back and looked at the cultural makeup of the socioeconomic status (SES) of our school district, those things have changed significantly and a lot of that is driven by the transfer status…I certainly think for the receiving districts, it's actually diversified us and I know that is a concern that is out there around the choice discussion is resegregation and some of that kind of stuff. It's definitely been the opposite here. Where we would have, I think this district is you can check but around 83% White, non-Hispanic and by the standards of our area, especially a non-urban district, we would be the most diverse I think, and that is almost entirely driven by open enrollment and the transfer students, we definitely have some students of color that are residents, but to get to that percentage, it's because of transfer numbers.
Superintendent: S5	Open enrollment happened at the same time as we were going through desegregation. So, for me to say that open enrollment has changed our demographics, I would not be able to. I would not be able to definitively say that it's had any impact, because I believe our desegregation efforts, and the desegregation order that we had created the greatest impact on our shifting demographics.
Superintendent: S7	We accept all kinds of kids. I mean, we are diverse, probably more diverse than we've ever been this year. We accept all kinds of kids from every walk of life and with open arms. And so, our culture here at our school has definitely diversified and we're very pleased with that…I will tell you that I definitely think it's helped our demographics. We are predominantly Caucasian. Free and reduced lunch is about 50% Caucasian area, so to speak

Table 6 continued

	and open enrollment has definitely given us an opportunity to bring other diverse groups with Hispanic and African American students…I know we had a couple kids that moved in from another area and they have been really great. They have been really positive influences to other students in our school not only from a social aspect, but for cultural aspects to be able to see kids that have lived a different life.

Other Effects

Research participants also provided other data points during the interviews that are worthy of additional discussion. First, each participant indicated that the mission and vision of their school district has not changed as a result of open enrollment legislation. Three participants indicated that their district was starting the process of reviewing their stated vision and mission statement but indicated that the process was not a result of open enrollment. Second, a few participants indicated that open enrollment patterns could likely be tied to geographical locations throughout the state of Indiana. School districts that border urban geographical areas have the potential to benefit from transient student populations in urban areas. Third, two study participants indicated that open enrollment is creating a system that discourages collaboration and cooperation between school districts. School districts are in competition with each other and as a result, school districts do not want to appear they are less successful than another because of the goal to attract students with and without legal settlement in their school district. Both participants shared that they have seen less of a cooperative environment since open enrollment began. Lastly, a few participants indicated that families who are choosing to participate in open enrollment are engaged in the educational process of their children. The following excerpts display the most salient response regarding inter-district collaboration and family engagement respectively.

Salient Response:

Superintendent S5:

In general, it has broken down the collaboration and cooperation between districts, because everybody is in competition with everybody else. While we want districts to be successful, we don't want them to appear to be more successful than our own, or more desirable than our own. We want those students to attend our schools whether they have legal settlement or not. I believe that we have seen less of a collaborative and cooperative environment since we began open enrollment.

Salient Response:

Superintendent S6:

I would argue that those students [transfer students] who come from out of district have more engaged families than some that live within the district because they have made that choice and because they are choosing to transport their children to a school outside of where they're paying taxes outside of where their home is… And by making that choice, they've chosen to be more engaged in their children's education. I think it's definitely had an impact…I think it is a great opportunity to expand the marketing and spread the great word about what's going on in your district. I use my previous school district as an example. When you look at an urban school, where we have an agriculture program, we build a brand new Science Academy wing and we teach animal science, plant science, food science, and offer the supervised agriculture experience (SAE) that really attracts kids. So, we have kids that come from other districts and other districts that want to come for academic programs, and then they go back and tell the people what we have. I think it's a socio-economic thing. I tell people, I've got 1000 transfer kids and the majority have to be dropped off. They stop at the speedway, the little grocery store. I guarantee they bought a lot of gas and a lot of pizza. So, I think transfer kids actually helped the socio economics of your community…I think there's some really good economic reasons to do it.

Summary

A thorough review of the data collected as a result of open and axial coding of participant responses resulted in four themes. These include (1) enrollment and financial instability, (2) marking and program advancement, (3) meeting student needs, and (4) increased diversity. Other issues of significance include the possibility of a decrease in inter-district collaboration, positive

family engagement of transfer students and the impact of geographical location on open enrollment trends throughout the state. Chapter 5 includes a discussion of these findings, assertions, limitations of this study and recommendations for future studies and practice.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Legislation surrounding open enrollment policy enacted in 2008 in Indiana has provided greater access to school choice for families in Indiana (Public Law 146, 2008). This policy has opened the doors for school corporations to focus on increasing school enrollment numbers due to the financial benefits of additional students. Parents also see a perceived benefit to this level of choice because they can choose a school they feel will best meet the needs of their student (Trujillo, 2018). Shifts in student enrollment can impact school districts positively and/or negatively and school superintendents need to be cognizant of these patterns and their related outcomes. Understanding how open enrollment is playing out in school districts throughout the state can provide valuable insight into whether this policy is meeting the state's goal of providing equitable access to educational opportunities for Indiana's students.

This chapter comprises an overview of the study and examines the findings and implications of this qualitative study. Included in this chapter is a review of the study's purpose, design, and research question. The discussion will include a summary of the results, relevant literature connected to the findings, limitations, and recommendations for future research to further explore the impact open enrollment policy is having on school districts in Indiana.

Study Design

Phenomenological inquiry was utilized to explore the perceptions, experience, and views of school superintendents on the impact open enrollment policy is having on their school district and school districts throughout the state of Indiana. Seven veteran Indiana superintendents participated in this study, each of whom have been working in the role of superintendent since

2010 and have lived through and experienced the changes in school choice legislation. Each superintendent was invited to participate voluntarily, and all seven superintendents participated in a semi-structured interview.

Interviews were conducted online via Google meet. Superintendents varied in their years of experience as superintendent and the size of the school district they currently serve. Each superintendent detailed their experiences using seven interview items. The interviews were digitally recorded to ensure accuracy for transcription and analysis. Open and axial coding was conducted to develop common themes. Lastly, each participant confirmed the accuracy of the transcripts.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the participant's experiences with open enrollment in the state of Indiana. Investigating the research question will help better understand how superintendents perceive the effects open enrollment is having on school districts. The following question served as the focus of this study.

1. How do Indiana superintendents perceive the effects of school choice and open enrollment?

Discussion of Findings and Implications

The research question for this study examined how superintendents perceive the effects of school choice and open enrollment. Four themes emerged from the data. These include (1) enrollment and financial stability, (2) marking and program advancement, (3) meeting student needs, and (4) increased diversity. The findings provide a unique perspective from seven

practicing superintendents and their experiences with open enrollment policy. The researcher hopes that current and future superintendents will continue to monitor and study the impacts of school choice legislation and the impact enrollment trends are having throughout the state. According to Holme and Finnigan (2015), the debate over issues of equity and equality continues as the expansion of school choice legislation in America permeates policy discussion. This is also true in Indiana as more students continue to participate in school choice programs. This study also aims to help inform school superintendents with important takeaways to consider as they evaluate school choice policy within the local context.

By considering these findings, the researcher hopes that local school boards and district administration will be proactive with understanding proposed open enrollment policies and their related impacts locally and regionally. These results may lead school leadership to update policy to better meet the needs of the local and surrounding school community.

Theme 1: Enrollment and Financial Instability

Student enrollment has always been a key factor when it comes to school funding in the state of Indiana. A century and a half of policy dialogue on this topic has resulted in our current funding model and school choice policies (Indiana Code 20-3.1-6.1-3, Michael et al., 2009). Student funding follows the student and Indiana school choice policy has opened the door for school districts to accept students who do not live in their home district. In addition, Indiana Choice Scholarships have added another layer of choice that provides vouchers for students to attend non-public schools, essentially creating a free-market environment for school choice in Indiana (Austin et al., 2019). However, the original intent of school choice and open enrollment options was to provide students an avenue to escape failing schools but has essentially turned into more choice for families (Malin & Mensa-Bonsu, 2020). Given the uncertainty school

choice brings, participants in this study expressed concern with the impact student enrollment has on school district finances.

The participants in this study each spoke to the importance overall student enrollment has on the district's budget and ability to offer programming for students. S3 reported, "It's just been frustrating that you're competing every year to stay afloat, and S1 shared "In my previous district, our enrollment was decreasing. The actual number of kids that were within the school district would have dwindled down to about 1,000. However, by having transfers, we were able to maintain about 1,200 and we were just under 1,300 when I left. We were fairly aggressive about stealing kids from the south side of a nearby school district." These superintendents quickly realized that it is a necessity to allow open enrollment transfers into their district if their school district is lucky to benefit from open enrollment. In addition, S5 shared "I don't believe we have a choice on whether or not we allow out of district enrollment if we're going to continue to operate." These responses highlight the importance superintendents place on increasing enrollment numbers to increase school budgets. However, there has to be winners and losers as a result of this school choice model. Fortunately for the participants of this study, six out of the seven superintendents work in school corporations benefiting from open enrollment policy and may contribute to why they were interested in participating in this study. School districts who are losing students are being forced to make staffing and program cuts to stay within budget which creates challenging working conditions between these superintendents and community stakeholders and school work groups. Before school choice legislation, current negatively impacted districts would not have had these financial concerns due to decreased variability in their school enrollment numbers.

Theme 2: Marketing and Program Advancement

School districts must find a way to creatively market themselves in an environment that is more competitive than ever before. There are several options for parents to consider when deciding on the schooling option for their child in the state of Indiana including: public schools, private schools, charter schools, magnet schools, Indiana Choice Scholarship vouchers and open enrollment options (Linkow, 2011). School districts are finding ways to create a competitive advantage that clearly advertises the unique offerings their schools can offer that sets them apart from local competitors. In addition, successful marketing can ensure that community stakeholders understand the vision and direction of the district, helps establish a reputation within the community and creates a creative edge that attracts families and increases financial resources. School districts that do not invest in marketing strategies can soon find themselves responding to failed measures that limit student enrollment and the ability to improve programs and facilities (National School Public Relations Association, n.d.).

The superintendents interviewed each spoke to the importance of focusing on marketing measures that attract and retain students. These measures were described as strategies to increase revenue that will help fund district initiatives, provide raises for school staff, and help add additional academic programs for schools to contribute to the unique offerings of each school or school corporation. S6 stated, "When I would talk to different stakeholders, I would tell them if I eliminate these 1,000 transfer kids, I'm willing to do that. But you realize we're going to eliminate every elective in our three elementary schools and middle schools because we can't afford it. I had to make sure that my association leadership and key teachers understood why we took transfer kids. It was the money to fund other programs for all kids in the school district." And S5 states this in a different way: "Open enrollment has caused us over the last several years to truly market and rebrand what we do because we have to be that school of choice for other

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students as well as our students who live within our own districts." These responses tell the story that marketing is now more important than ever when it comes to open enrollment and program advancement. Participants in this study and other school districts in Indiana now rely on funding from out-of-district students to help maintain existing programs and in some cases rely on this funding to add academic opportunities for students. However, other districts are losing students and as a result, they are needing to make decisions to eliminate programs or look at consolidating schools in an effort to maximize current funding levels. The superintendent must be able to navigate these realities within their local context and school choice trends.

Theme 3: Meeting Student Needs

Educational reform and school improvement initiatives continue to be a priority during state and federal policy dialogue. School choice has been and will most likely continue to be one strategy to address reform efforts to provide improved educational experiences and outcomes for Indiana students. School districts must find ways to advance student achievement in their school districts while at the same time working through the challenges presented by school choice and the possibilities of experiencing growth or decline in student enrollment as a result of more school choice options.

Superintendents in this study each discussed the shift in the demographics of their student population as a result of open enrollment and the importance of responding to these specific student needs. While each superintendent indicated their district's vision, mission and school improvement goals have not shifted, the strategies to achieve their desired goals have. Increases in the number of students with IEPs and/or on free and reduced lunch have required intentionality with the allocation of resources. S6 shared, "So at my previous school district, we were bringing in more kids in poverty, so our allocation of resources and counselors and things

like that changed because we had more kids with different needs." S3 illustrates this idea as well, "From a school improvement standpoint, we also have children that come to us, woefully behind…and so we're playing catch up from the moment they walk in, because they've been moved…Our school improvement plan has definitely had to modify and address the needs of children that come to us. And our special education count is up." S4 elaborates further, "I would say that just in terms of our poverty rate, that it's probably increased because of our transfer status. And so, what I think that forces us to do is to be more intentional about how we use data in the district…So I think bringing in kids maybe who come from more challenging homes and that's not everybody, and again, I'm generalizing but I think that sometimes requires a little bit more intentional skill and professional practice, which is good, and everybody benefits from that. I think it's been good for us to think about how we are going to address the needs of all learners on the continuum." These superintendent responses and the trends in the number of students who need additional support might suggest that other schools are seeing a decrease in certain demographic groups.

Superintendents also indicated that students are transferring for non-academic reasons as well. According to S7, "we've seen students coming in for academic reasons, but we also see them coming in for athletic and extracurricular wants and desires or looking for that smaller school setting". Participants also shared that the reasons students move to a different school district can include finding a school that is perceived to be a better environment and meets the social and emotional needs of the child. Research on school mobility and the ties to social networks and academics reports interesting results. While transfer students report fewer friends and fail more classes, they also report increased positive relationships with their teachers after switching schools (Langenkamp, 2016). Previous research also points to studies that show that

students who transfer are less engaged and at risk of dropping out (Gasper et al., 2012). How open enrollment school choice policy in Indiana is impacting participating students socially and academically is unknown but this policy will continue to incentivize educational opportunity for Indiana students.

Theme 4: Increased Diversity

Differences in ethnicity, academic ability, socioeconomic status, religion, gender and background contribute to a diverse school setting. The benefits of Indiana students attending schools that are diverse in multiple areas help students prepare to become global citizens who are culturally responsive. Indiana among other states have established efforts to create educational opportunities and experiences that eliminate systemic barriers and provide equitable learning opportunities for all students. School choice and open enrollment is a factor that impacts the diversity present inside Indiana schools and should be understood as Indiana schools interpret the results of open enrollment on improving learning outcomes for students.

Superintendents in this study all reported a general sense of increased diversity among different demographic groups. S6 stated, "I think it's provided the opportunity to create some diversity. Our district has more minority students now than we ever have had and that's good for kids…I just think it gives you a much more diverse student population from all aspects. I think the other thing is that for our kids that grew up in our school district, and that's all they know, when they have other kids that come to the district, they become friends and they go to their houses and they meet their family, I think it expands the peer relationships. I think it just gives them a worldview outside where they are right now." S4 also shared "I think honestly, if you went back and looked at the cultural makeup of the socioeconomic status (SES) of our school

district, those things have changed significantly and a lot of that is driven by the transfer status…I certainly think for the receiving districts, it's actually diversified us."

Quantitative data supports this finding. A comparison of each school district's demographic data between 2010 and 2022 is located in Table 7. The percentages of White students decreased at each school over that time ranging from a 4% decrease for S2 to a 24% decrease for S5 and all but one of the school districts saw an increase in the percentage of Black students. Other demographic groups show similar results. These results contradict demographic trends for other school choice pathways. For example, fewer Black students and more White students participated in Indiana's Choice Scholarship program over a ten-year period starting in 2011 (Indiana Department of Education, 2021). These results may suggest that the differences are a result of traditionally marginalized students now participating in open enrollment opportunities instead. Understanding the potential for demographic segregation will continue to be an important policy topic for Indiana legislators as they evaluate the outcomes of school choice policy. While this research supports a trend that some schools are seeing increases in diversity amongst their student population, it will be important to expand this type of research across all school choice models to get a more holistic view of demographic trends across the state and geographical regions.

Table 7. School District Demographic Data: 2010 and 2022

District	American Indian %	Asian or Pacific Islander %	Black %	Hispanic %	Multiracial %	White %	Free and Reduced %
S1: 2010	0.17%	0.34%	0.88%	15.58%	4.78%	78.25%	50.48%
S1: 2022	0.06%	0.77%	0.65%	28.82%	2.92%	66.78%	52.40%
S2: 2010	0.26%	0.26%	0.52%	0.83%	2.13%	96.00%	29.29%
S2: 2022	0.17%	0.30%	0.87%	3.48%	2.61%	92.57%	27.54%
S3: 2010	0.00%	0.00%	0.17%	1.36%	2.21%	96.26%	42.86%
S3: 2022	0.19%	0.19%	2.12%	3.67%	3.09%	90.73%	45.75%
S4: 2010	0.54%	1.85%	2.07%	2.12%	3.38%	90.03%	28.46%
S4: 2022	0.07%	2.94%	4.10%	3.31%	5.88%	83.69%	31.57%
S5: 2010	0.19%	1.21%	31.10%	15.74%	5.67%	46.09%	67.41%
S5: 2022	0.15%	0.66%	38.33%	30.61%	5.83%	24.42%	73.14%
S6: 2010	0.08%	2.03%	2.20%	6.64%	4.04%	85.01%	17.64%
S6: 2022	0.18%	3.08%	4.46%	9.15%	5.32%	77.81%	15.80%
S7: 2020	0.27%	0.76%	0.65%	1.52%	3.16%	93.64%	25.94%
S7: 2022	0.51%	0.78%	2.03%	3.64%	3.68%	89.36%	31.76%

Adapted from Indiana Department of Education School Enrollment by Grade Level Report (2022). https://www.in.gov/doe/it/data-center-and-reports/

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations that the researcher faced throughout this study. First, this study was limited to only seven superintendents, each of whom elected to participate in the study. The superintendents who volunteered to participate in this study did not include superintendents from school districts with declining enrollment as a result of open enrollment

policy. In addition, the sample of superintendents was limited to participants with at least 10 years of experience in the superintendent's role. This may impact the generalizability of the study and not represent the perspectives of superintendents in other geographical areas or with less experience. Qualitative research is limited in its application to additional sample populations (Caine et al., 2019). Additionally, the study findings only apply to the school districts represented. Also, as noted in Table 8, each school corporation saw a decrease in the number of White students over a ten-year span with each district with the majority having over 80% of its student population. A different sample might include school corporations with a higher percentage of minority students and produce different findings. S5 was the only participant from a school with a greater number of minority students when comparing 2010 to 2022. This research was only able to provide a contextual understanding for seven school superintendents in the state of Indiana and their perceptions of the impact of open enrollment. Lastly, unknown limitations to this study could also be present as a result of participant interviews being conducted virtually. Virtual interviews may have provided distractions and the inability to read body language.

Recommendations for Future Studies

This study focused on the perceptions of seven practicing superintendents who have served in this role for at least the last ten years. Four themes were collected from the data to help describe the experiences of a small sample set of participants. Given the limitations, additional research is recommended on this topic.

1. This study was limited to seven superintendents currently serving school districts benefiting from open enrollment policy. The researcher would recommend that future studies be conducted on a unique sample that includes superintendents serving school districts with declining enrollment or with greater numbers of students who reside in their

district transferring to other school districts. A different sample would contribute additional data and possibly a different set of perceptions to this study's findings.

2. Participants in this study mostly represented school districts with a greater number of White students compared to minority students. Future work should also seek to include school districts where White students are considered the minority.

3. Participants in this study represented public school districts. Open enrollment policy also includes the Indiana Choice Scholarship voucher. Future analysis of schools that accept vouchers to better understand how these patterns of enrollment are impacting all schools across the state.

4. School choice can be sometimes limited to a family's geographical location and ability to transport. Future research in Indiana would be important to study the impact that location has and look at the difference when comparing rural, suburban and urban school districts.

5. Open enrollment has been in place since 2008. Understanding the social and academic impact of students who choose open enrollment is critical. The academic trajectory and social outcomes should be studied to understand the performance of students who participate in open enrollment at various age levels and different school choice options.

Conclusion

Over the last two decades, school choice options in Indiana have changed and adjusted as new policy has been initiated. Current federal policy incentivizes choice as an educational opportunity for families across Indiana and the United States (Department of Education, 2001). However, school choice and open enrollment policy can impact school districts differently and Indiana superintendents and school boards are forced to navigate the challenges increased

educational choice for families is having on their school district's ability to operate. The superintendent's stories in this study provide a unique contextual perspective and the potential positive consequences of school choice.

In addition, research consistently finds that students who change schools can be disruptive to a student's educational journey, and it will be important to continue to study the multiple factors that contribute to the success a student has after the student transfers (Lee & Burkam, 1992). Based on the findings of this qualitative study, superintendents discussed enrollment and financial instability, marketing and program advancement, meeting student needs and increased diversity as factors that need to be considered. School superintendents across the state of Indiana are faced with financial challenges that continue to contribute to the identified issues in different ways. The impact of school enrollment and finances is important but understanding how schools are meeting the needs of students, especially with increases or decreases in minority group populations should be explored in future research (Langencamp, 2016).

Along with recommendations for future research, the findings of this study aim to support current and future superintendents as they consider the impact open enrollment has on their districts. It also serves to inform policymakers about considerations that may influence future school choice policy.

APPENDIX A. EMAIL INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Dear Superintendent,

My name is Sean Galiher, and I am the principal of Penn High School for Penn Harris Madison School Corporation while also pursuing a doctoral degree at Purdue University. I am looking to identify five superintendents who would be willing to be interviewed and participate in a phenomenological study that explores the lived experiences of superintendents since the beginning of open enrollment legislation in 2008. This study intends to analyze participant responses regarding their perceptions of school choice and open enrollment, inform the educational community and consider how decision-making policies and procedures promote educational outcomes for students in Indiana.

Your participation in this study would involve a 45-60-minute interview consisting of open-ended questions. Your responses will remain confidential, and the results will be presented as summary data. No individual, school, or district will be identified in the study findings. By agreeing to participate in the study, you will be giving your consent for the researcher or principal investigator to include your responses in their data analysis. Your participation in this research study is strictly voluntary, and you may choose not to participate without fear of penalty or any negative consequences. Interviews will be conducted at your convenience in person, or via a video conferencing format. I will be following up this e-mail with a phone call to answer questions and inquire about your interest in participating in this study. I am including my dissertation chair's name and contact information if you would like to contact her with questions. The promise of this study is to contribute to the field on the impacts of open enrollment legislation in Indiana.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sean Galiher   Dr. Alice Johnson
Penn Harris Madison School Corporation   Purdue University
Purdue Doctoral Candidate   Ph.D. Dissertation Chair

APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW ITEMS

RQ: How do Indiana superintendents perceive the effects of school choice and open enrollment?

Tell me about your school district's open enrollment policy and how it has evolved over the years.

Talk to me about how you feel open enrollment policies have impacted your school district.

Talk to me about your feelings about the impact that open enrollment policies are having on school districts in your region and in Indiana.

Talk about your school district's mission and vision and how open enrollment has impacted it?

Talk to me about how you view school improvement initiatives as a result of open enrollment.

Explain how open enrollment transfer policies are impacting partnerships with parents and community members.

Explain your thoughts on the impact open enrollment policies have had on student demographics.

APPENDIX C. PARTICIPANT PROFILE INFORMATION

1. Name:

2. Age:

3. Gender:

4. Job Title:

5. How many years, including the current, have you served as a superintendent?

6. How many years have you worked in your current district?

APPENDIX D. RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
A Qualitative Research Study: Superintendent Perceptions of Inter-District and Open Enrollment Policies: The aftereffects of fourteen years of policy implementation.
Sean Galiher, Doctoral Candidate at Purdue University

What is the purpose of this study?
This research project explores the perceptions of practicing superintendents on school choice and open enrollment policies in Indiana.

What will I do if I choose to be in this study?
If you agree to participate in this study, you will be invited to participate in an individual interview. Your participation is voluntary, which means that you can choose to stop participating in the study at any time. When the study has been completed, I can send you a summary of the findings if you so desire.

How long will I be in the study?
Participating in the interview will take 45-60 minutes of your time.

What are the possible risks or discomforts?
The risks involved in taking part in this study are minimal and do not exceed those encountered in daily life. We assure you that the highest standards will be maintained in ensuring that all information provided by you is confidential and there is no violation of privacy.

Are there any potential benefits?
Although participating in this study may not have any direct benefits for you, you may find it interesting and educational to explore how superintendents perceive the aftereffects of open enrollment policies in Indiana. The findings of this study will serve to inspire additional research and inform current superintendents. Your participation in our efforts would be highly valued.

Will I receive payment or another incentive?
By participating in this study, you are volunteering your time.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?
Your privacy is of prime importance to us, and you can be assured of the anonymity of your participation in this study. All identifying information received from you will be stored confidentially in separate password-protected files. All file-sharing related to this project will be conducted through secure file transfer software. Any results published from this study will only be in the form of aggregates of the data collected and will not contain any information that links the results obtained to personal identifying information. In addition, we will be destroying all

identifying information, including demographic and contact details, within five years of completing this study.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You can choose not to participate in this study, and even if you participate, you can still withdraw your participation at any time.

Whom can I contact if I have questions about the study?
If you have questions, comments, or concerns, please contact Sean Galiher at 574-485-9549 or via email at srgaliher@phm.k12.in.us

If you have questions about your rights while taking part in the study or have concerns about the treatment of research participants, please call the Human Research Protection Program at (765) 494- 5942, email (irb@purdue.edu), or write to:

Human Research Protection Program - Purdue University
Ernest C. Young Hall, Room 1032
155 S. Grant St. West Lafayette, IN 47907-2114

Documentation of Informed Consent
I have had the opportunity to read this information sheet and have the research study explained. In addition, I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research study, and my questions have been answered. Therefore, I am prepared to participate in the research study described above.

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2010	Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana
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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2017	Penn-Harris-Madison Schools, Mishawaka, Indiana
	Principal, Penn High School
2013-2017	Penn-Harris-Madison Schools, Mishawaka, Indiana
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