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GRADUATE COLLEGE

THE CLEVELAND SCHOLARSHIP AND

TUTORING GRANT PROGRAM:

NOW THAT THIS VOUCHER PROGRAM IS CONSTITUTIONAL;

HOW DO WE APPLY ITS LESSONS TO OKLAHOMA?

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THE CLEVELAND SCHOLARSHIP AND  
TUTORING GRANT PROGRAM:  
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A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL  
LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES

BY

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to research and discuss if: (a) a voucher program is legal in the state of Oklahoma; (b) if legal, would parents use vouchers; and (c) what would impact parents' attitude to use vouchers. The research of the legality of a voucher program was conducted under the framework of the Oklahoma Constitution, statutes, and caselaw. To determine if the parents would use vouchers to a secular or non-secular private school, questionnaires were sent out to three middle schools listed as a failing school on the Oklahoma State Department of Education's 2008 - 2009 School Improvements List under the No Child Left Behind Act, 70 U.S.C. § 6301 (2001). The completed questionnaires were analyzed and the finding was that parents would use vouchers. However, the data showed that the distance to the private school from the child's home, having to pay tuition or other costs, and the need for the private schools to be associated with a variety of religions would preclude parents from using vouchers.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

*The Legislature shall establish and maintain a system of free public schools wherein all the children of the state may be educated* (Okla.Const. art. XIII, §1).

The words of the Oklahoma Constitution are simple. However, the implementation of programs that will not only educate the children of the State of Oklahoma but will also provide them with a quality education is a perpetual goal. Arguably, the objective of a quality education encompasses both the altruistic view that a free public education system should be of the highest quality and the more realistic ideal that quality is needed in order to produce a competitive work force. Moreover, the social cost must be recognized as an intricate part of providing public education: “[e]ducation has a fundamental role in maintaining the fabric of our society. We cannot ignore the significant social costs . . . when select groups are denied the means to absorb the values and schools upon which our social order rests” (Plyler, 1982, p.221).

Considering the enormity of issues involved in providing a free public education, the subject of improving the quality of education draws suggestions from numerous interested parties, including parents,<sup>1</sup> business groups, members of government, and educational entities. One such suggestion involves the implementation of “school choice” programs. School choice consists of the belief that children and families should be provided with options for particular schools and educational programs (without regard for the neighborhood in which they live) to include a broad range of options. School

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The term “parents” will be used throughout this study as a general term indicating those individuals who are guardians of the school-aged children discussed herein. Those individuals who are guardians of the school-aged children discussed herein.

choice programs can take many forms, i.e. magnet schools, alternative schools, charter schools, and tax credits for tuition (Metcalf & Tait, 1999).

The State of Oklahoma has entered into the arena of school choice with the authorization of charter schools by the Oklahoma Legislature in the Oklahoma Charter School Act (2007). The Legislature authorized another school choice type program in the Education Open Transfer Act (2007). The Act allows students to request a transfer from their residential school district to any school district which will accept them. The decision of the United States Supreme Court in *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* (*Zelman*, 2002) would allow the State to pursue another school choice option by giving “vouchers” to parents for payment of the tuition to a secular (religious) or non-secular private school.<sup>2</sup> Prior to the Court’s decision, the legality of vouchers was questionable due to entanglement arguments involving the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. In *Lemon v. Kurtzman* (*Lemon*, 1971), the United States Supreme Court found that government reimbursement for secular educational services provided by non-secular schools was an excessive entanglement of church and State.

The Court’s decision in finding the State of Ohio’s voucher program legal in *Zelman* (2002) has effectively removed the main obstacle in preventing the State of Oklahoma from adopting vouchers in order to provide parents another choice regarding the education of their child/children. The Legislature always had the legal authority to implement a voucher program which paid the tuition of private secular schools; however, now, religiously affiliated schools can be included.<sup>3</sup>

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Definitions of specific terms used throughout this document are presented on pages 10-11 of this Chapter.

The Oklahoma Legislature has yet to fully address the legality and acceptability of a voucher program. Notwithstanding the apparent lack of research data, however, members are introducing Bills advocating the use of vouchers. In the 2007 session, Representative Mike Reynolds introduced the Opportunity Scholarship Act, House Bill 1301 (2007). Representative Reynolds advocated the use of “warrants” by parents to pay for their child’s tuition at a secular or non-secular private school. The money for the warrants would come from the Education Department and would equal 80% of the standard assessment.

In 2008, Representative Ken Miller and Senator Cliff Brannan authored the New Hope Scholarship Act, Senate Bill 2093 (2008). The Act authorized a tax credit to be given to any taxpayer who made a contribution to an eligible scholarship-granting organization. The credit was equal to fifty percent (50%) of the total amount of contributions made during a taxable year and was not to exceed an amount which was equal to fifty percent (50%) of the taxpayer’s total tax liability for the taxable year in which the credit was claimed.

A scholarship-granting organization was defined as a non-profit entity exempt from taxation that distributed periodic scholarship payments to qualified schools where a low-income eligible student was enrolled. A low-income student was defined as a

In the 2010 legislative session, Senator Patrick Anderson and Representative Jason Nelson introduced the Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program, Senate Bill 3393 (2010). The bill passed and is codified as 70 O.S. §13-101-1. This Program provides a scholarship to a private school of choice for students with disabilities and a developed individualized education program (IEP) in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The bill was co-authored by Representatives Sally Kern, Jabar Shumate, and Anastasia Pittman.



student who qualified for a free or reduced price lunch, and a qualified school was an accredited private school (in compliance with health and safety codes) with a stated policy against discrimination and in favor of ensured academic accountability.

In 2009, members of the House introduced similar bills. Representative Reynolds authored the Parental Choice in Education Act, House Bill 1594 (2009). Representative Jabar Schumate authored the Oklahoma Great Schools Tax Credit Program Act, House Bill 1805 (2009) and the New Hope Scholarship Act, House Bill 1804 (2009). Again, these bills did not become law.

In the 2010 legislative session, members of the House and Senate again introduced similar bills. Representative David Dank introduced the New Hope Scholarship Act, House Bill 2874 (2010) and Senator Dan Newberry and Representative Lee Denney authored the Oklahoma Equal Opportunity Education Scholarship Act, Senate Bill 1922 (2010).

The introduction of these bills demonstrates that members of the Legislature intend to continue pursuing a law that authorizes vouchers as a viable school choice program for the parents of school children in Oklahoma. Accordingly, the interest in a voucher program shown by members of our Legislature necessitates a holistic study to investigate the introduction and impact of such a program. Such a study must include legal status, applicability, and feasibility of vouchers as applied to a segment of the population and culture of Oklahoma. The aggregation of this data can ensure that all interested parties involved receive accurate information that supports achievable programs that further the education of the State's youth.

## **Statement of the Problem**

A voucher program that permits State monies to be used for the payment of tuition to a secular or non-secular private school is now a legally viable method that can be adapted by the State legislators as another “choice” for parents/guardians seeking to improve the quality of their children’s education. In order to determine if a voucher program is a viable choice option for the State of Oklahoma, an opinion addressing the legal basis for a program is necessary. Additionally, a study of the usability of such a program based on parental attitude to selected issues applicable to vouchers is essential, as there is a need for information that is relevant to the introduction and implementation of such a program.

## **Background to the Problem Statement**

The voucher program discussed in *Zelman* and determined to be constitutional by the United States Supreme Court was the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Grant Program (“Program”) (*Zelman*, 2002). The Program differs from the other school choice programs in that money is provided by the State to the parent of the student in the form of a voucher that can be used for tuition at either public or private schools, including religiously affiliated schools. The other choice proposals allow choice only among public schools (the charter schools, arguably, are neither fully public nor fully private).

The Cleveland School District and ultimately the State of Ohio went through a number of legal and social issues that evolved into the workable program in existence today. Thus, any research addressing the applicability of vouchers for payment of tuition for secular and non-secular private schools as a school choice option for a given State must first have an in-depth understanding of the Program. In addition, a working

knowledge necessary to conducting quality research will not be attained without fully investigating the United States Supreme Court's legal reasoning in *Zelman*, the Ohio Legislation's statutory enactment, and current research on the success of the program. The point here is that knowledge of the history of the Cleveland Program will forestall any unnecessary research on issues that have already been addressed by United States Supreme Court and the Ohio legislature.

The State of Ohio's Pilot Project Scholarship Program, also known as Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Grant Program, was enacted in response to the Federal District Court's action of placing the entire Cleveland School District under State control. An audit of the district established that the district failed to meet any of the 18 State standards for minimal acceptable performance: only 1 in 10 ninth graders could pass a basic proficiency examination, and more than two-thirds of high school students either dropped out of school or failed before graduation (*Zelman*, 2002).

The focus of the Program was the Cleveland School District because the Legislature allowed the Program to only provide financial assistance to families in school districts "under federal court order requiring supervision and operational management of the district by the state superintendent" (Pilot Project Scholarship Program, 1995). The Program was to provide scholarships (vouchers) to a number of students residing in the district to attend alternative schools.

The State of Oklahoma does not face the same situation of having a federal court place a school district under State control. The passing of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 by Congress, however, encourages States to implement programs for failing schools. Accordingly, using the experiences derived from Ohio's Program and relying on

the decision in *Zelman*, the State can ascertain the legality and applicability of vouchers to attend private secular and non-secular schools as an educational choice for Oklahoma.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study was conducted to specifically research and discuss the legality and applicability of a voucher program that includes secular (religious) and non-secular private schools. As evidenced by the aforementioned reference to recent legislation, the Oklahoma Legislature is interested in allowing secular (religious) schools to receive state finances. This study can provide information to all parties interested in the role of education in Oklahoma. Although this study will only address certain specific questions, it will allow a basis for further research if deemed necessary by the interested parties.

### **Research Questions**

Because the purpose of vouchers is to give parents “choice” in providing a quality education for their children, the research questions are constructed to address the issue of the legality of a program under the Oklahoma Constitution and whether parents will view vouchers that pay for tuition to private secular and non-secular schools as an acceptable alternative to public schools. As has been previously discussed, private schools secular or non-secular are privately financed while public schools are financed by the state.

Inherent in providing choices in order for children to receive a quality education, parents and the State have the right to expect increased productivity, accountability, and achievement from the education providers of private schools in exchange for taxpayer dollars. However, even if private schools meet these expectations, will parents transfer their children to those schools? This question prompted the researcher to investigate three questions for this study:

1. Is a voucher program that includes religiously affiliated schools legal under the Oklahoma Constitution?
2. Even if such a program is legal, will parents of children in schools failing to meet benchmarks that indicate improvement in areas mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act use the vouchers?
3. What factors of parental attitude will preclude the use of vouchers?

### **Significance of the Study**

Adapting a voucher program to the State of Oklahoma will involve a holistic examination of a number of factors which include: (a) determining the student population that will be served, (b) the Oklahoma constitutional and statutory framework for funding private education, and (c) the level of parental interest and cooperation to make such a system functional. To understand if a system of vouchers will be a legitimate choice for educating students in Oklahoma, all interested parties must have research available to them about the viability of such a program.

### **Assumptions of the Study**

This section describes four possible assumptions associated with implementing a voucher program in Oklahoma.

1. The students of failing schools will meet the criterion for receiving vouchers.
2. Parents will be given a voucher equal to the State monies allocated to their children for public education in order to pay for at least part of a private school's tuition. There is the possibility of extra costs for tuition, uniforms, etc., for which the parents will be responsible to pay for the costs.

3. The majority of the alternative schools will be religiously affiliated. A list of alternative schools can be found at the Oklahoma Private School Accreditation Commission, OPSCA, (n. d.).

4. Transportation will be available to bus children to their select voucher school; however, there is no guarantee that available alternative schools will be located near the children's originally attended public schools.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The purpose of vouchers as determined by *Zelman* (2002) is to take students out of failing schools and allow them to transfer to other schools in the District in the hope of receiving a better education (*Zelman*, 2002). Therefore, the parameters of this study will be designed to address the introduction of a voucher program in the Oklahoma City and Tulsa School Districts. The rationale is based on the fact that although Oklahoma has predominately rural schools that service the State, the majority of rural schools do not meet the criteria as a failing school in accordance with Oklahoma State Department of Education's 2008 - 2009 School Improvements List under the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) requirements (see Appendix A).

In comparison, the Oklahoma City School District and the Tulsa School District have a number of schools in need of improvement. This study is designed to address the applicability of vouchers to urban schools. This limitation, however, does not prevent rural school districts from using elements of this study when addressing the requirements for meeting the need for improvements under the No Child Left Behind Act.

## **Definitions of Terms**

Alternative School -	A registered private religiously affiliated or a secular school located within the boundaries of the school district.
Establishment Clause -	Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion (U.S.Const, Amend. I).
Non-Secular School -	A school that is not overtly or specifically religious.
Private School -	A school owned and administered by an entity other than the government.
Public School -	School that is administrated by the State and local government
Sectarian -	Pertaining to a body of persons united by religion or philosophy.
Secular School -	A school that is overtly or specifically religious.
Voucher -	A document representing State funds assigned to a parent for use in placing a child in an alternative school.

## **Organization of the Study**

This Study is organized into Chapters of which each contains a number of subsections:

### **CHAPTERS**

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Statement of the Problem  
Background to the Problem Statement

Purpose of the Study  
Research Questions  
Significance of the Study  
Assumptions of the Study  
Limitations of the Study  
Definitions of Terms  
Organization of the Study

## II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Description of Vouchers  
Original Voucher Programs  
Subsequent Programs  
Legal History of Vouchers  
An Analysis of Cleveland, Ohio's Voucher Program  
Parental Attitude in Choosing a School  
Oklahoma Voters' Position on School Choice  
Summation

## III. METHODOLOGY

Introduction  
Design of Study  
Sample  
Data Collection Techniques  
Procedures  
Methods of Analysis  
Limitations  
Conclusion

## IV. ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction  
Legal Research  
Quantitative Research  
Grouping the Questionnaire Statements into Five Reasons  
Qualitative Research  
Comments on the Questionnaire  
Conclusion

## V. FINDINGS AND LIMITATIONS, SUMMARY, AND RECOMMENDATION

Introduction  
Findings and Limitations



Summary  
Recommendation

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### **Description of Vouchers**

A voucher program involves directing State funds to parents in the form of a voucher in order to be used by the parents for their children's tuition in participating schools. A voucher program allows parents the ability to send their children to either private or public participating schools, completely or partially at the State's expense. The program also permits the private schools to be religiously affiliated (Metcalf & Tate, 1999).

There have been several expressed rationales justifying the feasibility of a voucher program as a viable educational alternative to the current public educational system. The first approach is the market model that is based on the empirical proposition that competition in education will improve the performance of school systems and their students. The second approach is the equity model that is derived from a concept of justice. Under the equity model, all parents deserve an equal opportunity to select the schools their children attend (Viteritti, 2000).

#### **Market Model**

The market model approach was first introduced in 1955 by economist Milton Friedman. Friedman advocated a system of vouchers that parents could use at any school, public or private. He believed the competition would force low-performing schools to close and provide the rest of the schools with an incentive to maintain and even improve their standards. Friedman was convinced that private schools would outperform public

schools. His system of education would be publicly financed, privately run, and have minimal governmental intrusion (Friedman, 1955).

### **Equity Model**

Moses (2000) discussed the concept of justice and the principles of equity associated with vouchers. Moses suggests advocates for a voucher program argue that allowing citizens to have a greater choice as to where to educate their children, according to their own belief systems, serves the notion of justice. The principle of equity is served because school choice plans such as vouchers primarily benefit the least-advantaged students and families. In theory, a voucher will ensure that poor families are no longer forced to attend incompetent public schools.

### **Original Voucher Programs**

The original voucher programs were started in Cleveland, Ohio, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (1989) was originally started in 1990. The Program focused on children in families whose income did not exceed 1.75 times the national poverty level. The children also had to have attended a public school in Milwaukee in the preceding school year. Under the Milwaukee Program, the total number of vouchers awarded was not to exceed 1% of the total enrollment of the Milwaukee Public Schools (Metcalf & Tait, 1999).

The program provided as much as \$2,500 per student in the form of vouchers for private school tuition. The funds for vouchers were deducted from the State general equalization aid to the Milwaukee Public Schools. Since its inception, the Milwaukee Program has included secular schools in the definition of private schools. Also, the

number of participating students has increased and the amount of the vouchers has also increased to \$5,000 per student (Metcalf & Tait, 1999).

The Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Grant Program (1995; cited and referenced as the Pilot Project Scholarship Program, 1995) was implemented in 1996. The focus of the Cleveland Program was to provide private school tuition scholarships (vouchers) to poor families within the Cleveland School District. Eligibility for the vouchers was based primarily on income, with consideration given first to families whose incomes were at or below the federal poverty level. The next level of eligibility included families with incomes between 100% and 200% of the federal poverty index. If any scholarships remained, families with greater incomes were eligible. The scholarships were awarded in all the levels through a random lottery process structured to ensure that 75% of the scholarships were awarded to African American students (Metcalf & Tait, 1999).

### **Subsequent Programs**

d'Entremont and Huerta (2007) listed the public-funded voucher programs in the United States as of the year 2006. Arizona, Utah, and Florida fund statewide programs, though only students with learning disabilities are eligible for their programs. Ohio funds the Cleveland program and a statewide program. All students are eligible for the Cleveland program, with low-income students having priority, however, only students in low-performing schools for 3 consecutive years are eligible for the statewide program. Wisconsin still funds the Milwaukee program with eligibility for students in families with

incomes below 220% of the federal poverty line. Finally, the District of Columbia funds a program for students in families with incomes below 185% of the federal poverty line.<sup>4</sup>

## **Legal History of Vouchers**

### **The Federal Challenge**

The United States Supreme Court in *Lemon v. Kurtzman* (*Lemon*, 1971), grappled with the issue of providing public funds to non-public sectarian schools. In *Lemon*, non-public schools were to be reimbursed by the State of Pennsylvania for secular educational services such as teachers, textbooks, and instructional materials for classes in mathematics, modern foreign language, physical science, and physical education courses. In addition to compensating the schools for these services, the State also was required to continually survey the instructional programs to ensure that the services were not provided in connection with “any subject matter expressing religious teaching, or the morals or forms of worship of any sect” (*Lemon*, 1971, pp. 609-610).

In striking down the State statutory scheme, the Court held that there was “excessive entanglement” between church and State due to the requirement of the scrutinization of the sectarian schools educational programs by the State and the statutory, post-audit procedures. Moreover, the Court determined that this “excessive entanglement” between government and religion violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment (*Lemon*, 1971, p. 614).

Opponents of the voucher program in Wisconsin argued that the program violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

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In 2009-2010, Congress failed to fund this program for all but the currently enrolled students until they graduate from high school (Bimbaum, 2010).

After the Wisconsin Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Milwaukee Program, an appeal to the United States Supreme Court was filed on behalf of the Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association by the American Civil Liberties Union and the People for the American Way (Walsh, 1998). Without stating a reason, the United States Supreme Court denied review of the case (Walsh, 1998).

The United States Supreme Court again tackled the legality of vouchers in *Zelman* (Zelman, 2002). The Court addressed the constitutionality of the voucher program functioning in Cleveland, Ohio, under the auspice of statutes implemented by the Ohio Legislature. Although the Court had previously ignored the subject when presented with the chance of ruling on the system established in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the Court decided that the currently functioning voucher program in Cleveland was constitutional.

In finding that the Cleveland Program was constitutional, the United States Supreme Court rejected the claim that using State money for vouchers to be used at non-secular schools was a violation of the Establishment Clause. In avoiding a *Lemon* (1971) challenge, the Ohio State Legislature had mandated that the voucher monies would be issued to a student's parent and then the parent would pay the private school for the student's tuition. The Court, focusing on the actions of the Ohio Legislature, held:

In sum, the Ohio program is entirely neutral with respect to religion. It provides benefits directly to a wide spectrum of individuals, defined only by financial need and residence in a particular school district. It permits such individuals to exercise genuine choice among options public and private, secular and religious. The program is therefore a program of true, private choice. In keeping with an unbroken line of decisions rejecting challenges to similar programs, we hold that

the program does not offend the Establishment Clause. (*Zelman*, 2002, pp. 662-63)

The State of Ohio's purpose for the pilot project was to create a voucher program conducted in any school districts "that are or have ever been under the federal court order requiring supervision and operational management of the district by the state superintendent" (Pilot Project Scholarship Program, 1995). Although the State of Ohio's purpose for the Program factored into the United States Supreme Court's determination that the Program was constitutional, the decision in *Zelman* did not rest on the issue of school districts under a federal court Order. The Court's holding was actually based on the right of a parent to exercise his/her own private choice for the child. The Court held that:

where a government aid program is neutral with respect to religion, and provides assistance directly to a broad class of citizens who, in turn, direct government aid to religious schools wholly as a result of their own genuine and independent private choice, the program is not readily subject to challenge under the Establishment Clause. A program that shares these features permits government aid to reach religious institutions only by way of the deliberate choices of numerous individual recipients. (*Zelman*, 2002, p. 652)

### **Challenges Under State Law**

In addition to complying with federal law, the Oklahoma Legislature must comply with Oklahoma State laws in order to resolve any possible legal complications with passing a voucher program. Notwithstanding the United States Supreme Court's decision in *Zelman* (2002), most State constitutions also have provisions against the establishment

of religion. In other words, the United States Supreme Court's decision in *Zelman* that the voucher program does not violate the Constitution does not prohibit a State court from deciding that a particular program violates the State constitution (*Witters v. Washington Dept. of Servs.*, 1986).

In 1999, the legislature in Florida passed an ambitious State-wide voucher program. Although the program was designated as the Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP), it was substantially a voucher system (Elam, 1999). The program was soon contested and subsequently found to be unconstitutional by the trial court, based on article I, section 3, article IX, section 1, and article IX, section 6 of the Florida Constitution, as well as the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. On appeal, the decision of the lower court was reversed, and the case was remanded for further proceedings (*Bush v. Holmes*, 2000). While on remand, the United States Supreme Court decided the *Zelman* (2002) case. In compliance with the Court's decision, the plaintiffs in *Bush v. Holmes* (2000) only contested the constitutionality of the "OSP" under article I, section 3 of the Florida Constitution which provided:

**Religious freedom.** There shall be no law respecting the establishment of religion or prohibiting or penalizing the free exercise thereof. Religious freedom shall not justify practices inconsistent with public morals, peace or safety. No revenue of the state or any political subdivision or agency thereof shall ever be taken from the public treasury directly or indirectly in aid of any church, sect, or religious denomination or in aid of any sectarian institution. (Fl.Const, art. I, § 3)



On remand, the trial court entered final summary judgment for the plaintiffs under the “no aid” provision of the State constitution. The court of appeal affirmed. The Florida Supreme Court in *Bush v. Homes*, (*Bush*, 2006, p. 405) agreed, finding:

[I]n this case we conclude that the OSP is in direct conflict with the mandate in article IX, section 1 and that it is the state’s ‘paramount duty’ to make adequate provision for education and that the manner which this mandate must be carried out is ‘by law for a uniform, efficient, safe, secure, and high quality system of free public schools.’

Florida’s rejection of the use of State money to fund any program that has a sectarian purpose is based on a federal constitutional amendment proposed by James G. Blaine known as the Blaine Amendment:

No State shall make any law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; and no money raised by taxation in any State for the support of public schools, or derived from any public fund therefor, nor any public lands devoted thereto, shall ever be under the control of any religious sect; nor shall any money so raised or lands so divided between religious sects or denominations. (4 CONG. REC. 205, 1875)

The Amendment would have applied the religion clauses of the First Amendment to the States. The States also would have been prohibited from allocating State funds and other State resources to sectarian organizations, particularly sectarian schools. At that time, most of the schools were Protestant run. The Amendment was not adopted; however, thirty-seven States incorporated versions of the Amendment into their respective constitutions (Gedicks, 2004).

The Blaine Amendment was a political effort by members of Congress to inflame the Republican base in the 1876 Presidential contest by invoking anti-Catholic fears. The Democrats were viewed as being subservient to the Roman Catholic Church and in those times, there existed a political necessity of not being viewed as pro-Catholic. The Democrats responded by raising federalism concerns that education was a State matter. The Democrats also pointed out that the language of the final version of the Amendment was so broad that the assigning of public contracts to Protestant orphanages, asylums, and hospitals would be precluded (Bradley, 2007).

Therefore, in determining if Oklahoma's constitution would preclude a voucher program, especially in light of the Blaine Amendment, an examination of the constitutional language and the litigation history of Oklahoma will be necessary.

### **An Analysis of Cleveland, Ohio's Voucher Program**

To fully comply with the decision of the United States Supreme Court in *Zelman* (2002), any research addressing the applicability of vouchers as a school choice option for a given State must first have an in-depth understanding of the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Grant Program (1995; cited and referenced as the Pilot Project Scholarship Program, 1995). Without fully investigating the United States Supreme Court's legal reasoning and the Ohio Legislation's statutory enactment and current research on the success of the program, a working knowledge necessary to conducting quality research will not be attained. Knowledge of the program will prevent unnecessary research on issues that have already been addressed by United States Supreme Court and the Ohio Legislature. In addition, knowledge of the Program will clarify issues that have not been yet investigated and resolved.

As previously mentioned, the State of Ohio's Pilot Project Scholarship Program (1995), also known as Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Grant Program, was enacted in response to the Federal District Court's action of placing the entire Cleveland School District under State control. An audit of the district established that the district had failed to meet any of the 18 state standards for minimal acceptable performance. Only 1 in 10 ninth graders could pass a basic proficiency examination, and more than two-thirds of high school students either dropped or failed before graduation (*Zelman*, 2002).

The focus of the Program was the Cleveland School District because the Legislature allowed the Program to only provide financial assistance to families in school districts "under federal court order requiring supervision and operational management of the district by the state superintendent" (Pilot Project Scholarship Program, 1995). The Program was to provide scholarships (vouchers) to a number of students residing in the district to attend alternative schools.<sup>5</sup>

The Legislature initially allowed vouchers to be used only in the grades kindergarten through the third grade. This limitation was expanded each year until the eighth grade was included. The Legislature decided that the State Superintendent had the responsibility to establish an application process. The Superintendent was required to award as many vouchers as could be funded by the Program; however, in no case could more than fifty percent of the vouchers be awarded to students who were already attending a private school.

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The Statute also authorized an equal number of students to receive tutorial assistance grants while attending public schools in the district. The issue of tutorial assistance is not relevant to this study and will not be covered.

In the original Statute, the Superintendent was also given the authority to make a grant to the school district that would defray one hundred percent of any additional costs to the district for providing transportation to and from the alternative school for all students attending it (Pilot Project Scholarship Program, 1995). This section of the Statute was later repealed.

In enacting the Program, the Legislature attempted to avoid any problems arising from a possible change in the level of employment of the teachers in the district. If the district suffered a decrease in student enrollment in the public schools due to the Program, the State Board of Education was allowed to enter into an agreement with any public school teacher to provide that teacher severance pay or early retirement incentives if the teacher agreed to terminate their employment with the district board. The Legislature recognized that this Statute was only applicable provided there was not any collective bargaining agreement that prohibited an agreement for termination of a teacher's employment contract (Pilot Project Scholarship Program, 1995).

The Legislature authorized the alternative schools wanting to join the Program to include both secular and non-secular schools. In order to be eligible, a school had to enroll a minimum of ten students per class or at least twenty-five students in all of the classes combined. A school was also not permitted to discriminate on the basis of race, religion, or ethnic background. More importantly, a school could not encourage unlawful behavior nor teach hate based on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, or religion (Pilot Project Scholarship Program, 1995).

Requirements for any private school wishing to participate in the Program included being within the boundaries of the school district and meeting Statewide

educational standards. Later, however, adjacent public school districts were allowed to join the Program and receive a \$2,250 tuition grant for each student accepted. This grant was in addition to the full amount of per pupil State funding attributable to each student (Pilot Project Scholarship Program, 1995).

The implementation of the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program began with parents lining up to pick lottery numbers for a drawing that allowed the winners to receive vouchers. The vouchers were to be used the next school year by students entering kindergarten through the third grade. A total of 6,277 parents applied for the lottery, the results of those who were awarded vouchers included 790 low-income African American students, 335 low-income students of other backgrounds, and 375 low-income students who already attended private schools (Ponessa, 1996).

At the beginning of the Program, fifty-two schools, of which thirty-eight were religious, had decided to participate. Although public schools in adjoining districts were allowed to join the Program, none chose to participate. In order to assist the parents through the process, a non-profit organization called HOPE for Cleveland's Children helped the parents with the paperwork and provided assistance to churches wanting to open schools in order to participate in the Program. The HOPE organization had already helped four church-affiliated schools participate in the Program (Ponessa, 1996).

## **State Legal Challenge**

The Program was constitutionally challenged from its inception by a number of individuals and groups. The challenges were consolidated and heard by the Ohio Court of Appeals. The Court of Appeals ruled on six substantive constitutional issues and found that the Program was unconstitutional as a violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. The court also found that the Program violated the School Funds Clause of Section 2, Article VI of the Ohio Constitution, the Establishment Clause of Section 7, Article I of the Ohio Constitution, and the Uniformity Clause of Section 26, Article II of the Ohio Constitution. The Court of Appeals, however, found that the Program did not violate the Thorough and Efficient Clause of Section 2, Article VI of the Ohio Constitution, or the single-subject rule of Section 15(D), Article II of the Ohio Constitution (discussed in *Simmons-Harris v. Goff*, 1999).

The Ohio Supreme Court reviewed the findings of the court of appeals and concluded that, overall, the current School Voucher Program did not violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution or the Establishment Clause of Section 7, Article I of the Ohio Constitution. The court also found that the Program did not violate the School Funds Clause of Section 2, Article VI of the Ohio Constitution, the Thorough and Efficient Clause of Section 2, Article VI, of the Ohio Constitution, or the Uniformity Clause of Section 26, Article II of the Ohio Constitution. The court did hold, however, that the current School Voucher Program did violate the one-subject rule, Section 15(D), Article II of the Ohio Constitution (*Simmons-*

*Harris v. Goff*, 1999). The court also held that former R.C.<sup>6</sup> 3313.975(A) did violate the Uniformity Clause of Section 26, Article II of the Ohio Constitution (*Simmons-Harris v. Goff*, 1999).

In finding the Program essentially constitutional, the court recognized that most of the beneficiaries of the Program attended sectarian schools. The court held that circumstances alone did not make the Program unconstitutional if the vouchers were "allocated on the basis of neutral, secular criteria that neither favor nor disfavor religion, and [are] made available to both religious and secular beneficiaries on a nondiscriminatory basis" (*Simmons-Harris*, 1999, p. 210, citing *Agostini v. Felton*, 1997).

The court, however, did find that the Program did not distribute the vouchers based on neutral and secular criterion that was nondiscriminatory. The Legislature allowed private schools to admit students according to the following priorities:

(1) students enrolled in the previous year, (2) siblings of students enrolled in the previous year, (3) students residing within the school district in which the private school is located (selected by lot), (4) students whose parents are affiliated with any organization that provides financial support to the school, and (5) all other applicants by lot (*Simmons-Harris*, 1999, p. 210, see R.C. 3313.977(A)). The court found that priority (4) was not neutral and secular. The court determined that under priority (4), a student whose parents did not belong to a religious group that supported a non-sectarian school was given a lesser priority than a student whose parents were members. The court reasoned that priority (4) provided an "incentive for parents desperate to get their child out of the Cleveland City School

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Ohio's statutes are cited as R.C., which stands for Revised Code. R.C. will be cited throughout this document.

District to ‘modify their religious beliefs or practices’ in order to enhance their opportunity to receive a School Voucher Program scholarship” (*Simmons-Harris*, 1999, p. 210, citing *Agostini*, 1997).

The court recognized that priority (4) also applied to situations where a student whose parents worked for a company that supported a nonsectarian school would have priority over students whose parents were not employees. However, the court found these other applications of priority (4) did not negate the incentive for parents to modify their religious beliefs or practices. Accordingly, the court concluded that priority (4) favored religion, thereby leaving R.C. 3313.977(A)(1)(d) unconstitutional (*Simmons - Harris*, 1999 p. 210).

Finding one section unconstitutional did not make the entire Program unconstitutional. The courts allow part of a statute to be severed from the rest of the statutory scheme. The following is the test for determining whether part of a statute is severable:

(1) Are the constitutional and the unconstitutional parts capable of separation so that each may be read and may stand by itself? (2) Is the unconstitutional part so connected with the general scope of the whole as to make it impossible to give effect to the apparent intention of the Legislature if the clause or part is stricken out? (3) Is the insertion of words or terms necessary in order to separate the constitutional part from the unconstitutional part, and to give effect to the former only? (*Simmons - Harris*, 1999, p. 210, citing *State v. Hochhausler*, 1996).



The court applied the aforementioned test and determined that the federally unconstitutional section could be severed from the statute.<sup>7</sup>

The court also reviewed the constitutionality of the Program under the Ohio Constitution. Section 7, Article I of the Ohio Constitution states that "[n]o person shall be compelled to attend, erect, or support any place of worship, or maintain any form of worship, against his consent; and no preference shall be given, by law, to any religious society; nor shall any interference with the rights of conscience be permitted" (*Simmons - Harris*, 1999, p. 210). The court conducted an analysis of Section 7, Article I by adopting the elements of the three-part *Lemon* (1971) test. The court found that the Program was constitutional, even though the language of the Ohio Constitution was quite different from the federal language (*Simmons-Harris*, 1999, p. 212, see *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 1971).

The Court then determined whether the Program violated Section 2, Article VI of the Ohio Constitution. This clause of the section states that "no religious or other sect, or sects, shall ever have any exclusive right to, or control of, any part of the school funds of this state" (*Simmons-Harris*, 1999, p. 212). The court reasoned that the sectarian schools participating in the Program received State money only as the result of the independent decisions of parents and students.<sup>8</sup> As such, the court found that the Program did not violate this clause of Section 2, Article VI of the Ohio Constitution.

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The United States Supreme Court's decision in *Zelman* (2002) makes moot any need for an analysis of the court's ruling regarding federal constitutionality of the Program.

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The court cited to precedent that indirect benefit to a private sectarian school does not violate this section of the Ohio Constitution.

The court then examined another clause of Section 2, Article VI of the Ohio Constitution which states that "[t]he general assembly shall make such provisions, by taxation, or otherwise, as, with the income arising from the school trust fund, will secure a thorough and efficient system of common schools throughout the State" (*Simmons-Harris*, 1999, p. 212). The court recognized that implicit within the State's obligation to provide public schools was a prohibition against State financing of a system of private schools. The court recognized, however, that private schools had existed in the State even before the establishment of public schools. The court found that the system of private schools should continue as long as the success of the private system did not come at the expense of the public education system or the public school teachers. As such, the court held that the Program did not violate the aforementioned clause of Section 2, Article VI of the Ohio Constitution, because the current funding level did not undermine the State's obligation to public education. The court warned, however, that a greatly expanded Program or similar program could damage public education and thereby be subject to a renewed constitutional challenge (*Simmons-Harris*, 1999, p. 212).

The court then reviewed the next challenge to the constitutionality of the Program on State grounds; Section 26, Article II of the Ohio Constitution (the Uniformity Clause), "[a]ll laws of a general nature, shall have a uniform operation through out the State . . . ." The court ascertained that for the Program to violate the Uniformity Clause, the considerations were: "(1) whether the statute is a law of a general or special nature, and (2) whether the statute operates uniformly throughout the statute" (*Simmons-Harris*, 1999, pp. 212-213). The court, relying on precedent, stated that a subject was general "if

the subject does or may exist in, and affect the people of, every county, in the state" (*Simmons-Harris*, 1999, pp. 212-213).

The court first found that the Program was of a general nature and the Uniformity Clause applied. The court then determined that R.C. 3313.975(A) violated the Uniformity Clause because statute was limited to "one school district that, as of March 1995, was under a federal court order requiring supervision and operational management of the district by the state superintendent" (*Simmons-Harris*, 1999, pp. 212-213).

The General Assembly amended R.C. 3313.975(A), effective June 30, 1997 to read that the Program was limited to "school districts that are or have ever been under a federal court order requiring supervision and operational management of the district by the state superintendent" (*Simmons-Harris*, 1999, p. 214). Although the Cleveland City School District was the only school district that was currently eligible for the Program, the court found that the amended statute was constitutional because similarly situated school districts would not be prohibited from inclusion in the future. . ." (*Simmons-Harris*, 1999, p. 214).

The court did find that the Program was in violation of Section 15(D), Article II of the Ohio Constitution. This section states that "[n]o bill shall contain more than one subject, which shall be clearly expressed in its title" (*Simmons-Harris*, 1999, p. 214). The court, citing precedent, explained the one-subject rule, "when there is an absence of common purpose or relationship between specific topics in an act and when there are no discernible practical, rational or legitimate reasons for combining the provisions in one act, there is a strong suggestion that the provisions were combined for tactical reasons, i.e., logrolling" (*Simmons-Harris*, 1999, p. 214). The court that found the Program was

significant and substantive legislation that should not be included in a general appropriations bill. As such, the court found that inclusion of the Program in the general appropriations bill was a violation of the one-subject rule (*Simmons-Harris*, 1999, p. 216).

The 123<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly responded to the court's holding in *Simmons-Harris v. Goff* (1999) by repealing the law and re-enacting similar provisions in the Amended Substitute House Bill 282 (1999), the State education budget for the 1999-2001 school years. The new law also abided by the court's ruling by omitting the provision that allowed participating private schools to give preference in admissions to members of organizations financially supporting the school.

### **Ohio Legislature's Evaluation**

The Legislature intended to assess any problems arising during implementation of the Program. In passing Amended Substitute House Bill Number 117 (1995), which resulted in the enactment of the original Pilot Program, the Legislature, in Section 45, para. 34, instructed the Superintendent of Public Instruction to contract with an independent research entity for an evaluation of the Program.

The first part of the formative evaluation was an audit of the implementation of the program. The first part of the evaluation was to be completed by June 30, 1997. The second part of the evaluation was to consist of ongoing studies of the impact of the vouchers on student attendance, conduct, commitment to education, and standardized test scores, parental involvement, the school districts ability to provide services to district students, and the availability of alternative educational opportunities. This part of the

evaluation was overseen by Indiana University's Center for Research on Learning & Technology (Amended Substitute House Bill Number 117, 1995).

**The audit.**

In order to comply with the Legislature's directives, the accounting firm of Deloitte and Touche LLP was hired to conduct an evaluation of the Program. The firm determined that the expenditures by the Program totaled \$5,244,793 for the period of implementation to June 30, 1977. Of that amount, \$2,929,982 went to the payment of the Scholarships. The tutoring expense was \$42,024. The rest of the allocated funds were spent on transportation and administrative costs (Deloitte & Touche, 1997).

After examining the costs, the firm then determined that approximately \$1.9 million dollars consisted of expenditures that may not have complied with the laws and regulations. The first problem the firm examined was the costs expended due to lack of verification of residency criteria. The firm estimated that the Program spent \$16,407 for students that were not eligible to participate. In the firm's opinion, there were not sufficient procedures in place to ensure that the proper documentation had been examined and retained to support residency requirements. Forty scholarship awards were examined, and there was not enough documentation as to ten of them to support residency requirements (Deloitte & Touche, 1997).

The Program required that a student's residency be proven by two of the following: (a) Valid driver's license, (b) State identification card, or (c) Recent utility bill, or a lease in the parent's name. Recommendations from the evaluation included enforcing the requirement that residency needed to be proven. Also, parents needed to contact the Program if there were any changes in a student's address. The evaluation

recommended periodically verifying the students' addresses with information gathered at the schools and through transportation records and other sources (Deloitte & Touche, 1997).

Upon receiving the evaluation's recommendations, the Program administrators composed remedies to be put in place for the 1997-1998 school year. Corrective actions included requirements that there be instructions on school envelopes which informed any entity not to forward mail directed to the parent of a student. Any parent of a student participating in the Program must sign a consent form authorizing his/her employer to release information about his/her income/wages. The parents' addresses were to be verified against W-2 and Social Security benefit documents. All schools were required to correct information regarding residency on a form during an annual internal audit. In July, prior to the beginning of the new school year, the parent had to verify home address and telephone numbers on the School Enrollment Survey and sign an affidavit verifying information on the internal audit form (Deloitte & Touche, 1997).

The evaluation also found discrepancies in determining if students receiving vouchers were actually in a grade covered by the Program. At the time, the Program only applied to kindergarten through the third grade. Upon receiving notice of the discrepancies, the administrators of the Program required the internal audit form to reflect grade verification from the participating school. Thus, the affidavit signed by the parent had to include grade verification. The fact that the Program currently allows participation in the Program until the 8<sup>th</sup> grade should lessen the risks of problems arising in this area of the Program. Interestingly, the problem uncovered by the evaluation involved a loss of \$8,250 due to an erroneous enrollment of a student. The student didn't qualify for the

Program due to the fact that the student was enrolled in nursery school (Deloitte & Touche, 1997).

The evaluation also discovered problems with records of guardianship. Either the parent or guardian of a student had the right to fill out an application for the Program. In reviewing the records, there were a number of students awarded vouchers who appeared to be under the care of a guardian. The records did not reflect proper authenticity of a guardianship. The problem allowed students to receive a scholarship under the premise of incomplete or false documentation (Deloitte & Touche, 1997).

The failure to ensure that the guardianship records were complete was also a legal problem. The Program administrators had the need to insure that the adult with legal authority was the individual in custody of and making decisions for a minor child. The Program administrators concurred with the recommendation that a thorough examination of legal documents or verification with a third party acceptable to the Ohio Department of Education be conducted to ensure that the student lived with his/her legal guardian (Deloitte & Touche, 1997).

The record examination also uncovered questionable expenditures charged to the Program in the amount of \$379,433 that was used to pay or was a future payment for outside consultants. There was insufficient documentation in the records proving that the correct procedures as authorized by the Ohio Revised Code had been properly followed. The administrators of the Program stated that they were unable to correct this finding because such action was outside their control. Apparently, the Ohio Department of Education was responsible for hiring the consultants and passing the cost on to the Program (Deloitte & Touche, 1997).

One of the most egregious problems discovered by the evaluation was the cost of transportation. The issue of transportation was a continually debated topic between the Cleveland City School District and the Program administrators. In House Bill 770 (1999), the 122<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly placed the responsibility of the additional cost of transportation of all the voucher students solely on the Cleveland district (Deloitte & Touche, 1997).

The report written by the Deloitte and Touche financial company exhibited the difficulties faced by the Program in providing transportation for the students. The report also showed the excessive amount of funds used to provide the transportation. In the two-year time frame covered by the report, \$1.4 million in transportation expenditures were charged to the Program. The Superintendent of Public Instruction, subject to the approval of the State Board of Education, was allowed to contract in order to provide student transportation services. The limitation, however, was, “In no event shall the payment for such service exceed the average transportation cost per pupil . . . ” (Deloitte & Touche, 1997, p. 7).

A problem had arisen with a shortage of buses and drivers at the inception of the Program. In response to the shortage, the Program administrators turned to public cab companies to transport the students at a cost of \$15-\$18 a day. The cost of transportation by school bus was \$3.33 a day. The cab companies even billed the Program for transportation costs when the parents failed to notify the company in advance of a student’s failure to attend school. Although notified of the problem with transportation, the Program management failed to provide an alternative to the current system.



According to the Program, the cost of transportation needed to be addressed to ensure the viability of the pilot program (Deloitte & Touche, 1997).

The report also recognized problems with the lack of procedures in connection with the ability of the Program administrators to monitor or reconcile cash disbursements made on the Program's behalf by the State of Ohio. The Program recognized the failure of its management in accounting for these expenditures. In order to correct this deficiency, a determination was made to compare the Program's reports with the warrant journal prepared by the Office of Management and Budget (Deloitte & Touche, 1997).

A number of miscellaneous problems also arose through the evaluation that required changes to the Program's procedures. The tuition structures of the participating schools were not verified or monitored, which allowed the tuition charged to the Program to exceed the amount previously filed. Other observations made in the report dealt with income verification and student attendance. There were not sufficient procedures in existence to ensure that proper documentation verifying the income of the parent's household was examined and retained (Deloitte & Touche, 1997).

Regarding student attendance, the report expressed habitual absenteeism. The report noted that one of the purposes of the Program was to promote better school attendance. The report stated that if the student was not attending school, the payments from the Program should stop. The managers of the Program disagreed and left the absentee issue to be decided in accordance with the participating schools policies of nonattendance (Deloitte & Touche, 1997).

Problems with the records discovered by the DeLoitte and Touche accounting firm during its evaluation of the Program resulted in a complete audit by Ohio Auditor

Jim Petro (Chancellor, 1999). The mismanagement during this period caused the Program to be 41 percent over budget. The Program had to appeal to the State Controlling Board for more funds in order to meet obligations. The Board transferred almost \$3 million from a public school account to cover the over-runs in the Program (Chancellor, 1999).

Another problem arose that carried legal ramifications regarding the Program. There were several vouchers that were made payable to the parents and were ultimately redeemed for payment. However, those vouchers were not endorsed by the parents, but by the school. The management responded to this error by re-stating that its procedure was to ensure that schools collected the voucher payments. The report noted that when a parent failed to “take responsibility for signing the warrant the school sends a certified letter stating that the warrant will be deposited in school’s account. The parent/guardian’s signature on the certified receipt verifies the parent/guardian has been notified” (Deloitte & Touche, 1997, p. 10).

In ensuring that the schools collect their money, the Program management may have violated the holding of *Zelman* (2002). In its opinion, the United States Supreme Court focused on the issue of choice. The Court found that the Program allowed individuals to “exercise genuine choice among options public and private, secular and religious” (*Zelman*, 2002, p. 662). Whether the cashing of the voucher by the school with notification to the parents of the school’s actions by mail fully comports with the principle of choice is questionable.

The reason the voucher program was found to be legal was because the Program focused on the element of choice exercised by the parent. Thus, in line with the United

States Supreme Court's holding would be to promulgate a system that ensures that the parent's choice followed, instead of just having the schools cash the checks. More restrictions directed to validating the parent's choice of where to direct the Program voucher would provide a great degree of assurance that a legal challenge could not be raised.

### **Ongoing evaluation.**

The State of Ohio hired researchers from Indiana University to conduct a longitudinal evaluation of the impact of the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Grant Program on the children, the families, and the schools involved. The research team was led by Dr. Metcalf and was conducted from the years of 1997 - 2004. The focus of the evaluation process was: (a) student academic achievement, attendance, conduct/behavior, and commitment to education; (b) parental involvement in child's education, satisfaction with schools, and educational choices; (c) student and family characteristics; (d) classroom and school characteristics; and (e) the basic functioning of the program (Metcalf, 1998).

Reports were submitted each year detailing the results of the evaluation (Metcalf, 1998). The initial evaluation began in the spring of 1997 and was for a three-year period. The first year report examined the impact of the program on students' academic achievement and monitored the characteristics of the participating students and their families. The Project Report (Report) detailed the activities and findings of the evaluation as related to student achievements during the first year of the Program (Metcalf et. al, 1998a, p. 1).

The Report was presented in three sections. The first section examined the debate over school choice both in a broad sense and in the specific context of the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Grant Program. The second section focused on the specific procedures, findings, and conclusions that could be drawn from the current evaluation. The final section of the Report discussed (i) issues or evaluation problems which arose, and (ii) suggestions for improving both the implementation and evaluation of school choice programs (Metcalf et. al., 1998a, p. 1).

As the first section has already been discussed above, an explanation of the remaining two sections will be discussed. The second section of longitudinal study on the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Grant Program conducted by Metcalf et. al (1998a) was guided by two basic questions:

1. What are the effects of the scholarship and/or tutoring grant programs on students' academic achievement?
2. What are the characteristics of participating students and their families and how do they compare with those of non-participating students and families? (Metcalf et al., 1998a, p. 14)

The research team (hereinafter "team") focusing on the above evaluative questions employed a quasi-experimental research design which was conducted in two distinct phases, one for each research question. The Report only documented the first phase of the project: the data collection and analysis of the effects of Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Grant Program on students' academic achievement because the second phase of the project (which would answer evaluative question two) was still being conducted. When finished, data in the second phase will have been collected and

analyzed in order to compare the characteristics and background of students who participated in the scholarship or tutoring grant programs with their non-participating Cleveland City School District (CCSD) peers (Metcalf et al., 1998a, p. 15).

The methodology of the longitudinal study on the Cleveland Program employed an Evaluation Design. The Report noted that in an experimental study, students would have been randomly assigned to a public school or a private school. Random assignment provided some degree of confidence that the students in each group were, for the most part, identical to those in the other group on all important variables before they participated in the programs. While students were similar at the beginning of the program, with certain qualifications, academic differences found after they had participated in the program could be attributed to the effects of the program. In this case, however, random assignment to different groups (e.g., scholarship, tutoring grant, tutoring grant waiting list, non-participating) was not possible because all interested students were offered a scholarship or tutoring grant (Metcalf et al., 1998a, p. 15).

Instead, the team employed a quasi-experimental, post hoc research design that compared students' current academic achievement after statistically controlling non-program factors. The team resorted to a basic approach to the evaluation which involved three steps:

1. students' academic achievement was measured through a special administration of a standardized achievement test;
2. background data on relevant non-program factors were obtained from students' previous school records and used to adjust achievement scores to reflect these important differences between the groups; and

3. adjusted achievement scores were compared using analysis of covariance techniques. (Metcalf et al., 1998a, pp. 16-17)

In the Report, factors were discussed that could explain or help to predict student test scores. A decision was made to include the following factors. The team looked at Prior Achievement test scores. Specifically, they looked at the Second-grade California Achievement Test Form E (reading) *vocabulary* score and second-grade California Achievement Test Form E (reading) *comprehension* score which were expressed in normal curve equivalents as indicators of students' previous achievement. Demographics factors that were known to influence students' academic performances were also included (Metcalf et al., 1998a, pp. 17-18).

The focus of the study was on third-grade students for whom background and previous achievement data were available. Due to the lack of a sufficient sample, however, the Team determined that for phase one, the central evaluation question would be:

On average, are the test scores of third-grade non-scholarship public school students and third-grade public-private<sup>9</sup> scholarship students similar or different? From a statistical perspective, can the hypothesis that the average test scores are the same be accepted or is there significant evidence to the contrary? (Metcalf et al., 1998a, p. 22).

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The term *public-private scholarship student* is used throughout to refer to students who had attended a Cleveland public school during the previous academic year, but who were using a voucher to attend a private school during the 1996-97 academic year. Similarly, *private-private scholarship students* are those who attended a private school during the preceding year, and who were attending a private school using a voucher during the 1996-97 academic year.

After conducting the research, the team wrote a Summary of Findings. The team found that an examination of the full impact of the tutoring grant program could not be determined due to the small sample of students. Nevertheless, the team still analyzed the data and found several important findings. The team found that:

The public-private scholarship students scored higher (on average) than non-scholarship public school students on the second-grade vocabulary and comprehension tests. In an absolute sense, the public-private scholarship students were higher achievers in the previous year than the non-scholarship public school students.

*In the absence of controls for background characteristics*, public-private scholarship students scored higher (on average) than non-scholarship public school students on the third-grade total battery and on each of the five subtests ( $p < .05$ ). In an absolute sense, the scholarship students did as well or better than their non-scholarship public school peers.

*When available background characteristics and previous levels of achievement are controlled*, there are no statistically significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) between no scholarship and scholarship students for scores on the third-grade total battery or any of the five subtests. (Metcalf et al., 1998a, pp. 44-45)

The team noted the limitation of the study because in this phase of the evaluation, only scores on standardized tests were examined. This was because there might have been other aspects of schooling that the private schools provided to their students that public schools did not. The team found that this study asked specific questions regarding achievement scores which resulted in appropriately specific answers. The team also

noted that the current analyses took into account only five of the many background and non-program factors that might have contributed to students' performances on the third-grade tests. Obviously, there may be other factors that contributed to the scores of the two groups of students (Metcalf et al., 1998, p. 47).

In the final section of the Report, discussed issues or evaluation problems that had arisen, and suggestions for improving both the implementation and evaluation of school choice programs were presented. The team stated that the results added to the very limited research base on information about publicly-funded private school voucher programs. What the team determined to be equally important was the processes put in place, and the initial findings drawn from those processes that provided a substantial foundation on which to build future evaluation activities. The evaluation methodology used by Metcalf and his research team and the results were then discussed in the context of previous research of school choice programs. The methodology and results were generalized to continuing evaluation activities for future years (Metcalf et al., 1998a, p. 47).

Subsequent evaluations conducted by the team occurred. In the years of 1997-1998, additional data was collected on many of the same scholarship and public school students who were then in fourth-grade (Metcalf et al., 1998b). The subsequent evaluation by the team focused on answering three questions.

*“Evaluation Question 1. Are there differences between students who returned to the scholarship program during their fourth-grade year and those who did not return after their third-grade year?”* (Metcalf et al., 1998b, p. 1).



The finding was that there was no significant difference between the returning and non-returning scholarship students on any of the background demographic or pre-program achievement measures. The students who did not continue in the program as fourth-graders, however, were those who were achieving at significantly lower levels in third-grade. Their third grade achievement scores in reading, science, and social studies were lower. There were no significant differences found between the continuing and discontinuing students in third-grade language or mathematics (Metcalf et al., 1998b, p. 2).

*“Evaluation Question 2. Are there differences between fourth-grade scholarship and public school students with regard to demographic and background characteristics or pre-program achievement?”* (Metcalf et al., 1998b, p. 2).

Both scholarship and public school students were found to be remarkably similar in terms of background demographic characteristics and previous achievement. The team noted that the characteristics of the students in the first year were similar to the students in the second year. Specifically, each group of students was primarily African-American (84-85%), most lived with only their mother (62-70%), most were eligible for the free lunch program (85-87%), and slightly over half were females (52%). Both groups of students also had been achieving at roughly the national mean for second graders (Metcalf et al., 1998b, p. 2).

*“Evaluation Question 3. Are there differences in classroom-relevant variables (e.g., class size, teachers’ education level, and teachers’ experience) between scholarship classes and public school classes?”* (Metcalf et al., 1998b, p. 2).

In response to this question, there was a significant difference between scholarship and public school classrooms. The scholarship class size was significantly smaller than public schools. Although teachers in both groups had completed a baccalaureate degree, public school teachers had at least some course work beyond the baccalaureate level. Public school teachers also had more years of teaching experience than teachers in scholarship classrooms (Metcalf et al., 1998b, p. 2).

*“Evaluation Question 4. What are the effects of the scholarship program on students’ academic achievement after two years in the scholarship program and when other relevant variables are controlled?”* (Metcalf et al., 1998b, p. 2).

The team determined that when demographic characteristics, prior achievement, and classroom-relevant variables were controlled, scholarship students performed better than their public school peers in language. There were no significant differences in reading, science, mathematics, or social studies. The team also found that students who were attending two-newly established private schools performed significantly less well in all tested areas than both scholarship students attending established private schools and public school students (Metcalf et al., 1998b, p. 2).

The conclusion reached by the team in this evaluation was that there still was much to learn about the effects and effectiveness of the Cleveland Scholarship Program. Notably, important information about how or why parents make the choices they do, and how the program impacted schools and teachers had not yet been collected (Metcalf et al., 1998b, p. 3). Further evaluations were expected to contribute that information. Nevertheless, the second-year results were found to add to those from year one in order to provide a more complete picture of the scholarship program (Metcalf et al., 1998b, p. 3).

The team found that a goal of the scholarship program appeared to have been met, as the Program provided additional educational options to low-income, minority, single parent families (Metcalf et al., 1998b, pp. 2-3). The team also determined that the goal of having educational choice without drawing only the best students from the public schools also appeared to have been met. Students who continued in the program for at least two years were comparable to their public school peers in demographic characteristics and previous academic achievement (Metcalf et al., 1998b, pp. 2-3).

Regarding classroom size, the team found that the scholarship classes were smaller than public school classes by about three students; however, neither public nor scholarship classes were dramatically smaller than would have been expected (Metcalf et al., 1998b, p. 4). As to teacher experience and credentials, public school teachers had more teaching experience and had taken more course work. Therefore, the team determined that neither group seemed to be substantially advantaged across these three variables. Student achievement also remained unclear. Scholarship students performed at significantly higher levels in language, but in all other areas (reading, mathematics, science, social studies), both groups performed at statistically similar levels (Metcalf et al., 1998b, p. 4).

Metcalf (1999) summarized the final evaluation of the initial study. He drew several defensible conclusions about process/descriptive and outcome/impact factors. First, the scholarship program served the families and children for which it was intended and developed in the sense that the majority of children who participated in the program were unlikely to have enrolled in a private school without the scholarship (Metcalf, 1999). Second, the public schools tended to be larger in terms of student enrollment but

smaller in number of grades than private schools (Metcalf, 1999). The public schools had more full-time teachers who were likely to possess considerably more teaching experience and to have completed coursework beyond their undergraduate degree than their private school peers (Metcalf, 1999). The parents who applied for the scholarship program were likely to be better educated, and more interested, motivated, and involved in their children's education than the parents who do not apply (Metcalf, 1999). Moreover, parental participation improved the parents' perceptions of and satisfaction with their children's schools (Metcalf, 1999).

Notwithstanding these initial conclusions, the three-year study was still insufficient to provide any more detailed definitive conclusions about the longitudinal evaluation of the impact of the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Grant Program on the children, the families, and the schools involved. In addition, a number of issues or questions arose that had not been originally considered. What was not clear was the impact the program would have on either the public or private schools, the effect of participation in the scholarship program on students' academic achievement, the effect of participation in the scholarship program on students' attendance, conduct, and commitment, and the types of instructional interactions that occurred in the classrooms (Metcalf, 1999).

In 2004, the final year of the study, the following research was conducted by a team of researchers led by Dr. Plucker, who had replaced Dr. Metcalf at Indiana University (Plucker, Muller, Hanson, Ravert & Makel, 2006). The researchers found that, in general, their analyses of the most current Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Grant

Program data available supported the overall conclusions drawn from previous years of the longitudinal study (Plucker et al., 2006).

The researchers determined that their current conclusions relating to student, teacher and classroom characteristics were similar to previous years' findings that: (a) scholarship students were less likely to be African-American or Latino/a than their public school peers; (b) students who exited the scholarship program were more likely to be African American or Latino/a than were students who remained in the scholarship program; and students who exited the program tended to have lower levels of achievement than students who remained in the scholarship program; (c) the majority of scholarship students were already attending a private school prior to receiving the scholarship<sup>10</sup>; and (d) although similar in some ways, the types of teachers and classrooms that scholarship students in private schools and their peers in public schools experience differ in terms of teacher education level (Plucker et al., 2006).

Regarding impact on student achievement, the researchers first noted that the results were also similar to previous years in that those students who would continue to use a scholarship to attend private schools began their schooling at the start of first grade with higher achievement scores (Plucker et al., 2006, p. 166). They elaborated by stating, "In other words, seven-year scholarship recipient-users had statistically significant higher achievement test scores than their public school peers in all measured areas (reading,

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This finding does not correspond with Metcalf (1999), where the researchers concluded that the scholarship program served the families and children for which it was intended and developed in the sense that the majority of children who participated in the program were unlikely to have enrolled in a private school without the scholarship.

language, math and overall) at the beginning of first grade (Fall, 1998)” (Plucker et al., 2006, p. 166).

Thus, in order to provide themselves with the most valid analyses of the impact of the Cleveland Scholarship Tutoring Grant Program on student achievement, the researchers determined to conduct analyses that adjusted for these early differences between seven-year scholarship students and their public school peers. The results that were reached indicated that:

by the end of the sixth grade, after controlling for differences in minority status, student mobility and prior achievement, there are no statistically significant differences in overall achievement scores between students who have used a scholarship throughout their academic career (i.e., kindergarten through sixth grade) and students in the two public school comparison groups. However, there are statistically significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) in three specific subject areas: language, science and social studies. Sixth grade scholarship students who had been in the CSTP since kindergarten outperformed both public school comparison groups in language and social studies; and these sixth grade scholarship students also outperformed public school non-applicants in science. (Plucker et al., 2006, pp. 166-167)

The researchers noted, however, that after adjusting for prior differences in academic achievement, public school non-applicants outperformed seven-year scholarship students at various points during the study, primarily in the area of mathematics (Plucker et al., 2006). They determined that although there was no

statistically significant difference in mathematics at the end of the sixth grade, this finding warranted further examination (Plucker et al., 2006).

The researchers also noted that their findings favoring seven-year scholarship students did not appear until the students' sixth grade year. They opined that because these differences were emerging during the early middle school years, it was possible that the impact of the Cleveland Scholarship Tutoring Grant Program was different in the early elementary years than it was during middle school years. The researchers found it logical to assume that the public students' transition to middle school or the differences in curriculum and organization during middle school years might help to account for these differences (Plucker et al., 2006).

### **Parental Attitude in Choosing a School**

A detailed discussion has been presented on the background and constitutionality of vouchers, as well as an evaluation of the academic results of the Cleveland Scholarship Tutoring Grant Program. However, regardless of the scholarly views of the applicability and effectiveness of vouchers, what is important to determine is if parents in Oklahoma would use vouchers as an intricate part of their children's education. In order to conduct research on parental attitude related to the use of vouchers, an examination of the literature related to parental attitude was conducted. It should be noted that the majority of research regarding voucher programs deals with student achievement and not parental attitude.

In the continuing study of the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Grant Program, Metcalf (2003) was able to evaluate factors which the parents used for choosing a school. The parents were asked to rate the importance of factors in selecting their

child's/children's school. These included "class size, quality of teacher, academic quality; the child's preference for a school, the school's reputation, diversity, extracurricular activities, classroom discipline, safety, and location" (Metcalf, 2003, p. 40).

The parents of public school students regarded "Safety" as the most important factor. This was followed by the "Quality of Teachers," "Academic Quality," "Classroom Discipline," "School's Reputation," "Location," "Class Size," "Child Preference," "Extracurricular Activities," and "Diversity. The parents indicated that the "teaching and administrative staff" and the "curriculum at the schools" were also factors (Metcalf, 2003, p. 43)

Manna (2002) examined the signals sent by parents during their selection of a school. Manna (2002) first warned, "signals parents send with their educational choices can be ambiguous and difficult to interpret" (p. 426). Manna (2002) conducted a study which examined the rationales parents provided and the factors they weighed in leaving public schools. The data was obtained from surveys given to parents who participated in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP). Parental dissatisfaction was expressed in: (a) teacher performance, (b) principal performance, (c) school discipline, (d) program of instruction, (e) textbooks, (f) amount the child learned, (g) opportunities for parental involvement, and (h) school location (Manna, 2002).

The research findings of Manna's (2002) study indicated that overall, the parents expressing interest in vouchers did think that the public schools were a total failure. There also was not one single important factor that caused parents to leave the public schools. Instead, the parents were dissatisfied for a number of different reasons.



Moreover, the reasons carried different weight depending on the school their child/children attended.

One of the main reason parents were dissatisfied was in regard to the level of academic knowledge their children had achieved. This was followed by discipline, program of instruction, principal performance, overall level of dissatisfaction, teacher performance, textbooks, opportunities for parental involvement, and location. Manna (2002) found that these findings were “especially important given the market model that voucher programs assume. With expanded choice, competition between individual schools is what supposedly will drive parents out of some places and into others” (pp. 437-438).

A study of Vermont’s school choice system provides information regarding the factors parents and students considered in deciding which school to attend (Mathis & Etzler, 2002). The Vermont study provides several factors not relevant to this study presented herein because Vermont’s system involves rural schools. Several factors, however, are relevant to how parents will choose urban schools. For instance, parents tended to select schools based on similar socioeconomic levels so their children would “fit-in” (Mathis & Etzler, 2002, p. 7). The findings also indicated that poorer families failed to pursue private schools because of the extra costs associated with private schools.

When the students were examined, the reasons that influenced their choice of schools included the fact that they disliked their home school and were attracted to a choice school option. Responding to their satisfaction with the choice school, those same students described “social/friends” as being what they liked most and not their educational experience (Mathis & Etzler, 2002, pp. 14-15).

In conclusion, it is obvious from the aforementioned literature in this section that parents consider numerous factors in making their decisions in selecting schools. Those factors include parental satisfaction with the public schools, the faculty and staff, and the curriculum. However, there are other factors to consider that encompass personal reasons the parents have for selecting their child's/children's school. Parents consider their child's/children's preferences in selecting a school. They also consider factors such as location, the cost of attending private schools, and the desire for their child/children to adapt socially. What can be determined is that parents individualize their decisions in selecting a school.

Parental attitude in selecting a school, public or private, will be important in determining if vouchers will be a viable educational choice for parents of students in failing schools. The market model and the equity model as described in this literature review chapter suggest that parents will use vouchers to allow their children to attend the more advantaged private school. The aforementioned research, however, indicates that parents consider numerous factors before selecting their child/children's schools. Therefore, it is important that parental attitude for using or rejecting vouchers be determined before a decision is made to implement a voucher program in Oklahoma.

### **Oklahoma Voters' Position on School Choice**

In a school choice survey performed by the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice in 2008, 1200 of Oklahoma's voters expressed their opinions regarding school choice programs that would include vouchers and tax-credit scholarships. Key findings were as follows: (a) about two-fifths of Oklahoma voters are not satisfied with the state's current public school system. In fact, 41 percent of the voters rate Oklahoma's public

school system as “poor” or “fair”; (b) more than four out of five Oklahomans would prefer to send their child to a school other than a regular public school. Only 17 percent say a regular public school is their top choice; (c) Oklahoma voters value private schools and they are more than twice as likely to prefer sending their child to a private school over any other school type; (d) Oklahomans like having a range of schooling options. Majorities express support for school vouchers (53 percent) and charter schools (54 percent), with many also open to virtual schools (40 percent); and (e) more than half of voters are favorable to a tax-credit scholarship system (DiPerna, 2008). The demographics of the participants in the survey by Diperna (2008) established that in addition to being voters: (a) 78% were parents of school-age children in grades K-12; (b) 8% had total family incomes under \$25,000, 17 % had total family incomes between \$25,000 - \$49,999, 39% had total family incomes between \$50,000 - \$74,999, 27% had total family incomes between \$75,000 - \$150,000, and 9% had incomes over \$150,000; and (c) 8% were African-American, 2% were Asian, 9% were Hispanic; 4% were listed as Other, and 77% were White (DiPerna, 2008).

In Diperna’s (2008) survey, 25% of the respondents’ income was under \$50,000 and 75% was over \$50,000. However, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (see <http://www.census.gov>), Oklahoma’s median income was only \$42,836 in 2008. Moreover, the Oklahoma State Department of Education (see [sde.state.ok.us](http://sde.state.ok.us)), in the 2008-2009 school year, reported that 85% of the students in the Oklahoma City and Tulsa public schools qualified for free or reduced lunch based on a family of four making \$27,500.

Hence, Diperna's (2008) survey represents the opinions of only a segment of Oklahoma's population. It is important to note that Diperna's survey is limited in informing low income populations about the specifics of obtaining and using vouchers.

### **Summation**

This Chapter, Review of the Literature has provided information about a number of school choice voucher issues that will be relevant to implementing a voucher program in Oklahoma. It has also illuminated several areas for research about vouchers that need to be investigated before the approval for a voucher program is given by the State's government. Foremost, is a voucher program legal under the Oklahoma Constitution? Once the legality of a voucher program has been established, a serious discussion needs to be instigated in order to determine the applicability of such a program to its targeted population. The research conducted in this study aims to provide relevant data for such a determination.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Introduction**

This Chapter discusses the methods and procedures that was used to answer the three research questions of this study:

1. Is a voucher program that includes religiously affiliated schools legal under the Oklahoma Constitution?
2. Even if such a program is legal, will parents of children in schools failing to meet benchmarks that indicate improvement in areas mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act use the vouchers?
3. What factors of parental attitude will preclude the use of vouchers?

The first part of the study entailed conducting legal research to address research question one: “Is a voucher program that includes religiously affiliated schools legal under the Oklahoma Constitution?” Research was conducted in accordance with the standard methods of the legal community as set forth by the Oklahoma Bar Association, Oklahoma Supreme Court, and the United States Supreme Court.

Legal research was conducted by locating, reading, and interpreting Oklahoma’s Constitution, statutes, and relevant case law. These documents were found on the Oklahoma Supreme Court’s website<sup>11</sup> and through the legal research service “Westlaw.”<sup>12</sup> It was also necessary to find support for a legal conclusion about the

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<sup>11</sup> See [oscn.net](http://oscn.net).

<sup>12</sup> See [westlaw.com](http://westlaw.com).

constitutionality of vouchers by referencing the decisions of federal cases. Again, legal research was conducted using the provider “Westlaw.”

The second part of the study entailed utilizing educational research methods to address research questions two and three: “Even if such a program is legal, will parents of children in schools failing to meet benchmarks that indicates improvement in areas mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act use the vouchers?” and “What factors of parental attitude will preclude the use of vouchers?” Educational research methods were utilized to discover parents’ attitude toward the acceptance of vouchers and attendance at private schools for their children in Oklahoma.

Although Oklahoma does not have an entire school district with failing schools, test scores from the Oklahoma State Department of Education’s 2008 - 2009 School Improvements List under the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) requirements (see Appendix A) established that there are some failing schools in the state with the majority of the failing schools located in Oklahoma and Tulsa school districts. The study consisted of examining data obtained from three schools identified on the list: one school located in Oklahoma City and two schools in Tulsa. Specifically, parental attitude was examined in order to determine if enrollment in a private school would be an option for those parents with children in the failing schools. Parental attitude revealed the reasons for foregoing the option of having a child attend a private school and instead having the child stay in public schools.

### **Design of the Study**

A mixed methods study was designed to investigate the research questions in the second part of the study. First, a quantitative study involving the use of questionnaires

was conducted as the primary method to collect data that would apply to research questions two and three. Data to address research question number two is linked to the “yes or no” question on the questionnaire that asked respondents: “If a voucher was an available school choice option for you, would you use a voucher to send your child/children to a private school?” (see Appendix B). The primary purpose of the questionnaire designed was to address research question number three: “What factors of parental attitude will preclude the use of vouchers?” by asking questions that would provide data that describes parental attitude regarding the use of vouchers.

According to Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996), questionnaires are a data-collection method that inquires about an individual’s feelings, motivations, attitudes, accomplishments, and experiences. Thus the questionnaire for this study sought to inquiry about parents’ attitude towards using vouchers as a school choice option for their child/children.

The questionnaire was given to an expert panel to assess the instrument in terms of reliability and validity of the survey. The panel consisted of a parent who felt positive toward considering educational alternatives, a neutral participant, and a school administrator who held, if not a negative view, at least a skeptical view to educational alternatives.

Prior to providing any information to the panel, the University of Oklahoma’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) was contacted for an opinion on whether the advice of the expert panel was qualified as conducting research. The Board determined that using an expert panel did not fall under the requirements of conducting research. Although not labeled as a research strategy, the use of an expert panel was significant to the process of

establishing the validity of the questionnaire. As stated in Gall, Borg, and Gall, (1996), “questionnaires and interviews are forms of measurement, and, as such, they must meet the same standards of validity . . . as appl[ied] to standardized tests and other measures in research” (p. 290).

The panel members were provided the questionnaire and information about the goals of the study. The participants were asked to examine each question within the parameters of their background and relevant knowledge about the subject of vouchers. The participants were asked to provide constructive commentary after any question that the participant determined was relevant to improving data collected from the questionnaire. The participants were also asked to provide additional overall feedback regarding the questionnaire that they believed was important to addressing the goals of the research.

It was the intent of the researcher to also utilize a qualitative research technique, focus group interview, as an additional means to provide follow-up information to the questionnaire section that addresses this study’s research question number three. This qualitative research technique would have involved interviewing parents to have them express in their own terms their reasons for not using vouchers and why they were keeping their child/children in the public schools. The interaction of the parents in the focus group interview was expected to “stimulate them to state feelings, perceptions, and beliefs that they would not express individually”(Gall, Borg, & Gall,1996, p. 308).

The use of a focus group “facilitates interpretation of quantitative results and adds depth to the responses obtained in the more structured survey” (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p. 15). Hence, a focus group was intended to be used to acquire additional data



about the items asked in this study's questionnaire. Due to no turn out of parents at the scheduled focus group interview meeting site – no focus group interviews were conducted for this study. Further discussion on the absence of employing a focus group interview is described in Chapter 5, Findings and Limitations.

Also part of this study's design and as noted earlier in the introduction, a historical review of legal documentation was examined to address this study's research question number one.

### **Sample**

The quantitative study consisted of obtaining and examining data from the Oklahoma State Department of Education's 2008-2009 School Improvements List under the No Child Left Behind Act (2004) requirements (see Appendix A) that identified schools underperforming in the State.

There were 42 schools on the list, with the majority of them located in Oklahoma City and Tulsa. Twenty schools on the Improvement List were not considered due to the requirement for this study, as based on literature, that the schools selected to participate in a voucher program must have a history of failing. These schools did not meet that requirement because they had made progress on the identified benchmarks for the years of 2008-2009 (see Appendix A).

After not considering 20 schools on the list that were making improvements, only 22 schools were left to select from that fit the criteria for a failing school. Nevertheless, further reduction in the number of eligible schools occurred due to the study's requirement that the students in those schools come from low-income and minority families, as were the students who qualified for enrolling in the Cleveland Program.

Specifically, schools with an economically disadvantaged, minority student population were considered. This requirement narrowed the eligible schools to six (see Appendix A).

In the final group of six schools for consideration to carry out the quantitative investigation, two elementary schools with a very young population were not considered because the study required some participation by the students. This left four schools that fit the criteria of this study: Jefferson and Rogers Middle School in Oklahoma City and Clinton and Gilcrease Middle Schools in Tulsa as eligible for the study (see Appendix A). In order to get a robust sampling of parents of children attending those schools, Clinton, Gilcrease, and Rogers Middle Schools were all selected as school sites for this study. Questionnaires were dispatched to 1059 homes based on the student population total at the respective selected school.

The Tulsa schools, Clinton and Gilcrease were selected first because the Tulsa School District had responded to the researcher's request to conduct research while the Oklahoma City School District's approval was still pending. Once the Oklahoma City School District sent their approval to conduct research in the district, Rogers Middle School was selected over Jefferson Middle School because it had been on the School Improvements List a year longer (see Appendix A).

Three hundred and three questionnaires were mailed to the parents of students attending Gilcrease Middle School, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Three hundred and seventy-one questionnaires were mailed to the parents of students attending Clinton Middle School, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Three hundred and eight-five questionnaires were given to Rogers Middle School's administrator in Oklahoma City for hand-delivery by the students to their parents.

Hence, parents with students in Clinton, Gilcrease, and Rogers, Middle Schools were sent questionnaires to complete. Those parents who had responded on the questionnaire “no” they would not use a voucher and wished to participate in the focus group would have become the sample for the qualitative portion of this study. In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to contact the researcher and give their first names and a phone number if interested in participating in the focus group. More discussion about the focus group follows in the data collection technique section of this chapter.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

#### **Survey Questionnaire**

Survey instruments specifically designed for a “pre-voucher study” were not discovered at the time this study commenced. This means that a similar pre-voucher study had not been previously conducted. If there had been such a study, using the same survey instrument would have allowed comparisons between the two studies. Therefore, a questionnaire was designed by the researcher to produce data that would address answering research questions two and three of this study. The questions for this study were designed after reviewing the literature on school voucher programs..

The first part of the questionnaire created for this study asked if the parents would use vouchers (see Appendix B); this question was created to illicit responses to address research question two. If respondents answered “no” to the first part of the questionnaire, they were instructed to complete the second part. The second part of the questionnaire was created to illicit responses to research question three which aimed to examine parental attitude by asking questions about the parents’ choice of not using vouchers.

The review of the literature of “post-voucher studies” led to creating what statements were important to ask parents in order to obtain the relevant data about parental attitude.

The statements were grouped according to five main reasons for why parents would not use vouchers. This was done prior to receiving any data only to assist the researcher in designing the instrument and later to organize and present the data. Moreover, these five reasons were derived from the literature review and were used to inform the findings of the study as presented in Chapter 5.

Of the five reasons, Reason Three: Location, directly came from the literature review and helped formulate the related statement to this reason. For the rest of the five reasons, the statements came from the literature review and were grouped in the questionnaire with the corresponding reason. The following are the five main reasons with corresponding statements from the questionnaire listed in numerical order as on the questionnaire.

**Reason One: Satisfaction with the Public School.** The parents are satisfied with how the principal does his job, how the teachers do their job, the curriculum, and their child/children’s academic performance.

1. The principal in my child/children’s school does a good job of running the school and communicating with the parents.
2. The teachers in my child/children’s school do a good job of educating my child/children.
3. I am satisfied with the schoolwork (curriculum) given to my child/children.

4. I am satisfied with my child's/children's academic performance at the school.

**Reason Two: Loyalty.** The parents have an attachment to the public school because the parent or other family members attended that school, and/or their child's/children's friends and social activities are at the public school, and/or their child/children would not get along with the students in a private school..

5. I want my child/children to attend this school because I, or another family member, attended it.
6. I will keep my child/children in this school because my child/children are in extracurricular activities and/or sports.
7. I will keep my child/children in this school because their friends are here.
8. My child/children will not get along with the children that go to a private school.

**Reason Three: Location.** The parents' day-to-day needs required convenient location of the school.

9. I want my child/children in this school because it is convenient to where I live.

**Reason Four: Added costs.** The cost of tuition at the alternative school, even if that cost was subsidized by the State, plus the cost of uniforms, etc., prohibit enrolling the child/children in the alternative school.

10. I will not use a voucher to have my child/children attend a private school because I would find it difficult to pay part of the tuition for a private school.

11. Even if all the tuition is paid for, I would find it difficult to pay for uniforms and other costs for a private school.

**Reason Five: Religiously affiliated school.** The parents did not want their child/children to attend a secular school.

12. I do not want my child/children to attend a religious private school.
13. I do not want my child/children to attend a religious school that is not in my faith.

The questionnaires were given to all the parents of students in the selected schools for this study: Rogers Middle School in Oklahoma City; Clinton and Gilcrease Middle Schools in Tulsa. The Tulsa Public School District and Oklahoma City School District were contacted for permission to conduct the study. The Oklahoma City School District granted permission. The Tulsa Public School District, however, chose not to grant access to conduct the study in the selected schools in their district. Their refusal necessitated a request for the parents' mailing addresses as authorized by The Oklahoma Open Records Act, 51 O.S. 2001, § 24.5. The request was made electronically on forms provided on the Tulsa School District's website.

An introductory letter (see Appendix C) and the questionnaire (see Appendix B) were either mailed in envelopes addressed to "Resident" to the parents of students in the designated schools in the Tulsa School District or they were hand-delivered to the parents by the students in the designated school in the Oklahoma City School District. In both scenarios, the parents were requested to send the completed questionnaire back to the researcher in the self-addressed, stamped envelope included with the introductory letter and questionnaire.

The questionnaire began by informing the parents not to fill out the questionnaire if they had already answered one for another one of their children (see Appendix B). In order to avoid skewing the analysis, this method should have helped in preventing multiple questionnaires from one parent. The issue of skewing was more applicable to the hand-delivered questionnaires at Rogers Middle School where the researcher could not control multiple questionnaires to one address. The list of addresses used for the Clinton and Gilcrease Middle Schools' questionnaires allowed removing duplicate addresses by the researcher in order to prevent the receipt of more than one questionnaire by a parent.

The parents were also informed that the questionnaire was anonymous. The parents were asked for demographic information regarding their race and income, but it was voluntary. They were also informed that the researcher would take their first names and phone numbers if they wished to participate in a focus group to be arranged at a later time (see Appendix B).

The instrument was designed to produce two initial groups, who would answer research question two – “If a voucher was an available school choice option for you, would you use a voucher to send your child/children to a private school?”. The two groups were those parents who would say yes, and those parents who would say no to the question “would they use a voucher?”. The cover letter explained the use of vouchers in that a voucher equal to the sum given by the State to their child's/children's public school would be sent to the parents for use in an alternative school. The parents were informed that they would be responsible for any tuition not paid by the voucher. In addition, the parents were informed that although transportation to the alternative school of their

choice would be available, an alternative school might not be located in the same neighborhood as the child's/children's public school. The parents were also informed that religious and non-religious schools would be available, but the majority of private schools were affiliated with a specific church and/or religion (see Appendix C). After receiving this information in the cover letter, the parents were then asked in the questionnaire to answer "yes or no" if they would use vouchers to send their children to an alternative school (see Appendix B).

### **Focus Group Interviews**

Those parents willing to participate in the focus group were instructed in the introductory letter (see Appendix C) and questionnaire (see Appendix B) to contact the researcher and provide their first names and phone numbers. The optimum number of participants sought for the focus group was to be from six to twelve parents. According to Stewart and Shamdasani (1990), "Fewer than 6 participants make for a rather dull discussion, and more than 12 participants are difficult for the moderator to manage" (p. 5).

The focus group was to be conducted in a private room at a local public library near the designated schools. The participants were to be identified by a number. The researcher, who was also the moderator, was the only individual privy to the first names of the participants. The researcher, i.e. moderator, was to lead a discussion based on the interview guide (see Appendix D). There were ten questions in the interview guide. The ten questions were taken directly from the statements in the questionnaire to further probe for the reasons the parents would or would not use a voucher. "The interview guide sets the agenda for a focus group discussion. It should grow directly from the research



questions that were the impetus for the research” (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p. 60).

Ideally, the discussion was to be audio-taped, which is a common procedure to carry out for focus groups (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990).

### **Change to the Questionnaire and the Focus Group**

After all of Gilcrease Middle School’s questionnaires and all but 92 of the Clinton Middle School’s questionnaires were mailed, the questionnaire was changed specific to the purpose of the focus group. The original questionnaire noted that the purpose of the focus group was to discuss the reasons why parents wouldn’t use vouchers. The revised questionnaire noted that the purpose of the focus group was to discuss vouchers in general. The change was brought on by the fact that there were no calls from parents requesting to participate in the focus group. It was hoped that the change would cause parents to volunteer for the focus group, however, this did not occur. Subsequently, after mailing the remaining 92 questionnaires to Clinton Middle School parents, there were still no calls received from parents requesting to participate in the focus group.

It was also hoped that some of the participants who would volunteer for the focus group would not use vouchers or would have liked to use vouchers but couldn’t based on the reasons stated in the questionnaire. A focus group including parents in these categories would have provided a discussion that furnished data that expanded on the reasons for not using a voucher as originally intended.

As previously mentioned, at this point the Oklahoma City School District authorized that the study could be conducted in their district. Rogers Middle School’s questionnaire was hand-delivered by the student to their parents. There was then another change to the questionnaire due to the emergence of unplanned data received. Clinton

and Gilcrease parents who were instructed to stop and return the questionnaire after they had marked “yes, they would use a voucher to send their child/children to a private school,” provided unplanned data by answering the rest of the questionnaire. There may have been Clinton and Gilcrease parents who marked “yes,” but who would still not use vouchers due to the reasons stated in the questionnaires. However, in accordance with the instructions on the Clinton and Gilcrease questionnaires, those parents were told to not finish the questionnaire (see Appendix B for original questionnaire).

In order to be consistent with the already received unplanned data, language was removed from the original questionnaire that instructed that only parents who marked “no, they would not use a voucher to send their child/children to a private school,” should answer the remainder of the questionnaire. On the revised questionnaire, after responding to the “yes” or “no” question on using vouchers, the respondents were asked to answer the remainder of the questionnaire (see Appendix E). This change to the questionnaire was made in order to determine how many parents were marking “yes” they would use a voucher, but were indicating in the rest of the questionnaire that they would not use vouchers.

This revised questionnaire also conveyed that potential participants volunteering for the focus group were going to discuss vouchers in general. The revised questionnaire also listed the specific location of the focus group and the date and time the focus group was going to be held (see Appendix E). The purpose of identifying the location of the focus group was to assure the potential participants that the focus group was to be held locally. The respondents were also informed that the date and time could be changed to accommodate their schedules if necessary.

Two calls were received from parents requesting to participate in the focus group. The first call was from a male parent who agreed to bring several other parents to participate in the focus group. The second call was from a female parent. Her main purpose in the call was to express her desire to move her children to another school that could better handle their learning disabilities. She agreed to participate in the focus group in order to discuss this issue, and she also stated that she would bring other parents. However, there were no attendees at the set focus group.

### **Interview guide change for focus groups.**

The two calls and the unplanned data received on the questionnaires made it apparent that the researcher should revise the Interview Guide for the focus group. The researcher needed to include basic questions to assess the potential focus group participants' knowledge of vouchers, as well as their knowledge of the public school's information about failing schools.

The original Interview Guide only followed the general outlay of the statements in the questionnaire giving reasons for keeping the child/children in the public school. The Interview Guide was designed to gather insights on a parent's reasons for selecting the rating they chose to each of the statements (see Appendix D).

The revised Interview Guide was rewritten to include additional questions in order to determine if potential participants understood, (a) what a voucher was and how it worked, including the possibility of extra costs for tuition, uniforms, and fees, and (b) the public school district's current policy on school choice (see Appendix F for the revised Interview Guide). This information was explained in the cover letter (see Appendix C) and the original questionnaire (see Appendix B) and would have been referred to by the

moderator/researcher at the beginning of the focus group since it would have been necessary to discover if the potential participating parents really did understand vouchers and the district's current policy on school choice.

The focus group was designed provide potential participants more information on vouchers and the Oklahoma State Department of Education's School Improvement: Parent Notification Requirements under No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.<sup>13</sup> Potential focus group participants were to be asked how the school district's policy of school choice affected their decision to use vouchers. They were also to be asked what costs for sending their child/children to a private school would affect their decision to not use vouchers. The rest of the questions followed the same format as the questions in the Original Interview Guide except they were more specific in asking why parents would opt for or against vouchers.

Although it was arranged to hold this focus group in Midwest City at the time and date stated on the questionnaire (see Appendix E), no participants showed up. Telephone calls to the two parents who had agreed to participate were not returned. Accordingly, the qualitative part of the study to elicit further information for Research Question Three was unable to be completed due to a no show of participants.

### **Procedures**

Specific procedures were followed by the researcher in the order as discussed below.

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<sup>13</sup> See <http://sde.state.ok.us>

The survey instrument was pre-tested by an expert panel. After taking into consideration the comments and suggestions from the panel, improvements were made to the questionnaire.

One Oklahoma City school was selected from the Oklahoma State Department of Education's 2008 School Improvements List under the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) requirements. Approval was then obtained from the University of Oklahoma's IRB office to conduct the study.

The initial request to the Oklahoma City School District for permission to conduct the study was denied by the Planning Research and Evaluation Department. The Department's administrators claimed that the study would cause a burden to the designated schools' instructional time due to Oklahoma's "shorter" school year.

A subsequent request was sent in the fall of 2009 to the Oklahoma City School District and the Tulsa School District. Specifically, three schools were selected from the Oklahoma State Department of Education's 2008-2009 School Improvements List under the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) requirements: one located in Oklahoma City, Rodgers Middle School, and two in Tulsa, Clinton and Gilcrease Middle Schools.

The Director of the Office of Program Management in the Tulsa School District denied the request. The Director claimed that the study did not align with their guiding principles that: (a) the purpose of the research must be education related and directly linked to the mission of Tulsa Public Schools, and (b) the study must demonstrate a tangible benefit to the District. In response, the researcher requested the addresses of parents with students in the Clinton and Gilcrease Middle Schools. Citation was made to The Oklahoma Open Records Act, 51 O.S. 2001, §24.5, as a legal ground. After the

questionnaires were sent to parents with students in the Clinton and Gilcrease Middle Schools, the Research and Evaluation Department of the Oklahoma City Public School District granted the request to conduct research in Rogers Middle School.

A sealed envelope containing a cover letter explaining the questionnaire, Information Sheet for Consent, the questionnaire, and a stamped, self-addressed return envelope were sent to the parents Clinton and Gilcrease students. The questionnaires were left at Rogers Middle School, Oklahoma City with the school administrator for delivery to the students. The students were instructed to take the questionnaire home to their parents. The cover letter explained the purpose and significance of the study and the importance of the information to be furnished by the respondent (see Appendix C). The respondent was instructed to fill out the questionnaire and return it in the self-addressed, stamped envelope. Parents were informed that the questionnaire was anonymous; however, if they so chose, they could contact the researcher and give their first name and phone number for voluntary participation in the focus group at a later time (see Appendix B).

Three hundred and three questionnaires were mailed to the parents of students attending Gilcrease Middle School, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Three hundred and seventy-one questionnaires were mailed to the parents of students attending Clinton Middle School, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Three hundred and eighty-five questionnaires were given to the administrator of Rogers Middle School in Oklahoma City to be hand-delivered by the students to their parents. The questionnaires that were completed were returned in the stamped, self-addressed envelope.

A reservation for a private room in order to conduct the focus group was made at the Suburban Acres Library at 4606 North Garrison Avenue in Tulsa. The Suburban Acres Library was near the Gilcrease Middle School. The nearness of the library to the school was made in order to allow the parents to meet at a convenient location in the neighborhood. The researcher planned on arranging a location near the Clinton Middle School if there had been any requests by those parents to participate in the focus group.

Another reservation for a private room in order to conduct the focus group was made at the Midwest City's Public Library at 8143 E Reno, at Midwest City. The Midwest's City Public Library was near the Rogers Middle School. The nearness of the library to the school was made in order to allow the parents a convenient location in the neighborhood.

### **Methods of Analysis**

This section discusses the methods used to analyze the data obtained during the study.

#### **Questionnaire**

In the original questionnaire, the parents who marked "no" on the questionnaire when asked "If a voucher was an available school choice option for you, would you use a voucher to send your child/children to a private school?" were then requested to rate 13 follow-up statements using a *Likert scale*. In the revised questionnaire, all participating parents were asked to rate all 13 statements. These statements were designed to test parental attitude that affected the parents' decision to not use vouchers. The data received from the questionnaire was analyzed based on the parent's responses.

A *Likert scale* can be used to measure attitudes. A *Likert scale* “asks individuals to check their level of agreement . . . with various statements” (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996, p. 273). In this study, the parents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with a statement by circling the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, with the number 1 being “Strongly Agree,” number 2 being “Agree,” number 3 being “Undecided,” number 4 being “Disagree,” and number 5 being “Strongly Disagree.”

The questionnaire data was analyzed to yield frequencies and percentages of the parents checking each response category for a particular statement (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). The questionnaire also contained a comment section. A comment section was provided in order to give the respondents a means to express any further viewpoints they may have had regarding the questionnaire. The comments made on the questionnaire are listed in Chapter 4, Analysis of Data. The comments were not subject to any particular method of analysis. The comments are included in the Analysis section to give the reader an “emic perspective, that is, the respondents’ perspective on the phenomenon being studied” (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996, p. 305).

### **Focus Group**

There was no data analysis conducted for this portion of the study since the focus group interview was not carried out due to a no-show of participants. Although the researcher was prepared and had established designated locations in Tulsa and Midwest City for a focus group to be held, no one volunteered to participate in the focus group.

### **Limitations**

This section describes the limitations of this study’s Methodology. Although the survey instrument’s validity was tested, it was not tested for reliability. By not testing for



reliability, the questions asked in the survey instrument may not correlate with the five main reasons that the questionnaire elicited for not using vouchers.

Another limitation is that this study did not carry out the qualitative methodology, a focus group. Although the quantitative methodology, a questionnaire, was the primary method used for obtaining data for both research questions 2 and 3 in this study. The focus group was designed to provide follow-up information to enrich the responses given on the questionnaire.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, the design of the study, the selection of the sample, the data collection techniques, procedures followed, and limitations of the methodology employed in this study the methods of analysis were described. It was also discussed that because no instrument existed that served the purposes of this study, a specially designed questionnaire was developed for the quantitative research part of the study.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

#### **Introduction**

This study aims to assist in determining the legality of a voucher program under Oklahoma law, as well as provide information on parental attitude for using or not using vouchers. With this information, the policy makers can determine the applicability of funding and implementing voucher programs to remove children from failing schools. Although a bit precipitous, if Oklahoma implements a voucher program in the future, evaluation of that program will be a time-consuming process.<sup>14</sup> There will be no information immediately available to answer questions about success of the program.

The literature presented in Chapter 2 indicates that evaluation of a voucher program requires extensive resources as seen by the Indiana University's longitudinal evaluation the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Grant Program. The main indicator of success of the Pilot Project Scholarship Program was student achievement. The program evaluation process took years of collecting data about the students, their families, their previous school, and past and current test scores. Therefore, prior to the initiation of a voucher program in Oklahoma, it will be important to have examined and incorporated factors that will affect positively on the success of such a program.

The data analysis for this study will provide information about the different factors that will affect the implementation of a voucher program in Oklahoma. The data was acquired through legal research and a quantitative study and in accordance with the

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See in Chapter II of the Literature Review the evaluation of Cleveland, Ohio's Program conducted by The Indiana Center for Evaluation, Indiana University.

methodology described in Chapter 3. The results are also analyzed in accordance with the methodology described in Chapter 3.

### **Legal Research**

A legal research analysis of discovering and applying legal principles from the State of Oklahoma's Constitution, statutory language, and case law provided possible legal arguments that answer Research Question 1.

**Research Question 1.** Is a voucher program that includes religiously affiliated schools legal under the Oklahoma Constitution?

The first requirement in analyzing the legal principles necessary to determine if a program of vouchers is constitutional, is to read and legally interpret the language set forth in the Oklahoma Constitution. Stated in the Oklahoma Constitution is the following:

Public Money or Property - Use for Sectarian Purposes.

No public money or property shall ever be appropriated, applied, donated or used, directly or indirectly, for the use, benefit, or support of any sect, church, denomination, or system of religion, or for the use, benefit, or support of any priest, preacher, minister, or other religious teacher or dignitary, or sectarian institution as such. (Okla.Const. art. II, §5)

In analyzing this section of the Oklahoma Constitution the language clearly prohibits any public money be appropriated and used, indirectly and directly, for use by a religious entity. The Oklahoma Legislature further emphasized this legal principle by setting forth in statutory language that any program that had a sectarian purpose in public schools was prohibited:

Sectarian or religious doctrines - forbidden to be taught in Schools.

No sectarian or religious doctrine shall be taught or inculcated in any of the public schools of this state, but nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit the reading of the Holy Scriptures. (70 O.S.2001, §11-101)

In adopting charter schools, the Oklahoma Legislature again reiterated the prohibition against allowing state sponsored education be by associated with any entity dealing with sectarian purposes:

A. A charter school shall adopt a charter which will ensure compliance with the following:

1. A charter school shall comply with all federal regulations and State and local rules and statutes relating to health, safety, civil rights and insurance. By January 1, 2000, the State Department of Education shall prepare a list of relevant rules and statutes that a charter school must comply with as required by this paragraph and shall annually provide an update to the list;

2. A charter school shall be nonsectarian in its programs, admission policies, employment practices, and all other operations. A sponsor may not authorize a charter school or program that is affiliated with a nonpublic sectarian school or religious institution . . . (70 O.S.2001, §3-136)

Kemerer (1997) did an exhaustive study of all fifty States' constitutional provisions and interpretive law related to religion, public funds, public education and private entities. The constitutional provisions studied included those pertaining to "(1) religious freedom, (2) public school funds and private schools, (3) the application of public income and property to education, (4) public purpose restrictions on

appropriations, (5) general appropriation of public funds, and (6) government involvement with private organizations” ( Kemerer, 1997, p. 3).

Based on his research, Kemerer (1997) divided the States into three categories – “restrictive, permissive, uncertain – with regard to its likely orientation toward the constitutionality of State-funded school vouchers encompassing sectarian private schools” (p. 3). The restrictive and permissive categories were subdivided into three additional categories that explain whether the basis of the classification was a State constitution, case law, or attorney general opinion.

Kemerer (1997) determined that Oklahoma’s constitution provision was in the “restrictive” category. Kemerer (1997) noted that Oklahoma prohibited direct and indirect aid for sectarian purposes. He cited to *Board of Educ. v. Antone (Board of Educ., 1963)*, wherein the Oklahoma Supreme Court, strictly construing the Oklahoma Constitution, struck down a pupil transportation program for students attending parochial schools.

The law leaves to every man the right to entertain such religious views as appeal to his individual conscience, and to provide for the religious instruction and training of his own children to the extent and in the manner he deems essential or desirable. When he chooses to seek for them educational facilities which combine secular and religious instruction, he is forced with the necessity of assuming the financial burden which that choice entails. (Kemerer, 1997, p. 3)

In further analyzing the legal principles as set forth above, it would appear that the only option for the implementation of a voucher program in Oklahoma would require an amendment to the Oklahoma Constitution that would allow public monies be used for

sectarian purposes. However, recent decisions of the United States Supreme Court to include *Zelman* (2002) raises the possibility of another option. Gedicks (2004) points out that the federal Blaine Amendment (which inspired state constitutions such as Oklahoma's) was based on anti-Catholic sentiments. The state constitutional provisions that were based on the Blaine Amendment also imposed special burdens on religious schools, such as adherence to secular policies regarding the distribution of state funds and other financial aid. Accordingly, in analyzing Gedicks (2004) legal premise, an argument can be made that discrimination based on religion as espoused by the Oklahoma Constitution raises a question about that article's constitutionality.

Based on the legal argument regarding unconstitutionality of the Blaine Amendment, Gedicks (2004) argues that voucher programs can be implemented without requiring the tedious process of amending state constitutions. Gedicks (2004) discusses the recent Supreme Court decisions that consider the Establishment Clause's focus on religious neutrality (Gedicks, 2004).

In addition to *Zelman* (2002), Gedicks cites to *Mitchell v. Helm* (*Mitchell*, 2000), to illustrate his point. In *Mitchell*, the Court found that Louisiana's State law for funneling federal school aid to public and private religiously affiliated schools was, "respecting an establishment of religion" and therefore unconstitutional (*Mitchell*, 2000, p. 800). Regarding neutrality, the Court held:

[W]e have consistently turned to the principle of neutrality, upholding aid that is offered to a broad range of groups or persons without regard to their religion. If the religious, irreligious, and a religious are all alike eligible for government aid, no one would conclude that any indoctrination that any particular recipient

conducts has been done at the behest of the government. (*Mitchell*, 2000, p. 810-11)

Gedicks (2004) provided suggestions for private schools whose states pass a voucher program within the parameters of religious neutrality. First, private schools should comply with the state anti-discrimination laws, both in their admission of students and their employment of administrators, teachers, and other employees. Private schools will likely not have difficulty complying with state laws against discrimination based on race, gender, or sexual orientation. Religiously affiliated schools, however, may find that banning discrimination on the basis of religion may be problematic. The inability of the school to restrict the majority of its students and staff to those who adhere to the religious beliefs and practices promulgated by the school will eventually cause dilution or loss of the school's denominational or religious identity.

Next, because the Government has a clear interest in overseeing the use of its funds, compliance with a state's curriculum, teacher certification, and other accreditation standards will likely be required. Finally, private schools will probably have to avoid or adopt certain kinds of expression of speech. As long as all private schools, not just those religiously affiliated, are required to comply, a state can make judgments about factual, historical, or moral correctness of what the schools may teach (Gedicks, 2004). At this point, whether Gedicks' (2004) arguments will survive any future ruling by the United States Supreme Court is difficult to determine.

In a related ruling regarding using public funds for sectarian purposes, the Court in *Locke v. Davey* (2004) supported the State of Washington's limitation on the scholarship program (which assisted academically-gifted students with post-secondary

education expenses) from applying to theology students. The Court found that Washington could exclude the use of State funds to educate the ministry. Justice Scalia, writing for the dissent, argued, “The Court makes no serious attempt to defend the program’s neutrality . . .” (*Locke*, 2004, p. 731).

*Locke* (2004) was another example of when the Court was given the opportunity to address the constitutionality of the Blaine Amendment but side-stepped the controversy. The Court stated, “Neither *Davey* nor *amici* have established a credible connection between the Blaine Amendment and Article I, § 11, the relevant constitutional provision. Accordingly, the Blaine Amendment’s history is simply not before us” (*Locke*, 2004, p. 723, FN 7).

Although the Court failed to address the constitutionality of the Blaine Amendment, a hint of the Court’s position can be read in *Mitchell* (2000), where the Court, in discussing the Amendment, wrote, “[N]othing in the Establishment Clause requires the exclusion of pervasively sectarian schools from otherwise permissible aid programs, and other doctrines of this Court bar it. This doctrine, born of bigotry, should be buried now” (*Mitchell*, 2000, p. 829).

In considering this study’s Research Question One, the overall legal analysis suggests that although the United States Supreme Court has referenced the Blaine Amendment, the Court has not shown a willingness to decide the constitutionality of Blaine-Amendment type language in the states’ constitutions. Nonetheless, notwithstanding the reluctance of the Court to address this issue, the Oklahoma Legislature may determine that the legal and political environment would uphold a voucher program.



## Quantitative Research

The data analysis from the quantitative research presents answers applicable to Research Questions 2 and 3.

**Research Question 2.** Even if such a program is legal, will parents of children in schools failing to meet benchmarks that indicate improvement in areas mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act use the vouchers?

**Research Question 3.** What factors of parental attitude will preclude the use of vouchers?

### The Number of Returned Questionnaires

The data from the questionnaires received were hand counted and entered electronically into a table. Of the 303 questionnaires mailed to the parents of the students attending Gilcrease Middle School, 22 were returned and 27 were undeliverable. Of the 371 questionnaires mailed to the parents of students attending Clinton Middle School, 30 were returned and 37 were undeliverable.<sup>15</sup> There were 25 questionnaires returned of the 388 that were given to the Rogers Middle School's administrator for hand-delivery by the students to their parents.

In computing response rates of surveys taken in studies, Babbie (1973) stated: the accepted practice is to omit all those questionnaires that could not be delivered. In his methodological report, the researcher could indicate the initial sample size, then subtract the number that could not be delivered due to bad

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Of the 37 questionnaires that were returned undeliverable, it appears that 13 were sent to addresses that were undoubtedly incorrect.

addresses, death, and the like. Then the number of completed questionnaires is divided by the net sample size to produce the response rate. (p. 22)

Babbie (1973) did not provide an equation, but it can be envisioned as follows:

$$RR = \{q/(N-U)\} \times 100$$

RR = Response Rate

q = Number of returned survey questionnaires.

N = Number of initial survey questionnaires mailed.

U = number of undeliverable questionnaires.

Questionnaires were analyzed following Babbie's (1973) formula. The questionnaires were manually calculated and then expressed in an equation.

The following is the calculation for the Gilcrease Middle School:

$$q = 22$$

$$N = 303$$

$$U = 27$$

$$RR = [22/(303-27)] \times 100$$

$$RR = 8$$

The calculation resulted in a response rate that equaled 8%.

The following is the calculation for the Clinton Middle School:

$$q = 30$$

$$N = 371$$

$$U = 37$$

$$RR = [30/(371-37)] \times 100$$

$$RR = 9$$

The calculation resulted in a response rate that equaled 9%.

This formula is not applicable for the responses returned from the questionnaires left at Rogers Middle School for delivery to the parents because it cannot be determined how many questionnaires were actually delivered by the students. There, 388 questionnaires were left with the administration, which resulted in 25 returned responses. Using a simple mathematical equation for calculating percentages, 25 divided by 388, the response rate was 6%.

Table 1 shows the response rate associated with each school.

Table 1

Number of Questionnaires Sent, Received, and Percentage of Returns by Each School

School	Sent	Received	Undelivered	% of Returns
Clinton	303	22	27	8%
Gilcrease	371	30	37	9%
Rogers	385	25	NA	6%

The response rate of returned questionnaires was analyzed since response rate can indicate how important or prominent a concern the content of the questionnaire was to the parents and provided the data to address Research Question Three. According to Gall, Borg, & Gall (1996), “The salience of the questionnaire content to the respondents (i.e, how important or prominent a concern it is for them) affects both the accuracy of the information received and the rate of response” (p. 293).

Further, Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) referenced Herberleing and Baumgartner’s (1978) review of 181 studies using questionnaires judged to be “salient,” “possibly

salient,” or “nonsalient” to the respondents (p. 293). Herbereling and Baumgartner (1978, as cited in Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996) found that the rate of returns averaged “77 percent for the salient studies, 66 percent for those judged possibly salient, and 42 percent for those judged nonsalient” (p. 293). According to Gall, Gall, & Borg (1996), “These findings suggest the need to select a sample for whom your questionnaire will be highly salient” (p. 293).

In this study, however, the sample was already established according to the criteria presented in Cleveland’s Pilot Project Scholarship Program. The questionnaires went to parents of a child/children in a failing school with a large minority and low-income student population. Accordingly, there was not an emphasis in this study on selecting a sample that would find the questionnaire highly salient.

This lack of emphasis on selecting a sample that found the questionnaire highly salient does not mean, however, that the response rate should not be analyzed and the data presented here. In this study, the low response rate of 7.6% can still indicate how important or prominent a concern the content of the questionnaire was for the parents. The fact that this study did not have an adequate response rate, as Babbie (1973) noted less than 10% is not an adequate response rate, could indicate that vouchers may be of prominent concern among the parents who returned the questionnaire. Arguably, the importance of the questionnaire’s content to the parents would be relevant in answering Research Question Three.

It should be noted that when there is such a low response by the respondents as exhibited in this study, it is desirable to contact the non-respondents with a professional appeal to complete and return the questionnaire. According to Gall, Borg, and Gall

(1996), Heberlain's and Baumgartner's (1978) study showed that follow-ups would increase the response rate. However, a follow-up letter was not used in this study because considering the low percentages for the first returns, the extra number of returns would not have affected the salience of the questionnaire content.

### **Demographics**

The parents were asked in the questionnaire to identify their race and level of family income. This information was completely voluntary. It was important, however, for establishing that the parents were of similar race and income as the participants in Cleveland's Pilot Project Scholarship Program. It was a component of the Pilot Project Scholarship Program that the student population being assisted was minority and low-income. As discussed in Chapter 1, if the State of Oklahoma wants to implement a constitutional voucher program, it is advisable that it follows the parameters of the Pilot Project Scholarship Program, which has already passed constitutional muster.

The following demographic information shows that similar to the families in the Cleveland Program, the majority of parents answering the questionnaires were minority and low-income. Table 2 reflects the demographics of the parent/parents who returned the questionnaire and had a child/children in Clinton Middle School. Table 3 is the demographics of the parent/parents who returned the questionnaire and had a child/children in Gilcrease Middle School. Table 4 is the demographics of the parent/parents who returned the questionnaire and had a child/children in Rogers Middle School.

Table 2

Demographics For Clinton Middle School

<b>Race</b>	<b>Number of Returns</b>	<b>Percentage of Total(30) Returns</b>
<b>African-American</b>	8	26.5%
<b>Asian</b>	0	0%
<b>Hispanic</b>	0	0%
<b>White</b>	14	47%
<b>Other</b>	8 <sup>a</sup>	26.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>a</sup> All of the parents identified themselves as Native American Indian. Three parents also identified White as a dual race.

<b>Family Income</b>	<b>Number of Returns</b>	<b>Percentage of Total (29)<sup>a</sup> Returns</b>
<b>Under \$25,000</b>	17	57%
<b>\$25,000 - \$49,999</b>	7	23%
<b>\$50,000 - \$74,999</b>	3	10%
<b>\$75,000 - \$150,000</b>	3	10%
<b>Over \$150,000</b>	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>a</sup> One questionnaire did not list income.

Table 3

Demographics for Gilcrease Middle School

<b>Race</b>	<b>Number of Returns</b>	<b>Percentage of Total (21)<sup>a</sup> Returns</b>
<b>African American</b>	17 <sup>b</sup>	81%
<b>Asian</b>	0	0%
<b>Hispanic</b>	0	0%
<b>White</b>	3	14%
<b>Other</b>	1 <sup>c</sup>	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>a</sup> One questionnaire did not list race.

<sup>b</sup> Two parents identified themselves as having dual races. One parent chose to identify as Hispanic and the other parent as Cherokee American Indian.

<sup>c</sup> The parent identified as Cherokee American Indian.

<b>Family Income</b>	<b>Number of Returns</b>	<b>Percentage of Total (19)<sup>a</sup> Returns</b>
<b>Under \$25,000</b>	12	63%
<b>\$25,000 - \$49,999</b>	7	37%
<b>\$50,000 - \$74,999</b>	0	0%
<b>\$75,000 - \$150,000</b>	0	0%
<b>Over \$150,000</b>	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>a</sup> Three questionnaires did not list income.

Table 4

Demographics for Rogers Middle School

<b>Race</b>	<b>Number of Returns</b>	<b>Percentage of Total (25) Returns</b>
<b>African American</b>	17	68%
<b>Asian</b>	0	0%
<b>Hispanic</b>	1	4%
<b>White</b>	7	28%
<b>Other</b>	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>Family Income</b>	<b>Number of Returns</b>	<b>Percentage of Total (23)<sup>a</sup> Returns</b>
<b>Under \$25,000</b>	16	70%
<b>\$25,000 - \$49,999</b>	6	26%
<b>\$50,000 - \$74,999</b>	1	4%
<b>\$75,000 - \$150,000</b>	0	0%
<b>Over \$150,000</b>	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>a</sup> Two questionnaires did not list income.

**General Interpretation of the Data Answering Research Question Two**



The first question on the questionnaire asked the parents if they would or would not use a voucher to send their child/children to a private school. Of the 77 returned questionnaires, 63 respondents answered yes, 13 answered no, and 1 questionnaire was blank. Table 5 lists the number of yes and no responses according to each school.

Table 5

Number of Yes and No Answers by Each School

School	No	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
Clinton	22	20	91%	2	9%
Gilcrease	30	24 <sup>a</sup>	80%	6	20%
Rogers	25 <sup>b</sup>	19	79%	5	21%

<sup>a</sup> One respondent qualified the yes answer by writing, “if transportation is provided.” Another respondent wrote, “if paid in full.”

<sup>b</sup> One respondent did not answer this question.

The data indicates that all the respondent’s overwhelmingly answered “yes” that they would use a voucher. Again, this is a general interpretation of the data. Considering that there was only a 6-9 % response rate, an assumption could be made that from the limited questionnaires received back, the parents who answered the question “yes” will not use vouchers.

### **General Interpretation of the Data Answering Research Question Three**

The respondents answering “yes” to the question were asked to return the questionnaire in the self-addressed, stamped envelope. Those who answered “no” were informed that their child would hypothetically stay in the public school if vouchers were

a school choice option. The questionnaire then asked a respondent to read each of the next statements and respond to them using the *Likert scale*. The statements provided reasons for why the parent will leave their child/children in the public school. Thus, the returned questionnaires received from parents of each school were further analyzed to denote the response to the additional statements on the questionnaire. Eight questionnaires sent by parents with a child/children in the Gilcrease and Clinton Middle Schools were used. The questionnaires were manually formulated and the information then embedded into Tables. The term *student*, which is used in the presentation of the data on the Tables in the following section, is synonymous with *child/children*. Table 6 lists each statement and the percentage of responses to each rating.

Table 6

Responses Given for Staying With the Public School

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>N=8</b>					
<b>Principal does a good job<sup>a</sup></b>	0%	17%	50%	0%	33%
<b>Teachers do a good job<sup>a</sup></b>	17%	33%	33%	0%	17%
<b>Satisfied with schoolwork<sup>a</sup></b>	16.6%	50%	16.6%	16.6%	0%
<b>Satisfied with student's<sup>a</sup> academic performance</b>	30%	70%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Family went to the school</b>	25%	0%	12.5%	62.5%	0%
<b>Student in extracurricular activities/sports<sup>b</sup></b>	14%	0%	0%	29%	57%
<b>Student's friends in this school<sup>b</sup></b>	4%	14%	0%	29%	43%
<b>Student not make friends in private school<sup>b</sup></b>	14%	0%	14%	29%	43%
<b>Location of school near their home<sup>b</sup></b>	28.6%	28.6%	0%	14%	28.6%
<b>Difficult to pay part of the tuition<sup>b</sup></b>	57%	29%	14%	0%	0%
<b>Difficult to pay other costs<sup>a</sup></b>	33%	17%	33%	0%	17%
<b>Don't want student in religious school<sup>a</sup></b>	33%	17%	17%	0%	33%
<b>Don't want student in school not in my faith<sup>a</sup></b>	33%	0%	17%	33%	17%

<sup>a</sup> Two respondents did not make a selection for this statement.<sup>b</sup> One respondent did not make a selection for this statement.

Again, the extremely low number of responses fails to provide any definitive determination regarding what factors of parental attitude would prevent the parents from using vouchers to send their child/children to a private school and instead, stay with the public school system. The only general determination that can be made is that these parents were not dissatisfied with the teachers (50%), and the students' performance (100%). They were, however, concerned with being responsible for part of the tuition (86%) and any other costs (50%), and the location of the schools (57.2%). Half (50%) of the number of parents who returned the questionnaire from Gilcrease and Clinton were also against having their child/children attend a religious school.

#### **General Interpretation of the Data Obtained From an Unexpected Phenomenon in the Study**

As exhibited by Tables 5 and 6, the responses to the questionnaire returned by the parents of students at Clinton and Gilcrease Middle Schools provided data for answering Research Questions Two and Three. However, an unexpected phenomenon involving the questionnaires occurred during the study. In the original questionnaire (see Appendix B), sent to the parents of students at Clinton and Gilcrease Middle Schools, the instructions indicated that if a respondent answered, "yes" to the question then he/she should not answer the supplemental questions in the survey. However, as shown on Tables 7 and 8, a substantial number of the parents who returned the questionnaire answered the additional questions that asked about reasons for staying in a public school AFTER they had already indicated that they would use a voucher to send their child/children to a private school.

Table 7

Responses Given for Staying With Clinton Middle School By Parents Whom Said They Would Use a Voucher to Send Their Child/Children to a Private School.

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>N=12</b>					
<b>Principal does a good job</b>	50%	8%	27%	25%	0%
<b>Teachers do a good job</b>	25%	33%	25%	17%	0%
<b>Satisfied with schoolwork</b>	16.6%	16.6%	50%	16.6%	0%
<b>Satisfied with student's academic performance</b>	17%	33.5%	8%	33.5%	8%
<b>Family went to the school</b>	17%	17%	8%	25%	33%
<b>Student in extracurricular activities/sports</b>	8%	17%	8%	42%	25%
<b>Student's friends in this school</b>	16.6%	16.6%	16.6%	16.6%	33%
<b>Student not make friends in private school</b>	0%	0%	0%	25%	75%
<b>Location of school near their home</b>	25%	33%	17%	25%	0%
<b>Difficult to pay part of the tuition</b>	42%	0%	25%	16.5%	16.5%
<b>Difficult to pay other costs</b>	8%	16.6%	16.6%	16.6%	42%
<b>Don't want student in religious school</b>	8.5%	0%	33%	8.5%	50%
<b>Don't want student in school not in my faith</b>	33%	8.5%	17%	8.5%	33%

Table 8

Responses Given for Staying With Gilcrease Middle School By Parents Whom Said They Would Use a Voucher to Send Their Child/Children to a Private School.

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>N=14</b>					
<b>Principal does a good job</b>	14%	0%	14%	29%	43%
<b>Teachers do a good job</b>	7%	0%	28.5%	36%	28.5%
<b>Satisfied with schoolwork</b>	14%	7%	14%	29%	36%
<b>Satisfied with student's academic performance</b>	7%	0%	7%	36%	50%
<b>Family went to the school</b>	14%	0%	0%	29%	57%
<b>Student in extracurricular activities/sports</b>	7%	7%	0%	0%	86%
<b>Student's friends in this school</b>	7%	0%	14%	0%	79%
<b>Student not make friends in private school<sup>a</sup></b>	15%	0%	23%	0%	62%
<b>Location of school near their home</b>	21.5%	14%	21.5%	0%	43%
<b>Difficult to pay part of the tuition</b>	21.5%	14%	14%	21.5%	29%
<b>Difficult to pay other costs</b>	7%	22%	7%	7%	57%
<b>Don't want student in religious school</b>	14%	0%	43%	0%	43%
<b>Don't want student in school not in my faith</b>	14%	0%	29%	7%	50%

<sup>a</sup> One respondent did not make a selection for this statement.

A general interpretation of this data suggests that even though the parents wanted to use the vouchers, certain factors would preclude them. Those factors included the location of the private school and the possibility of having to pay part of the tuition. The differences were that the parents of the Gilcrease students did not agree on any one factor as a reason not to use a voucher while a majority the parents of Clinton students were satisfied with the principal (58%), teachers (58%), and their child's academic performance (50.5%). A majority of the Clinton parents (58%) were concerned about the location of the private school. Although not a majority, a sizeable number of Clinton parents (42%) would not use the voucher because they might become responsible for part of the tuition. All 41.5% of the responding Clinton parents indicated they did not want their children in a religious school not in their faith.

Due to this variation on how the respondents were answering the questionnaire, a change was made to the original questionnaire before distribution to parents who had a child/children attending Rogers Middle School. The revised questionnaire (see Appendix E) informed the parents to finish filling out the questionnaire after answering either "yes" or "no" to the question asking if they would use a voucher to send their child/children to a private school. The rest of the statements were still framed as reasons for the parents' child/children to stay in the public school and not use vouchers (see Appendix E). Table 9 lists each statement and the percentage of responses to each rating.

Table 9

Roger Middle School's Questionnaires from Respondent's Who Will Use Vouchers

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>N=20</b>					
<b>Principal does a good job</b>	0%	15%	35%	15%	35% <sup>a</sup>
<b>Teachers do a good job</b>	5%	20%	40%	20%	15% <sup>a</sup>
<b>Satisfied with schoolwork</b>	5%	25%	25%	15%	30% <sup>a</sup>
<b>Satisfied with student's academic performance</b>	10%	10%	35%	20%	25% <sup>a</sup>
<b>Family went to the school</b>	5% <sup>a</sup>	5%	5%	10%	75%
<b>Student in extracurricular activities/sports</b>	0%	10% <sup>a</sup>	10%	20%	65%
<b>Student's friends in this school</b>	0%	0%	15% <sup>a</sup>	20%	65%
<b>Student not make friends in private school<sup>b</sup></b>	0%	0%	0%	21%	79% <sup>a</sup>
<b>Location of school near their home<sup>b</sup></b>	16% <sup>a</sup>	21%	21%	10.5%	31.5%
<b>Difficult to pay part of the tuition</b>	5%	10%	15% <sup>a</sup>	20%	50%
<b>Difficult to pay other costs</b>	10%	5% <sup>a</sup>	10%	10%	65%
<b>Don't want student in religious school</b>	0%	0%	5%	20%	75% <sup>a</sup>
<b>Don't want student in school not in my faith</b>	5%	15%	25%	20% <sup>a</sup>	35%

<sup>a</sup> The respondent was counted with this group although the respondent did not mark if he/she would use or not use a voucher.

<sup>b</sup> One respondent did not make a selection for this statement.



Table 10

Roger Middle School's Questionnaires from Respondent's Who Will Not Use Vouchers

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>N=5</b>					
<b>Principal does a good job</b>	60%	20%	20%	0%	0%
<b>Teachers do a good job</b>	20%	40%	20%	30%	0%
<b>Satisfied with schoolwork</b>	0%	40%	40%	20%	0%
<b>Satisfied with student's academic performance</b>	0%	40%	0%	60%	0%
<b>Family went to the school</b>	20%	40%	0%	20%	20%
<b>Student in extracurricular activities/sports</b>	0%	0%	25%	25%	50%
<b>Student's friends in this school</b>	0%	20%	20%	20%	40%
<b>Student not make friends in private school</b>	0%	0%	0%	20%	80%
<b>Location of school near their home</b>	60%	20%	0%	20%	0%
<b>Difficult to pay part of the tuition</b>	40%	40%	0%	0%	20%
<b>Difficult to pay other costs<sup>a</sup></b>	25%	25%	50%	0%	0%
<b>Don't want student in religious school</b>	20%	20%	20%	40%	0%
<b>Don't want student in school not in my faith</b>	20%	60%	20%	0%	0%

<sup>a</sup> One respondent did not make a selection for this statement.

As with the questionnaires received from parents of students in Clinton and Gilcrease Middle Schools, the low response rate with the questionnaires received from parents with students attending Rogers Middle School only allows a general interpretation of the data. In interpreting the data from Table 9, a number of parents (37%) indicated they would use a voucher responded that they would not use the vouchers because of the location of the private school not being near their home. As seen in Table 10, a large percentage of the parents who marked that they would not use the vouchers gave several reasons. They did not want their child to attend a religious school not in their faith (80%), they did not want to pay any tuition (80%), and they would not send their child/children to a private school that was not near their home (80%).

### **Grouping the Questionnaire Statements into Five Reasons**

The data from the questionnaires received are presented according to the five reasons for not using vouchers as described in Chapter 3 and subsequently presented per the statements listed in numerical order in the questionnaire. Again, the term *student* is synonymous with *child/children*, as is discussed in the analysis which follows below.

### **Data from Clinton and Gilcrease Middle Schools**

This section presents the data received from the Clinton and Gilcrease Middle Schools as discussed per the five reasons for using school vouchers linked to the questionnaire.

**Reason 1: Satisfaction with the Public School.** The statements in the questionnaire corresponding to Reason 1 are:

1. The principal in my child/children's school does a good job of running the school and communicating with the parents.

2. The teachers in my child/children's school do a good job of educating my child/children.
3. I am satisfied with the schoolwork (curriculum) given to my child/children.
4. I am satisfied with my child's/children's academic performance at the school.

The percentages described here indicate that the public schools' principals and teaching staff were not individual reasons supporting the parents overall satisfaction with the public school. Of the parents, who responded from Clinton and Gilcrease Middle Schools, 50% were Undecided and 33% Strongly Disagreed on whether the principal of their child/children's school did a good job and only 40% Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the teachers did a good job. However, 66.66% Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they were satisfied with the curriculum given to their child/children and 100% Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they were satisfied with their child/children's academic performance at their respective school.

**Reason 2: Loyalty.** The following statements were used to determine if the parents experienced loyalty to the public school their child/children currently attended as a reason for not using vouchers. The statements in the questionnaire corresponding with Reason 2 are:

5. I want my child/children to attend this school because I, or another family member, attended it.
6. I will keep my child/children in this school because my child/children are in extracurricular activities and/or sports.

7. I will keep my child/children in this school because their friends are here.
8. My child/children will not get along with the children that go to a private school.

The data indicated that loyalty to the current public school was not the parents' reason for not using vouchers. Of the parents who responded from the Clinton and Gilcrease Middle Schools, 75% Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed that the reason for not using vouchers was because another family member attended the public school; 86% Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed that the reason for not using vouchers was because their child/children was in extracurricular activities or sports; 72 % Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed that the reason for not using vouchers was because their child/children's friends were there; and 72% Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed with the statement that their child/children will not get along with children in a private school.

**Reason 3: Location.** This reason dealt with the convenience of location from the child/children's home to the school location. The statement in the questionnaire corresponding with Reason 3 is:

9. I want my child/children in this school because it is convenient to where I live.

This statement recognized that the parents' day-to-day needs required the school that the student attended be conveniently located for the parents. The percentages described here indicate that the majority of the parents found this as a reason to not use vouchers as can be seen by the fact that 57% Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they would not use the voucher because their child/children's current school was located near their home.

**Reason 4: Added costs.** This reason recognized that the cost of tuition at an alternative school, even if that cost was subsidized by the State, plus the cost of uniforms, etc., prohibited enrolling the student in the alternative school. The statements in the questionnaire corresponding with Reason 4 are:

10. I will not use a voucher to have my child/children attend a private school because I would find it difficult to pay part of the tuition for a private school.
11. Even if all the tuition is paid for, I would find it difficult to pay for uniforms and other costs for a private school.

The data indicate that added costs of attending an alternative school is a main reason that parents would have their child/children stay at the public school. Specifically, 86% Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they would find it difficult to pay a part of the tuition for their child/children to attend a private school; and 50% Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they would find it difficult to pay for uniforms and other costs associated with their child/children attend a private school.

**Reason 5: Religiously affiliated school.** This reason is relevant to the whole issue of using state funded vouchers for religiously affiliated schools. The statements in the questionnaire corresponding with Reason 5 are:

12. I do not want my child/children to attend a religious private school.
13. I do not want my child/children to attend a religious school that is not in my faith.

The data indicate that 50% of the parents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they didn't want their child/children attending a secular (religious) school. These parents

made known their preference for public schools. Their preference for public schools rather than any disagreement with the secular schools was supported by the fact that 50% of the parents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed that their reason for keeping their child/children in the public school was because they didn't want their child/children in a secular school that was not in their faith.

### **Data from Rogers Middle School**

This section presents data received from Rogers Middle School as discussed per the five reasons for not using school vouchers linked to the questionnaire. The description for each of the five reasons will not be presented here since it was already discussed above for the data received from Clinton and Gilcrease Middle Schools.

**Reason 1: Satisfaction with the Public School.** The statements in the questionnaire corresponding with Reason 1 are:

1. The principal in my child/children's school does a good job of running the school and communicating with the parents.
2. The teachers in my child/children's school do a good job of educating my child/children.
3. I am satisfied with the schoolwork (curriculum) given to my child/children.
4. I am satisfied with my child's/children's academic performance at the school.

The data indicate that the parent's satisfaction with the principal and teaching staff was why their satisfaction with the public school precluded their use of vouchers. Of the parents who responded from Rogers Middle School, 80% Agreed or Strongly

Agreed the principal did a good job and 60% Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the teachers did a good job. Additionally, 40% Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they were satisfied with the curriculum given to their child/children; and 40% Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they were satisfied with their child/children's academic performance at their respective school.

**Reason 2: Loyalty.** The statements in the questionnaire corresponding with Reason 2 are:

5. I want my child/children to attend this school because I, or another family member, attended it.
6. I will keep my child/children in this school because my child/children are in extracurricular activities and/or sports.
7. I will keep my child/children in this school because their friends are here.
8. My child/children will not get along with the children that go to a private school.

The data indicate that loyalty to the current public school was a reason the parents would not use vouchers. Of the parents who responded from Rogers Middle School, 60% Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the reason they would not use vouchers was because another family member attended the public school. The parents did not agree with the other statements expressing loyalty to the public school. Of the parents who responded, 85% Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed that the reason they would not use a voucher was because their child/children was in extracurricular activities or sports; 60 % Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed that the reason was because their child/children's friends were there;

and 100% Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed with the statement that their child/children will not get along with the children in a private school.

**Reason 3: Location.** The statement in the questionnaire corresponding with Reason 3 is:

9. I want my child/children in this school because it is convenient to where I live.

The data indicate that the majority of the parents associated location as a reason to not use vouchers as seen by the fact that 80% Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they would not use the voucher because the student's current school was located near their home.

**Reason 4: Added Costs.** The statements in the questionnaire corresponding with Reason 4 are:

10. I will not use a voucher to have my child/children attend a private school because I would find it difficult to pay part of the tuition for a private school.
11. Even if all the tuition is paid for, I would find it difficult to pay for uniforms and other costs for a private school.

The data indicate that added costs of attending an alternative school is a main reason that parents stayed with sending the student to the public school. Specifically, 80% Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they would find it difficult to pay a part of the tuition for their child/children to attend a private school; and 50% Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they would find it difficult to pay for uniforms and other costs associated with having their child/children attend a private school.



**Reason 5: Religiously affiliated school.** The statements in the questionnaire corresponding with Reason 5 are:

12. I do not want my child/children to attend a religious private school.
13. I do not want my child/children to attend a religious school that is not in my faith.

The data indicate that 40% of the parents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they didn't want their child/children attending in a secular (religious) school. These parents made known their preference for having their child/children continue attending the respective public schools. Their preference for public schools rather than any disagreement with the secular schools was supported by the fact that 80% of the parents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed that their reason for keeping their child/children in the public school was because they didn't want their child/children in a secular school that was not in their faith.

### **Qualitative Research**

Since the focus group was not conducted due to no parents appearing at the scheduled meeting sites, there was no interview data to analyze.

### **Comments on the Questionnaires**

A few comments were noted on the questionnaires by the parents who responded from the three schools. Specifically, there were three comments out of the 30 questionnaires returned from Clinton Middle School:

“If paid in full” (Referencing using a voucher).

“If transportation is provided” (Referencing using a voucher).

“I think that money should be provided to schools that are on the needs improvement list and assistance to correct problems should also be provided to those schools.”

There was one comment out of the 22 questionnaires returned from Gilcrease Middle School:

“The School my child currently go [sic] to there is a lot of bullies and my child don’t [sic] like it, [sic] whether a voucher comes or not my child will get out of Gilcrease Middle School.”

There was one comment out of the 25 questionnaires returned from Rogers Middle School:

“I will be happy to have my child in any other school besides Rogers. My son also has multiple disabilities and needs a better education. The okc [sic] schools need more schools to choose from that Rogers in my area.”

The comments were not subject to any particular method of analysis. The comments are provided here to give the reader an “emic perspective, that is, the respondents’ perspective on the phenomenon being studied” (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996, p. 305). The comments from parents with a child/children in Clinton Middle School exhibited concerns that the tuition to a private school be entirely paid for, and that transportation to a private school be provided by the State of Oklahoma. Comments from other parents exhibited the parents’ reasons for accepting a voucher and not having their child/children stay in the public school. Specifically, a Gilcrease Middle School parent was concerned about bullies and a Rogers Middle School parent was concerned with that school’s ability to assist children with disabilities.

## **Conclusion**

The data analyzed here can be examined by all of the parties concerned with education in Oklahoma in order to determine if a voucher program is a viable school choice option. It should be noted that there was no direct comparison done between the schools because each school is comprised of a different school administration, which could have reflected on how the parents rated those statements in the questionnaires. According to Manna (2002), parental attitude, as seen by parents overall level of satisfaction with their public school, should be measured at the local school level and not the district level.

The only common feature among the parents used for this study was the demographic data described in this Chapter. It was a component of the Pilot Project Scholarship Program that the student population being assisted was minority and low-income. As discussed in Chapter 1, if the State of Oklahoma wants to implement a constitutional voucher program, it is advisable that it follows the parameters of the Pilot Project Scholarship Program, which has already passed constitutional muster.

CHAPTER V  
FINDINGS AND LIMITATIONS, SUMMARY,  
AND RECOMMENDATION

**Introduction**

This Chapter presents culminating discussion on the research conducted in this study. Again, this study investigated three research questions in relation to the applicability of offering a school voucher program in the state of Oklahoma. The three research questions investigated are:

1. Is a voucher program that includes religiously affiliated schools legal under the Oklahoma Constitution?
2. Even if such a program is legal, will parents of children in schools failing to meet benchmarks that indicate improvement in areas mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act use the vouchers?
3. What factors of parental attitude will preclude the use of vouchers?

**Findings and Limitations**

This section presents the findings from the legal research analyzed in relation to Research Question 1 and the data analyzed from Research Questions 2 and 3 in this study. Demographic information obtained from the questionnaire is also discussed in relation to the Pilot Project Scholarship Program's target population and its importance when considering the creation of a school voucher program in Oklahoma that is constitutionally sound based upon the target population and the data analysis conducted in this study. Limitations that occurred from different components of the study are also discussed in this section.

## **Findings for Research Question One**

The findings for Research Question One based on the legal research conducted in this study are as follows.

In accordance with Oklahoma's constitution, statutes, and the decisions of the Oklahoma Supreme Court, the legality of a voucher program is questionable. The easiest method in making a voucher program constitutional, and thereby avoid legal challenges, is to amend the state constitution. However, understanding the difficulties associated with amending the constitution, there are other legal arguments that can be pursued. Oklahoma's restrictive constitutional language that precludes state money from being sent to religious institutions for any purpose, in of itself, may be an unconstitutional deprivation of the First Amendment's right to religious freedom. In addition, the Oklahoma Legislature may just determine that the legal and political environment would uphold a voucher program. Of course, relying on either argument for support of a voucher program raises the likelihood of a legal challenge.

## **Demographic Information from the Questionnaire**

As discussed in Chapter 1, if the State of Oklahoma wants to implement a constitutional voucher program, it is advisable that it follows the parameters of the Cleveland Pilot Project Scholarship Program and target a population that closely mirrors the population served by the Pilot Project Scholarship Program.

Demographic data derived from the returned questionnaires in this study is presented by school as follows:

### **Clinton Middle School data:**

**Income:** Of 29 returns: 55% of the respondents had an income under \$25,000; 24% had

an income between \$25,000-\$49,999; 10.5% had an income between \$50,000-\$74,999; and 10.5% had an income between \$75,000-\$150,000.

**Race:** Of 30 returns: 47% of the respondents were White; 26.5% were African-American; and 26.5% were American Indian.

**Gilcrease Middle School data:**

**Income:** Of 19 returns - 63% of the respondents had an income under \$25,000; 37% had an income between \$25,000 and \$49,999.

**Race:** Of 21 Returns - 81% of the respondents were African-American, with two of those listing Hispanic and Cherokee Indian as a dual race; 14% were White; and 5% were Cherokee Indian.

**Rogers Middle School data:**

**Income:** Of 23 returns: 70% of the respondents had an income under \$25,000; 26% had an income between \$25,000-\$49,999; and 4% had an income between \$50,000-\$74,999.

**Race:** Of 25 returns: 68% of the respondents were African-American; 28% were White; and 4% were American Indian.

Of the respondents who listed their race, 86% of those with a child/children in Gilcrease Middle School were a minority; 53% of those with a child/children in Clinton Middle School were a minority; and 72% of those with a child/children in Rogers Middle School were a minority. Of the respondents who listed their income, 63% of those with a child/children in Gilcrease Middle School had an income under \$25,000; 55% of those with a child/children in Clinton Middle School had an income under \$25,000; 70% of those with a child/children in Rogers Middle School had an income under \$25,000.

This data establishes that the target population of parents in this study who were low-income and a minority responded to the questionnaires. It was important that the parents in this study were of a similar race and income as the participants in Cleveland's Pilot Project Scholarship Program. It was a component of the Pilot Project Scholarship Program that the student population being assisted was minority and low-income. Again, it is advisable that if the state of Oklahoma wants to implement a constitutional voucher program, it should follow the parameters of the Cleveland Pilot Project Scholarship Program and target a population that closely mirrors the population served by the Pilot Project Scholarship Program.

### **Findings for Research Question Two**

The findings for Research Question Two based on the questionnaire used in this study are described here.

The findings for Research Question Two indicate that 83% of respondents, those individuals who returned the questionnaire from the ones distributed to all schools noted "yes" on the questionnaire that they would use vouchers while the remaining 17% said "no" they would not use vouchers.

The significance of this data in regards to Research Question Two is that a majority of respondents indicated they will use vouchers as a school option choice. However, the low response rate on the return of the questionnaire allows only a general interpretation of this finding in terms of the Clinton, Gilcrease, and Rogers Middle School parents' preferences for wanting to use a voucher. Because of the low response rate on the return of the questionnaires, an assumption could be equally made that there may be a number of parents from these schools who would not use vouchers. Such an

assumption is not conclusive without further data collected or without knowing the true cause(s) for the low response rate.

### **Findings for Research Question Three**

The findings for Research Question Three based on the questionnaire used in this study are described here.

Based on the percentages of the data received and analyzed from the Clinton and Gilcrease Middle School parents who responded to the questionnaire, certain assumptions as related to Research Question Three are presented. As previously discussed, the 26 respondents from Clinton and Gilcrease Middle School deviated from the instructions and answered all questions even if they were not supposed to as per the questionnaire instructions. The 26 respondents answered the questions in the questionnaire that asked for their agreement or disagreement to the statements in relation to not wanting to use vouchers and wanting their child/children to stay in their respective public school.

This deviation from the instructions was an unexpected phenomenon in the study. This data received and analyzed is significant to inform this study's investigation on voucher use because it indicates that some parents want to use vouchers but they agree that the reasons set forth in the statements in the questionnaire prevents them. Based on this phenomenon, the original questionnaire was revised before distribution to Rogers Middle School parents. The revised questionnaire (see Appendix E) allowed the Rogers Middle School parents to respond to all the statements in the questionnaire regardless if the parent would or would not use a voucher. The data received from the questionnaires returned from Rogers Middle School parents was analyzed and general interpretations are provided here that are relevant to answering Research Question Three.



The percentages gleaned from the data received from all the returned questionnaires were examined and considered in relation to the “Five General Reasons” for using school vouchers that was described in Chapters 3 and 4 in this study. Again, all the 13 statements on the questionnaire were grouped under one of the five reasons in order to assist the researcher in organizing and interpreting the data analysis and findings. Additionally, data from each of the 13 statements in the questionnaire was analyzed separately by school in order to determine if the percentages yielded from the data in relation to addressing research Question Three.

The discussion that follows provides assumptions based on the five reasons for not using school vouchers that can be interpreted from the data received from the questionnaires returned by parents from each school. Again, the five reasons as described in Chapters 3 and 4 of this study are: (a) Reason 1, Satisfaction with the Public School; (b) Reason 2, Loyalty; (c) Reason 3, Location; (d) Reason 4, Added Costs; (e) Reason 5, Religiously Affiliated School.

*Clinton Middle School.* An assumption can be made that Satisfaction with the Public School, Reason 1, was a significant reason that a majority of the respondents indicated would preclude them from using a voucher. Specifically, the principal and teachers’ job performances were the reasons parents were satisfied with Clinton Middle School and as such would not use a voucher. There were 60% of parents who Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the principal did a good job and 58% Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the teachers did a good job. In finding the Location, Reason 3 of the current public school as a reason not to use vouchers, there were 58% of the respondents who Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they would stay in the public school because the school was

located near their home. Added Costs, Reason 4 was also designated as a reason for not using a voucher as a large number of the respondents, 42%, Strongly Agreed, that they would find it difficult to pay a part of the tuition to attend a private school.

Finally, under Religiously Affiliated School, Reason 5 the association of a specific religion with a school seemed to be a deterrent among parents to use a voucher since 42% of the respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they would not use a voucher because they did not want their child/children in a religious school not in their faith. This finding is significant because it shows that parents care about what religion is practiced by the secular (religious) private schools.

*Gilcrease Middle School.* An assumption can be made that Location, Reason 3, and Added Costs, Reason 4, may be the more significant reasons that some parents have for not wanting to use a voucher. Of the parents from Gilcrease who returned the questionnaire, 35.5% Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the convenient location of the current public school would prevent them from using a voucher. Additionally, 35.5% Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they would find it difficult to pay part of the tuition to a private school and 29% Agreed or Strongly Agreed that any additional costs associated with using vouchers was a reason for staying with the public school.

*Rogers Middle School.* The majority of the parents from Rogers Middle School who responded to the questionnaire indicated Location, Reason 3, would affect their choice for using a school voucher. Specifically, there were 37% of the respondents who Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they would stay with the public school their child/children was attending because the school was located near their home.

An assumption can be made that the Rogers Middle School parents wanted to use vouchers to send their child/children to a private secular school, notwithstanding the other reasons stated in the questionnaire for staying in the public school. This assumption is supported by the fact that 95% of the respondents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed that they did not want their child/children attending a religious school.

It is important to note that large cities currently using voucher programs, such as Cleveland, Ohio and Milwaukee, Wisconsin,<sup>16</sup> have a dense population with different methods of public transportation available. In contrast, Oklahoma City and Tulsa<sup>17</sup> are geographically spread out and have limited public transportation. Because of Oklahoma City and Tulsa's current public transportation limitations, parents may find it difficult to travel to their child/children's school to drop off or pick up a child, meet with teachers and school administrators, or attend school functions.

As discussed in Chapter Two, in Metcalf's (2003) study, parents listed location as a factor in choosing their child/children's school. If parents are to consider transportation as a factor for using vouchers in Oklahoma City and Tulsa, Oklahoma, the Astec Charter School, John Wesley Charter School, and Marcus Garvey Leadership Charter School are schools located in Oklahoma City's inner city; and the Deborah Brown Community School is located in Tulsa's inner city. If vouchers were a choice option in Oklahoma, parents may find that these schools are a viable school choice alternative to their child/children's current public school given their location in the city and the consideration of transportation in using a voucher to have their child/children attend any of these schools.

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<sup>16</sup> See <http://www.city.cleveland.oh.us> and <http://www.city.milwaukee.gov>.

<sup>17</sup> See <http://www.okc.gov> and <http://www.cityoftulsa.org>.

## **Limitations**

Problems arose during different parts of the study that resulted in limitations to the methods of acquiring and further analyzing the data by means of data triangulation acquired from the questionnaire and hoped to have been acquired by conducting a focus group. First, there was no qualitative research conducted because no parents showed up at the site for the focus group. The focus group was designed to produce more in-depth questioning of the questionnaire respondents who indicated they were not going to use vouchers and had responded to the statements in the questionnaire giving reasons for why they would not use vouchers. The failure to conduct a focus group did not limit the initial retrieval of data since the questionnaire was designed as the primary method used to obtain the data. However, the in-depth questioning of voluntary participants in the focus group would have enriched the study's findings and would have been an addition to the Quantitative research used as the primary means to investigate research Questions Two and Three in this study.

Another limitation is the low response rate of 7.6% for the questionnaire. This low response rate makes it difficult to conclusively indicate that the subject of vouchers was or was not a prominent concern of the parents receiving the questionnaires. Also, the low response rate precluded any definitive answer to Research Questions Two and Three. Only general interpretations can be made from the data received. Moreover, regarding Research Question Two, although 83% of the respondents indicated they would use vouchers, the low response rate only leads to a general assumption that a large majority of parents would use a voucher to send their child/children to a private school. In fact,

the failure of parents to return the questionnaire could indicate that the parents would not use a voucher.

Also, regarding Research Question Three, only eight initial questionnaires were returned where the parents indicated that they would not use vouchers and provided responses to the statements giving their reasons for not doing so. This low response rate prevents any conclusive interpretation of the data.

The questionnaire was revised before it was sent to the parents of students in the Rogers Middle School, however, again, there was a low response rate. Accordingly, the data received was not representative of the parents with a child/children attending Rogers Middle School. Therefore, as with the questionnaires received from parents of students attending Clinton and Gilcrease Middle Schools, only general assumptions could be made from the data.

Another limitation arose to the questionnaires sent to Rogers Middle School due to the delivery and tracking method used to distribute the questionnaires to the parents. The delivery and tracking method was a limitation because it affected the reliability of the sample. A response rate could not be calculated because it was unknown how many questionnaires actually were distributed to the parents. The researcher dropped off the questionnaires to the Rogers Middle School administration, which were then responsible for getting all of the questionnaires to the students. The students were then responsible for taking the questionnaire home to their parents. Unintended problems may have arisen due to the questionnaires being left at the school and using students as the means of delivery. Moreover, unlike the mailing list used to send out the questionnaires to the Clinton and Gilcrease Middle Schools' parents where duplicate

addresses could be deleted, there was no way to avoid sending the questionnaires to parents who have several children attending Rogers Middle School from receiving multiple questionnaires.

### **Summary**

This study was conducted to specifically research and discuss the legality and applicability of a voucher program that includes secular and non-secular private schools. This study was conducted to provide information to all parties interested in the role of education in Oklahoma. Although this study only addressed certain specific questions, it provides a basis for further research if deemed necessary by the interested parties.

The following research questions were investigated in this study:

1. Is a voucher program that includes religiously affiliated schools legal under the Oklahoma Constitution?
2. Even if such a program is legal, will parents of children in schools failing to meet benchmarks that indicate improvement in areas mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act use the vouchers?
3. What factors of parental attitude will preclude the use of vouchers?

At first, it appears that Research Question One can easily be answered. No, a voucher program that includes religiously affiliated schools is not legal under the Oklahoma Constitution. However, the discussion does not end here. There is a legal issue that has been raised several times before the United States Supreme Court, but has not been answered. Is the language in the Oklahoma Constitution that would deny state support to a religiously affiliated private school, in itself, unconstitutional? Until that legal question is answered, there can be no definitive answer to Research Question One.

Although the Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program, 70 O.S. §13-101-1 was passed, there is still no definitive answer to Research Question One. First, the federal law regarding students with disabilities supercedes any state law. In other words, federal law regardless of any state law that has been passed governs legal cases addressing students with disabilities. Second, there is no legal standing for students without disabilities to raise state law legal challenges based on federal laws that were passed for students with disabilities. The courts have failed to find that students without disabilities suffer the same level of harm from not receiving an adequate education as students with disabilities.

Regarding Research Questions Two and Three, only general assumptions can be made due to the limited data that was received to answer these questions. The general assumption for Research Two is that the vouchers would be used by parents with a child/children in a failing school. This answer, however, is tempered by the data that was received for Research Question Three.

The responses from all of the parents who were sent questionnaires reflect some of the key issues for not using a voucher that other studies have discovered and as presented in Chapter 2, Literature Review. In this study, the parents indicated that how the principals and teachers performed their job, the students' academic performance, the public schools location, the extra costs associated with attending a private school that would not be covered by the voucher, and the preference for not sending their child/children to a secular (religious) school were all reasons given for not wanting to use a voucher.

What was not expected in this study was the responses from parents who wanted to use vouchers, but marked on the questionnaires their reasons for why they would not use the voucher. This unexpected data undermines the general assumption of the data received in regards to Research Question Two that parents will use vouchers. It is significant information because 83% of the parents who responded indicated that they would use vouchers. By the parents then positively responding to the statements giving reasons for not using vouchers, the answer on whether the vouchers will or will not be used by these parents is not straight-forward.

Any other States that may be using this study to determine its application for whether a voucher program can be introduced in the State needs to realize that this study was organized specifically to address questions based on the State of Oklahoma's Constitution, statutes, Department of Education, and population. Answering Research Question One requires legal research directed to the laws of each individual State. The methods of research designed to answer Research Questions Two and Three can be adapted by other States with the understanding that the designation of a failing school is the responsibility of each State's Department of Education. Finally, the reasons given for not using a voucher, although based on a review of the literature on vouchers, may not be geared toward the population in any other State. For instance, Oklahoma is a deeply religious and conservative State. The question about not using a voucher because the parent does not want their child/children to attend a religious school that is not in their faith may not be applicable to other States.

The limitations that were previously discussed in this Chapter 5 needs to be considered before any further research can be conducted by interested parties. Anyone



wanting to continue or replicate this study needs to discover a more exact way of acquiring parental responses to both the questionnaire and the focus group.

However, regardless of the limitations discussed earlier, there are general assumptions ensuing from the findings that can be taken from this study. Foremost, there is parental interest in having a voucher program implemented in Oklahoma. In addition, it can be assumed that implementing such a program will require a number of issues to be addressed, such as: (a) added costs to attend a private school, since the respondents in this study indicated a deep concern with being responsible for any extra costs to send their child/children to private school on which the costs would not be covered by vouchers, (b) the location of the private school not being conveniently located to the child/children's home as is the public school in which the child/children attend, and (c) a concern with having students attending private secular schools not in the parents' faith.

### **Recommendation**

Although limited, this study's research findings about parental attitude to use vouchers or not use vouchers clearly establishes that further research needs to be conducted before a voucher bill is passed in Oklahoma. In-depth and comprehensive research is needed to determine why parents initially marked on the questionnaire that they would use a voucher but then countermanded themselves by agreeing with the reasons for having their child/children stay in the public schools.

Although only a limited number of parents returned the survey, the leading reasons indicated for wanting to have their child/children stay in the public school were (a) the location of the private school would not be conveniently located to the parents' homes, (b) any extra tuition and other costs not covered by the voucher, and (c) the need

for the private schools to affiliate with a wide variety of religions. Additionally, on the factor of location and transportation, it is important to note that any school choice system such as a voucher program will lack equity for the participants unless transportation is included in the program.

These are serious issues that need to be resolved before a program is passed and implemented by the Oklahoma Legislature. As Levin and Driver (1997) stated,

The estimation of the costs of a voucher system to replace existing systems of schooling cannot be done without the accurate specification of the particular voucher plan that is being considered, the system that it will replace, the setting where it will be applied, assumptions about the behavior of schools and families under the voucher approach, and the method for estimating cost. (para. 6)

In order to conduct a more comprehensive study on the use of vouchers in Oklahoma, it will be imperative to first educate the parents about vouchers, Oklahoma's current school choice programs, and the rights and state support parents with children in schools on the School Improvements List have under the No Child Left Behind Act. In a survey conducted by DiPerna, (2008), even non-minority and wealthier Oklahomans were found to have a "low baseline" of knowledge when it came to knowledge about vouchers. It is believed having such knowledge will assist parents in giving answers or opinions about the use or nonuse of vouchers.

In addition, the low response rate in this study necessitates the use of multiple approaches that are focused on contacting the parents of children in failing schools. It is foreseeable that this will require the full cooperation of the Oklahoma City and Tulsa School Districts. Possible means to contact parents could be through the Parent Teacher

Association, school functions, and through meetings with their child/childrens' teacher. Other methods for contacting parents should be investigated.

Considering the history of Oklahomans' strong ties with religious organizations, one such method could be an outreach program conducted through the support of local churches that would explain vouchers and encourage individuals to voluntarily participate in research about implementing a voucher program in Oklahoma. Also given the fact that some of the participants in this study self-reported as Native-American, it may be useful to contact tribal leadership and elicit their assistance for contacting parents.

Another method is that parents could be contacted and provided information about vouchers through the governmental assistance that is provided to some members of low-income minorities. An assumption should not be made, however, that just because a parent is qualified as low-income and a minority, he/she receives assistance. Oklahoma's unique history as a fairly recent State built by pioneers precludes an automatic assumption that our low-income minorities are similar to those in other large urban areas. Moreover, Oklahoma's low standard of living precludes the assumption that low-income necessarily denotes poverty.

Other recommendations are those that can be learned from Cleveland's Pilot Project Scholarship Program. Arguably, knowledge of the Program, the State's experiences in implementing the Program, and the scholastic achievements of the students, are all important in determining if a voucher program is a valid school choice option for Oklahoma.

An important issue in considering the implementation of a voucher program will be to ensure that the holding of *Zelman* (2002) is not violated. In order to avoid this an

Oklahoma program would have to be “neutral with respect to religion, and provide assistance to a broad class of citizens”(Zelman, 2002, p. 652). Upon proposing a voucher program which corresponds with the holding of *Zelman* (2002) and is, arguably, legal under its own State constitution, the Oklahoma Legislature should use applicable elements of the actual process implemented in Ohio in regards to a successful Pilot Project Scholarship Program. Legislation should be passed to determine what year new students can enroll in a voucher program, the highest grade level which voucher students can attend, what percentage of vouchers will be awarded to students previously enrolled in a private school, how long a voucher program will be funded, the amount of the funding, and whether students would be protected should the voucher program be discontinued.

The Legislature also needs to promulgate the requirements for the participating schools. Are the schools to be located within the boundaries of a district if the Legislature is going to restrict a voucher program by districts? Are the schools to meet any State standards? What is the minimum number of students an alternative school will be required to enroll? What priorities will private schools be allowed to use in admitting students?<sup>18</sup>

The Legislature must mandate that an alternative school not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, or ethnic background. Just as it is not authorized by the Pilot Project Scholarship Program sectarian schools cannot advocate or foster unlawful

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The Legislature must be aware of the Court’s holding in *Simmons-Harris* (1999) which found that a school’s priority in admitting students was not unconstitutional if it allowed the admission of students to be "allocated on the basis of neutral, secular criteria that neither favor nor disfavor religion, and [are] made available to both religious and secular beneficiaries on a nondiscriminatory basis" (*Simmons-Harris*, 1999, p. 207).

behavior or teach hatred of any person or group on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, or religion notwithstanding the dictates of their religion.

In passing legislation regarding actual use of a voucher, the Legislature should also closely adhere to the Ohio laws based on vouchers as basis for adherence to legal issues surrounding the use of vouchers. In statutory language, the Legislature should indicate that a voucher is payable to the parents of the student. The Legislature should also state the system to be used for a private school to redeem a voucher. The Legislature must ensure that any method used for redeeming vouchers not take away any parent's *choice* for determining the school in which to educate his/her children.

If it so chooses, the Legislature can require that the State Superintendent administer the voucher program. The Superintendent can be required to provide information about the voucher program to all the students in the district. The Superintendent can establish an application process and deadline for accepting applications for the program. The Superintendent can establish the criteria for setting up a process for the selection of students applying for the program. The Superintendent can also determine the qualifications of students under any preferences for selection to receive vouchers under criteria statutorily imposed by the Legislature. In addition, the Legislature can authorize the State Superintendent to be the responsible party for paying the parent in the form of a voucher made out for an amount designated by the Legislature.

The Legislature can also indicate the requirements to be met by the students and their parents. Students and their parents can be required to follow deadlines set out to ensure the timeliness of the application and acceptance process. The Legislature may have to provide notice to the student and their parent(s) that they are responsible for

ensuring that all submitted documentation is correct and complete according to the requirements for admission.

Oklahoma legislators should look to Ohio's Pilot Project Scholarship Program as a possible model for implementing a voucher program in their State. Specifically, the Ohio Department of Education maintains a website which provides access to relevant information about Cleveland's Scholarship and Tutoring Grant Program (see <http://www.ode.state.oh.us>). The website allows parents to download an application for their voucher program, be given information on eligibility, and told how the State will award the scholarships. Information on the amount of the scholarships is given along with the responsibilities of the parents to make arrangements with the school for the amount not paid by the State.

Recognizing the difficulties that occurred when the voucher program was first implemented, the Ohio Department of Education website gives information on verification of eligibility. This site provides parents with instructions and a list of examples of acceptable documents for proving residency. Information and a list of documents accepted as proof of the parent's gross income is also provided. In addition, parents are given information on the subject of guardianship and what supporting legal documents are required. Necessary phone numbers are provided and parents are encouraged to contact the program if assistance is required in obtaining the necessary documentation. The Oklahoma Legislature, or if designated, the Oklahoma State Department of Education may find this to be a useful model in providing general and specific information about a voucher program to the public.

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Appendix A  
School Improvement List

### Schools In Need Of Improvement 2008-2009

District	School	Benchmark	Student Group
Year 1			
Watts Public Schools	Watts ES *	Reading	All, AI
Erick Public Schools	Erick ES *	Math	ED
Lawton Public Schools	Lawton HS	% Tested	IEP, HI
Vinita Public Schools	Hall-Halsell ES *	Math	Reg. Ed.
Sapulpa Public Schools	Sapulpa JHS	Reading	AI
Ponca City Public Schools	Ponca City HS	Graduation Rate	
Marietta Public Schools	Marietta MS *	Reading	HI
Crutcho Public School	Crutcho ES *	Math	Reg. Ed.
Midwest City-Del City Public Schools	Jarman MS	Reading	IEP
Oklahoma City Public Schools	Coolidge ES	Math	IEP, All
Oklahoma City Public Schools	Emerson Alternative ED. (ES)	Math	All
Oklahoma City Public Schools	Rockwood ES *	Math	ELL, All, HI, ED
Oklahoma City Public Schools	Willow Brook ES	Math	Reg. Ed., IEP, All, BL
Oklahoma City Public Schools	Jefferson MS	Reading	ED
Oklahoma City Public Schools	NE Academy *		IEP, All, HI, ED
Oklahoma City Public Schools	Health/Sci/Engineering MS	Math	Reg. Ed., All, BL, ED.
Oklahoma City Public Schools	Oklahoma Centennial MS *	Math, Reading, Attendance	Reg. Ed., IEP, All, BL, ED
Oklahoma City Public Schools	Star Spencer HS *	Reading	ED
Oklahoma City Public Schools	Santa Fe South MS *	Reading	IEP
Oklmulgee Public Schools	Oklmulgee ES *	Reading	ELL
Tulsa Public Schools	McClure ES	Math	Reg. Ed., All, ED
Tulsa Public Schools	Byrd MS	Math	All
		Math	IEP

### Schools In Need Of Improvement 2008-2009

District	School	Benchmark	Student Group
Tulsa Public Schools	Clinton MS	Math	Reg. Ed., All, BL, HI, ED
Tulsa Public Schools	Lewis and Clark MS	% Tested	IEP
Tulsa Public Schools	Franklin Youth Academy MS	Reading, Attendance	Reg. Ed., All, ED
Union Public Schools	Union 8th Grade Center*	Reading	ELL
Muskogee Public Schools	7th & 8th Grade Center*	% Tested	IEP
<b>Year 2</b>			
Jay Public Schools	Jay MS	Reading	IEP
Oklahoma City Public Schools	Rogers MS	Math	IEP, All, BL, ED
Oklahoma City Public Schools	Roosevelt MS	Math	IEP
Oklahoma City Public Schools	Taft MS	Math	IEP
Union Public Schools	Briarglen ES	Math	ELL
<b>Year 3</b>			
Oklahoma City Public Schools	Douglass MS *	Attendance	
Oklahoma City Public Schools	Webster MS	Reading, % Tested	BL
Tulsa Public Schools	Daniel Webster HS *	Graduation Rate	
Union Public Schools	Union Intermediate HS	Reading	ELL
<b>Year 4</b>			
Oklahoma City Public Schools	F.D. Moon Academy ES	Math	All, BL, ED
Oklahoma City Public Schools	U.S. Grant HS*	% Tested	IEP, W
Tulsa Public Schools	Gilcrease MS	Math/Reading	Reg. Ed., IEP, All, BL, ED
Tulsa Public Schools	Central HS *	Reading/Grad. Rate	All, BL, ED
Tulsa Public Schools	East Central HS *	Reading/Grad. Rate	All, BL, HI, ED
<b>Year 5</b>			
Tulsa Public Schools	Nathan Hale HS *	Reading/ Grad. Rate	All, BL, ED

### Schools In Need Of Improvement 2008-2009

District	School	Benchmark	Student Group
Tulsa Public Schools	Will Rogers HS *	Reading/ Grad. Rate	IEP, ED

\*Schools that have made progress on the identified benchmark for 2008-2009

#### Student Groups

Regular Education Students (Reg. Ed.)	White Students (W)
All Students (All)	Other Students (O)
American Indian Students (AI)	Economically Disadvantaged Students (ED)
Asian Students (A)	Students on Individual Education Program (IEP)
Black Students (BL)	English Language Learners (ELL)
Hispanic Students (HI)	



Appendix B

Original Questionnaire

## QUESTIONNAIRE

(This questionnaire is anonymous)

**Please fill out this questionnaire only once regardless of how many of your children are enrolled in the school.**

**The purpose of this questionnaire is to elicit your feedback on the use of school vouchers as a means to send your child/children to an alternate private school other than the current public school for which he/she is enrolled in. A voucher is defined as a document that is equal to the sum of money given by the State to their child's/children's public school and which will be sent to the parents to use as tuition to send their child to a private school.**

### Preliminary Information

**Please give some information about yourself. You do not have to answer these questions:**

In which of the following categories does your total family income fall? Please circle.

Under \$25,000; \$25,000 - \$49,999; \$50,000 - \$74,999; \$75,000 - \$150,000;

Over \$150,000

Are you? Please Circle.

African-American; Asian; Hispanic; White; Other

### Directions

Please check "yes or no" to the following question: If a voucher was an available school choice option for you, would you use a voucher to send your child/children to a private school?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

**If you answered “yes”, please return the questionnaire in the enclosed envelope.**

**If you answered “no”, then your child/children will stay in the current public school. The following statements are reasons for staying in the school. Following each statement is a rating scale from, 1 to 5.**

**Sample Rating Scale**

**Example:**

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

At one end is “strongly agree” if the statement is a very important reason for your keeping your child/children in the current public school. At the other end is “strongly disagree” if it is not a reason. The numbers in the middle are other choices for selection if you feel the statement is one that you “agree” is a reason, you are “undecided,” or you “disagree.”

After reading each statement, circle the number that best represents your response to the statement. Please feel free to not respond to a statement that you do not understand or you do not wish to answer.

**STATEMENTS**

1. The principal in my child/children’s school does a good job of running the school and communicating with the parents.

Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

2. The teachers in my child/children’s school do a good job of educating my child/children.

Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

3. I am satisfied with the schoolwork (curriculum) given to my child/children.

Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

4. I am satisfied with my child's/children's academic performance at the school.

Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree

2

3

4

5

5. I want my child/children to attend this school because I, or another family member, attended it.

Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

6. I will keep my child/children in this school because my child/children are in extracurricular activities and/or sports.

Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

7. I will keep my child/children in this school because their friends are here.

Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

8. My child/children will not get along with the children that go to a private school.

Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

9. I want my child/children in this school because it is convenient to where I live.

Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

10. I will not use a voucher to have my child/children attend a private school because I would find it difficult to pay part of the tuition for a private school.

Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

11. Even if all the tuition is paid for, I would find it difficult to pay for uniforms and other costs for a private school.

Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

12. I do not want my child/children to attend a religious private school.

Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

13. I do not want my child/children to attend a religious school that is not in my faith.

Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Thank you for your time and cooperation spent in completing this questionnaire.

**Any further comments:**

A follow up to this questionnaire and an additional part of this study involves getting several parents together in a focus group to discuss why they won't use vouchers. Names will not be used in this group. I will identify each participant by a number. However, the participants may know or be familiar with one or more members of the group. All the participants will have a child or children attending the same school.

If you indicated that you will not use a voucher and you are willing to volunteer to participate in the focus group, please contact me at (580) 541-7074. Please do not state your name when you call. Instead, identify yourself as a member of the focus group. I will then inform you about the focus group and your rights as a volunteer. If you decide to volunteer, I will then take your name and phone number and the best times to reach you.

**This is the end of the questionnaire. Please return it in the enclosed self-addressed envelope.**

## Appendix C

### Cover Letter

SANDRA MULHAIR CINNAMON  
University of Oklahoma  
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies  
820 Van Vleet Oval  
Norman, OK 73019

January 12, 2010

Dear Parents:

The attached Questionnaire is part of a research project that I am conducting in order to be awarded a doctoral degree. The purpose of this research is to discover if vouchers will be a helpful part of our educational system. A voucher is a document that is equal to the sum of money given by the State to their child's/children's public school and which will be sent to the parents to use as tuition to send their child to a private school. A voucher will be given to parents who have a child or children in a school on the Oklahoma Department of Education's School Improvement Schools 2009 list under the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Your child's/children's school is on that list.

It is very important to discover if parents from public schools which are listed as requiring improvement will use a voucher to send their child/children to private schools. The attached Questionnaire will assist in determining if parents will use the voucher. However, you should know that you will be responsible for any tuition, uniform costs, **etc.**, not paid for by the voucher. In addition, although there will be transportation for your child/children to the private school of your choice, a private school may not be located in the same neighborhood as your child's/children's public school. Furthermore, the private schools will include religious and non-religious schools; however, the majority of private schools will be affiliated with a specific church and/or religion.

Please fill out this questionnaire and mail it in the enclosed self-addressed and stamped envelope. I would appreciate it if you can return it as soon as possible so that the other phases of this research can be completed. If you do not wish to fill out this questionnaire, I ask that you also return it in the self-addressed envelope.

The questionnaire is anonymous so you or your child/children cannot be identified. However, a second part of this research will have parents discussing vouchers in a group. Please contact me if you would be willing to join this group. I will ask for your name and phone number in order to conduct the focus group.



Please contact me at (580) 541-7074 if there are any problems or if you would like to receive a summary of the results. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Sandra Mulhair Cinnamon

Appendix D  
Interview Guide

## INTERVIEW GUIDE

All of you answered my questionnaire about the reasons why your child/children will stay in the public school instead of going to a private school. I want to discuss further several of the questions asked in the questionnaire.

1. Are there other reasons for why you like the principal of your child/children's school?
2. What does your child's teacher do that makes you want to keep your child in the public school?
3. Why do you think the schoolwork your child receives and your child's academic performance is a good reason to stay in the public school?
4. What activities is your child in that you believe is an important reason for keeping him/her in the public school?
5. Why is it important to you to keep your child with his/her friends in his/her current school?
6. Why do you think your child will feel uncomfortable in a private school?
7. What problems will you have if the private school is in another part of Tulsa?
8. Why do you not want your child attending a private religious school or one not in your faith?
9. What costs for sending your child to a private school would be more than you can afford?
10. Is there any other reason that you find is important for keeping your child/children in the public school?

Appendix E

Revised Questionnaire

## QUESTIONNAIRE

(This questionnaire is anonymous)

**Please fill out this questionnaire only once regardless of how many of your children are enrolled in the school.**

**The purpose of this questionnaire is to elicit your feedback on the use of school vouchers as a means to send your child/children to an alternate private school other than the current public school for which he/she is enrolled in. A voucher is defined as a document that is equal to the sum of money given by the State to their child's/children's public school and which will be sent to the parents to use as tuition to send their child to a private school.**

### Preliminary Information

**Please give some information about yourself. You do not have to answer these questions:**

In which of the following categories does your total family income fall? Please circle.

Under \$25,000; \$25,000 - \$49,999; \$50,000 - \$74,999; \$75,000 - \$150,000;

Over \$150,000

Are you? Please Circle.

African-American; Asian; Hispanic; White; Other

### Directions

Please check "yes or no" to the following question: If a voucher was an available school choice option for you, would you use a voucher to send your child/children to a private school?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

The following statements are referring to the public school that your child/children is now attending. There are also several statements about vouchers. Following each statement is a rating scale from, 1 to 5.

### **Sample Rating Scale**

#### **Example:**

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

After reading each statement, circle the number that best represents your response to the statement. At one end is “strongly agree.” At the other end is “strongly disagree.” The numbers in the middle are other choices for selection if you feel the statement is one that you “agree” with, you are “undecided,” or you “disagree” with.

Please feel free to not respond to a statement that you do not understand or you do not wish to answer.

### **STATEMENTS**

1. The principal in my child/children’s school does a good job of running the school and communicating with the parents.

Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

2. The teachers in my child/children’s school do a good job of educating my child/children.

Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

3. I am satisfied with the schoolwork (curriculum) given to my child/children.

Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

4. I am satisfied with my child’s/children’s academic performance at the school.

Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
	2	3	4	5

5. I want my child/children to attend this school because I, or another family member, attended it.

Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

6. I will keep my child/children in this school because my child/children are in extracurricular activities and/or sports.

Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

7. I will keep my child/children in this school because their friends are here.

Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

8. My child/children will not get along with the children that go to a private school.

Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

9. I want my child/children in this school because it is convenient to where I live.

Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

10. I will not use a voucher to have my child/children attend a private school because I would find it difficult to pay part of the tuition for a private school.

Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

11. Even if all the tuition is paid for, I would find it difficult to pay for uniforms and other costs for a private school.

Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

12. I do not want my child/children to attend a religious private school.

Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

13. I do not want my child/children to attend a religious school that is not in my faith.

Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Thank you for your time and cooperation spent in completing this questionnaire.

**Any further comments:**

A follow up to this questionnaire and an additional part of this study involves getting several parents together in a focus group to discuss vouchers. The focus group is scheduled for Saturday, February 20th, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. at the Midwest City Library's meeting room. This date and time can be moved if it does not fit your schedule. The location can also be moved if needed.

Names will not be used in this group. I will identify each participant by a number. However, the participants may know or be familiar with one or more members of the group. The participants may have a child or children attending the same school. If you are willing to volunteer to participate in the focus group, please contact me at (580) 541-7074. Please do not state your name when you call. Instead, identify yourself as a



member of the focus group. I will then inform you about the focus group and your rights as a volunteer. If you decide to volunteer, I will then take your name and phone number and the best times to reach you.

**This is the end of the questionnaire. Please return it in the enclosed self-addressed envelope.**

Appendix F  
Revised Interview Guide

## INTERVIEW GUIDE

All of you answered my questionnaire about the public school your child/children attend and about vouchers. I want to discuss further several of the questions asked in the questionnaire.

1. Will you use a voucher if such a program becomes a viable school choice?
2. Do you understand what a voucher is and how it works including the possibility of extra costs to you for tuition, uniforms, and fees?
  - a. Which expenses for sending your child to a private school would affect your decision not to use vouchers?
3. Do you understand the school district's current policy on school choice? How does this policy affect your decision to use vouchers?
4. Is the principal of your child/children's school ability to run the school and communicate with the parents a reason for opting or not opting for vouchers? Why?
5. Is the teacher's ability to educate your child/children a reason for opting or not opting for vouchers? Why?
6. Is your satisfaction with the schoolwork your child receives and your child's academic performance a reason for opting or not opting for vouchers? Why?
7. Are there activities in which your child is involved that you believe pose an important reason for keeping him/her in the public school?
8. Why is it important or not important to you to keep your child with his/her friends in his/her current school?
9. How does your child/children's ability to get along with the children in a private school affect your decision to opt or not opt for vouchers?
10. What problems will you have if the private school is located in another part of Oklahoma City and will these problems keep you from using vouchers?
11. Why would you not want your child attending a private religious school or one not in your faith?
12. Are there any other reasons that you find is important for keeping your child/children in the public school?
13. Are there any other reasons that you find is important for using a voucher and have your child/children attend a private school?