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The Missouri Student Transfer Program

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THE MISSOURI STUDENT TRANSFER PROGRAM

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Abstract

In 1993, the state of Missouri passed the Outstanding Schools Act. This law was created as a means to ensure that “all children will have quality educational opportunities, regardless of where in Missouri they live.” Section 167.131 of this law states that an unaccredited district must pay the tuition and transportation cost for students who attend an accredited school in the same or adjoining district. This portion of the law became known as the Student Transfer Program.

The Riverview Gardens School District (RGSD) was one of three unaccredited school districts in the state of Missouri in 2013. With close to 6,000 students (96.9% Black), RGSD, located in St. Louis, Missouri, was forced to implement this program. The majority of media reports focused on the political, financial, and school perspectives of the Student Transfer Program, neglecting the personal family stories in the process. In addition to providing a voice for the neglected family perspectives, this dissertation is accompanied by a feature-length documentary film. The dissertation and documentary complement one another by highlighting personal experiences and stories of those who have been impacted by this program.

The unique experiences and perspectives of these participants are based on the decisions that they made related to the Student Transfer Program. One of the participants (Jennifer) decided to keep her children enrolled in RGSD following implementation of the Student Transfer Program. Another participant (Michelle) decided to exercise her right to transfer her children from RGSD and enroll them in an accredited school district, at the expense of RGSD. The final participant (Tiffany) initially decided to transfer her children from RGSD to an accredited school district, but later that same year returned to RGSD.

Acknowledgements

Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD.

Thanks be to God for steering me down such a rewarding and humble path. I could not have dreamed of the experiences that believing in Him has afforded me. To my beautiful wife, Nancy, thank you for believing in me when no one else did. You are my biggest supporter and best friend. To my children, Howard IV, Aniyah, and Isaiah, as well as my sisters, Annette and Shelah, every day you motivate me to be better and to establish what is expected from a Fields.

I would like to formally thank my advisor and dissertation chair, Dr. Carl Hoagland. From day one, you challenged me to embrace innovation and to unapologetically think different. I would also like to thank the remaining committee members. To Dr. Lynn Beckwith Jr., thank you for always setting the bar high and demanding excellence in everything that you are associated with. To Dr. Matthew Davis, thank you for challenging me to think critically and helping me to develop the confidence to stand up against the status quo. Thank you, Dr. Keith Miller, for your knowledge and consistent positive vibe that you bring to the committee.

Thank you to the participants in this study (Jennifer, Michelle, and Tiffany). Your bravery and candidness while sharing your personal stories will certainly help in the ongoing quest to provide equitable quality education for all students.

Lastly, to the two people who have sacrificed the most to allow me to come this far, my parents, Lynnette and Howard Fields Jr. My life came at the expense of your college education. For that reason, you were my biggest motivation to obtain the highest college degree possible and have it serve as the ultimate “thank you.” This was all for you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Introduction	1
Background	2
Purpose of the Study.....	6
Research Questions.....	7
Significance of the Study.....	7
Delimitations.....	8
Limitations and Assumptions	8
Definition of Terms.....	9
Summary.....	14
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	15
Introduction	15
Separate But Equal	15
Equitable Quality Education.....	18
The Use of Busing to Achieve Equity.....	19
The St. Louis Voluntary Inter-district Transfer Program.....	25
The “New” Inter-district Transfer Program.....	28
Missouri’s Accreditation System	30
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	34
Introduction	34
Researcher’s Role	34
Documentary Film	35
Research Design.....	36
Setting and Participants	38
Data Collection	39
Data Analysis	40
Ethical Consideration	40
Summary	42

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS	43
Introduction	43
Documentary	43
Participant #1	44
Participant #2	55
Participant #3	64
Question and Answer Comparison Table	72
Initial Understanding of the Student Transfer Program	97
Social Impact	98
Emotional Impact	100
Academic Impact.....	100
Unforeseen Challenges	102
Views on the “End” of the Student Transfer Program	102
Quality & Equitable Education	105
Four Years Later.....	106
 CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, & SUGGESTIONS.....	109
Summary	109
Conclusion	112
Recommendations for Future Research	114
 REFERENCES	116
 APPENDICES	120

Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

During the summer of 2013, the Riverview Gardens School District, located in North St. Louis County, Missouri was dealt a catastrophic blow that would leave this unaccredited school district on the brink of lapsing. According to Missouri State Statute 162.081, an unaccredited school district could lapse, which means that at any time, the state school board has the authority to dissolve the district and annex students to other school districts. So when the Missouri Supreme Court ruled that students in unaccredited school districts could transfer to an accredited school district at the expense of the unaccredited district (*Breitenfeld v. School District of Clayton*, 2013), the challenge of regaining accreditation became much more difficult for Riverview Gardens.

As a new administrator in Riverview Gardens in 2013, the researcher observed how the *Breitenfeld v. School District of Clayton* ruling impacted an entire district from the inside. Although the majority of media reports related to this ruling focused on the financial, political, and school implications, there were particular perspectives that did not gain much attention; one of those being the different ways in which families reacted to the ruling. The researcher was engaged in multiple conversations with families on the topic of transferring during the summer of 2013. The June 11, 2013 ruling meant that families could transfer for the upcoming school year, which was scheduled to start on August 12, 2013. Like the researcher, many Riverview Gardens administrators had strong relationships with district students and their families. As a result, they began calling families who filed for transfer, passionately requesting they give the district, as well as the new superintendent, another year and reconsider transferring. Although many

families granted the district with another opportunity, many respectfully declined the invitation(s) and decided to transfer.

As of 2017, it has been nearly five years since students began transferring from Riverview Gardens under what has become known as the Student Transfer Program. The majority of media reports continue to focus on the political, financial, and school perspectives of this program, neglecting the personal family stories in the process. In an attempt to leverage this dissertation to provide a voice for some of those neglected family perspectives, the subsequent sections and chapters are accompanied by a feature-length documentary film. In this documentary film, parents of current and former Riverview Gardens' students share their personal experiences and stories, as well as the impact this program had on their families.

Background

A mission statement can reveal much about an organization or initiative. It may include a goal, as well as an unquantifiable measurement for assessing its effectiveness. In educational policy, this declaration is often synonymous with words such as “quality education,” “improvement,” or “maximizing opportunities.” Take for example, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965, the purpose of ESEA was to “strengthen and improve educational quality and educational opportunities in the Nation’s elementary and secondary schools” (Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965). The State of Missouri echoed this mission in 1993 with the passing of the Outstanding Schools Act. The mission of this act was to ensure that “all children will have quality educational opportunities regardless of where in Missouri they live” (Outstanding Schools Act of 1993). Notwithstanding the

year, the narrative remains the same. A law that mandates equitable education is passed, only to have the interpretation and implementation decided in court; case in point, Liddell v. Board of Education in 1983. Ironically, the twenty-eight years between ESEA and the Outstanding Schools Act represents the same number of years that Mrs. Minnie Liddell fought for equitable educational opportunities in the St. Louis Public School District (SLPSD).

Admitted as a slave state to the Union through the Missouri Compromise (1820), Missouri was the most northern state to require separate schools for whites and Blacks (Gotham, 2002). Although *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) abolished separate but equal practices, during the 1970s, “black [SLPSD] students, [still] attended schools in old, dilapidated buildings, their textbooks were both used and outdated, [and] their classrooms were substantially overcrowded” (Norwood, 2012, p. 7). These claims, however, could be disputed when considering the number of newly built schools that Black students attended in SLPS during this time (L. Beckwith, personal communication, December 8, 2016). What cannot be disputed is how Black students were often transported and reassigned from their neighborhood schools to other predominately Black schools across town, while white students on the south side of SLPSD attended predominantly white neighborhood schools. When the predominately Black schools were overcrowded, “intact busing” was used as an offsetting strategy. “Intact busing” occurred when Black students and teachers were bused to a predominately white school for teachers to teach, and students to learn. These students had different arrival, dismissal, lunch, and recess times than the white students (L. Beckwith, personal communication, December 8, 2016). This system infuriated many Black SLPSD parents,

including Minnie Liddell. In 1971, Mrs. Liddell began vocalizing her concerns through various protests.

On February 18, 1972, a class action lawsuit was filed (*Liddell v. Board of Education of the City of St. Louis, Missouri*) in U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Missouri (*Liddell v. Board of Education*, 1983). The Board of Education for the City of St. Louis would later file a lawsuit against many suburban school districts located outside of St. Louis City, citing that they also contributed to the segregation in the SLPSD by “assign[ing] and transport[ing] black students living in the suburbs to black schools in the City” (Norwood, 2012). Fearful after the presiding district judge threatened to combine and consolidate multiple districts into one metropolitan school district; an agreement was signed by all parties in 1983 (Norwood, 2012). This agreement gave birth to the voluntary inter-district transfer program. Implemented during the 1983 - 1984 school year, the major components of this agreement included Black students from the city transferring to suburban schools, the creation and growth of magnet schools in the city, and quality educational improvements for the remaining SLPSD students (Norwood, 2012). In 1999, the voluntary inter-district transfer program hit its peak of over 14,000 students being transferred from St. Louis City schools (Glaser, n.d.). This same year, an updated Settlement Agreement identified the end of the 2008 - 2009 school year as the final year that the State of Missouri would be obligated to fund the voluntary inter-district transfer program (Norwood, 2012). To say this would mark the end of students from a predominantly Black St. Louis school district transferring to another “high-quality” school district would be premature and eventually proven to be false.

Section 167.131 of the Outstanding Schools Act (1993) states that an unaccredited district must pay the tuition and transportation cost for each student who attends an accredited school in the same or adjoining district. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) uses performance standards to classify school districts as accredited with distinction, fully accredited, provisionally accredited, or unaccredited (DESE, n.d.). In May 2007, the SLPSD lost their accreditation (“Court upholds decision to rescind St. Louis Public School's accreditation.” 2008). Up until this point, St. Louis City residents Jane Turner, Susan Bruker, Gina Breitenfeld, and William Drendel all paid tuition for their children to attend the nearby School District of Clayton (Clayton), which is located in St. Louis County (Norwood, 2012). Aware of Missouri Statue 167.131, these same parents requested Clayton to seek reimbursement for tuition from the unaccredited SLPSD (Turner v. School District of Clayton, 2007). When Clayton refused, a lawsuit was filed in St. Louis County Circuit Court (Turner v. School District of Clayton, 2007). Although the Circuit Court sided with Clayton, upon appeal, the Missouri Supreme Court reversed the decision in 2010 and remanded the case back to the St. Louis County Circuit Court (Norwood, 2012). After Clayton argued that the Missouri Supreme Court ruling was unconstitutional and the St. Louis County Court agreed, the case was sent back to the Missouri Supreme Court (Norwood, 2012). By now, Jane Turner, Susan Bruker, and William Drendel were no longer plaintiffs in the case, resulting in the case being renamed [Gina] Breitenfeld v. School District of Clayton (2013).

On June 11, 2013, the Missouri Supreme Court reaffirmed its 2010 decision, ruling that students in unaccredited school districts could transfer to an accredited school

district at the expense of the unaccredited district (Breitenfeld v. School District of Clayton, 2013). This ruling would eventually serve as the impetus for implementation of the Student Transfer Program. In 2012, SLPSD was reclassified as provisionally accredited (Bock, 2012.). This meant that the 2013 ruling no longer had immediate ramifications for SLPSD; the same could not be said for the Riverview Gardens School District (RGSD).

Unaccredited since 2007, RGSD was one of three unaccredited districts in the State of Missouri in 2013 (Kansas City Public School District & Normandy School District were the other two) (DESE, n.d.). With close to 6,000 students (96.9% Black) and recent financial struggles, RGSD began implementation of the Student Transfer Program exactly thirty years after the start of the voluntary inter-district transfer program. Only this time, the funding source would not be the State of Missouri, it would be the unaccredited school district. At an estimated \$30 million dollars per school year, the Student Transfer Program was viewed as a bankruptcy program waiting to happen (Salter, J. & Hollingsworth, H. 2013).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this narrative study is to better understand the perceptions of the Student Transfer Program by interviewing three families from the unaccredited Riverview Gardens School District who have been impacted by this program. These varying perspectives include a family who transferred from RGSD to an accredited school district, a family who remained in RGSD, and a family who transferred from RGSD to an accredited district, only to return to RGSD.

Research Questions

In this documentary film, parents of current and former Riverview Gardens' students will share their personal experiences and stories related to the Student Transfer Program in an attempt to answer the following questions:

How does the Student Transfer Program impact families in the Riverview Gardens School District?

What experiences did families in the Riverview Gardens School District have as a result of the Student Transfer Program?

Significance of Study

To the best of the researcher's research efforts, there have not been any video publications that provide families with opportunities to discuss their perspectives related to this phenomena. Families have been impacted by this law in a variety of ways. By creating a platform to discuss the Student Transfer Program, outside of the frequently visited financial context, informative conversations were welcomed and expected.

The findings of this study provide extended personal stories, told by actual Student Transfer Program participants, through a feature-length documentary film. Again, per extensive research efforts, the researcher did not locate any documentary films or studies that focused exclusively on the perspectives of families in the Student Transfer Program through the use of video recording. These stories, as well as the usage of the documentary film, will contribute to both the education and educational policy fields by allowing all stakeholders to examine multiple perspectives and unique experiences that may have otherwise been difficult to extract through survey data collections. These data could also be considered when making future decisions related to student transfers and

student transfer programs. Having access to first-hand narratives that contribute to subsequent research related to inter-district student transfers is an additional benefit of this study.

Delimitations

All of the participants in this study are from the Riverview Gardens School District, which, as of the 2015 - 2016 school year, represented only one of the unaccredited school districts in the State of Missouri. The narratives that were shared in this study were delimited to 14 pre-selected questions (follow-up questions were asked as well). Although fathers were requested to participate in this study, the researcher was unsuccessful in obtaining a male's perspective, which resulted in all female subjects. In addition, all of the subjects were above the age of 35. When considering the actual number of students who have participated in the Student Transfer Program, three perspectives is merely a small sample size.

Limitations and Assumptions

The three families that were selected to share their experiences were selected based on convenience. As an employee of the Riverview Gardens School District, a relationship was already established between the researcher and the study participants prior to implementation of the Student Transfer Program. This could have impacted the actual experiences that were shared by these families. Some details or experiences may have been omitted by the participants due to this relationship. Other details or experiences may not have been shared without this previously established relationship.

The first assumption is in regard to the interview responses. Based on the signed consent form, which encourages honesty, the researcher assumed that all responses to the

interview questions were answered honestly, as accurately as possible, and to the best of the participants' knowledge. The second assumption of this study has to do with the sample size. Although the sample size is small, the researcher has made an attempt to represent three distinct points of view for the documentary film. One cannot generalize from the sample, but the size will give the viewer of the documentary a view of the differences of opinion of the student transfer program.

Definition of Terms

Accreditation Status - DESE reviews each district's accreditation status and the supporting data from the Annual Performance Report (APR) for the three (3) most recent years to identify trends and statuses in student performance outcomes.

Other considerations may include Missouri School Improvement Plan (MSIP) Goals, previous Department MSIP findings, financial status, and leadership stability. A district's accreditation classification remains intact until the State Board of Education rules otherwise. As of 2016, schools/districts are classified as one of the following four classifications: Unaccredited, Provisionally Accredited, Fully Accredited, or Accredited with Distinction (DESE, 2016).

Accredited - The Missouri School Improvement Program 5 (MSIP5) has the responsibility of reviewing and accrediting the 517 school districts in Missouri. The process of accrediting school districts is mandated by state law and by State Board of Education regulation. As of 2016, accredited schools / districts score more than fifty percent on their APR. These schools are classified as one of the following three accredited classifications: Provisionally Accredited, Fully Accredited, or Accredited with Distinction (DESE, 2016).

Annual Performance Report (APR) – School/district reports that are based on the performance standards (below) and reviewed for accreditation purposes at the district level. DESE also produces APRs for schools and charter LEAs to support its goal of empowering all stakeholders, in manners appropriate to their roles, through regular communication and transparent reporting of results. The overall APR score is comprised of scores for each of the MSIP5 Performance Standards: (1) Academic Achievement, (2) Subgroup Achievement, (3) High School Readiness (K-8 districts) or College and Career Readiness (K-12 districts), (4) Attendance Rate, and (5) Graduation Rate (K-12 districts). Status, progress, and growth (where applicable) are used to calculate a comprehensive score used to determine the accreditation level of a school district. Data for academic achievement (English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and High School Social Studies), subgroup achievement (English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and High School Social Studies) and graduation rates are also used for federal accountability determinations, including rewards, and focus/priority school identification for LEAs and schools. (DESE, 2016).

Autoethnographic Research Approach – An approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience. This approach challenges canonical ways of doing research and representing others and treats research as a political, socially-just, and socially-conscious act. A researcher uses tenets of autobiography and ethnography to do and write autoethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). This approach also served as the driving force to produce the documentary that accompanies this dissertation.

Breitenfeld v. School District of Clayton – The renaming of Turner v. School District of Clayton due to Turner and other original plaintiffs no longer being named in the case. Also see Turner v. Board of Education (Breitenfeld v. School District of Clayton).

Brown v. Board of Education – Heard by the United States Supreme Court, the 1954 ruling of this case addressed educational inequality by abolishing the notion of “separate but equal” in public schools (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954).

Critical Race Theory – For the purposes of this study, Critical Race Theory refers to the role that race and racism plays in social events.

De facto Segregation - A non-government mandated segregation, in which events outside of governmental control result in a segregated society (Grace, 2014).

De jure Segregation - Legally keeping society separated by the creation of laws and statutes that restrict or make it completely impossible for minority citizens to exercise their rights (Grace, 2014).

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) – Governing body for primary and secondary public education in the State of Missouri (DESE, n.d.).

Desegregation – The breaking down of imposed racial separation. Desegregation has always been a fundamental aim of the civil rights movement in this country and was given special impetus by the Supreme Court's 1954 decision in Brown v. Board of Education that ruled segregated schools unconstitutional (“Civil Rights Glossary,” n.d.)

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) - Signed into law in 1965 by President Lyndon Baines Johnson, who believed that a “full educational opportunity” should be “our first national goal.” From its inception, ESEA was a civil rights law that

offered new grants to districts serving low-income students, federal grants for textbooks and library books, funding for special education centers, and scholarships for low-income college students. Additionally, the law provided federal grants to state educational agencies to improve the quality of elementary and secondary education (Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) - Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Signed by President Barack Obama on December 10, 2015 (Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015).

Feature-Length Documentary – According to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (2017), any documentary that is longer than 40 minutes.

High-Quality School District – In this study, school districts that are Fully Accredited or Accredited with Distinction.

Intra-district Transfer – The process of transferring from one's designated school to another school within the district's attendance boundary.

Integration – The process of ending racial imbalances in schools by bringing students from different racial backgrounds together to attend school. Separate but equal was used as a strategy to preserve segregation in some schools, but is not a true form of integration.

Inter-district Transfer - The process of transferring from one's designated school to another school outside the district's attendance boundary.

Liddell v. Board of Education – The 1972 class action lawsuit filed by Minnie Liddell that accused the St. Louis Public School District of having segregated schools post-Brown v. Board of Education (Liddell v. Board of Education, 1983).

Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) – An annual Missouri high-stakes, standardized assessment for third through eighth-grade students. This assessment is designed to assess students’ progress towards mastery of Missouri Standards (DESE, n.d.).

Outstanding Schools Act – Missouri 1993 act designed to help all children have access to quality educational opportunities, regardless of where in Missouri they live (Outstanding Schools Act of 1993).

Settlement Agreement – The 1983 agreement by all parties in *Liddell v. Board of Education* that would give birth to the voluntary inter-district transfer program, which transferred Black students from the city to suburban schools and white students from suburban schools to the city. There was another agreement in 1999 (Norwood, 2012).

Student Transfer Law – Missouri Revised Statue 167.131, which makes it possible for students in an unaccredited school district to transfer to an accredited school district, at the expense of the unaccredited school district (Outstanding Schools Act of 1993).

Student Transfer Program – The process of students transferring from unaccredited school districts to accredited school districts, at the expense of the unaccredited school district (Outstanding Schools Act of 1993).

Turner v. School District of Clayton – Pursuant to Missouri Revised Statue 167.131, students from the then-unaccredited St. Louis Public School District attended the accredited School District of Clayton. When Clayton refused to bill the St. Louis Public School District for tuition, a lawsuit was filed in 2007. See *Breitenfeld v. School District of Clayton* (Breitenfeld v. School District of Clayton, 2013).

Unaccredited – The formal process made by the DESE’s Board of Education when a school district scores less than fifty percent of points on their APR (DESE, n.d.).

Voluntary Inter-District Transfer Program – In this study, the formal process of transferring Black students from St. Louis Public School District to schools in St. Louis County, and/or transferring white students from St. Louis County to schools in St. Louis Public Schools.

Voluntary Inter-District Choice Corporation (VICC) – The organization that oversees the implementation of the metropolitan area desegregation program pursuant to the Settlement Agreement. Ultimately responsible for facilitating transfers of city students to suburban school districts and suburban students to city magnet schools. (Glaser, n.d.)

White Flight - the relocation of whites to the suburbs as a direct result of Blacks migrating to the central cities where whites reside (Boustan, 2010).

Summary

The remaining chapters of this study are uniquely assembled. The Literature Review serves as an overview of multiple books and articles relating to the long and well-documented history of the “fight” for student educational equality. Chapter three reveals the research design and methods for collecting data for this study. The fourth chapter provides the results from each participants’ interview, while chapter five serves as the study’s summary.

These five chapters include a feature-length documentary film, titled “The Art of The Student Transfer Program.” If you are interested in viewing this documentary film, please email the researcher at DrHowardFields@gmail.com.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

In order to examine the Student Transfer Program thoroughly, it is necessary to establish the context needed as a precursor. Using a chronology of events, the researcher will start with the introduction of separate but equal, followed by equitable quality education, the use of buses to achieve equity, the St. Louis Voluntary Inter-district Transfer Program, and subsequently, the new inter-district transfer program.

Separate but Equal

Education, segregation, and the United States judicial system have been intertwined for over 150 years. In 1850, Sarah Roberts, a five year old Black girl, attempted to attend an all-white school that was closer to her Boston, Massachusetts home than the sub-standard, all-Black school (Sumner, 1849). When she was not allowed to attend the school as a result of her race, her father, Benjamin Roberts, filed a discrimination suit.

Judge Lemuel Shaw presided over the case and ruled in favor of the City of Boston (Roberts v. City of Boston, 1850). Notwithstanding, in 1855, Massachusetts would become the first state to prohibit racially segregated schools in the United States (Desegregating Public Schools, 1855).

In 1896, Plessy v. Ferguson represented the nation's highest legal sanction for the physical separation by race of persons in the United States (Davis, 2004). Homer Adolph Plessy, who was seven-eighths white and one-eighth Black, boarded a train in Louisiana and took a seat in a car that was reserved for white passengers (Medley, 2003). When asked if he was a colored man, Plessy's response resulted in an order to move to a car

reserved for African Americans (Medley, 2003). Refusing to comply, Plessy was arrested and later tried in US District Court. Judge John H. Ferguson found that requiring Plessy to move on the basis of race did not violate the Thirteenth or Fourteenth Amendments (Plessy v. Ferguson, 1896). The US Supreme Court's decision to uphold this ruling confirmed the *Separate but Equal* doctrine, making segregation a legal practice for fifty-eight more years.

In 1951, a class action lawsuit was filed in Topeka, Kansas, challenging the Board of Education's policy on racial segregation in public education. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) would lead the case in Supreme Court, combining five different cases from Kansas, Delaware, South Carolina, Virginia, and Washington D.C. that challenged racial segregation in schools (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954).

On May 17, 1954, Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas was decided. The US Supreme Court ruled that the "separate but equal" doctrine adopted in Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537, had no place in the field of public education (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954). The court also went on to state that "segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race deprives children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities, even though the physical facilities and other 'tangible' factors may be equal" (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954).

Although the Brown v. Board of Education decision was undoubtedly a victory for racial equality in education, the actual process of starting court-imposed racial desegregation in schools would take decades for some states. In Brown v. Board of Education II, the courts called for states to desegregate "with all deliberate speed" (1955).

The impact of the contrasting words “deliberate” and “speed” allowed some states to move rather slowly, enabling segregation to continue for many more years after Brown II (L. Beckwith, personal communication, December 8, 2016). It would take more court cases and Supreme Court rulings to expedite the process of desegregation in schools.

In 1971, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools in North Carolina were still considered racially imbalanced. With over 84,000 students (29% Black) and 107 schools, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools was considered a huge school district (Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education, 1971). Two-thirds of the 21,000 Black students were attending schools that were 99% Black (Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education, 1971). During this time, many states and districts interpreted the Brown rulings as prohibiting segregation, not necessarily as integration mandates. This notion would change (in part) with Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education (1971). The US Supreme Court upheld the decision that bus transportation could be used as a strategy to accomplish school desegregation (Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education, 1971). This decision not only articulated the Supreme Court’s stance on ensuring equal educational opportunities for all students regardless of race, it also opened the door for other states to use buses as a school desegregation strategy (Schwartz, 1986).

At the same time Swann and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools were battling in court, a similar court battle was taking place in Indianapolis, Indiana. In 1971, the Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) were found guilty of “de jure segregation” for their utilization of gerrymandering attendance boundaries, establishing free transfer zones, and promoting faculty segregation (United States District Court vs. Indianapolis Public

Schools, 1975). In this lawsuit, which was filed by the US Justice Department, the court found that IPS was “operating a segregated school system wherein segregation was imposed and enforced by operation of laws” (United States District Court vs. Indianapolis Public Schools, 1975). Two years later, IPS was ordered to bus “a certain percentage” of their Black students to surrounding schools outside of IPS (Indianapolis Public Schools and Township Schools Busing Agreement, 1998).

Both *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg* and the *United States District Court v. Indianapolis Public Schools* used busing as a strategy to desegregate proven racially segregated school systems. This same strategy would be used again on multiple occasions in an attempt to provide equitable quality education. Before we can examine the effectiveness of this strategy, it is important to establish a clear understanding of what constitutes an “equitable quality education,” as well as the mitigating factors.

Equitable Quality Education

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. This law was enacted with intentions of providing “equitable educational opportunities” to help “enhance the learning experiences of underprivileged children” (Thomas & Brady, 2005). This essentially meant that the federal government would play a role in ensuring equitable and quality education for all students. But what exactly constitutes equity and quality in education? According to the United States Office of Education, the usage of terms such as “equity” and “quality” are frequently “imprecise and inconsistent” (Improving Education Quality Project, 1993). “Equity,” as a stand-alone word in education, is defined as “fairness between distinguishable groups in terms of access to, participation in, and achievement of the educational system” (Cobbe, 1990).

“Quality” on the other hand, typically represents the “degree to which objectives are met, accomplished, or [are] effective” (Improving Education Quality Project, 1993).

Together, “equitable [quality] education” represents a “systematic sustained effort aimed at chang[ing] learning conditions, with the ultimate aim of accomplishing educational goals more effectively” (Bollen, 1989). When considering learning conditions for students, one must understand the contrast between Black and white schools. The *Equality of Educational Opportunity Report* (1966), served as evidence that students’ background and socioeconomic status has an impact on learning conditions. Schools serving Black students, especially those in the inner-city, often face the challenges associated with disadvantaged neighborhoods (Jacobs, 2007); most notably poverty. The research is clear; there is a substantial relationship between poverty and student achievement; “[a]s the percent of poverty increases in a school, student achievement goes down” (The Relationships Between School Poverty and Student Achievement in Maine, 2014). Across the nation, many of the highest performing schools are in the richest neighborhoods (Hochschild & Scovronick, 2013). In fact, there is such a correlation between student achievement and zip codes that the quality of education received, is “entirely predictable, based on where you live” (Domenech, 2011). It may be safe to state that such a notion provides a solid argument for those who believe that students who live in poverty, but attend schools in “rich” neighborhoods, should perform better than those students who remain in schools within poverty-stricken neighborhoods.

The Use of Busing to Achieve Equity

Desegregation was believed to be a way for Black students to increase their educational achievement by accessing greater educational resources, which were

prevalent in “white schools” (Flentroy, 1977). In 1955, social scientist Gordon Allport stated that the greater the contact between races, the greater the chances for “mutual understanding and tolerance of cultural differences.” According to Glynda Flentroy (1977):

[T]here have been four distinct factors motivating school integration: (1) the removal of the Black inferiority stigma in order to heighten [self-esteem], (2) access by Black pupils to superior resources at White institutions, (3) increasing the academic achievement of Black students, and (4) lessening racial prejudice. Among the factors motivating school integration, the scholastic performance of Black students in an integrated academic environment has received the most attention from social scientists.

Based on the noted benefits of integration, why are buses even needed to achieve integration in schools? An explanation that has been provided so often focuses on de jure segregation, de facto segregation, and “white flight.”

De jure segregation is defined as “legally keeping society separated by the creation of laws and statutes that restrict or make it completely impossible for minority citizens to exercise their rights” (Grace, 2014). Contrarily, de facto segregation is a non-government mandated segregation, in which events outside of governmental control result in a segregated society (Grace, 2014). “White flight” refers to the relocation of whites to the suburbs as a direct result of Blacks migrating to the central cities where whites reside (Boustan, 2010). When considering the impact that de jure segregation, de facto segregation, and “white flight” had on historically segregated states, cities, and school districts, “busing” became a viable option for achieving integration. One of those historically segregated states was Missouri.

As previously stated, Missouri was admitted as a slave state to the Union through the Missouri Compromise (1820), which represented the most northern state to require separate schools for whites and Blacks (Gotham, 2002). In 1910, the Missouri State Attorney General informed all Missouri school districts that the State would prosecute any school officials who were operating racially integrated schools (Gotham, 2002). In addition to schools being segregated, *Shelley v. Kraemer* would serve as an example as to how neighborhoods in Missouri were just as segregated as the schools.

In 1945, a Black family moved into a St. Louis, Missouri neighborhood that was overwhelmingly white. Unbeknownst to this family, their new home, just north of the 4600 block of St. Louis Ave. in the Greater Ville area, had a restrictive covenant that prevented Blacks from moving into the property (*Shelley v. Kraemer*, 1948). The United States Supreme Court would overturn the lower court's decision that housing covenants were constitutional, ruling that "racially restrictive covenants violated the United States Constitution" (*Shelley v. Kraemer*, 1948). The state of race relations during this time would lead to the "most widespread outbreak of racial violence in the city's post-World War II history" (O'Conner, 2009).

On June 21, 1949, the Fairgrounds Park riot would occur less than two miles from the Shelley's home on the first day that the previously all-white Fairgrounds Park pool was racially integrated (O'Conner, 2009). Thousands of white youths brandished bats, clubs, sticks, and knives, striking many unsuspecting victims (O'Conner, 2009). It would take more than 400 police officers and 12 hours to restore order (O'Conner, 2009).

Given Missouri's large number of racially segregated schools and communities following the Brown I ruling, "busing" would become one of the most frequently used options to become compliant with the Brown II ruling.

The Kirkwood R-VII School District is located in the suburbs of St. Louis County, Missouri. In 1973, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) required Kirkwood to explain the "substantial racial disproportion" in their schools (US Commission on Civil Rights, 1977). Kirkwood responded with plans to appoint a "biracial interpersonal relations committee" that would take action to address their racially disproportionate schools by the 1974-75 school year (US Commission on Civil Rights, 1977). The desegregation plan that was submitted by Kirkwood in 1975, which was later accepted by the OCR, addressed how they would eliminate racial isolation, as well as their traditional dual school system (US Commission on Civil Rights, 1977). In this plan, Kirkwood would close the predominantly Black Turner Elementary School and bus students to other predominantly white schools within the district. This infuriated the Black community.

The United States Commission on Civil Rights reported that:

The minority community felt that it was assuming an additional burden because its own school was closed and all its children would have to ride the bus. It protested that, aside from the unequal burden, busing presented particular problems for them since unavoidable tardiness would mean the loss of a day's schooling for their children, while white children would lose only a few hours under similar circumstances. Blacks also perceived Turner School as a vital part of the community. They felt that white students might have been bused into Turner to preserve the school.

This report also claimed that the desegregation plan used in the Kirkwood R-VII School District was a success (US Commission on Civil Rights, 1977). "The district is working hard to overcome or avoid such problems and ensure that Kirkwood schools are

providing quality desegregated education of which the entire community can be proud” (US Commission on Civil Rights, 1977). Approximately fifteen miles down the road, however, there was another community in the City of St. Louis, Missouri that wasn’t proud of the quality of education that was being provided by their school district.

Glynda Flentroy (1977) listed “access by Black pupils to superior resources at White institutions” as one of the distinct factors motivating school integration; Minnie Liddell felt the same way. Following the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, schools in the St. Louis Public School District were still racially segregated. Many of the schools in the southern portion of the district were predominantly white, while schools in the northern portion of the district were predominantly Black (*Liddell v. Board of Education*, 1972). According to Minnie Liddell, the schools that Black students attended were old, inferior, overcrowded, and used books that were previously used by the all-white schools. In 1972, Mrs. Liddell and a group of concerned parents filed a lawsuit against the Board of Education for the City of St. Louis. The purpose of the lawsuit was to obtain quality education for her children (*Liddell v. Board of Education*, 1972). In 1975, attorneys from both sides entered into a Consent Decree that resulted in the SLPS board of education pledging to increase the number of minority teachers and decrease racial imbalances with the creation of programs such as magnet schools (Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation, 2016). The NAACP objected to this settlement and was allowed to intervene in the case as the result of an overturned decision by the US Circuit Court of Appeals (Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation, 2016).

In 1980, the St. Louis Court of Appeals reversed one of its previous decisions regarding segregated schools in St. Louis (Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation, 2016).

[U]ntil 1979, [and] long after the separate but equal doctrine was ruled unconstitutional, the Missouri Constitution contained an article calling for separate schools. The [US Appeals] Court suggests the development of an exchange program between the city and the county and returns the case to Meredith. [Afterwards,] St. Louis school officials submit plans for an intradistrict (within the district) desegregation plan [that is] approved by the [US Appeals] Court for implementation [in] September, [1980] with the transfer of 7,500 students within the city district.

After SLPSD filed a lawsuit against 23 St. Louis County school districts, a desegregation plan, inclusive of “busing,” would be agreed upon in 1983 and implemented at the start of the 1983 - 84 school year. This Settlement Agreement (1983) was accepted by all St. Louis metropolitan school districts, and according to the Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation (2016) included:

[M]ultiple components, including the transfer of black city students into primarily white suburban districts and white suburban students into magnet schools in the city. Transportation and tuition costs were fully paid by the State of Missouri. The preliminary goal for suburban districts was to reach Plan Ratio (a 15 percent increase of all African-American students in the district including resident students.) The ultimate goal was for districts to achieve the Plan Goal which was a 25 percent black student population.

This plan would later be known as the “St. Louis Voluntary Inter-district Transfer Program.”

The St. Louis Voluntary Inter-District Transfer Program

The St. Louis Voluntary Inter-district Transfer Program was originally overseen by the Voluntary Interdistrict Coordinating Council (VIC), which, in 1999 became a non-profit entity and was renamed the Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation (VICC) (Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation, 2016). In 1983, VIC was granted the task of implementing the inter-district transfer program. The transfer program consisted of (1) transferring 15,000 Black students living in St. Louis City to suburban schools, (2) providing establishment and growth of magnet schools in the city, and (3) providing quality educational improvements and capital improvements for the estimated 10,000 – 15,000 students who would remain in segregated St. Louis Public Schools (Norwood, 2012). These claims however, along with many of Norwood's claims, have been questioned by employees who were employed by SLPSD during this time. Dr. Lynn Beckwith Jr. (2017), who took exception to #3, stated that the state of Missouri and SLPSD were required by the US Court to make these improvements as outlined in the Court ordered Intradistrict Desegregation Plan.

When the St. Louis Voluntary Inter-district Transfer Program officially started in 1983, it was the largest desegregation plan in the entire country (Heaney & Uchitelle, 2004). It was also the only plan that was 100% funded by the state (Heaney & Uchitelle, 2004). The cost was estimated as \$75.5 million per year, or \$7,257 per pupil (Heaney & Uchitelle, 2004).

Based on a 1993 focus-group study, Dr. Susan Uchitelle reported that most of the Black students who transferred rated their experiences in the county schools as positive (Heaney & Uchitelle, 2004). It must be noted that these results have been challenged due

to Dr. Uchitelle's, who at the time served as supervisor of VICC, vested interest and perceived bias pertaining to VICC (L. Beckwith, personal communication, March 22, 2017). This same report also reflected overwhelmingly positive sentiments by white students as well. One student in particular admitted that his previous stereotypes were false, stating that he met many "really nice [black] guys" through sports (Heaney & Uchitelle, 2004).

The inter-district transfer program certainly changed high school sports in St. Louis. According to Steve Warmack, a former principal of Roosevelt High School, 90% of the outstanding athletes in St. Louis County were transfer students who were recruited from St. Louis City. A thoughtful analysis of available data seems to lend validity to Mr. Warmack's claims. For example, from 1970-1981, the 11 years prior to the voluntary [inter-district] transfer program, St. Louis County schools won a total of 6 Missouri High School State Championships in basketball, football, and track & field (Fields, 2012). In that same span, St. Louis City schools won a total of 11 Missouri High School State Championships in the same sports (Fields, 2012). From 1982 to 1987, following the implementation of the St. Louis Voluntary Inter-district Transfer Program, St. Louis City schools won 7 Missouri State High School Championships in basketball, football, and track & field, while the St. Louis County schools that accepted students from St. Louis City via the inter-district transfer program won 8 Missouri State High School Championships (Fields, 2012). These numbers are revealing when considering that in the first year of the inter-district transfer program, approximately 1,327 transfer students from the city participated in extracurricular activities (McKenna & Uchitelle, 1984). By 1987, the number of transfer students from the city who participated in extracurricular

activities had increased to approximately 5,516 students (Campbell & Uchitelle, 1987). From 1988 - 1999, St. Louis City schools won a total of 6 Missouri State High School Championships in basketball, football, and track & field, while St. Louis County schools that accepted students from St. Louis City won 18 Missouri State High School Championships in basketball, football, and track & field (Fields, 2012). Almost 13,000 transfer students attended school through the transfer program in 1999. Of the 7,683 transfer students who participated in extracurricular activities, 40.9% of those students participated in three or more activities (Fields, 2012). Academically, however, it has been much more of a challenge to compare students from the St. Louis Voluntary Inter-district Transfer Program with students who remained in SLPSD, as DESE's annual performance reports did not disaggregate data by student transfer status until 2012.

In 1988, then-Governor John Ashcroft revealed that the transfer program was a waste of money, costing the state of Missouri \$500 million in only five years of the program (Desegregation Fifth Year, 1988). There was no question that the financial burden of the inter-district transfer program was immense in the eyes of Missouri politicians and policymakers.

In 1996, then-Attorney General Jay Nixon filed a motion to terminate the voluntary inter-district transfer program (Heaney & Uchitelle, 2004). He argued that that the state of Missouri:

had complied with all prior court orders, had demonstrated its good-faith commitment to desegregate, had eliminated all vestiges of the prior de jure segregation to the extent that was practical, and had proposed a transition plan that provided enough money for the St. Louis School District to make the transition from a school district undergoing desegregation to a unitary district. The state said it had spent \$1.834 billion between 1980 and 1996, or \$115 million per year. Of that sum,

\$1,300 per pupil was for transportation costs, and the remainder of \$4,700 per pupil was the payment to the receiving schools for the full cost of educating the transfer student.

The United States argued that the burden was on the state to show that the city school system had achieved unitary (forming a single, non-segregated entity) status (Heaney & Uchitelle, 2004). In 1997, Attorney General Nixon requested an order to relieve the state of Missouri for paying for this transfer program, stating that Missouri had “done its share;” the Eighth Circuit Court agreed (Heaney & Uchitelle, 2004). In 1998, the Missouri General Assembly passed Senate Bill 781, which laid the foundation for an official settlement agreement to end the voluntary transfer program (Heaney & Uchitelle, 2004). In 1999, a new Settlement Agreement was reached that marked the end of the 2008 – 2009 school year as the last year that the state of Missouri would have to fund the St. Louis Voluntary Inter-district Transfer Program (VICC, 2016). The 1999 Settlement Agreement also included a separate agreement with participating school districts that allowed for a ten-year maximum extension (Norwood, 2012). As of 2016, there are 4,300 students from the city attending suburban school districts through VICC, and 140 county students attending city magnet schools (VICC, 2016). The current provision of the 1999 Settlement Agreement enables VICC to accept students in the voluntary inter-district transfer program through the 2018 – 2019 school year (VICC, 2016).

The “New” Inter-district Transfer Program

When the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993 (SB 380) was signed into law by then-Governor Mel Carnahan, it was believed that it would help Missouri create a state-

wide educational system that would be “second to none” (Outstanding Schools Act of 1993). Under this act, all Missouri students were provided a better opportunity for a quality educational experience, regardless of where they live (Outstanding Schools Act of 1993). This statement was made possible, in part, due to the heavier accountability measures that were embedded into the Outstanding Schools Act; particularly section 167.131. In this section:

[t]he board of education of each district in this state that does not maintain an accredited school pursuant to the authority of the state board of education to classify schools as established in section 161.092 shall pay the tuition of and provide transportation consistent with the provisions of section 167.241 for each pupil resident therein who attends an accredited school in another district of the same or an adjoining county.

In 2007, St. Louis Public School District (SLPS) lost its accreditation (Turner v. School District of Clayton, 2007). That same year, a group of parents who resided in SLPS and, up to this point, were paying for their children to attend the nearby School District of Clayton, sued on the basis of section 167.131. Their argument was based on the fact that SLPS was unaccredited, which, from their perspective, should result in the School District of Clayton billing SLPS for tuition (Turner v. School District of Clayton, 2007).

The court would reach a ruling in this case in 2013 (Breitenfeld v. School District of Clayton, 2013). By this time, SLPS was no longer unaccredited. However, approximately 10 miles north, the Riverview Gardens School District was one of two unaccredited North St. Louis County school districts (Riverview Gardens, Normandy School District, and Kansas City Public Schools were the only unaccredited school districts in the state of Missouri as of June, 2013). Unaccredited since 2007, Riverview

Gardens began the process of implementing the Student Transfer Program immediately following this ruling. Although the Outstanding Schools Act required unaccredited school districts to pay for the tuition and provide transportation for any student who decided to attend an accredited district, DESE required Riverview Gardens to provide transportation to only two districts (L. Beckwith, personal communication, March 22, 2017). Therefore, in addition to paying the tuition, Riverview Gardens decided to pay the transportation cost for students who were transferring to the Kirkwood School District and the Mehlville School District. This decision was made, in part, due to Kirkwood and Mehlville's tuition being commensurate to the tuition in Riverview Gardens (L. Beckwith, personal communication, March 22, 2017). Eventually, Riverview would send thousands of students to schools outside of their school district. During the 2013 – 2014 school year, 1063 students participated in the transfer program. During the 2014 – 2015 school year, 717 students; in 2015 – 2016, 520 students, and currently (2016 – 2017 school year), 437 students are participating in what has become the newest Missouri Student Transfer Program (L. Beckwith, personal communication, December 10, 2016).

Missouri's Accreditation System

As of January 1, 2016, Riverview Gardens and Normandy are the only two school districts in the State of Missouri without some level of accreditation (DESE, n.d.). Both districts' demographic data shows that they are predominantly Black, and that more than 90% of their total enrollment qualifies for free or reduced lunch (DESE, n.d.). In 2012, St. Louis Public School District and Kansas City Public School District were both unaccredited ("So You've Lost Accreditation, What Now? A How-To, How-Not-To Guide from Kansas City and St. Louis - NextSTL." 2012). They, too, were

predominantly Black, with close to 90% of their total enrollment qualifying for free or reduced lunch (DESE, n.d.). In addition to demographics, these districts have also shown similar school performance (DESE, n.d.).

In the state of Missouri, public schools and districts are currently accredited (2016 – 2017) using the fifth cycle of the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP5). Updated in July, 2014, this accountability measure outlines student achievement expectations, as well as college and career readiness criteria. As a means to promote growth, MSIP5 computes an Annual Performance Report (APR) based on the following performance standards: Academic Achievement, Subgroup Achievement, High School Readiness or College and Career Readiness, Attendance Rate, and Graduation Rate (DESE, 2014). Data from the APR is used to determine the accreditation level of a school or district. The four accreditation levels are as follows: Accredited with Distinction, Accredited, Provisionally Accredited, and Unaccredited (DESE, 2014). The maximum points that a K-12 district can obtain is one hundred and forty (140). In theory, one hundred and twenty-six (126) points are needed to score in the Accredited with Distinction range, ninety-eight (98) points are needed to score in the Accredited range, seventy (70) points are needed to score in the Provisionally Accredited range, and fewer than seventy (70) points results in the Unaccredited range (DESE, 2014). Although a district may score in a particular range, accreditation classification recommendations are made based on APR statuses and trends, and are presented to the State Board of Education to make a determination (DESE, 2014).

Despite the implementation of the Student Transfer Program, the Riverview Gardens School District has made tremendous performance improvements, as measured

by their APR. In 2013, the Riverview Gardens Special Administrative Board appointed a new superintendent, which led to subsequent increases in the district's APR points. RGSD received forty (40) points out of one hundred and forty points (140), or twenty-eight percent (28.6%) in 2013 (DESE, n.d.). After the first year of the Student Transfer Program, Riverview Gardens received sixty-three and a half (63.5) points out of one hundred and forty points (140), or forty-five percent (45.4%) (DESE, n.d.). In 2015, one hundred and eleven points (111) points, or seventy-nine point three percent (79.3%) were received (DESE, n.d.). In 2016, Riverview Gardens received one hundred and four point five points (104.5) points, or seventy-four point six percent (74.6%) (DESE, n.d.). Due to the noted progress, the Riverview Gardens School District requested an accreditation classification upgrade. While awaiting a ruling on the accreditation classification upgrade, the Riverview Gardens Special Administrative Board was required by DESE to adopt a Student Transfer Transition Plan and Memorandum of Understanding, with all accredited school districts who participated in the Student Transfer Program, as a precursor for recommending any accreditation upgrade to the State Board of Education (L. Beckwith, personal communication, March 22, 2017).

On December 2, 2016, the Missouri Board of Education voted to upgrade the Riverview Gardens School District from Unaccredited to Provisionally Accredited. Although Riverview Gardens became Provisionally Accredited effective January 4, 2017, the previously referenced Transition Plan and Memorandum of Understanding with the 22 receiving districts allows for the Student Transfer Program to continue after the 2016 – 2017 school year. Under this plan, qualified students will be authorized to continue to enroll in and attend school within the Receiving District for three (3) subsequent

academic school years, or until the student reaches a natural shift to the next grade span (i.e., moving from elementary school to middle school or from middle school to high school), whichever timeline is shorter (Reference MOU).

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of the current study is to understand the perceptions of the Student Transfer Program by interviewing three families from the unaccredited Riverview Gardens School District who have been impacted by this program. The methods used to conduct this qualitative study will be addressed throughout this chapter; specifically, the researcher's role, research design, setting and participants, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations. Narrative Inquiry has been selected as the theoretical framework to drive this study. In addition, the following research questions are used:

1. How did the Student Transfer Program impact families in the Riverview Gardens School District?
2. What experiences did participating families in the Riverview Gardens School District have as a result of the Student Transfer Program?

Researcher's Role

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines "researcher" as someone who collects information about a particular subject (2009). In addition to this, the role of the researcher in this qualitative study is to contribute to a better understanding of the previously referenced phenomena. This is accomplished by using an autoethnographic approach to produce a documentary film. The researcher will also take on the role of a "documentarian." A "documentarian" is described as an analyst who takes the time to think about whatever it is they are doing so that they can present a coherent picture to an audience (Hampe, 2007).

As an employee of the Riverview Gardens School District (RGSD) for the past eight years, as well as a former student of the district, the researcher recognizes that certain assumptions, biases, and perspectives that may serve as a platform for subjectivity. This can best be described as a sense of “loyal-belonging,” however, the same apparent history with RGSD affords the researcher certain insight that contributes to this study; which includes previously established relationships with the participants. In research, however, objectivity is paramount, which is why extra precautions were taken to minimize the chances that these assumptions, biases, and perspectives did not impede or shape the manner in which data was collected and/or interpreted. All attempts to extract information, consistent with answering the research questions of this study, were done ethically, responsibly, and in good faith.

Documentary Film

In today’s digital age, documentaries have become quite popular. If something interesting occurs and you are there to film it, to some, this is a documentary. For others, if you film individuals providing their opinions on a topic, this is considered a documentary as well. According to Hampe (2007), a documentary is a quest for the truth that presents its findings as evidence for the viewer to evaluate. The documentarian is responsible for disclosing to the viewers whenever the evidence is not conclusive, even if it is sensational (Hampe, 2007). In addition to this, the documentarian is also responsible for the production of the documentary. This includes researching the topic, structuring the topic, writing a documentary proposal and/or documentary treatment, preproduction planning, filming, recording sound, conducting the interview, transcribing all responses, editing all video and audio files, and finalizing the entire production.

Research Design

The Participants

The intention of this documentary film is to collect and compare personal experiences from three families whose backgrounds are similar, yet unique, in an attempt to help us better understand the impact of the Student Transfer Program. All participants are mothers to multiple students who are either currently enrolled in an RGSD school, or were enrolled in RGSD at one time. According to No Child Left Behind, “parental involvement” is defined as “the participation of parents in regular, two-way and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities” (107th Congress, 2002). Using this definition, all of the participants are considered to be involved parents. The unique experiences and perspectives of these participants are based on the decisions that they made related to the Student Transfer Program. One of the participants decided to keep her children enrolled in RGSD following implementation of the Student Transfer Program. Another participant decided to exercise her right to transfer her children from RGSD and enroll them in an accredited school district, at the expense of RGSD. The final participant initially decided to transfer her children from RGSD, but later left the accredited school district that her children attended and returned to RGSD.

Narrative Inquiry

According to Andrews, Squire, and Tambokou (2008), narrative inquiry is derived from the notion that, as humans, we come to understand and give meaning to our lives through storytelling. When one attempts to examine, comprehensively, the impact that the Student Transfer Program had on these families, it was determined that narrative

inquiry would render information and perspectives that add to the significance of this qualitative study. Furthermore, a narrative inquiry is one of the best ways to reflect upon experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The researcher, however, must understand that stories typically fall short in analyzing phenomena, due in part to the therapeutic nature many personal experiences deliver (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p.745). In addition to this, the authenticity of personal experiences can certainly become a challenge when analyzing results. According to Van Maanen (1988), “reliability and validity are however overrated criteria whereas apparency and verisimilitude are underrated criteria.” Therefore, since the focus of this study is to understand participants’ personal stories, the researcher chose to implement narrative inquiry.

When considering the research questions of this study, as well as the implications outside of education that each participant’s story could produce, it was evident that autoethnography would be an appropriate research method to use. Autoethnography is an “autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural” (Gall, Gall, Borg, 2007). The *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* (2006) states that “the intent of [an] autoethnography is to acknowledge the inextricable link between the personal and the cultural and to make room for nontraditional forms of inquiry and expression.” For a subject as multifaceted as the Student Transfer Program, there is certainly a benefit in allowing participants to tell “their story.” As is the case with all research methods, an autoethnographic study has its limitations as well. Goode (2006), described narratives as “void of social context, social action, and social interaction, and do not achieve serious social analysis.” Despite this claim, the researcher decided to proceed with narrative

inquiry and autoethnography due to the original purpose of this study: to better understand the perceptions of the Student Transfer Program by interviewing three families from the unaccredited Riverview Gardens School District who has been impacted by this program. Autoethnography is presented in the documentary film portion of this dissertation, which adds a strong voice to the selected approaches. It is the researcher's conviction that a greater understanding of the perceptions stems more from personal experiences and perspectives than from generalizations that are based on reliability and validity findings.

Setting & Participants

The Riverview Gardens School District is located in North County, St. Louis, Missouri. According to the Missouri Census Data Center (2016), in the year 2010, the Riverview Gardens attendance area had a total population of 41,192. The district covers nine square miles, with a population density of 4,382 per square mile. Homeowners made up 59.4% of the population, while the remaining 40.6% were renters. Of the 16,599 total housing units within the Riverview Gardens School District, 12.7% were listed as vacant, according to the 2010 census.

In this study, data was collected at undisclosed locations within the Riverview Gardens School District. These locations were carefully identified as calm, quiet, and free from high levels of distraction, making them ideal for video and audio recording during personal interviews.

Three specific participants were selected to be interviewed in this study due to their similar and unique first-hand experiences and perspectives related to the Student Transfer Program. The participants were all women, aged 39 to 48. All interviews lasted

approximately 60 minutes using an established interview protocol (Appendix A). In order to protect the identity of the participants, the following pseudonyms were used as individual identifiers:

(Participant 1) Jennifer- Mother of three students who are/were enrolled in RGSD; decided to keep her children in RGSD despite having the Student Transfer Program as an option to attend a nearby accredited district.

(Participant 2) Michelle- Mother of two students who are/were enrolled in a nearby accredited district via the Student Transfer Program. Both students attended RGSD before transferring.

(Participant 3) Tiffany- Mother of three students who are/were enrolled in RGSD; transferred her children from RGSD to a nearby accredited district via the Student Transfer Program; decided to transfer her children back to RGSD five months into the program.

Data Collection

The instruments that were used to extract data for the purpose of this study were captured by the researcher, via audio and video recordings. These recordings took place during individual interview sessions. According to Merriam (2009), “interviewing in qualitative investigations is more open-ended and less structured.” Due to this less structured and flexible approach to interviews, the researcher conducted all interviews in a semi-structured manner. The Research and Development Corporation (2009), described semi-structured interviews as being, “somewhat conversational interviews, used when a researcher wants to delve deeply into a topic and to understand thoroughly the answers provided.” All of the questions were written open-endedly, and organized

prior to the participants' arrival. Participants were encouraged to speak candidly and expand as much as they deemed necessary. The researcher used probes when there was a sense that a significant point was about to be made, as well as to clarify or follow-up on a previously referenced point or question.

Data Analysis

All audio and video recordings were personally transcribed. The transcribed data was reviewed and organized by question and participant. The data was closely analyzed and organized. Primary and secondary sources from chapters one and two were included in the final product to provide clarity and a reference point for the documentary audience. The final edited version of the documentary serves as a narrative that draws from participants' experiences and perspectives to assist in answering the research questions that drive this study. Those questions were:

1. How does the Student Transfer Program impact families in the Riverview Gardens School District?
2. What experiences did families in the Riverview Gardens School District have as a result of the Student Transfer Program?

Ethical Considerations

Patton (2002) proposes ten items that should be used as a guide for ethics in qualitative research. These same ten items were used as stated in this study. Participants were provided with the purpose of the study prior to agreeing to participate. This step was repeated during the start of data collection (filming of interviews). Participants were asked to read along as the researcher read aloud the informed consent participation form (Appendix B). The researcher expressed that participation was voluntary and that

participants could refuse to answer any question(s), and/or withdraw from the study at any time without advanced notice. Participants were also informed that they would not receive monetary gifts or any other benefits for participating in this study, other than the potential that their experiences and perspectives could contribute to the field of education. All participants were provided the initial questions prior to signing the form. Each of the above steps were video and audio recorded.

In all video recorded interviews, there are certain risks that participants are exposed to. This includes potentially being recognized by the public, as well as self-incrimination while providing their perspectives. There have been recent documentaries that, upon their release, compromised participants' safety (Rafsky, 2015). It is because of this that heightened awareness was used in preparation of recording the actual interviews, which included taking the necessary steps to protect vulnerable sources and sensitive information. Pseudonyms were used as a strategy in protecting participants' confidentiality. Participants were given the opportunity of being completely anonymous (using proper lighting and audio techniques) as another layer of confidentiality; none of the participants decided to proceed with this option.

Following the interview, participants were introduced to "member checking," which is defined as "a quality control [technique] by which a researcher seeks to improve the accuracy, credibility, and validity of what has been recorded during a research interview" (Barbour, 2001; Byrne, 2001; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Doyle, 2007, Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Any requested or necessary changes, including re-filming a particular question(s), made by the interviewer or interviewee would have been addressed during this time. Neither the interviewer nor the interviewees noted any requested changes.

After the final product (documentary) was produced, all video, audio, and interview transcript files were housed in a password protected, digital folder that is only accessible by the researcher. These same files will be discarded in compliance with IRB regulations.

Summary

All of the experiences that were rendered from the interviews will help current and future researchers understand the impact that the Student Transfer Program has on participating families. As the producer, director, editor, interviewer, and cinematographer of this study, as well as the accompanying documentary, the researcher's original vision was simple: examine these personal stories to better understand this phenomenon within the context of equal educational opportunities for all of Missouri's students.

Chapter Four: Research Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this narrative study is to better understand the perceptions of the Student Transfer Program by interviewing three families from the unaccredited Riverview Gardens School District who have been impacted by this program. In this chapter, the findings from the three interviews will be presented; one interview from a family who transferred from RGSD to an accredited school district, one interview from a family who remained in RGSD, and one interview from a family who transferred from RGSD to an accredited district, only to return to RGSD.

The personal experiences and stories that each interview participant shared related to the Student Transfer Program, provides the data needed to answer the following research questions:

1. How does the Student Transfer Program impact families in the Riverview Gardens School District?
2. What experiences did families in the Riverview Gardens School District have as a result of the Student Transfer Program?

Documentary

The interview data that were collected during this study resulted in the production of a documentary film (The Art of The Student Transfer Program). To view this feature-length documentary, email the researcher at Dr.HowardFields@gmail.com.

Interviews

Each participant contributed to this study by providing a unique perspective, relative to the other two participants. The following pseudonyms were used as individual identifiers:

(Participant 1) Jennifer- Mother of three students who are/were enrolled in RGSD; decided to keep her children in RGSD despite having the Student Transfer Program as an option to attend a nearby accredited district.

(Participant 2) Michelle- Mother of two students who are/were enrolled in a nearby accredited district via the Student Transfer Program. Both students attended RGSD before transferring.

(Participant 3) Tiffany- Mother of three students who are/were enrolled in RGSD; transferred her children from RGSD to a nearby accredited district via the Student Transfer Program; decided to transfer her children back to RGSD five months into the program.

Participant #1 - Jennifer's Interview

(HF= Howard Fields /J= Jennifer)

HF: (Question 1) Without using individual names, can you talk about each of your school-aged children?

J: Okay, so, I have three sons. Um. Freshman, Junior and a 7th grader. Um. They are all very energetic. Two of them are really eager to learn. They are all athletic. And they all have something special and genuine to bring to the table, um, as far as their personalities, their demeanors. Their needs and wants are very different, but yet similar in some ways.

HF: (Question 2) In 2013, a judge ruled that students in an unaccredited school districts were eligible to transfer to an accredited school district via the Student Transfer Law.

What were your initial views regarding this ruling?

J: Actually, I transferred my children INTO the Riverview Gardens School District right after that ruling. Uh, my babies were in private school, and so the school was closing down and we had a choice to transfer them to a sister school or bring them to Riverview Gardens, because we lived in the district, and my husband and I decided that they would come into the Riverview Gardens School District.

HF: (Question 3) What were your school-aged children's views regarding this ruling?

J: Um, my oldest, which is a junior now, he was the only one that had some questions, because he is...being the oldest, he kind of had heard what the community was saying, and what a lot of the other children were saying, but he really didn't, it didn't bother him too much. He still came in and was treated pretty much the same as he was, maybe actually a little bit better than the private school which he came from, so it didn't have a major impact on them at all.

HF: (Expansion Question 3a) Okay. You said that he had a few questions. Can you give me an example or some of those questions or some of the things he heard from the community?

J: Well, one of the questions was why would I take them out of a private school and take them into a school that was a failing district. And, where did he get that from? Well, the media has a way of painting a picture that is not great at all. And he's a child, so he's going to go off what he's hearing. And then some of the kids that were already in the district, I guess, um, was telling him that they were unaccredited, trying to tell him what

that meant, but he wasn't getting the correct answers until he decided to come home and ask.

HF: (Question 4) To the best of your knowledge, how did your family's views regarding the Student Transfer Program compare to the views of other family members within your community?

J: Well, I didn't agree with the transfer program. I didn't agree with it, and I didn't like the program, that they were offering the program.

HF: (Expansion Question 4a) What didn't you like about it?

J: Well...those are the same families that got the district to where they were. Those families should have been made to remain and help get the district back to where it needed to be. The district didn't lose their accreditation because of some outside person. These people were here. When the accreditation was lost, they should have come together: town hall meetings or whatever, however, to work out a game plan, to assist the district in getting back its accreditation.

HF: (Question 5) What led your initial decision to transfer your children into Riverview Gardens? Let me rephrase that question because you have a unique situation, you transferred them in. What led your initial decision to not transfer your students to a different district that was being offered as a byproduct of the Student Transfer Program?

J: Well, one thing was, when we found out the private school our children were in was closing down, and we would have to go to another school, we had to kind of do our research on Riverview Gardens School District ourselves. Um, and, if the private school can close, and this district is still here but they're still fighting and trying, we wanted to give that same opportunity to our children, like we gave the private school an

[opportunity], a chance, and it didn't work out. So, we came into Riverview Gardens, and it has actually been a very good experience for all of my kids.

HF: (Expansion Question 5a) You say "a really good experience". Can you speak to that?

J: Um, sure. So, my oldest one, he made some decisions and, um, choices that were not the best for him, but it was not because of the schooling. My middle son, he is soaring greatly as a freshman. Um, he has, when he went to do his shadow days, when he goes out into different colleges to do different visits or whatever, a lot of things that he is hearing or seeing, he learned that from the middle school, where he attained his 6th, 7th and 8th grade education. Um, he sees some things that he was taught in Riverview Gardens School District as a young child. Now that he is a freshman, he considers himself a young man, Um, he's able to compare some of those things. My youngest son has been doing great. Like, he has not missed a beat. Um, He came into Riverview Gardens School District reading well below level, and Um, once he got into the district, the principal he had at that time um had him tested, had his dad and I take him through some different programs or whatever and we just found out he wasn't being challenged or being made to do anything different at his private school that he was attending. Um, that was really very costly. So, he continued on with these different programs, different testing, different programs, different testing and now he's above where he should be and he's, you know, doing very well academically.

HF: (Question 6) Next question: what impact did your decision to stay in the Riverview Gardens School District have as a parent socially, with other parents?

J: Well, because I'm being new to the district, as a new parent, there were parents that were able to tell me their opinion of Riverview Gardens School District. And, of course, teeth and tongue fall out, so I was able to be that Well, did you try this? Did you do that? Well, naw, I did such and such and such and such. Well, you know, you can't always bail out. Because if, you don't want to find out what the problem is, you just want to run, that doesn't teach your child anything. And so for us, it was really challenging because we were bringing our children into the district, while some of our family and friends was taking their children out of the district. Um, now they see where our kids are, some of them have brought their children back, and have discussed bringing their children back next year. My, my thing is, you know, you're still rocking the boat.

HF: (Expansion Question 6a) Um, a lot of times, you said you were new to the district, so they (they being the other parents) would give their other opinions. I'm interested to know, were the opinions based on academics, discipline, combination of all...what were their opinions specifically about Riverview Gardens?

J: It was a combination of...you know, everyone has an opinion, but their opinions were based off of basically, their lack of knowledge. So, when you as a parent don't attend parent-teacher conference, you don't answer your phone when the school is calling, you don't go to the school just periodically to find out what's going on in the district, or what happened that we got here. You tend to just get on the bandwagon with the other complaining parents or naysayers. So, for me it was the thing of, you know, being new in the district, um, we listened to the news, we watched the news, but we were those parents that did further research. Why did the district lose its accreditation? Why is it such a high turnover? But when you look at Riverview Gardens turnover, it's no different than any

other school districts teacher turn... staff turnover, be it private school, charter school, anything. And, for myself, I was an educator in the charter school, but my kids attended private school. So, it was a lot of having to do a lot of research and listening and just kind of making our own final decision on what we were gonna do with the boys.

HF: (Question 7) Next question. What impact did your decision not to exercise your right to go to another district have on your school-aged children socially?

J: None. They did not miss a beat.

HF: (Expansion Question 7a) And what was that evidenced by? Just their conversations with you, or...?

J: They never asked to leave the school, they never asked could they transfer, could they go with their friends, could they go back to their old school, and that was the only concern that I did have, is, how would I respond if they asked, but I never got that question, so...

HF: Thank you.

HF: (Question 8) Next question: What impact did your decision to transfer have on you as a parent, I'm sorry, What impact did your decision NOT to transfer have on you as a parent emotionally?

J: It had no impact. I'm a very involved parent. I was always, if I got a call about grades, if I got a call about behavior, whatever the school contacted me about via one-one-one with the principal, a teacher, school reach, I made sure that I attended whatever meetings and appointments that were made available by the district.

HF: (Question 9) Next question: What impact did your decision not to transfer have on your school-aged children emotionally?

J: None.

HF: Okay.

HF: (Question 10) Next question: What impact did your decision not to transfer have on your school-aged children academically?

J: It had, well, two of my babies, two of my sons, they actually did better once they transferred into the school district. My other son, he was already, you know, just, he doesn't like school. So he just did what he had to do to get by. But, two of them really excelled a great deal.

HF: (Expansion Question 10a) When you say they did better, what was that evidenced by? Are you just talking...

J: Their grades, their behaviors, um, willingness to learn, studying more, reading more. They just did a lot better once they got in the district.

HF: (Question 11) Next question: Were there any unforeseen challenges that your family experienced as a result of not transferring? If so, what were they?

J: We didn't have any.

HF: (Question 12) As you reflect on your decision not to transfer, as well as everything we have discussed so far, would you have changed any of your previous decisions regarding the Student Transfer Program? Why or why not?

J: No. Um, they weren't a part of the district losing their accreditation, but I feel like they were a part of it being given back. Um, my kids have done very well, They've not had any issues with teachers, they've not had any issues with peers. They've just done very well academically, um, behavior, socially. Um, and then again, as a parent, you have to

be involved, and ask questions, and not go off of what everyone else is saying, or the media.

HF: Okay.

HF: (Question 13) Next question: What are your views on Riverview Gardens regaining provisional accreditation on January the 4th, 2017, thus ending the Student Transfer Program in its current form?

J: So, I haven't really done a lot of studying on the transfer program, but I...

HF: Take your time.

J: I'm trying to say it right. I think if the children are going to come back...it shouldn't be that they can come back and then start issues or problems. Or the parents and families shouldn't be able to come in and then tear up what you all here have worked so hard to get. If that makes sense. Because the teachers have worked really hard. Dr. Spurgeon has worked extremely hard. So, to get your team together to build this far, which I think it should have been more than just provisional, but to allow those families back...I just think it should be not just, you can just walk back in the door.

HF: (Expansion Question 13a) Based on your response, do you see...what problems do you think could arise, which it's good news for the district that they have provisional accreditation, but what problems could arise as a result of that?

J: It's great that we, that the district has it back, but then if you bring children back in the district, who are not going to school on a day-to-day basis where they are, having behavior issues in the district that they are currently attending, or they're not coming to school on a day-to-day basis, then that's going to come and fall right back into the dis[trict]...the Riverview Gardens School District and put us right back where [we]

started. So, I, I think it, it's just...I don't really know how to say it, but it's kind of a catch-22 I guess.

HF: (Question 14) What are your school-aged children's views on Riverview Gardens regaining provisionally accreditation on January the 4th?

J: Well, my 7th grade son, because he doesn't really understand the whole gamut, he wants to know why did it take so long, and why only provisional. Um, so I've explained it to him as best that I can and um, and I've taken him to a couple meetings with me. I've had him look online, kind of reading some things. But it is still a lot for a 13 year old to process, so he's still trying to understand it. Um, the other two feels like, um, can't say their terms, but they feel like the state want to play games with us because we are predominately African American school[s]. That's the best way I can say it. Considering they're older and they clearly know what has happened.

HF: (Expansion Question 14a) You said the state wanted to play games because we're an African American, um, school. Can you speak a little bit in terms of, um, if people don't necessarily know St. Louis, or don't know, can you...because this may be seen in, you know, different cities, whatever. Can you speak a little bit to that?

J: So, if you do the research in any of the 9 elementary schools Riverview Gardens have, the one high school, the two middle schools. So, if you check the demographics, it's predominately all minority, African American students. You can count the number of any other nationality of children that attend the district. So, in my children's eyes, and they coming from a private school, where they were 3 in the entire school. They were 3 of the 50 children that made up the school of 585 children when they were closing the building. So, they have family in various school districts, so they know, like I said, the two older

ones, know, they understand and they see more, and they can have a conversation with me about when you're a predominately black school, when you're a predominately white school, what's the difference, you know. And they just feel, and that was their opinion, their words, because I hadn't even looked at it that way, but they just feel like, momma, is it because we are a predominately black district, that they playing yo-yo, is what my oldest son said, with the kids that are in the Riverview Gardens School District. Um, he's trying to figure out why is it Riverview Gardens outscored and out tested other districts around us, but they still have full accreditation, and Riverview Gardens doesn't have it.

HF: (Expansion Question 14b) Last question I have before we, uh, continue to the next question. You said that there were, in their, in your children's, the two oldest, um, there were some difference between, um, black schools and white schools, what's one or a few differences that they would say, coming from their eyes, from the students' perspective?

J: One of the things they've said is, they have friends that, like I said, attend districts all over, um, and for my 9th grade son, his view is kind of like one of those, old type thoughts, his thing is, you know, we already are several steps behind everyone else, but why is it those that are already behind, they're never acknowledged, you never hear about them, they're always put in the limelight, they're the ones who you always see on the sports something with the news, or whatever, I don't look at it. But whatever the sports part is on the news. But you don't see Riverview Gardens. So, I didn't have an answer, because, like I said, I don't look at the sports part of the news, so I didn't even really know too much what he was talking about. For my oldest son, his thing is, well, momma, is it that because we're always doing things this way, or we're expected to do things this way, is that why we're always on the news, versus, um, schools that really, just like, right

across the bridge, have issues and things going on, but you don't hear about it. Schools right here in their back door have a lot of things going on, but you don't hear it. You always hear Riverview Gardens. So, I had to explain it as best as I felt for them to hear it, you know, that's more for you all to go to school and do better, to show those people that just because I'm, the color of my skin, does not denominate, does not say that I'm less a person or that my district is less a district, you know, because of our skin tone.

HF: Thank you.

HF: (Question 15) Next question: one of the rationales behind the implementation of the Student Transfer Program is to ensure that all students have access to a quality and equitable education. What does that mean to you?

J: Well, I wonder what they mean when they say that. Because you don't see them in anybody's classroom, walking down any halls of any school. You're not coming in to help. So, instead of tearing down, come in and see what you can do to help. Teachers have it hard. They have...principals have it hard, but if you just want to keep sitting on the back burner, and you just want to keep lighting that fire even more, instead of coming in and seeing what's going on, or how you can lend a helping hand, for me, that really shouldn't even be stated. What is a quality education? They, they keep saying that and throwing that term around, but have yet to say what that really means or what that's supposed to look like.

HF: Thank you.

HF: (Question 16) Based on your family's experience with the Student Transfer Program, do you believe this program creates opportunities for all students to receive access to a quality and equitable education? Why or why not?

J: I say no. Because a lot of the districts, I feel like they took the kids in because it was a dollar, and it was a way for them to build up their schools and increase their finances. I don't think a lot of the districts that took our children really wanted our babies out there, they just took 'em.

HF: (Question 17) Last question I have before we just have some further dialogue: What is your biggest takeaway from the Student Transfer Program?

J: What did we really teach our children?

HF: Expand on that a little bit.

J: Because the ship is sinking does that mean you just abandon the ship, or do you figure out how you can do, what you can do to get the ship back up like it's supposed to be. It, it didn't send a good message to me. But you can still live here, but you can't be educated here. That, that...

HF: (Expansion Question 17a) Is there any question you wished I would have asked you or anything you would like to speak to that was not necessarily conveyed in this formal interview?

J: Not that I can think of, no.

HF: Okay. Well, again, thank you so much.

Participant #2 - Michelle's Interview

(HF= Howard Fields/M= Michelle)

HF: (Question 1) Without using individual names, can you talk about each of your school-aged children?

M: Well, my oldest one graduated from high school last year, and my middle son is now a freshman in high school. He graduated 8th grade last school year.

HF: Okay.

HF: (Question 2) In 2013, a judge ruled that students in unaccredited school districts were eligible to transfer to an accredited school district via the Student Transfer Law. What were your initial views regarding this ruling?

M: My initial views were, mixed a little bit, because I was, I was confused about it. But once I understood that, what it was all about, I still thought about, should I have my kids to leave their home district. How would they feel with going to a new school with new kids, all that stuff. And I sat and talked with them, and they were like, “mom, let’s do this.”

HF: Okay.

HF: (Question 3) What were, what were your school-aged children’s views on the ruling and them potentially going to another school?

M: They...pretty much almost the same thing. You know, they, they, they wanted a good education, and you know, they relied on me to help them through that process, ‘cause they didn’t know if they stayed with Riverview, if Riverview became accredited, or if they didn’t, what would that mean when they graduated. They weren’t sure. So they just, you know, we talked, and that’s what happened.

HF: Okay.

HF: (Question 4) To the best of your knowledge, how did your family views regarding the Student Transfer Program compare to the views of other family members or other people in your community?

M: Um...we had mixed feelings. Some, some family were like, “why would you leave the district, you’ve had them there since kindergarten.” And some were like, just like with me, education. Education comes first, and that’s not saying that Riverview wouldn’t have had that education, but I didn’t know.

HF: (Question 5) Alright, next question: what led to your initial decision to transfer?

M: Education. I wanted my kids to have a fighting chance.

HF: (Expansion Question 5b) What type of education were they having in Riverview?

M: They were having...it’s hard to explain. Like, when my, my middle, or, I’m sorry, my older son left the district before the transfer program, he was having issues with the middle school. So, he left before the transfer program. And, the teacher that he had was a good teacher, but the students that were in the class, I just, I couldn’t...at the end of the school year, my son was sitting outside of the classroom being taught, as opposed to being taught inside of the classroom. And, as far as my middle son, he was still in elementary school, and the elementary school that he was at, I loved. He loved. He loved the teachers, he was doing class work a year...what’s the word I’m looking for...like if he was in 3rd grade he was doing 4th grade work, in 4th grade he was doing 5th grade work, and so on and so forth. So, elementary school was great, middle school, I just, I just couldn’t do.

HF: (Question 6) Next question: What impact did your decision to transfer have on you as a parent socially?

M: It really didn’t change. The only thing, it was just more of a conversation I had.

Everyone was asking, why would you do that, why...and, once again, I wanted to give my kids a fighting chance.

HF: (Question 7) What impact did your decision to transfer have on your school-aged children socially? So, interaction with friends, uh, etc.?

M: Well, when they were in the district, they really didn't have that many friends, but once they transferred, it's like they just blossomed. They didn't want to come home on weekends, they wanted to stay after school more. So, I say the transfer program helped them out tremendously in that aspect.

HF: Okay.

HF: (Question 8) What impact did your decision to transfer have on you as a parent emotionally?

M: It...it didn't really have an impact. The only, like I just said, it was just basically I wanted my kids to have a fighting chance.

HF: (Question 9) What impact did your decision have on your school-aged children emotionally?

M: Emotionally, at the beginning, they were scared. Once it was final that they got their classes and their schedule, knowing their teachers, of course first-day jitters. But after a little while, they were like, "mom, it's nothing, it's just like a regular day."

HF: (Question 10) Next question: What impact did your decision to transfer have on your school-aged children academically?

M: I think it, it...it helped. They, um, they went from having homework for like, 5 minutes a day, to having it for like hours. And it didn't really bother them, because they wanted to learn. They just, they just adapted to it.

HF: (Question 10b) How were they academically, um in Riverview Gardens, with regards to being challenged in class. Just, what do you see a difference between the

Riverview Gardens schools and, um, and the school that your children transferred to, academically?

M: Um, with my middle son, he, like I said, when he was in Riverview he was doing one grade up so that helped him transfer easier, I'm sorry, easily to the curriculum that Kirkwood had. And I think that if he didn't do that, it would have taken him longer to get to where he is. And, as far as my older son, he was about challenged the same. Because, like I said, he left before, before the transfer program, and where he was, he was doing a lot of homework but, going and doing the transfer program was a great thing for both of my children.

HF: Okay, thank you.

HF: (Question 11) Next question: Were there any unforeseen challenges that your family experienced as a result of transferring?

M: No.

HF: (Expansion Question 11a) Were there, was there anything, um, that happened once they transferred that you didn't see happening? Either from Riverview or while they were in Kirkwood that you just didn't know that was going to occur?

M: No.

HF: (Question 12) Next question: As you reflect on your initial decision to transfer, as well as everything you have discussed so far today, would you change any of your previous decisions related to the Student Transfer Program? If so, why? If no, why?

M: I wouldn't change a thing. Because, like I said, it went from my kids not necessarily being a wallflower, but being quiet and withdrew a little bit, they just blossomed and the education that I saw that they got was also fantastic. The teachers were great. They would

call, they would email. They would send anything...they would, they would let me know how the kids were doing, they, I just, I just loved it. I just I loved how the transition and the whole aspect was.

HF: (Question 13) Next question: What are your views on Riverview Gardens regaining provisional accreditation on January 4, 2017, thus ending the Student Transfer Program in its current form?

M: Well, I'm glad that it happened for Riverview. It, it's a, it's a phenomenal thing that Riverview got their accreditation back...I forgot the rest of the question.

HF: I'll repeat it: What are your views on Riverview Gardens regaining provisional accreditation on January the 4th, 2017, basically ending the Student Transfer Law, in its current...I'm sorry, Student Transfer Program in its current form?

M: Um, well, like I said, I'm glad and I'm proud that it has and, you know, it's like, it doesn't affect either of my children now, because they go to the district, but if they were still in the [Student] transfer program I would bring them back.

HF: (Question 13a) As I extend on [that] question, basically given the education that they received the last few years, any concerns, or anything you would be, you know, thinking about as they transition[ed] back into Riverview?

M: I, it would be that...you know, it just basically like the education. It's like, just because the kids, just because the district got accredited, or provisionally, is it still you know, what would it mean for my middle aged, my middle school, my middle child when he graduates? Would that mean that his [high school] diploma meant anything? You know, that would be my only thing.

HF: Thank you.

HF: (Question 14) What are your school aged children's views on Riverview Gardens regaining provisional accreditation on January 4, 2017, thus ending the Student Transfer Program in its current form?

M: Um, they don't know about it.

HF: (Question 14c) Assuming that both of your children graduated from the school that they went to, but if their younger sibling had to attend a Riverview Gardens school, what would their views be?

M: Their views would be, um, take the bull by the horn. Get the best education you can, I'm here for you. I can answer any questions, because that's how they are. They're, they're helpful and you know.

HF: Thank you.

M: Uh huh

HF: (Question 15) Next question, number 15: One of the rationales behind the implementation of the Student Transfer Program is to ensure that all students have quality access to equitable education. So again, they want all students to have access to quality and equitable education. What does that mean to you?

M: To me that means that anyone, you know, with any kind of education. If, if they're in the, uh, let me see, Kirkwood had the SOAR program, which is their gifted program, down to their basic classes, or down to their special ed[ucation] classes, every child has a chance.

HF: (Expansion Question 15a) Did you feel that same way about the schools that your students, your children were in prior?

M: My middle son, when he was in elementary school, I feel did. But, like, with my middle son, I don't think so. I think that the class that he was in, might have just been more kids that didn't care. I don't know. But I just, I had to do what I had to do.

HF: (Question 16) Based on your family's experiences with the Student Transfer Program, do you believe that this program creates opportunities for all students to receive a quality education?

M: Yes I do.

HF: Can you expand on that?

M: I think that every child should have a chance at an education, and I'm glad that my children were picked for it. And, I just, I'm, I'm extremely grateful.

HF: Okay.

HF: (Question 17) What is your biggest takeaway from the Student Transfer Program?

M: My biggest takeaway from the Student Transfer Program is that I think without it, my kids wouldn't be who they are today. But I don't know. But that's, I mean, that's what I take away from it.

HF: (Expansion Question 17b) Who are your kids today?

M: My kids are phenomenal kids. I have a freshman in college, I have a freshman in high school and I think without the Transfer Program that they would still be a freshman in high school and a freshman in college, but I don't think that they would have the drive, the perseverance that they have, without the Transfer Program.

HF: (Expansion Question 17a) Are there any questions, or anything you wanted to discuss related to the Student Transfer Program, or your kids, that I didn't get a chance to ask you, or anything like that?

M: Uh uh, no.

HF: (Expansion Question 17c) Based on your responses, you spoke a lot about, um, your kids and all of that. Did you have any interactions with other parents who transferred out? And if so, could you just shed a little light on what they were getting out of the program?

M: I only had contact with one other parent, and, it was basically like the same thing. She was glad that the program was available and the same thing, for her kids to get an education.

HF: (Expansion Question 17d) If your children communicated with a lot of the, uh, students who were still in Riverview Gardens. You said they didn't have too many friends...

M: No...they, they only had a handful. And they still, they still communicate with them as friends.

HF: (Expansion Question 17e) So, given what you said, if parents are watching this and they have a kid in a transition year, what would you tell them, if they're trying to make a determination on rather they should send their children back to Riverview Gardens, or stay in whatever district they are receiving. What would you say?

M: What I would say is, A: follow your heart, follow, talk to your kids. You know the education that they're getting where they're at. If you're not sure, talk to the school that your child would be attending. Get everything that you can about, know everything you can about that school. The education, the teachers, principal, down to anyone that would come in contact with your child. And then, make your determination that way.

HF: Okay.

Participant #3 -Tiffany's Interview

HF= Howard Fields/T= Tiffany)

HF: (Question 1) Without using names, can you briefly talk about your school-aged children?

T: Briefly talk about my school aged children...Well, I had three at the time, two of them were in high school, one...no, at the time, when they transferred?

HF: Yes.

T: Oh, I had one elementary, one middle and one high school, at the time of transfer.

HF: (Question 2) Alright. In 2013, a judge ruled that parents in unaccredited school districts were eligible to transfer to an accredited school district via the Student Transfer Law. What were your initial views regarding this ruling?

T: I thought it would be a great opportunity for my kids to get a better education, in an accredited school district.

HF: (Expansion Question 2a) What was the type of education you thought they were receiving, um, at the time in Riverview?

T: I didn't have a problem with Riverview, it's just that I was thinking more to the future, as far as them going to college and stuff. And I have a lot of people in my family who are educators, so they, you know, listening to them, they were telling me, like, it would have been a better move as far as, like, they transcripts, saying they came. So, they broke it down to me like this: say if your child went to an accredited school and an unaccredited school, if they made straight As here, and they made straight As here, and they both want to go to Harvard, they [are] going [to] pick this child that went to the accredited school first. So, it made me think, send them to the better school, and they get a better education.

HF: (Question 3) Next question: Um, what were your school-aged children's views regarding this ruling?

T: My elementary child, he didn't really care either way. My, my high schooler, she thought it would be a better education, until she actually did it. My middle schooler, he don't care about nothing. But, he, they both were...basically, everybody was with going to the new school, until they got there.

HF: (Question 4) To the best of your knowledge, how did your family views regarding the Student Transfer Program, uh, compare to your views of other families in the community?

T: Everybody transferred. Everybody thought it would be a better, better education, a better opportunity. Everybody in the neighborhood transferred. You know, some went to Mehlville, some went to Kirkwood, but everybody just thought it would be a better opportunity.

HF: Thank you.

HF: (Question 5) To the best of your knowledge...I'm sorry, you already answered. Next question: What led to your initial decision to transfer?

T: That I thought they was going to get a better education. Like, I just was really thinking towards the future as far as high school, going to college. I was like, yeah, and I wasn't just going to transfer the high schooler one, so I was just like, send everybody.

HF: (Question 6) What impact did your decision to transfer have on you as a parent socially?

T: It killed me. It killed me having to have them at the bus stop at 5AM, they weren't getting home 'til 6, 7 in the evening. It, it killed me working, it killed me doing

everything. I couldn't do nothing socially, but, uh, during the week, get up get my kids to school. Work a part time job in between, and then be there to pick them up from the bus stop because it was, it was such an inconvenience. The bus stop was not close to the house, like, they had one major bus stop and it was not walking distance. So, you, it['s] like...and with me having 3 children in 3 different schools...I'm there from 5AM, and got to go home and get the next kid. 6AM, go home and get the next kid. 7AM. It was, it was not good. It was not good. It wore me out.

HF: (Question 7) What impact did your decision to transfer have on your school-aged children socially? So, with other friends they had or...

T: It...my, my elementary schooler, he was a football player and he had to quit football behind it because he was getting home too late, getting home so late, he had to do his homework, do his homework, it's bed time.

HF: (Expansion Question 7b) What about your middle or your high school aged children?

T: They were getting home too late to do anything as well. Everybody was getting home 6, 7:00 in the evening. Then, when my high schooler, her grades start slipping, she tried to stay after school, she wasn't getting home 'til 8 or 9:00 at night. And they told her at one point she couldn't stay after anymore for the extra help.

HF: (Question 8) Next question: What impact did your decision to transfer have on you as a parent emotionally?

T: Made me exhausted, frustrated, and it...it's just emotionally drained me. Like, it drained me.

HF: (Question 9) What about your children emotionally? What did it do to them?

T: Well, my high sc[hooler]...well, my middle and my high schooler it, it really affected them emotionally. I just spoke with her about that. It, she was like, you know, they used to say little smart things to them. Like, the kids that come from Riverview, they only, you know, “all the kids at Riverview, all they do is get pregnant, and all them got roaches in they house” These are comments the kids was making to them. The bus drivers used to be real ignorant to them. Like, it just made them...it really made my daughter like, lose her drive to go to school. As a high schooler. And, as a high schooler, that’s something that, you know, those your, them your years in school. And she was really losing her drive. She really fell behind with that transfer program.

HF: (Question 10) A lot of times, we talk about academics, so this question speaks to that. What impact did your decision to transfer have on your school-aged children academically?

T: My elementary schooler, it didn’t, he still made straight As. My middle schooler and my high schooler, their grades dropped dramatically. My middle schooler, he had problems as far as the long bus ride, uh...that made him tired in class. Because he had to get up so early, so he was going to sleep in class, so his grades were dropping dramatically, it made him didn’t even want to go to school. But, my high schooler, just with the social atmosphere, she wasn’t fitting in. Like, it was like they had something against the Riverview kids, like, they were better than them. You know, like they felt like they were more financially stable than the Riverview kids, and all that. So they, they, you know, they treated her like she was beneath them. So, it kind of made her just stay off to herself and it really affected her grades. She didn’t want to go to class, she don’t want to

go to school. I'm, driving all the way to Kirkwood everyday to go get her early. She was having problems with the teachers. Her grades slipped from As and Bs to Cs and Ds.

HF: (Question 11) Thank you. Were there any unforeseen challenges, uh, that your family experienced as a result of transfer? If so, what were they?

T: The drive was so far, we didn't know it was going to be that far. It was like 45 minutes to an hour drive to get there. They never really welcomed the Riverview families as they did the Kirkwood families out there. They, they....it was like the Riverview families come for this, the Kirkwood families come for this. They never made us all one whole big family as a school district. How Riverview is, we welcome everybody. They didn't do that for us. It, it just...it just was a bad experience all the way around. Like, emotionally, it really, it really messed my kids up. Like, as far as school, they, they never want to go back out there.

HF: (Question 12) Next question: As you reflect on your initial decision to transfer, as well as everything that we have discussed so far today, would you change any of your previous decisions related to the Student Transfer Program? Why or why not?

T: I would have never transferred them. I would have left them at Riverview where they felt they were at home. And they had a great relationship with the teachers, the principals, all the way around. I would have left them where they felt more safe. 'Cause, it, I had bad incidents all the way around with Kirkwood.

HF: (Expansion Question 12a) Was there any positive component about transferring out, um, at all?

T: To me, not really. Not really. Like, I don't, I didn't see the education being better. Like, I didn't feel the teachers cared more than the Riverview teachers. They didn't, they

didn't welcome us. You...I don't know. At Riverview we get that, everybody know each other, everybody welcome, even if you don't know each other, they still welcome you. You the new student, come on, you know...this such and such, we never got any of that. We never got a, "Oh, here go the principal, the vice principal..." You know, none, we never got any of the welcoming.

HF: (Expansion Question 5c) Okay. Before I ask question 13, I'm going to go back to question 5 and flip it. What led to your decision to return to Riverview Gardens School District?

T: The dramatic change in my children's grades. And...overall, the way, when my children came home and expressed they feelings to me that they wanted to go back to Riverview, they wanted to go back somewhere where they felt at home and more safe. So, I just really honored they request, because I felt that they were drained. My children were drained.

HF: (Question 13) Next question, um, What are your views on Riverview Gardens regaining provisional accreditation on January 4th, 2017, thus ending the Student Transfer Program in its current form?

T: I believe that Riverview getting they accreditation back is great. Like, I believe that all the staff members, they did really work hard, and the children worked hard to help maintain that and get that back. And, as far as the children who are still in the transfer program, I know that they parents is going to be upset, but...I feel like it's going to be better 'cause we all right here. Them long bus rides is not good for them children, at all.

HF: Okay.

HF: (Question 14) Same question, what are your children's, your school-aged children's views on Riverview Gardens regaining accreditation on January 4th?

T: I just spoke with my high schooler about it. She think it's great. She, she loves Riverview Gardens. She want to make that her home school forever.

HF: Question 15 out of 17:

HF: (Question 15) One of the rationales behind the implementation of the Student Transfer Program is to ensure that all students have access to a quality and equitable education. What does a quality, equitable education mean to you?

T: Meaning...that they are learning everything that they need to further their self in life. Being able to go on to college, and be a successful person. But, I don't feel the transfer program gives them that. Like, I feel that that's something they was getting at Riverview, even when they didn't have the accreditation. And, I feel like it's really upon the teachers. What the teachers are teaching them.

HF: (Question 16) And, you answered question 16, which was: Do you think the transfer program did that, so I'm going to go to 17.

HF: (Question 17) What is your biggest takeaway as we look now, years in the rearview mirror, what is your biggest takeaway from the Student Transfer Program?

T: It, it took my children's drive away from school. It...my high schooler and my middle schooler at the time, it really made them feel like, "ah, I don't really want to do this, I don't want to do school like this." 'Cause at first, they really had ambition, like, my son he was talking about going to college and my daughter, they don't feel that way no more. It just, since the transfer program, they were like, "no, if this is what it's going to be like,

going to a new school, away from home..." They, they don't want that. And it really made them lose they drive for they education.

HF: (Question 17f) If you had a parent who wanted to talk to you about, they're on the fence between sending their child back to Riverview, or staying where they're having a decent, um, time, or even a good time for that matter, over in another school district, what would you say to them?

T: I would first ask them why do they feel that they, why did they even put they child in the transfer program? And, I know everybody, really they reason is going to be "I feel like it's gonna be a better education because of accreditation." A lot of people don't even know what the accreditation is though. A lot of people don't. And I would tell them, like, really sit down and talk to your child about it, because, yeah, they might be having fun and games and stuff, but, that, it...it...it really wears your child down from them having to be up at 4 and 5 in the morning. And you doing school from 5 in the morning till 5 in the evening. What else is your child doing with they self other than school? That would be my question to them. Because, my children were involved in other activities. They played, played instruments, football, basketball, cheerleading, and all this. So, they didn't have time for none of that being in the transfer program. So, and, that...and now, you want to talk about education? That looks good on your child's transcript, them being part of extra-curriculum activities and things in high school. So, you gotta think about all that. And then, when my children were in the transfer program, they didn't really give them the option of doing anything after school, because then they not getting home 'til 8 or 9:00 at night. And they have to pay for that cab fare, so it was...it wasn't...it's not fair, and I would tell them, like, stick your children with they home school where they, you

know, where they with the kids in the community where they live. You know, it, it's not no difference for real. The education not no difference. And I feel like it's just on the teachers. It, whatever the teachers, if the teachers really love the children, and they going to be there, and they love they job, and they education, they gonna make it happen for the kids.

HF: (Question 17a) Last question I have: Were there any questions that I did not ask that you wanted to ask, or was there anything related to Student Transfer or education in general that you wanted to speak to, that I did not ask?

T: No, not really.

HF: Okay.

Question and Answer Comparison Table

Question #	Question	Participant #1 / Jennifer	Participant #2 / Michelle	Participant #3 / Tiffany
1	Without using individual names, can you talk about each of your school-aged children?	Okay, so, I have three sons. Um. Freshman, Junior and a 7th grader. Um. They are all very energetic. Two of them are really eager to learn. They are all athletic. And they all have something special and genuine to bring to the table, um, as far as their personalities, their demeanors. Their needs and wants are very different, but yet similar in some ways.	Well, my oldest one graduated from high school last year, and my middle son is now a freshman in high school. He graduated 8th grade last school year.	I had one elementary, one middle and one high school, at the time of transfer.
2	In 2013, a judge ruled that students in unaccredited school districts were eligible to	Actually, I transferred my children INTO the Riverview Gardens School District right after that ruling. Uh,	My initial views were, mixed a little bit, because I was, I was confused about it. But once I	I thought it would be a great opportunity for my kids to get a better education, in an accredited school

	transfer to an accredited school district via the Student Transfer Law. What were your initial views regarding this ruling?	my babies were in private school, and so the school was closing down and we had a choice to transfer them to a sister school or bring them to Riverview Gardens, because we lived in the district, and my husband and I decided that they would come into the Riverview Gardens School District.	understood that, what it was all about, I still thought about, should I have my kids to leave their home district. How would they feel with going to a new school with new kids all that stuff? And I sat and talked with them, and they were like, “mom, let’s do this.”	district.
2a	What was the type of education you thought they were receiving, um, at the time in Riverview?			I didn’t have a problem with Riverview, it’s just that I was thinking more to the future, as far as them going to college and stuff. And I have a lot of people in my family who are educators, so they, you know, listening to them, they were telling me, like, it would have been a better move as far as, like, they transcripts, saying they came. So, they broke it down to me like this: say if your child went to an accredited school and an unaccredited school, if they made straight As here, and they made straight As here, and they both want to go to Harvard, they [are] going [to] pick this child that went to the accredited school first. So, it made me think, send them to the better school,

				and they get a better education.
3	What were your school-aged children's views regarding this ruling?	Um, my oldest, which is a junior now, he was the only one that had some questions, because he is...being the oldest, he kind of had heard what the community was saying, and what a lot of the other children were saying, but he really didn't, it didn't bother him too much. He still came in and was treated pretty much the same as he was, maybe actually a little bit better than the private school which he came from, so it didn't have a major impact on them at all.	They...pretty much almost the same thing. You know, they, they, they wanted a good education, and you know, they relied on me to help them through that process, 'cause they didn't know if they stayed with Riverview, if Riverview became accredited, or if they didn't, what would that mean when they graduated. They weren't sure. So they just, you know, we talked, and that's what happened.	My elementary child, he didn't really care either way. My, my high schooler, she thought it would be a better education, until she actually did it. My middle schooler, he don't care about nothing. But, he, they both were...basically, everybody was with going to the new school, until they got there.
3a	Can you give me an example or some of those questions or some of the things he heard from the community?	Well, one of the questions was why would I take them out of a private school and take them into a school that was a failing district. And, where did he get that from? Well, the media has a way of painting a picture that is not great at all. And he's a child, so he's going to go off what he's hearing. And then some of the kids that were already in the district, I guess, um, was telling him that they were unaccredited, trying to tell him what that meant, but he wasn't getting the correct answers until he		

		decided to come home and ask.		
4	To the best of your knowledge, how did your family's views regarding the Student Transfer Program compare to the views of other families within your community?	Well, I didn't agree with the transfer program. I didn't agree with it, and I didn't like the program, that they were offering the program.	Um...we had mixed feelings. Some, some family were like, "why would you leave the district, you've had them there since kindergarten." And some were like, just like with me, education. Education comes first, and that's not saying that Riverview wouldn't have had that education, but I didn't know.	Everybody transferred. Everybody thought it would be a better, better education, a better opportunity. Everybody in the neighborhood transferred. You know, some went to Mehlville, some went to Kirkwood, but everybody just thought it would be a better opportunity.
4a	What didn't you like about it?	Well...those are the same families that got the district to where they were. Those families should have been made to remain and help get the district back to where it needed to be. The district didn't lose their accreditation because of some outside person. These people were here. When the accreditation was lost, they should have come together: town hall meetings or whatever, however, to work out a game plan, to assist the district in getting back its accreditation.		
5	What lead to your initial decision to transfer? or ... not to transfer?	Well, one thing was, when we found out the private school our children were in was closing down, and we would have to go to	Education. I wanted my kids to have a fighting chance.	That I thought they was going to get a better education. Like, I just was really thinking towards the future as

		<p>another school, we had to kind of do our research on Riverview Gardens School District ourselves. Um, and, if the private school can close, and this district is still here but they're still fighting and trying, we wanted to give that same opportunity to our children, like we gave the private school an opportune[ity]...a chance, and it didn't work out. So, we came into Riverview Gardens, and it has actually been a very good experience for all of my kids.</p>		<p>far as high school, going to college. I was like, yeah, and I wasn't just going to transfer the high schooler one, so I was just like, send everybody.</p>
5a	<p>You say "a really good experience". Can you speak briefly to that?</p>	<p>Um, sure. So, my oldest one, he made some decisions and, um, choices that were not the best for him, but it was not because of the schooling. My middle son, he is soaring greatly as a freshman. Um, he has, when he went to do his shadow days, when he goes out into different colleges to do different visits or whatever, a lot of things that he is hearing or seeing, he learned that from the middle school, where he attained his 6th, 7th and 8th grade education. Um, he sees some things that he was taught in Riverview Gardens School District as a</p>		

		<p>young child. Now that he is a freshman, he considers himself a young man, Um, he's able to compare some of those things. My youngest son has been doing great. Like, he has not missed a beat. Um, He came into Riverview Gardens School District reading well below level, and Um, once he got into the district, the principal he had at that time um had him tested, had his dad and I take him through some different programs or whatever and we just found out he wasn't being challenged or being made to do anything different at his private school that he was attending. Um, that was really very costly. So, he continued on with these different programs, different testing, different programs, different testing and now he's above where he should be and he's, you know, doing very well academically.</p>		
5b	What type of education were they having in Riverview?		They were having...it's hard to explain. Like, when my, my middle, or, I'm sorry, my older son left the district before the transfer program, he was having issues with	

			<p>the middle school. So, he left before the transfer program. And, the teacher that he had was a good teacher, but the students that were in the class, I just, I couldn't...at the end of the school year, my son was sitting outside of the classroom being taught, as opposed to being taught inside of the classroom. And, as far as my middle son, he was still in elementary school, and the elementary school that he was at, I loved. He loved. He loved the teachers, he was doing class work a year...what's the word I'm looking for...like if he was in 3rd grade he was doing 4th grade work, in 4th grade he was doing 5th grade work, and so on and so forth. So, elementary school was great, middle school, I just, I just couldn't do.</p>	
5c	<p>What led to your decision to return to Riverview Gardens School District?</p>			<p>The dramatic change in my children's grades. And...overall, the way, when my children came home and expressed they feelings to me that they wanted to go back to Riverview, they wanted to go back somewhere</p>

				where they felt at home and more safe. So, I just really honored they request, because I felt that they were drained. My children were drained.
6	<p>What impact did your decision to transfer have on you as a parent socially? (or)</p> <p>What impact did your decision not to transfer have on you as a parent socially?</p>	<p>Well, because I'm being new to the district, as a new parent, there were parents that were able to tell me their opinion of Riverview Gardens School District. And, of course, teeth and tongue fall out, so I was able to be that</p> <p>Well, did you try this? Did you do that?</p> <p>Well, naw, I did such and such and such and such. Well, you know, you can't always bail out. Because if, you don't want to find out what the problem is, you just want to run, that doesn't teach your child anything. And so for us, it was really challenging because we were bringing our children into the district, while some of our family and friends was taking their children out of the district. Um, now they see where our kids are, some of them have brought their children back, and have discussed bringing their children back next year. My, my thing is,</p>	<p>It really didn't change. The only thing, it was just more of a conversation I had. Everyone was asking, why would you do that, why...and, once again, I wanted to give my kids a fighting chance.</p>	<p>It killed me. It killed me having to have them at the bus stop at 5AM, they weren't getting home 'til 6, 7 in the evening. It, it killed me working, it killed me doing everything. I couldn't do nothing socially, but, uh, during the week, get up get my kids to school. Work a part time job in between, and then be there to pick them up from the bus stop because it was, it was such an inconvenience. The bus stop was not close to the house, like, they had one major bus stop and it was not walking distance. So, you, it like...and with me having 3 children in 3 different schools...I'm there from 5AM, and got to go home and get the next kid. 6AM, go home and get the next kid. 7AM. It was, it was not good. It was not good. It wore me out.</p>

		you know, you're still rocking the boat.		
6a	What were their opinions specifically about Riverview Gardens?	<p>It was a combination of...you know, everyone has an opinion, but their opinions were based off of basically, their lack of knowledge. So, when you as a parent don't attend parent-teacher conference, you don't answer your phone when the school is calling, you don't go to the school just periodically to find out what's going on in the district, or what happened that we got here. You tend to just get on the bandwagon with the other complaining parents or naysayers. So, for me it was the thing of, you know, being new in the district, um, we listened to the news, we watched the news, but we were those parents that did further research. Why did the district lose its accreditation? Why is it such a high turnover? But when you look at Riverview Gardens turnover, it's no different than any other school districts teacher turn... staff turnover, be it private school, charter school, anything. And, for myself, I was an educator in the charter school, but my kids attended private</p>		

		school. So, it was a lot of having to do a lot of research and listening and just kind of making our own final decision on what we were gonna do with the boys.		
7	What impact did your decision to transfer have on your school-aged children socially? (or) What impact did your decision not to transfer have on your school-aged children socially?	None. They did not miss a beat.	Well, when they were in the district, they really didn't have that many friends, but once they transferred, it's like they just blossomed. They didn't want to come home on weekends, they wanted to stay after school more. So, I say the transfer program helped them out tremendously in that aspect.	It...my, my elementary schooler, he was a football player and he had to quit football behind it because he was getting home too late, getting home so late, he had to do his homework, do his homework, it's bed time.
7a	And what was that evidenced by?	They never asked to leave the school, they never asked could they transfer, could they go with their friends, could they go back to their old school, and that was the only concern that I did have, is, how would I respond if they asked, but I never got that question, so...		
7b	What about your middle or your high school aged children?			They were getting home too late to do anything as well. Everybody was getting home 6, 7:00 in the evening. Then, when my high schooler, her grades start slipping, she tried to stay after school, she wasn't

				getting home 'til 8 or 9:00 at night. And they told her at one point she couldn't stay after anymore for the extra help.
8	What impact did your decision to transfer have on you as a parent emotionally? (or) What impact did your decision not to transfer have on you as a parent emotionally?	It had no impact. I'm a very involved parent. I was always, if I got a call about grades, if I got a call about behavior, whatever the school contacted me about via one-one-one with the principal, a teacher, school reach, I made sure that I attended whatever meetings and appointments that were made available by the district.	It...it didn't really have an impact. The only, like I just said, it was just basically I wanted my kids to have a fighting chance.	Made me exhausted, frustrated, and it...it's just emotionally drained me. Like, it drained me.
9	What impact did your decision to transfer have on your school-aged children emotionally? (or) What impact did your decision not to transfer have on your school-aged children emotionally?	None.	Emotionally, at the beginning, they were scared. Once it was final that they got their classes and their schedule, knowing their teachers, of course first-day jitters. But after a little while, they were like, "mom, it's nothing, it's just like a regular day."	Well, my high sc...well, my middle and my high schooler it, it really affected them emotionally. I just spoke with her about that. It, she was like, you know, they used to say little smart things to them. Like, the kids that come from Riverview, they only, you know, "all the kids at Riverview, all they do is get pregnant, and all them got roaches in they house" These are comments the kids was making to them. The bus drivers used to be real ignorant to them. Like, it just made them...it really made my daughter

				like, lose her drive to go to school. As a high schooler. And, as a high schooler, that's something that, you know, those you, them your years in school. And she was really losing her drive. She really fell behind with that transfer program.
10	<p>What impact did your decision to transfer have on your school-aged children academically? (or)</p> <p>What impact did your decision not to transfer have on your school-aged children academically?</p>	<p>It had, well, two of my babies, two of my sons, they actually did better once they transferred into the school district. My other son, he was already, you know, just, he doesn't like school. So he just did what he had to do to get by. But, two of them really excelled a great deal.</p>	<p>I think it, it...it helped. They, um, they went from having homework for like, 5 minutes a day, to having it for like hours. And it didn't really bother them, because they wanted to learn. They just, they just adapted to it.</p>	<p>Well, my elementary schooler, he still made straight As. My middle schooler, he had problems as far as the long bus ride, uh...that made him tired in class. Because he had to get up so early, so he was going to sleep in class, so his grades were dropping dramatically, it made him didn't even want to go to school. But, my high schooler, just with the social atmosphere, she wasn't fitting in. Like, it was like they had something against the Riverview kids, like, they were better than them. You know, like they felt like they were more financially stable than the Riverview kids, and all that. So they, they, you know, they treated her like she was beneath them. So, it kind of made her just stay off to</p>

				<p>herself and it really affected her grades. She didn't want to go to class, she don't want to go to school. Um, driving all the way to Kirkwood everyday to go get her early. She was having problems with the teachers. Her grades slipped from As and Bs to Cs and Ds.</p>
10a	<p>When you say they did better, what was that evidenced by?</p>	<p>Their grades, their behaviors, um, willingness to learn, studying more, reading more. They just did a lot better once they got in the district.</p>		
10b	<p>What do you see a difference between the Riverview Gardens schools and the school that your children transferred to, academically?</p>		<p>Um, with my middle son, he, like I said, when he was in Riverview he was doing one grade up so that helped him transfer easier, I'm sorry, easily to the curriculum that Kirkwood had. And I think that if he didn't do that, it would have taken him longer to get to where he is. And, as far as my older son, he was about challenged the same. Because, like I said, he left before, before the transfer program, and where he was, he was doing a lot of homework but, going and doing the transfer program was a great thing for both of my children.</p>	

11	Were there any unforeseen challenges that your family experienced as a result of transferring? (or) Were there any unforeseen challenges that your family experienced as a result of not transferring?	We didn't have any.	No.	The drive was so far, we didn't know it was going to be that far. It was like 45 minutes to an hour drive to get there. They never really welcomed the Riverview families as they did the Kirkwood families out there. They, they....it was like the Riverview families come for this, the Kirkwood families come for this. They never made us all one whole big family as a school district. How Riverview is, we welcome everybody. They didn't do that for us. It, it just...it just was a bad experience all the way around. Like, emotionally, it really, it really messed my kids up. Like, as far as school, they, they never want to go back out there.
11a	Was there anything that happened once they transferred that you just didn't know was going to occur?		No.	
12	Would you change any of your previous decisions related to the Student Transfer Program? Why or Why not?	No. Um, they weren't a part of the district losing their accreditation, but I feel like they were a part of it being given back. Um, my kids have done very well,	I wouldn't change a thing. Because, like I said, it went from my kids not necessarily being a wallflower, but being quiet and withdrew a little bit, they just blossomed	I would have never transferred them. I would have left them at Riverview where they felt they were at home. And they had a great relationship with the teachers,

		<p>They've not had any issues with teachers, they've not had any issues with peers. They've just done very well academically, um, behavior, socially. Um, and then again, as a parent, you have to be involved, and ask questions, and not go off of what everyone else is saying, or the media.</p>	<p>and the education that I saw that they got was also fantastic. The teachers were great. They would call, they would email. They would send anyth[ing]...they would, they would let me know how the kids were doing, they, I just, I just loved it. I just I loved how the transition and the whole aspect was.</p>	<p>the principals, all the way around. I would have left them where they felt more safe. 'Cause, it, I had bad incidents all the way around with Kirkwood.</p>
12a	<p>Was there any positive component about transferring out, at all?</p>			<p>To me, not really. Not really. Like, I don't, I didn't see the education being better. Like, I didn't feel the teachers cared more than the Riverview teachers. They didn't, they didn't welcome us. You...I don't know. At Riverview we get that, everybody know each other, everybody welcome, even if you don't know each other, they still welcome you. You the new student, come on, you know...this such and such, we never got any of that. We never got a, "Oh, here go the principal, the vice principal..." You know, none, we never got any of the welcoming.</p>
13	<p>What are your views on Riverview</p>	<p>So, I haven't really done a lot of studying on the transfer</p>	<p>Um, well, like I said, I'm glad and I'm proud that it has and,</p>	<p>I believe that Riverview getting they accreditation</p>

	<p>Gardens regaining Provisional Accreditation on January 4, 2017, thus ending the Student Transfer Program in its current form?</p>	<p>program, but I f...I... I'm trying to say it right. I think if the children are going to come back...it shouldn't be that they can come back and then start issues or problems. Or the parents and families shouldn't be able to come in and then tear up what you all here have worked so hard to get. If that makes sense. Because the teachers have worked really hard. Dr. Spurgeon has worked extremely hard. So, to get your team together to build this far, which I think it should have been more than just provisional, but to allow those families back...I just think it should be not just, you can just walk back in the door.</p>	<p>you know, it's like, it doesn't affect either of my children now, because they go to the district, but if they were still in the Kirkwood transfer program I would bring them back.</p>	<p>back is great. Like, I believe that all the staff members, they did really work hard, and the children worked hard to help maintain that and get that back. And, as far as the children who are still in the transfer program, I know that they parents is going to be upset, but...I feel like it's going to be better 'cause we all right here. Them long bus rides is not good for them children, at all.</p>
13a	<p>What problems could arise as a result of that?</p>	<p>It's great that we, that the district has it back, but then if you bring children back in the district, who are not going to school on a day-to-day basis where they are, having behavior issues in the district that they are currently attending, or they're not coming to school on a day-to-day basis, then that's going to come and fall right back into the dis...the Riverview Gardens School District and</p>	<p>I, it would be that...you know, it just basically like the education. It's like, just because the kids, just because the district got accredited, or provisionally, is it still you know, what would it mean for my middle aged, my middle school, my middle child when he graduates? Would that mean that his cer..di...diploma meant anything? You know, that would be</p>	

		put us right back where you started. So, I, I think it, it's just...I don't really know how to say it, but it's kind of a catch-22 I guess.	my only thing.	
14	What are your school-aged children's views on Riverview Gardens regaining Provisional Accreditation on January 4, 2017, thus ending the Student Transfer Program in its current form?	Well, my 7th grade son, because he doesn't really understand the whole gamut, he wants to know why did it take so long, and why only provisional. Um, so I've explained it to him as best that I can and um, and I've taken him to a couple meetings with me. I've had him look online, kind of reading some things. But it is still a lot for a 13 year old to process, so he's still trying to understand it. Um, the other two feels like, um, can't say their terms, but they feel like the state want to play games with us because we are predominately African American school. That's the best way I can say it. Considering they're older and they clearly know what has happened.	Um, they don't know about it.	I just spoke with my high schooler about it. She think it's great. She, she loves Riverview Gardens. She want to make that her home school forever.
14a	You said the state wanted to play games because we're an African American school. Can you speak a little bit to that?	So, if you do the research in any of the 9 elementary schools Riverview Gardens have, the one high school, the two middle schools. So, if you check the demographics, it's		

		<p>predominately all minority, African American students. You can count the number of any other nationality of children that attend the district. So, in my children's eyes, and they coming from a private school, where they were 3 in the entire school. They were 3 of the 50 children that made up the school of 585 children when they were closing the building. So, they have family in various school districts, so they know, like I said, the two older ones, know, they understand and they see more, and they can have a conversation with me about when you're a predominately black school, when you're a predominately white school, what's the difference, you know. And they just feel, and that was their opinion, their words, because I hadn't even looked at it that way, but they just feel like, momma, is it because we are a predominately black district, that they playin' yo-yo, is what my oldest son said, with the kids that are in the Riverview Gardens School District. Um, he's trying to figure out</p>		
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		<p>why is it Riverview Gardens outscored and out tested other districts around us, but they still have full accreditation, and Riverview Gardens doesn't have it.</p>		
14b	<p>You said that there were, in their, in your children's, the two oldest, there were some difference between black schools and white schools. What's one or a few differences that they would say, coming from their eyes, from the students' perspective?</p>	<p>One of the things they've said is, they have friends that, like I said, attend districts all over, um, and for my 9th grade son, his view is kind of like one of those, old type thoughts, his thing is, you know, we already are several steps behind everyone else, but why is it those that are already behind, they're never acknowledged, you never hear about them, they're always put in the limelight, they're the ones who you always see on the sports something with the news, or whatever, I don't look at it. But whatever the sports part is on the news. But you don't see Riverview Gardens. So, I didn't have an answer, because, like I said, I don't look at the sports part of the news, so I didn't even really know too much what he was talking about. For my oldest son, his thing is, well, momma, is it that because we're always doing things this way, or we're expected to</p>		

		do things this way, is that why we're always on the news, versus, um, schools that really, just like, right across the bridge, have issues and things going on, but you don't hear about it. Schools right here in their back door have a lot of things going on, but you don't hear it. You always hear Riverview Gardens. So, I had to explain it as best as I felt for them to hear it, you know, that's more for you all to go to school and do better, to show those people that just because I'm, the color of my skin, does not denominate, does not say that I'm less a person or that my district is less a district, you know, because of our skin tone.		
14c	Assuming that both of your children graduated from the school that they went to, but if their younger sibling had to attend a Riverview Gardens school, what would their views be?		Their views would be, um, take the bull by the horn. Get the best education you can, I'm here for you. I can answer any questions, because that's how they are. They're, they're helpful and you know.	
15	One of the rationales behind the implementation of the Student Transfer Program	Well, I wonder what they mean when they say that. Because you don't see them in anybody's classroom, walking down any	To me that means that anyone, you know, with any kind of education. If, if they're in the, uh, let me see, Kirkwood	Meaning...that they are learning everything that they need to further theirselves in life. Being able to go on

	is to ensure that all students have access to quality and equitable education. What does that mean to you?	halls of any school. You're not coming in to help. So, instead of tearing down, come in and see what you can do to help. Teachers have it hard. They have...principals have it hard, but if you just want to keep sitting on the back burner, and you just want to keep lighting that fire even more, instead of coming in and seeing what's going on, or how you can lend a helping hand, for me, that really shouldn't even be stated. What is a quality education? They, they keep saying that and throwing that term around, but have yet to say what that really means or what that's supposed to look like.	had the SOAR program, which is their gifted program, down to their basic classes, or down to their special ed classes, every child has a chance.	to college, and be a successful person.
15a	Did you feel that same way about the schools that your students, your children were in prior?		My middle son, when he was in elementary school, I feel did. But, like, with my middle son, I don't think so. I think that the class that he was in, might have just been more kids that didn't care. I don't know. But I just, I had to do what I had to do.	
16	Based on your family's experiences with the Student Transfer Program, do you believe that this program creates opportunities for	I say no. Because a lot of the districts, I feel like they took the kids in because it was a dollar, and it was a way for them to build up their schools and increase their finances. I don't think	Yes I do. I think that every child should have a chance at an education, and I'm glad that my children were picked for it. And, I just, I'm, I'm extremely grateful.	But, I don't feel the transfer program gives them that. Like, I feel that that's something they were getting at Riverview, even when they didn't have the

	all students to receive access to a quality and equitable education? Why or why not?	a lot of the districts that took our children really wanted our babies out there, they just took 'em.		accreditation. And, I feel like it's really upon the teachers. What the teachers are teaching them.
17	What is your biggest takeaway from the Student Transfer Program?	What did we really teach our children? Because the ship is sinking does that mean you just abandon the ship, or do you figure out how you can do, what you can do to get the ship back up like it's supposed to be. It, it didn't send a good message to me. But you can still live here, but you can't be educated here. That, that...	My biggest takeaway from the Student Transfer Program is that I think without it, my kids wouldn't be who they are today. But I don't know. But that's, I mean, that's what I take away from it.	It, it took my children's drive away from school. It...my high schooler and my middle schooler at the time, it really made them feel like, "ah, I don't really want to do this, I don't want to do school like this." 'Cause at first, they really had ambition, like, my son he was talking about going to college and my daughter, they don't feel that way no more. It just, since the transfer program, they were like, "no, if this is what it's going to be like, going to a new school, away from home..." They, they don't want that. And it really made them lose they drive for they education.
17a	Is there any question you wished I would have asked you or anything you would like to speak to that was not necessarily conveyed in this formal interview?	Not that I can think of, no.	Uh uh, no.	No, not really. You covered it.
17b	You said that your kids wouldn't be who they are today		My kids are phenomenal kids. I have a freshman in	

	if it wasn't for the Student Transfer Program. Who are your kids today?		college, I have a freshman in high school and I think without the Transfer Program that they would still be a freshman in high school and a freshman in college, but I don't think that they would have the drive, the pers...the perseverance that they have, without the Transfer Program.	
17c	Did you have any interactions with other parents who transferred out? And if so, could you just shed a little light on what they were getting out of the program?		I only had contact with one other parent, and, it was basically like the same thing. She was glad that the program was available and the same thing, for her kids to get an education.	
17d	If your children communicated with a lot of the students who were still in Riverview Gardens. You said they didn't have too many friends...		No...they, they only had a handful. And they still, they still communicate with them as friends.	
17e	If parents are watching this and they have a kid in a transition year, what would you tell them, if they're trying to make a determination on rather they should send their children back to Riverview Gardens, or stay in whatever district they are receiving.		What I would say is, A: follow your heart, follow, talk to your kids. You know the education that they're getting where they're at. If you're not sure, talk to the school that your child would be attending. Get everything that you can about, know everything you can	

			about that school. The education, the teachers, principal, down to anyone that would come in contact with your child. And then, make your determination that way.	
17f	if you had a parent who wanted to talk to you about, they're on the fence between sending their child back to Riverview, or staying where they're having a decent, um, time, or even a good time for that matter, over in another school district, what would you say to them?			I would first ask them why do they feel that they, why did they even put they child in the transfer program? And, I know everybody, really they reason is going to be "I feel like it's gonna be a better education because of accreditation." A lot of people don't even know what the accreditation is though. A lot of people don't. And I would tell them, like, really sit down and talk to your child about it, because, yeah, they might be having fun and games and stuff, but, that, it...it...it really wears your child down from them having to be up at 4 and 5 in the morning. And you doing school from 5 in the morning till 5 in the evening. What el...what else is your child doing with theyself other than school? That would be my question to them. Because, my

				<p>children were involved in other activities. They played, played instruments, football, basketball, cheerleading, and all this. So, they didn't have time for none of that being in the transfer program. So, and, that...and now, you want to talk about education? That looks good on your child's transcript, them being part of extra-curriculum activities and things in high school. So, you gotta think about all that. And then, when my children were in the transfer program, they didn't really give them the option of doing anything after school, because then they not getting home 'til 8 or 9:00 at night. And they have to pay for that cab fare, so it was...it wasn't...it's not fair, and I would tell them, like, stick your children with they home school where they, you know, where they with the kids in the community where they live. You know, it, it's not no difference for real. The education not no difference. And I feel like it's just on</p>
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				the teachers. It, whatever the teachers, if the teachers really love the children, and they going to be there, and they love they job, and they education, they gonna make it happen for the kids.
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Initial Understanding of the Student Transfer Law

Each of the three participants expressed a cursory level of initial understanding pertaining to the Student Transfer Law, which led to the implementation of the Student Transfer Program. Participant #2 stated that she was “confused about it,” while Participant #3 stated that her initial understanding of the Student Transfer Law was heavily influenced by her family members.

I have a lot of people in my family who are educators, so they, you know, listening to them, they were telling me, like, it would have been a better move as far as, like, they transcripts. So, they broke it down to me like this: say if your child went to an accredited school and an unaccredited school, if they made straight As here, and they made straight As here, and they both want to go to Harvard, [Harvard would] pick this child that went to the accredited school first. So, it made me think, send them to the better school, and they get a better education.

The participants also stated that their school-aged children’s initial understanding of the Student Transfer Law primarily rested on conversations with family and friends. The common theme was that their children did not know an extensive amount about what all of this meant, other than they wanted a better education.

When asked how their family's initial perspective of the Student Transfer Program compared with other families' perspective within their community, each participant provided a different response. Participant #1 differed from many community perspectives.

[T]hose are the same families that got the district to where they were. Those families should have been made to remain and help get the district back to where it needed to be. The district didn't lose their accreditation because of some outside person. These people were here. When the accreditation was lost, they should have come together: town hall meetings or whatever, however, to work out a game plan, to assist the district in getting back its accreditation.

Participant #2 revealed that there were mixed feelings

Some family were like, "why would you leave the district, you've had them there since kindergarten." And some were like, just like with me, education. Education comes first, and that's not saying that Riverview wouldn't have had that education, but I didn't know.

Participant #3 stated that the communities' perspective was aligned with her family's perspective.

Everybody transferred. Everybody thought it would be a better, better education, a better opportunity. Everybody in the neighborhood transferred. You know, some went to Mehlville, some went to Kirkwood, but everybody just thought it would be a better opportunity.

Social Impact

Participant #1 was new to the Riverview Gardens School District during the first year of the Student Transfer Program. She described the social impact of this program on her as "challenging."

Well, because I'm being new to the district, as a new parent, there were parents that were able to tell me their opinion of Riverview Gardens School District. And, of course, teeth and tongue fall out, so I was able to be that Well, did you try this? Did you do that? Well, naw, I did such and such and such and such. Well, you know, you can't always bail out.

Because if, you don't want to find out what the problem is, you just want to run, that doesn't teach your child anything. And so for us, it was really challenging because we were bringing our children into the district, while some of our family and friends was taking their children out of the district.

Participant #2 stated that her social life "really didn't change," while Participant #3 could not have provided a more contrasting perspective to Participant #2.

It killed me. It killed me having to have them at the bus stop at 5AM, they weren't getting home 'til 6, 7 in the evening. It, it killed me working, it killed me doing everything. I couldn't do nothing socially, but, uh, during the week, get up get my kids to school. Work a part time job in between, and then be there to pick them up from the bus stop because it was, it was such an inconvenience. The bus stop was not close to the house, like, they had one major bus stop and it was not walking distance. So, you, it like...and with me having 3 children in 3 different schools...I'm there from 5AM, and got to go home and get the next kid. 6AM, go home and get the next kid. 7AM. It was, it was not good. It was not good. It wore me out.

When asked the social impact the Student Transfer Program had on her children,

Participant #1 did not notice an impact, stating that her children "did not miss a beat."

Participant #2 provided a different narrative.

When they were in the district, they really didn't have that many friends, but once they transferred, it's like they just blossomed. They didn't want to come home on weekends, they wanted to stay after school more. So, I say the transfer program helped them out tremendously in [the social] aspect.

Participant #3 also saw a change in her children socially, as a result of the Student Transfer Program.

My elementary schooler, he was a football player and he had to quit football behind it because he was getting home too late, getting home so late, he had to do his homework, do his homework, it's bed time. [My middle and high schooler] were getting home too late to do anything as well. Everybody was getting home 6, 7:00 in the evening. Then, when my high schooler, her grades start slipping, she tried to stay after school, she wasn't getting home 'til 8 or 9:00 at night. And they told her at one point she couldn't stay after anymore for the extra help.

Emotional Impact

Participants #1 and #2 stated that the Student Transfer Program did not impact them emotionally. Participant #3 stated that the program “made me exhausted, frustrated, and emotionally drained me.” Participant #1 stated that the Student Transfer Program did not impact her children emotionally. Participants #2 and #3 felt like the Student Transfer Program did impact their children.

Participant #2 provided the following explanation:

Emotionally, at the beginning, they were scared. Once it was final that they got their classes and their schedule, knowing their teachers, of course first-day jitters. But after a little while, they were like, “mom, it’s nothing, it’s just like a regular day.”

Participant #3 spoke about her high schooler experiencing an emotional change as a result of the Student Transfer Program.

[S]he was like, you know, they used to say little smart things to them. Like, the kids that come from Riverview, they only, you know, “all the kids at Riverview, all they do is get pregnant, and all them got roaches in they house” These are comments the kids was making to them. The bus drivers used to be real ignorant to them. Like, it just made them...it really made my daughter like, lose her drive to go to school. As a high schooler. And, as a high schooler, that’s something that, you know, those you, them your years in school. And she was really losing her drive. She really fell behind with that transfer program.

Academic Impact

Question #10 asked participants to consider the academic impact of their decision to, or not to, transfer. All participants expressed that the Student Transfer Program impacted their children academically. Participant #1 stated:

[T]wo of my sons, they actually did better once they transferred into the school district. My other son, he was already, you know, just, he doesn't like school. So he just did what he had to do to get by. But, two of them really excelled a great deal. Their grades, their behaviors, um, willingness to learn, studying more, reading more. They just did a lot better once they got in the district.

Participant #2 contributed her children's increased and continued academic performance to the Student Transfer Program.

I think it, it...it helped. They, um, they went from having homework for like, 5 minutes a day, to having it for like hours. And it didn't really bother them, because they wanted to learn. They just, they just adapted to it. Um, with my middle son, he, like I said, when he was in Riverview he was doing one grade up so that helped him transfer easier, I'm sorry, easily to the curriculum that Kirkwood had. And I think that if he didn't do that, it would have taken him longer to get to where he is. And, as far as my older son, he was about challenged the same. Because, like I said, he left before, before the transfer program, and where he was, he was doing a lot of homework but, going and doing the transfer program was a great thing for both of my children.

Participant #3 contributed her middle and high schoolers' decreased academic performance to the Student Transfer Program.

Well, my elementary schooler, he still made straight As. My middle schooler, he had problems as far as the long bus ride, uh...that made him tired in class. Because he had to get up so early, so he was going to sleep in class, so his grades were dropping dramatically, it made him didn't even want to go to school. But, my high schooler, just with the social atmosphere, she wasn't fitting in. Like, it was like they had something against the Riverview kids, like, they were better than them. You know, like they felt like they were more financially stable than the Riverview kids, and all that. So they, they, you know, they treated her like she was beneath them. So, it kind of made her just stay off to herself and it really affected her grades. She didn't want to go to class, she don't want to go to school. Um, driving all the way to Kirkwood everyday to go get her early. She was having problems with the teachers. Her grades slipped from As and Bs to Cs and Ds.

Unforeseen Challenges

The only participant that reported any unforeseen challenges their family experienced as a result of the Student Transfer Program was Participant #3. This unforeseen challenges was centered on transportation.

The drive was so far, we didn't know it was going to be that far. It was like 45 minutes to an hour drive to get there. They never really welcomed the Riverview families as they did the Kirkwood families out there. They, they....it was like the Riverview families come for this, the Kirkwood families come for this. They never made us all one whole big family as a school district. How Riverview is, we welcome everybody. They didn't do that for us. It, it just...it just was a bad experience all the way around. Like, emotionally, it really, it really messed my kids up. Like, as far as school, they, they never want to go back out there.

Views on the “End” of the Student Transfer Program

Each participants' response to their thoughts on Riverview Gardens regaining Provisional Accreditation, thus ending the Student Transfer Program in its current form, rendered different perspectives. Participant #1 addressed this question with optimism and concern.

I think if the children are going to come back...it shouldn't be that they can come back and then start issues or problems. Or the parents and families shouldn't be able to come in and then tear up what you all here have worked so hard to get. If that makes sense. Because the teachers have worked really hard. Dr. Spurgeon has worked extremely hard. So, to get your team together to build this far, which I think it should have been more than just provisional, but to allow those families back...I just think it should be not just, you can just walk back in the door. It's great that we, that the district has it back, but then if you bring children back in the district, who are not going to school on a day-to-day basis where they are, having behavior issues in the district that they are currently attending, or they're not coming to school on a day-to-day basis, then that's going to come and fall right back into the Riverview Gardens School District and put us right back where you started. So, I, I think it, it's just...I don't really know how to say it, but it's kind of a catch-22 I guess.

Participant #2 was happy for Riverview, yet appeared to have some questions.

Well, I'm glad that it happened for Riverview. It, it's a, it's a phenomenal thing that Riverview got their accreditation back. [I]t's like, it doesn't affect either of my children now, because they go to the district, but if they were still in the [Student] transfer program I would bring them back. I, it would be that...you know, it just basically like the education. It's like, just because the kids, just because the district got accredited, or provisionally, is it still you know, what would it mean for my middle aged, my middle school, my middle child when he graduates? Would that mean that his [high school] ...diploma meant anything? You know, that would be my only thing.

Participant #3 appeared to be happy for Riverview Gardens as well, but acknowledges that everyone may not share her sentiment.

I believe that Riverview getting they accreditation back is great. Like, I believe that all the staff members, they did really work hard, and the children worked hard to help maintain that and get that back. And, as far as the children who are still in the transfer program, I know that they parents is going to be upset, but...I feel like it's going to be better cause we all right here. Them long bus rides is not good for them children, at all.

When asked how their children felt about Riverview Gardens regaining Provisional Accreditation, thus ending the Student Transfer Program in its current form, Participant #1 had a lot to say, particularly around the role that race may have played in the decision to classify Riverview Gardens as unaccredited.

Well, my 7th grade son, because he doesn't really understand the whole gamut, he wants to know why did it take so long, and why only provisional. Um, so I've explained it to him as best that I can and um, and I've taken him to a couple meetings with me. I've had him look online, kind of reading some things. But it is still a lot for a 13 year old to process, so he's still trying to understand it. Um, the other two feels like, um, can't say their terms, but they feel like the state want to play games with us because we are predominately African American school. That's the best way I can say it. Considering they're older and they clearly know what has happened. [I]f you do the research in any of the 9 elementary schools Riverview Gardens have, the one high school, the two middle schools. So, if you check the demographics, it's predominately all minority, African American students. You can count the number of any other nationality of

children that attend the district. So, in my children's eyes, and they coming from a private school, where they were 3 in the entire school. They were 3 of the 50 children that made up the school of 585 children when they were closing the building. So, they have family in various school districts, so they know, like I said, the two older ones, know, they understand and they see more, and they can have a conversation with me about when you're a predominately black school, when you're a predominately white school, what's the difference, you know. And they just feel, and that was their opinion, their words, because I hadn't even looked at it that way, but they just feel like, momma, is it because we are a predominately black district, that they playin' yo-yo, is what my oldest son said, with the kids that are in the Riverview Gardens School District. Um, he's trying to figure out why is it Riverview Gardens outscored and out tested other districts around us, but they still have full accreditation, and Riverview Gardens doesn't have it. One of the things they've said is, they have friends that, like I said, attend districts all over, um, and for my 9th grade son, his view is kind of like one of those, old type thoughts, his thing is, you know, we already are several steps behind everyone else, but why is it those that are already behind, they're never acknowledged, you never hear about them, they're always put in the limelight, they're the ones who you always see on the sports something with the news, or whatever, I don't look at it. But whatever the sports part is on the news. But you don't see Riverview Gardens. So, I didn't have an answer, because, like I said, I don't look at the sports part of the news, so I didn't even really know too much what he was talking about. For my oldest son, his thing is, well, momma, is it that because we're always doing things this way, or we're expected to do things this way, is that why we're always on the news, versus, um, schools that really, just like, right across the bridge, have issues and things going on, but you don't hear about it. Schools right here in their back door have a lot of things going on, but you don't hear it. You always hear Riverview Gardens. So, I had to explain it as best as I felt for them to hear it, you know, that's more for you all to go to school and do better, to show those people that just because I'm, the color of my skin, does not denominate, does not say that I'm less a person or that my district is less a district, you know, because of our skin tone.

While Participant #2 simply stated that her children "don't know about it,"

Participant #3 revealed her high school daughter "think it's great" and "loves Riverview Gardens."

Quality & Equitable Education

One of the rationales behind the implementation of the Student Transfer Program was to ensure that all students have access to quality and equitable education. When participants were asked what this meant to them, as well as if they felt the Student Transfer Program provides such an opportunity, only one of the three participants believes that this program achieves this goals. According to Participant #2:

Kirkwood had the SOAR program, which is their gifted program, down to their basic classes, or down to their special ed classes, every child has a chance. [While in Riverview Gardens], [m]y middle son, when he was in elementary school, I feel did [receive a quality & equitable education]. But, like, with my middle son, I don't think so. I think that the class that he was in, might have just been more kids that didn't care. I don't know. But I just, I had to do what I had to do. I think that every child should have a chance at an education, and I'm glad that my children were picked for it. And, I just, I'm, I'm extremely grateful.

Participant #1 does not feel like the Student Transfer Program ensures that all students have access to quality and equitable education. Participant #1 also has questions regarding what quality and equitable education actually means.

I wonder what they mean when they say that. Because you don't see them in anybody's classroom, walking down any halls of any school. You're not coming in to help. So, instead of tearing down, come in and see what you can do to help. Teachers have it hard. They have...principals have it hard, but if you just want to keep sitting on the back burner, and you just want to keep lighting that fire even more, instead of coming in and seeing what's going on, or how you can lend a helping hand, for me, that really shouldn't even be stated. What is a quality education? They, they keep saying that and throwing that term around, but have yet to say what that really means or what that's supposed to look like. I say no [to the question]. Because a lot of the districts, I feel like they took the kids in because it was a dollar, and it was a way for them to build up their schools and increase their finances. I don't think a lot of the districts that took our children really wanted our babies out there, they just took 'em.

Participant #3 also believes that the Student Transfer Program falls short of ensuring that all students have access to quality and equitable education.

I don't feel the transfer program gives them that. Like, I feel that that's something they was getting at Riverview, even when they didn't have the accreditation. And, I feel like it's really upon the teachers. What the teachers are teaching them.

Four Years Later

The end of the 2016 – 2017 school year will mark the end of the most recent Missouri Student Transfer Program in its current form. Each participant provided a different response to the question: What is your biggest takeaway from the Student Transfer Program? Participant #1's response to that question, starts with a question.

What did we really teach our children [as a result of the Student Transfer Program]? Because the ship is sinking does that mean you just abandon the ship, or do you figure out how you can do, what you can do to get the ship back up like it's supposed to be. It didn't send a good message to me. But you can still live here, but you can't be educated here?

Participant #2 believes that the Student Transfer Program helped groom her children into who they are today.

My biggest takeaway from the Student Transfer Program is that I think without it, my kids wouldn't be who they are today. But I don't know. But that's, I mean, that's what I take away from it. My kids are phenomenal kids. I have a freshman in college, I have a freshman in high school and I think without the Transfer Program that they would still be a freshman in high school and a freshman in college, but I don't think that they would have the drive, perseverance that they have, without the Transfer Program.

For Participant #3, the Student Transfer Program took something away from all of her children.

It took my children's drive away from school. It...my high schooler and my middle schooler at the time, it really made them feel like, "ah, I don't

really want to do this, I don't want to do school like this." 'Cause at first, they really had ambition, like, my son he was talking about going to college and my daughter, they don't feel that way no more. It just, since the transfer program, they were like, "no, if this is what it's going to be like, going to a new school, away from home..." They, they don't want that. And it really made them lose they drive for they education.

When asked if they would change any decision pertaining to the Student Transfer

Program, Participant #1 and Participant #2 both stated that they would not, however,

Participant #3's response was filled with regret in her initial decision.

I would have never transferred them. I would have left them at Riverview where they felt they were at home. And they had a great relationship with the teachers, the principals, all the way around. I would have left them where they felt more safe. 'Cause, it, I had bad incidents all the way around with Kirkwood. I didn't see the education being better. Like, I didn't feel the teachers cared more than the Riverview teachers. They didn't, they didn't welcome us. You...I don't know. At Riverview we get that, everybody know each other, everybody welcome, even if you don't know each other, they still welcome you. You the new student, come on, you know...this such and such, we never got any of that. We never got a, "Oh, here go the principal, the vice principal..." You know, none, we never got any of the welcoming.

At the end of the 2016 – 2017 school year, the families of 437 students will have to decide if they will return to the Riverview Gardens School District. Participant #2 and Participant #3 had a message for them. Participant #2 would tell them:

[F]ollow your heart, follow, talk to your kids. You know the education that they're getting where they're at. If you're not sure, talk to the school that your child would be attending. Get everything that you can about, know everything you can about that school. The education, the teachers, principal, down to anyone that would come in contact with your child. And then, make your determination that way.

While Participant #3 would start by asking them a question.

I would first ask them why do they feel that they, why did they even put they child in the transfer program? And, I know everybody, really they reason is going to be "I feel like it's gonna be a better education because of accreditation." A lot of people don't even know what the accreditation is though. A lot of people don't. And I would tell them, like, really sit

down and talk to your child about it, because, yeah, they might be having fun and games and stuff, but, that, it...it...it really wears your child down from them having to be up at 4 and 5 in the morning. And you doing school from 5 in the morning till 5 in the evening. What el...what else is your child doing with they self other than school? That would be my question to them. Because, my children were involved in other activities. They played, played instruments, football, basketball, cheerleading, and all this. So, they didn't have time for none of that being in the transfer program. So, and, that...and now, you want to talk about education? That looks good on your child's transcript, them being part of extra-curriculum activities and things in high school. So, you gotta think about all that. And then, when my children were in the transfer program, they didn't really give them the option of doing anything after school, because then they not getting home 'til 8 or 9:00 at night. And they have to pay for that cab fare, so it was...it wasn't...it's not fair, and I would tell them, like, stick your children with they home school where they, you know, where they with the kids in the community where they live. You know, it, it's not no difference for real. The education not no difference. And I feel like it's just on the teachers. It, whatever the teachers, if the teachers really love the children, and they going to be there, and they love they job, and they education, they gonna make it happen for the kids.

Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusion, and Suggestions for Future Research

Summary

The three (3) unique family perspectives were captured through one-on-one interviews with the mothers of these families. Their passionate stories and experiences help us, as a society, to understand the first-hand challenges that many parents must pay as collateral to obtain “quality” and “equitable” education for their most valued possession: their child(ren).

The purpose of this study is to understand the perceptions of the Student Transfer Program by interviewing the three aforementioned families from the unaccredited Riverview Gardens School District, who have been impacted by the Student Transfer Program. This program, just like so many before it, was the latest example of what happens when policy, education, and equity collide. The interpretation and lasting impact of these programs may not become evident until years after the program(s) have actually ended. Most of the existing literature on these programs lack the in-depth, family perspective necessary to draw valid conclusions on how programs like these truly impact families. Many dissertations on similar topics were able to obtain the quantitative data of this phenomena through Likert scales and/or survey data, seldom allowing families to genuinely and thoroughly tell their stories qualitatively. This is why the researcher originally decided to embark on this long, yet rewarding journey; which included the production of a feature-length documentary film. This film helped show the powerful, firsthand stories told by each participant.

Although this study was limited to three participants, the data extracted from each participant's unique perspective, helped to answer the research questions, starting with Participant #1.

Participant #1 decided to transfer her three (3) school-aged children into the Riverview Gardens School District during the first year of the Student Transfer Program. Her children previously attended a private school. Nearly four years later, Participant #1 does not have any regrets pertaining to her decision to remain in the Riverview Gardens School District. Her children are doing quite well. In fact, Participant #1 contributes her children's current and future success to the Riverview Gardens School District. The researcher found it interesting that when Participant #1 interacted with community members who expressed different views than her own, she took on an approach along the lines of "what are you doing to make the situation better, not worse." In addition, Participant #1 also appeared to paint a picture that her family was willing to weather the storm and stay in Riverview Gardens to try to make things better. She felt that this would teach her children to stand up and fight for themselves. Participant #1 was happy and proud of the progress that Riverview Gardens has made, but was skeptical of the students who may return after transferring out to another school district. Participant #1 stated that her biggest concern was not knowing how the returning students would impact what Riverview Gardens built over the years to regain provisional accreditation.

Many of Participant #1's views could best be described as "polar opposite" of the views captured by Participant #2. Participant #2 decided to transfer her two (2) school-aged children via the Student Transfer Program, due to her concerns with one of the schools that her oldest child previously attended. While in the Student Transfer Program,

her children “blossomed.” Nearly four years later, Participant #2 does not have any regrets pertaining to her decision to transfer out of the Riverview Gardens School District. Participant #2 credits her children’s current, as well as future success to the educational opportunities that were afforded by the Student Transfer Program.

Participant #2 acknowledged that although her children excelled academically in their new district, she believes that the district her students attended provided all students with a chance at success. From the gifted students, to the basic students, to the students requiring special education services, “all students [have] a chance.” This notion was not echoed by the other transfer family in the study, Participant #3.

Plain and simply stated by Participant #3 “emotionally, [the Student Transfer Program] really messed my kids up.” Like Participant #2, Participant #3’s transferred her children from Riverview Gardens via the Student Transfer Program. She stated that she wanted the best education for her three (3) school-aged children. Although Participant #2 and Participant #3 children attended the same district, each of their oldest child even transferred to the same school, their reported experiences were overtly contrasting to one another. The long bus rides impacted Participant #3 socially and emotionally. She reported that two of her children were socially, emotionally, and academically impacted in a negative way, based on their experiences while in the Student Transfer Program. Tired and frustrated, Participant #3 decided to transfer her children back to Riverview Gardens five (5) months into the program. Nearly four years later, Participant #3 regrets her initial decision to transfer out of the Riverview Gardens School District. Participant #3 also cautions other families to “stick your children with [the] home school where they live.”

Altogether, the three participants in this study, provided information that helped to answer the two research questions for this study:

1. How does the Student Transfer Program impact families in the Riverview Gardens School District?
2. What experiences did families in the Riverview Gardens School District have as a result of the Student Transfer Program?

The approximately seventeen (17) interview questions for each participant took less than sixty (60) minutes. After reviewing all of the interview data, it became apparent that there would not be much consensus found in this study. Most of the interview responses were just as different from one another as the interview participants' unique perspectives. As a result, the data suggests that the Student Transfer Program impacted families in the Riverview Gardens School District in a variety of ways. In addition, the Student Transfer Program also provided a wide range of experiences to families in the Riverview Gardens School District.

Conclusion

The original goal of this study was to allow families with different perspectives to share their personal experiences related to the Student Transfer Program. Captured through one-on-one interviews, those extracted data were used to determine the impact of the Student Transfer Program. Such data suggests that the Student Transfer Program impacted families in the Riverview Gardens School District in a variety of ways, both positively and negatively. In addition, the Student Transfer Program also provided a wide range of experiences to families in the Riverview Gardens School District; again, both positively and negatively.

On the positive end, all of the referenced students in this study appear to currently be receiving a “quality” and “equitable” education. Some students are receiving such education in Riverview Gardens, some outside of Riverview Gardens. Another positive is centered on observing these mothers passionately fight for their children’s education. Regardless if you agree or disagree with the steps that are/were taken, one cannot argue with a parent demanding what is best for their children.

Unfortunately, there were also reported adverse effects to the Student Transfer Program. Participant #3 stated that the Student Transfer Program “took my children’s drive away from school.” This was one of my biggest takeaways from the interviews. In the quest to give students what they deserve to be successful in life, my ignorance did not think that something so precious as one’s drive, could be taken as a result of participating in a program that was being sold as the “transportation to a better education,” so to speak. In addition, it was an interesting revelation by Participant #1 when she explained that her children were forced to view the Student Transfer Program through a Critical Race Theory lens, without ever taking a class on this subject.

Participant #1 stated that her two oldest sons feel like “the state want[ed] to play games with [Riverview Gardens] because we are predominately African American.” When you examine the other transfer programs that were mentioned in this study such as the Student Transfer Program (in Riverview and Normandy), the Voluntary Inter-district Transfer Program, and the transfer programs in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Indianapolis, and Kirkwood, to not acknowledge the role that race and poverty may have in all of these incidents would be fallacious, at best. In all of these cases, students of color from “low-performing schools and districts were bused miles away from their community to attend

predominantly white schools.” If hours of commuting to and from school is the price for “quality” and “equitable” education, what makes the “white” schools “quality?” Better yet, what makes many of the community schools that are made up of mostly students of color “low performing?” In the St. Louis, Missouri metropolitan area, you can look at zip codes to determine the crime rate, unemployment rate, as well as the poverty rate in that area. You can also look at the zip code of a public school to determine how students are performing. This brings us back to where we started. If we take students from “low performing” schools and send them to higher performing schools, this will begin to address the underline problem; in theory at least. But if the results from the interviews that were conducted in this study hold the key, then we really are further away from seeing eye-to-eye than we originally believed.

Recommendations for Future Research

Each of the three (3) interview participants were able to provide detailed responses to most of the questions that were asked. When asked about other participants in the Student Transfer Program, none of the participants were able to provide detailed information. Although the three (3) perspectives in this study were unique, the study lacked in the number of participants. Including many more participants who are willing to share their stories and experiences related to the Student Transfer Program would certainly extend this research. This includes interviewing families that transferred to more than just the Kirkwood School District.

The research participants in this study were all connected to the Riverview Gardens School District. Interviewing families from other transfer programs would have extended this research and made the results more comprehensive in nature. In addition,

including families from the “receiving districts,” where students transferred to, would have extended this research as well.

All of the participants had to provide, to the best of their knowledge, information regarding the thoughts and views of their school-aged children. If students were included in this study, the results may have been more organic.

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APPENDIX A



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Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities
THE MISSOURI STUDENT TRANSFER PROGRAM

Participant _____ HSC Approval Number _____
 Principal Investigator _____ PI's Phone Number _____

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Howard Fields and Faculty Advisor Dr. Carl Hoagland. The purpose of this research is to understand the perceptions of the Student Transfer Program by interviewing three families from the Riverview Gardens School District who have been impacted by this program. The findings from these interviews will be used to produce a documentary that will be shown publicly.
2. a) Your participation will involve
 - One sixty-minute audio & video captured interview with Howard Fields.
 - An agreed upon date, time, and location for this interview will be determined at a later time.
 - Your permission to use the audio and video material to produce a documentary that will be shown publically.

Approximately three subjects may be involved in this research.

- b) The amount of time involved in your participation will be approximately sixty minutes.
3. a) There may be certain risks or discomforts associated with this research. This includes potentially uncomfortable feelings when asked to answer questions in front of a camera that may result in an emotional response. You may discontinue the interview or not answer any question(s) at any time.
- b) Although pseudonyms will be used, participation in a documentary film also presents the risk of loss of confidentiality. Participants are encouraged to send questions about participating in the study to hfields@umsl.edu.
- c) The interview will be video and audio recorded using two cameras and two microphones. The raw recorded video and audio files will be kept for a period of one year in a password-protected computer. The final edited version of the documentary video will be uploaded online. The video link will be shared with you, the members of my dissertation committee, and the public to contribute to future research beginning spring 2017.

- d) Your video and audio recordings can be reviewed at the conclusion of this interview, as well as upon completion of the final edited version of the documentary. Additional information or clarification can be made after reviewing these data. Additional changes will also be made at your request prior to completion of the final edited version of the documentary.
4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about The Missouri Student Transfer Program and may help society by providing a unique perspective to the aforementioned phenomena.
 5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or withdraw your consent at any time. If you would like to withdraw from the study, please complete the attached withdrawal form. If you later decide to withdraw, you can contact me at 314.504.1323 or hefy83@umsledu. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.
 6. By agreeing to participate, you understand and agree that your data will be shared with other researchers and educators in the form of presentations, publications and/or the documentary video. In all cases, your facial identity will be visible, but your actual name will not be revealed (a pseudonym will be used). In rare instances, a researcher's study must undergo an audit or program evaluation by an oversight agency (such as the Office for Human Research Protection). That agency would be required to maintain the confidentiality of your data. In addition, all data will be stored on a password-protected computer and/or in a locked office.
 7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, (Howard Fields 314.504.1323) or the Faculty Advisor, (Dr. Carl Hoagland 314.516.6516). You may also ask questions or state concerns regarding your rights as a research participant to the Office of Research Administration, at 516-5897.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

Participant's Signature

Date

Participant's Printed Name

Signature of Investigator or Designee

Date

Investigator/Designee Printed Name

APPENDIX B**THE MISSOURI STUDENT TRANSFER PROGRAM**

Participant #: 1 2 3

Location: _____

Interview Start Time: _____

Interview End Time: _____

Interview Protocol

You have been selected to participate in a research study conducted by Howard Fields and Faculty Advisor, Dr. Carl Hoagland. You will be asked the questions below related to the Missouri Student Transfer Program. The purpose of this study is to understand the perceptions of the Missouri Student Transfer Program by interviewing three families from the Riverview Gardens School District who have been impacted by this program. You have the right to refrain from answering any question(s) and/or discontinue the interview at any time. If you would like to proceed, please provide the signed consent form acknowledging you would like to proceed.

This interview will be recorded using the two video & two audio recorders you see here. The recorded interview will be kept for one year on a password-protected computer. The final edited version of the documentary video will be uploaded online. The video link will be shared with you, the members of my dissertation committee, and the public to contribute to future research. May we begin?

Participant Interview Questions

1. Without using individual names, can you talk about each of your school-aged children?
2. In 2013, a judge ruled that students in unaccredited school districts were eligible to transfer to an accredited school district via the Student Transfer Law. What were your initial views regarding this ruling?
3. What were your school-aged children's views regarding this ruling?
4. To the best of your knowledge, how did your family's views regarding the Student Transfer Program compare to the views of other families within your community?
5. What lead to your initial decision to transfer? [OR] What lead to your initial decision not to transfer?

6. What impact did your decision to transfer have on you as a parent socially? [OR] What impact did your decision not to transfer have on you as a parent socially?
7. What impact did your decision to transfer have on your school-aged children socially? [OR] What impact did your decision not to transfer have on your school-aged children socially?
8. What impact did your decision to transfer have on you as a parent emotionally? [OR] What impact did your decision not to transfer have on you as a parent emotionally?
9. What impact did your decision to transfer have on your school-aged children emotionally? [OR] What impact did your decision not to transfer have on your school-aged children emotionally?
10. What impact did your decision to transfer have on your school-aged children academically? [OR] What impact did your decision not to transfer have on your school-aged children academically?
11. Were there any unforeseen challenges that your family experienced as a result of transferring? If so, what were they? [OR] Were there any unforeseen challenges that your family experienced as a result of not transferring? If so, what were they?
12. As you reflect on your initial decision to transfer, as well as everything we have discussed so far today, would you change any of your previous decisions related to the Student Transfer Program? Why or why not? [OR] As you reflect on your initial decision not to transfer, as well as everything we have discussed so far today, would you change any of your previous decisions related to the Student Transfer Program? Why or why not?
13. What are your views on Riverview Gardens regaining Provisional Accreditation on January 4, 2017, thus ending the Student Transfer Program in its current form?

14. What are your school-aged children's views on Riverview Gardens regaining Provisional Accreditation on January 4, 2017, thus ending the Student Transfer Program in its current form?
15. One of the rationales behind the implementation of the Student Transfer Program is to ensure that all students have access to quality and equitable education. What does that mean to you?
16. Based on your family's experiences with the Student Transfer Program, do you believe that this program creates opportunities for all students to receive access to a quality and equitable education? Why or why not?
17. What is your biggest takeaway from the Student Transfer Program?

APPENDIX C

“The Art of the Student Transfer Program”

Documentary (Film) / Audio / Photography Release Form

Please read carefully:

For good and valuable consideration, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, I hereby grant permission to **Howard Fields III** to use photographs and/or video and audio taken of me. These images may be used in educational and documentary materials such as Public Service Announcements, Grant Applications, Video Documentaries and both printed and online mediums. Furthermore, I authorize the use of my image, likeness, and voice for all program promotion, materials, and any other purposes, both non-commercial and commercial, in connection with the program deemed appropriate and/or necessary by **Howard Fields III**.

I hereby agree to release, defend, and hold harmless **Howard Fields III** and its agents or employees, including any firm publishing and/or distributing the finished product in whole or in part, including, but not limited to paper, broadcast, videotape, or via electronic/online media, from any claim, damages, or liability arising from or related to the use of the photographs/video, including but not limited to any misuse, distortion, blurring, alteration, optical illusion, or use in composite form, either intentionally or otherwise, that may occur or be produced in taking, processing, reduction, or production of the finished product, its publication, or distribution.

I do hereby guarantee that any information related to this documentary will be held in confidence, and will not be communicated in any form.

I accept and acknowledge that personal recording of any component of this session is strictly forbidden.

I am 18 years of age or older and have read this release before signing below, fully understanding the contents, meaning, and impact of this release. I understand that I am free to address any specific questions regarding this release by submitting those questions in writing prior to signing, and I agree that my failure to do so will be interpreted as a free and knowledgeable acceptance of the terms of this release.

Full Name (Printed): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Location: _____

APPENDIX D**Office of Research Administration**

One University Boulevard
St. Louis, Missouri 63121-4499
Telephone: 314-516-5899
Fax: 314-516-6759
E-mail: ora@umsl.edu

DATE: February 8, 2017

TO: Howard Fields, A.A., B.S., M.A.Ed., E.D.S.
FROM: University of Missouri-St. Louis IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1005619-1] THE MISSOURI STUDENT TRANSFER PROGRAM
REFERENCE #:
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: February 8, 2017
EXPIRATION DATE: February 8, 2018
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 7

The chairperson of the University of Missouri-St. Louis IRB has reviewed the above mentioned protocol for research involving human subjects and determined that the project qualifies for expedited review under Title 45 Code of Federal Regulations Part 46.110b. The time period for this approval expires one year from the date listed below. You must notify the University of Missouri-St. Louis IRB in advance of any proposed major changes in your approved protocol, e.g., addition of research sites or research instruments.

You must file an annual report with the committee. This report must indicate the starting date of the project and the number of subjects to date from start of project, or since last annual report, whichever is more recent.

Any consent or assent forms must be signed in duplicate and a copy provided to the subject. The principal investigator must retain the other copy of the signed consent form for at least three years following the completion of the research activity and they must be available for inspection if there is an official review of the UM-St. Louis human subjects research proceedings by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office for Protection from Research Risks.

This action is officially recorded in the minutes of the committee.

If you have any questions, please contact Carl Bassi at 314-516-6029 or bassi@umsl.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.