

# CHARTER SCHOOLS: CHANGING THE FACE OF AMERICAN EDUCATION

*Today*

*A Record of Success*



THE CENTER FOR EDUCATION REFORM

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*Contributors:*

Jeanne Allen  
Meghan E. Cotter  
Anna Varghese Marcucio

1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW  
Suite 204  
Washington, DC 20036  
(202) 822-9000  
(202) 822-5077  
[www.edreform.com](http://www.edreform.com)

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## INTRODUCTION

Charter schools are succeeding —

As with any new policy, it is important that states track the progress of charter schools. Both opponents and proponents of schools of choice agree that these new schools must be held accountable, and as the following research shows, charter schools are being measured *and are measuring up*.

We know from individual state data, reports and evaluations that charter schools are outpacing non-charter public school student achievement, despite fewer resources and mounting obstacles. And charter schools – like traditional public schools – are also held to account under No Child Left Behind.

The record of the charter movement’s success is documented in the following report, *Charter Schools Today – A Record of Success*. In 24 states that offer good data, charters have made notable gains, particularly in serving a wide spectrum of students. In addition to serving “average” populations, charters are serving exceptionally well children of color, children with special needs and huge numbers of poor children. More importantly, parents of these students report high satisfaction with the education their children are finally receiving.

Most current assessment methods do not gauge the progress that students make since a student begins attending a charter school. That is beginning to change. But the early test results are promising.

Charter schools are still in their early years—but these positive results are the beginnings of successful future trends.

Jeanne Allen  
*President*

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## ARIZONA

### *Havens for underserved students produces results*

Arizona is one of the most progressive states, passing strong charter school legislation in 1995. Today, that legislation has allowed for 464 charter schools to open, and more than 70,000 students have chosen to participate in this educational opportunity.

Despite current myths, Arizona charter schools do not serve the “best of the best,” but “have become havens for students with special problems, returning former drop-outs, and others ‘referred’ to them by traditional public schools.”

In 2001, researchers analyzed academic data for 60,000 students and looked at their actual gains from year to year. The conclusion: The longer the child is in a charter school, the higher he/she achieves.

Academic performance in Arizona schools is measured using the Stanford 9 exam. Standardized test scores for Arizona charter schools show that students met or exceeded the average statewide score. In addition, students who have been enrolled in a charter school for three years were found to have “a significant advantage [in math and reading] over students in traditional public schools with the effect increasing over time.”

In 2003, statewide results from the Stanford 9 language, math and reading tests found that 17 out of the state’s 25 highest performing elementary and middle schools are charter schools.



For more information refer to “Does Charter School Attendance Improve Test Scores? The Arizona Results” written by Lewis Solmon, Ph.D., David Garcia, and Kern Paark for the Goldwater Institute in March 2001.

## CALIFORNIA

### *Low-income children benefit more from charter schools*

All public schools in California are measured by what is called the Academic Performance Index (API), which is based on the aggregate test scores of each school year to year. Utilizing the API, researchers have found that charter schools do better with low-income students than traditional public schools. Charter schools serve more low Socioeconomic (SES) students than non-charter schools.

There were over 430 charter schools operating as of 2002, when the following findings were concluded. The research was limited to a sample of schools.

Charter schools also have a higher proportion of African-American students (16 percent vs. 8 percent in district public schools). In short, API scores in California's low-income charter schools are improving at a faster rate than non-charter public schools. This is especially significant given that traditionally, the gap among low income and more affluent schools usually increases over time. Charters in California have a high percentage of non-English learners and high mobility rates, similar to non-charter public schools. But these factors have less bearing on student achievement in charters than they do in traditional learning environments.

Another significant finding is the impact that smaller schools have on achievement. Many charters start out with the mission of ensuring a smaller environment. The research finds the small size factor influences student performance positively. For example, for every increase of 100 students, 4.5 API points were lost in charter schools versus a 5.8 point loss in non-public charter schools.

Other facts regarding California charter school achievement:

- Of all the charter schools operating for five years or more, 80 charters outperformed all public schools on 2002 API scores, with an average of 708 points versus 689 for all public schools.
- Seventy percent of charter schools in 2002 improved over the previous API scores.

- Charter schools serving 75 percent or more of low socio-economic status students increased student achievement over non-charter public schools by a 4.3 margin.
- On average, start-up charters – those that start from scratch without the benefit of an existing public school campus or faculty - are slightly outperforming conventional non-charter public schools.
- Charter schools tend to enroll those most under-served by the traditional public school system. Charter schools tend to serve a great percentage of low-income students, and a slightly greater percentage of students with academic problems than traditional public schools. Also, on a percentage basis, twice as many African-American students are enrolled in charter schools compared to the traditional public school system.



For more information please refer to “California Charter Schools Serving Low SES Students: An Analysis of the Academic Performance Index” written by Slovak, Kunnan, and Kim, published on March 11, 2002; and “Veteran Charter Schools Outperform Non-Charter on API” written by Agostini and Micaheal for the Charter School Development Center in March 2003.

## COLORADO

*Charter schools are among the highest performing public schools in the state*

The Colorado State Assessment Program (CSAP) is considered among the most rigorous of state-based criterion referenced tests. Over the last several years, comparisons using CSAP demonstrate that charters are outperforming comparable public schools in nearly every measure, while at the same time, serving high percentages of minority students in traditionally urban areas. In 2000-2001, minority students made up 26.3 percent of total enrollment, of which 17.6 were low socio-economic status. This is an increase of 40 percent from 1997.

As of 2000-2001, 77 charter schools were operating. Overall, they represented a disproportionately high number of schools scoring among the top performers on the CSAP:

- Charter schools performed ten percent better than non-charter public schools on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade reading. On 9<sup>th</sup> grade reading tests, students in charter schools performed five percent higher.
- On the 7<sup>th</sup> grade writing assessment, charters performed nine points higher.



For more information refer to “Colorado Charter School At a Glance 2000-2001” and “The State of Charter Schools in Colorado 2001-02: The Characteristics, Status, and Performance Record of Colorado Charter Schools” both published by the Colorado Department of Education in March of 2002.

## CONNECTICUT

*Charter school students make substantial gains the longer they stay in charter schools*

Charter schools in Connecticut are measured by five state-mandated objectives and goals: student progress, accomplishment of mission, organizational viability, financial status/governance, and efforts to reduce racial and economic isolation.

As of 2003, 16 charter schools were operating in Connecticut, serving over 2,500 students. Most of the students in charter schools come from low-income families and single parent households.

Across all five objectives, over half of Connecticut's charter schools met their measurable objectives, while 80 percent adequately met their mission, goals and non-quantitative objectives.

Charter schools that have been operating longer show larger gains on both the Connecticut Mastery Tests (administered in grades 4, 6 and 8) and the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (administered in 10<sup>th</sup> grade).

Charter schools do better on the early CMTs than on the CAPT in 10<sup>th</sup> grade, but they make larger gains on both tests than the traditional public schools in the same district. For example, in the Norwich School District, there was a 6.9 percent increase among charter schools versus a 5.23 percent increase among the traditional public schools.



For more information refer to Gary Miron and Jerry Horn's study, from The Evaluation Center at Western Michigan University in September 2002. It is available at [www.wmich.edu/evalctr](http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr).

## DELAWARE

*Many minorities and low-income students find a place for education in charter schools*

The state of Delaware passed legislation allowing charter schools in 1995. Today 13 schools are operational, serving more than 6,000 students. The students' academic achievement is measured using the Delaware Student Testing Program (DSTP), which is issued during 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> grades.

Students attending charter schools in Delaware represent well the state's diversity. In fact, 4 out of the 13 existing charter schools have student bodies that are more than 95 percent minority. Further, students from low-income families are not left out of charter schools services. For example, one percent of Delaware charter schools has 78 percent of their student populations from low-income families.

These concentrations of certain sub-populations of students impede the process of fair comparison between charter schools and traditional public schools. Plus, these students are not tested when they enroll in charter schools, so the progress they make may be great, yet can not be gauged by the current achievement measurement devices. However, more than half of Delaware charter schools had a greater percentage of students learning at basic or above basic levels than averages of students statewide.



For more information please consult "Delaware Charter Schools 6<sup>th</sup> Annual State Report" published by the Delaware Department of Education in June of 2003 and "Delaware Student Testing Program: State Summary Report Reading, Mathematics, Writing, Spring 2002 Administration Grades 3, 5, 8, & 10" prepared by the Assessment and Analysis Group, Assessment and Accountability Branch, Delaware Department of Education in July 2002.

## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

### *Charter schools are in demand in the District of Columbia*

Currently, there are 39 charter schools in DC, serving over 11,500 students. Charter school students represent over 15 percent of the entire public school population.

The city's largest charter school serves 20 percent of the entire charter school population and has demonstrated the most progress of any public school in the District of Columbia with similar demographics.

DC's charter school board is considered one of the toughest chartering authorities, specifically regarding renewal processes. Of all the charter schools authorized by the charter board, 7 are currently going through the renewal stage. The high stakes review will take place this fall, after all the schools have submitted their year-five data.

The success of charter schools in DC has been credited for the push to improve the under performing traditional public schools, through the process of reconstitution. This movement is a perfect example of the positive ripple effect that charter schools often have on their traditional public school counterparts.



For more information refer to Mark Schneider and Jack Buckley's study for the State University of New York, Stony Brook in March 2002.

## FLORIDA

### *Charter schools score high in Florida*

All public schools in Florida are measured against the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). Currently, there are 227 charter schools in Florida, with over 70 new charter schools ready to open this Fall.

During the 1998-1999 school year, charter schools served almost 43% low-income students, and close to 20% of the total charter school population were disabled.

During the 1999-2000 school year, first graders who were enrolled in charter schools that had been in existence for three or more years in Fort Lauderdale scored significantly higher in reading and math than their counterparts in traditional public schools.

In June 2003, eighty-eight charter schools participated in the statewide grading A+ Program. Thirty-eight charter schools received A's, and 41% of all schools received a B or higher.



For more information refer to *The State of Charter Schools: A National Study of Charter Fourth-Year Report*, Office of Education Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, January 2002. Also, *Charter School Evaluation Report: Central Charter School, Charter School of Excellent, and Somerset Neighborhood School*, The School Board of Broward County, Florida, Office of the Superintendent, Frank Till, March 2001.

## GEORGIA

### *Charter schools are successful in serving disadvantaged and minority students*

Despite serving children from disadvantaged backgrounds, charter schools are successful at raising student achievement. The percentage of students who are eligible for free and reduced lunch rose 12 percent in just one year. In 2002, almost half of the entire charter school population was minority.

Public schools in Georgia are measured by two tests: the Georgia High School Graduation Test and the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test. On average, charter schools exceed state scores on the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test by 4 points in 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades in reading and math.

In 2002, 35 charter schools were operating in Georgia, serving over 15,000 students. Ninety-three percent of charter high school students passed the Georgia High School Graduation Test, compared to only 85 percent of students from traditional high schools.

The average SAT score for charter school students is over 100 points higher than that of the students from traditional public schools. And charter school students are less likely to be held back in school, with a 2.4 percent lower grade retention rate in charter schools as compared to a 4.6 percent rate in traditional public schools.

The results of the 2002 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) report under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, show charter schools across the state performed significantly better than traditional public schools. A total of 77% of Georgia charter schools made adequate yearly progress last year, compared to 58% of all public schools in the state.



For more information refer to Georgia Charter School Association's press releases "Georgia's Charter Schools Making the Grade," published November 12, 2002 and "Georgia's Charter Schools Make "No Child Left Behind" Grade," published August 20, 2003.

## HAWAII

*Early returns suggest positive outcomes*

There are 25 charter schools in Hawaii, serving more than 3,000 students.

Achievement is measured using the Hawaiian Content and Performance Standards (HCPS II) and is issued to those in grades 3, 5, 8, and 10.

The choice that charter schools have provided Hawaiian families with has been well received—enrollment in the past year has risen 9 percent, as compared to less than 1 percent for traditional public schools.

In addition, Hawaiian charter schools are exceeding the state’s target for proficiency exams. Plus, of the schools with available data, most are exceeding the statewide average.



For more information consult “Hawaii Public Schools 2002-2003, Official Enrollment” published by the Hawaii State Department of Education.

## IDAHO

### *Charter schools perform better than traditional public school students*

Two main assessments, the Idaho Reading Indicator and the Idaho Standards Achievement Tests measure all public schools in Idaho.

Currently, there are thirteen charter schools in Idaho, serving almost 2,700 students. Charter school enrollment has increased by nearly 40 percent from the previous year, and the number of students on waiting lists exceeds the total charter school enrollment by 38 percent.

Charter schools have a 91 percent retention rate. Almost 70 percent of charter schools met or exceeded their academic goals in the 2001-2002 school year. Eighty-five percent of all charter schools in Idaho have student demographics that reflect those of the host districts.

Using data from the 2000-2001 school year, the average Direct Writing Assessment and Direct Mathematics Assessment scores of charter school students were higher than the average scores of their counterparts throughout the state in every grade and subject, except for 4<sup>th</sup> – grade writing.

With few exceptions, charter school students performed above the national average on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

For the Idaho Standards Achievement Test, an overwhelming majority of charter schools earned similar or superior scores to those earned by traditional district schools.



For more information please refer to “Idaho Charter Schools, Program Evaluation Report, Year Three,” conducted by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory in July 2002.

## ILLINOIS

*Charter schools serve a diverse population and achieve success*

Charter schools have been operating in Illinois since 1997 and have grown to a total of 29 schools, serving a diverse population of more than 10,000 students. Achievement in these schools is measured with two state examinations: the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) and the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSEA).

The population of students enrolled in Illinois charter schools mirrors their district's minority demographics. Black, Hispanic, and Asian students make up 54.8 percent of charter school students across the state, and that number rises to almost 100 percent in the Chicago area charter schools

Another population that is well represented in the charter school system is students with disabilities. Their representation has grown by more than 300 percent since the 1998-1999 school year. In addition, low-income student representation nearly equals that of the home district demographics. In Chicago alone 78 percent of charter school students are low-income.

Between 2000 and 2002, 20 percent of the charter schools, met or exceeded the ISAT by an average of 16 percentage points. The host districts were only able to demonstrate a 2.6 percentage point increase. In addition, the results of the PSEA indicate that charter schools kept pace with traditional public schools, and one school, equaling 3 percent of Illinois charter school population, was able to exceed proficiency levels by more than 15 percent.



For more information consult the Illinois State Board of Education's "Illinois Charter School Annual Report," published in January 2003.

## LOUISIANA

*Charter schools offer a place for different cultures and different needs.*

In 1995 Louisiana passed legislation allowing charter schools. Since then, 24 schools have opened, serving more than 4,500 students. Academic achievement is measured with the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (LEAP 21) and the Graduation Exit Examination for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (GEE 21).

Currently there are no comprehensive evaluations available that accurately measure the impact of the state's charter schools.

The student population in Louisiana's charter schools is more diverse than traditional public schools. Charter schools have 23 percent more Black students, and significantly more Hispanic, Asian, and American Indian students than traditional public schools.

The percentage of special education students attending charter schools had doubled since the 1998-1999 school year. In addition, more than half of the charter high schools in Louisiana primarily serve those students with behavioral and learning difficulties.

As a result of these concentrations, the student population in charter schools is not easily compared to that of traditional public high schools. Plus, those students with difficulties are not tested upon enrollment; thus any progress they make is not observed with current achievement exams.



For more information refer to the Louisiana Department of Education website, [www.doe.state.la.us](http://www.doe.state.la.us); "State of Charter Schools 2000, National Study of Charter Schools Fourth-Year Report" from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement; and "LEAP 21 and GEE 21 2001-2002 Annual Report, Grades 4, 8, 10, and 11, Criterion Referenced Tests" from the Louisiana Department Of Education.

## MASSACHUSETTS

*Charter schools are in high demand and are outperforming the traditional public schools*

All public schools in Massachusetts are measured by the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment Test (MCAS). Charter schools consistently outperform their traditional public counterparts on the MCAS.

For example, sixty-four percent of all charter high schools outperformed the sending district's high schools. Over half of all charter schools serving students in grades 3, 6, 7, and 8 achieved scores higher than traditional public schools. Charter schools, on average, across the state, surpassed traditional public schools by almost 4 points on the MCAS. Charter school students outperformed their district school counterparts on MCAS beginning in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and the gap grew to almost 9 points by the 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

Two out of three charter schools outperform district schools. Ten out of 13 charter schools had higher passing percentages on the 10<sup>th</sup> grade MCAS than the district. Five urban charter schools had passing rates at least 20 points higher than the district. Five of the top eight non-exam high schools were charter schools.

There are 46 charter schools in Massachusetts, serving over 14,000 students. In 1999-2000, a total of 11,769 parents applied for 3,592 charter school seats, clearly, demand outpaces supply.

Charter schools serve a significantly higher percentage of African-American and Latino students than traditional public schools. For example, Black students represent 24 percent of the charter school population, as compared to 9 percent in Massachusetts's traditional public schools. Likewise, Latino students represent 14 percent of the charter school population, as opposed to 10 percent in traditional public schools.

Two charter schools in particular, River Valley Charter School and Hilltown Cooperative Charter School earned superior scores to ALL school districts scores across the state on the MCAS 7<sup>th</sup> grade Language Arts exam.



For more information on Massachusetts Charter School achievements refer to "MCAS 2002: Facts About Charter School Performance" compiled by the Massachusetts Charter School Resource Center, published in 2002.

## MICHIGAN

*Charter school students are making more progress than students are in traditional public schools*

The Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) measures all public schools in Michigan. Scores from the 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 tests show that students in charter schools are making substantial gains, while traditional public schools are improving at a much slower rate.

For example, of all the 4<sup>th</sup> graders tested in reading, there was a 43 percent increase among charter school students, versus a 10 percent increase for non-charter school students. For the math exam, charter school students gained 28 percent, compared to less than a 1 percent gain for students in traditional public schools.

Currently, there are 196 charter schools in Michigan, serving over 60,000 students. Eleven percent of all charter schools received the Golden Apple award for their performance on the 2002 MEAP exam, but only 5 percent of all traditional public schools received this recognition.

Charter schools that are managed by the National Heritage Academies (NHA), and that serve a large percentage of minority and low socio-economic status students; show significant gains over a 2-year period. In twenty-two NHA schools, students exceed the state average in 4<sup>th</sup> grade math, 5<sup>th</sup> grade social studies and science, and in 7<sup>th</sup> grade reading and writing.



For more information refer to “Michigan Public Charter Schools See MEAP Scores Rise Faster Than Regular Public Schools” written by the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, published on September 5, 2002 and “National Heritage Students Excel on MEAPS” written by MEAPS and published on March 12, 2002.

## MINNESOTA

*Charter schools serve a high percentage of poor and special needs students; yet show a positive impact on their learning*

All public schools in Minnesota are measured by the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (in grades 3, 5, 7, and 10) and the Basic Skills Test (grades 8, 10, and 12), both of which are criterion-referenced exams.

Currently, there are 88 charter schools operating in Minnesota, serving over 12,200 students. Forty-seven percent of all charter school students are eligible for free and reduced lunch, as compared to 29 percent in host districts. Approximately 10 percent of all charter students are limited in their English proficiency, while only 5 percent of the host district's population is identified as such. Almost half of all charter students are minority, compared to 38 percent statewide.

Half of all charter schools reporting test data had a higher percentage of students scoring above the national average on math and reading tests in spring 1997 than in the year before.

On the Minnesota basic graduation test, 71 percent of charter school students reported higher percentages in passing the reading section, and 43 percent of charter students reported higher percentages in passing the math section.

On the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments, 20 percent of charter schools surpassed the state's passing rate in math, 17 percent of charter schools surpassed the state's passing rate in reading, and 20 percent of charter schools surpassed the state's passing rate in writing.



For more information please refer to "Minnesota Charter Schools Evaluation Final Report," conducted by the Minnesota State Board of Education and the University of Minnesota Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement, in May 1998; and "The State of Charter Schools 2000, National Study of Charter Schools Fourth Year Report," conducted by the U.S. Department of Education.

## MISSOURI

*Charter schools are improving from year to year*

All public schools are measured by the Missouri Academic Performance exam. Currently, there are 26 charter schools located in Kansas City and St. Louis, serving over 12,000 students.

In Kansas City charter schools, 90 percent of the population is minority, and 75 percent of the population is from low-income families. In St. Louis, charter school enrollment increased 110 percent between 2000 and 2002. It increased an additional 25 percent between 2002 and 2003.

The majority of charter schools use multiple assessments for monitoring student achievement. Most schools use the Stanford-9 and Terra Nova in addition to the MAP, and in combination with monthly performance tests, pre- and posttests, and mastery tests that students must pass before proceeding to the next grade level.

Fifteen charter schools in Kansas City are showing improvements from year to year. Schools that have been in operation since 1999 have reduced the number of students scoring at “step one” of the MAP. In 1999, charter schools saw a 93 percent increase in the number of students achieving the “near proficiency” level.

In St. Louis, there was an increase in the number of students who scored at the “proficient” level on the MAP. Additionally, more students scored “near proficient” in math on the 2002-2003 MAP. Start-up charters- the only category of charter schools in St. Louis - outperformed the traditional public schools, and did it with \$4,000 less per pupil than what the traditional district spends.



For more information please refer to “Capitol Day Kick-Off Summary Memo on Charter Schools in Kansas City and St. Louis,” conducted by The Learning Exchange in June 2003. Also, Dave Camden’s letter to the editor, “Charter Schools Perform Better at Lower Cost” in the St. Louis Dispatch, 8/21/03.

## NEW JERSEY

*Charter schools are showing gains despite serving a high percentage of minority and disadvantaged students*

As of 2002, 50 charter schools were in operation in New Jersey, serving over 12,000 students. Based on data from the 2001-2002 school year, 68 percent of the charter school population was African-American. Sixty-three percent of the charter school population was eligible for free and reduced lunch, and 60 percent of the entire charter school population participated in Title I programs.

Of all the public school students tested in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, using the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA), 81 percent of charter school students scored proficient or advanced in Language Arts, compared to only 69 percent of students from the sending districts.

In math, 62 percent of charter school students scored at the proficient or advanced levels, compared to only 52 percent of students from traditional public schools.

Charter students in elementary school posted a 12 percent gain in math scores from 1999-2000, proving that students in charter schools make significant gains after enrolling in a charter school.



For more information refer to “New Jersey Charter School Report,” conducted by Citizens for Better Schools published October 2, 2001 and “Evaluation of the New Jersey Charter Program,” conducted by the Charter School Resource Center in September 2001.

## NEW YORK

*Charter schools sponsored by the State University of New York demonstrate academic progress for students over time*

All public schools in New York are measured by the state assessments in English Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, and Technology. Currently, there are 38 charter schools in New York, serving close to 16,000 students. Of the 38 charter schools, 22 are sponsored by the State University of New York (SUNY), and an overwhelming majority of these schools have made gains over a two-year period. An overwhelming majority of New York's charter schools are located in school districts that have been identified as failing by the state education department.

Fourteen out of fifteen SUNY-approved charter schools that were examined using norm-referenced assessments showed positive academic progress for students over a two-year period. In results released in June of 2003, "charter schools that are authorized by the State University...made significant, and in some cases, dramatic progress in student achievement." In addition, 14 of the 15 charter schools demonstrated more improvement between 2002 and 2003 than their host districts achieved.

Among all 4<sup>th</sup> graders, the number of charter schools with a higher passing rate than their host districts almost tripled between 2002 and 2003. Likewise, among 8<sup>th</sup> graders, two-thirds of the state's charter schools had a higher passing rate than their host districts.

For charter schools that have been in operation for two or more years, "dramatic increases in student achievement can be seen over time, equaling or surpassing that seen in the districts of location." While the pattern of gains in traditional public schools has remained steady over the past two years, the gains demonstrated by charter schools have improved dramatically in 2002-2003.

The progress that has been made in New York’s charter schools is resulting in positive parent feedback. In a recent survey by Zogby International, 79 percent of parents gave their charter school an “A” or “B” and were twice as likely to give the schools an “A” as they were for their child’s previous school.



For more information: This study, “Charter Schools in New York - A New Choice in Public Education: The First Three Years” was conducted by the Charter Schools Institute at the State University of New York in March 2002; and “State University Authorized Charter Schools’ Achievement on the 2003 State English Arts Examination” produced by the Charter Schools Institute at the State University of New York and published June 13, 2003. And the draft of the “Five Year Report to the Governor and the Legislature on the Charter School Approach” conducted by the NY Board of Regents.

## NORTH CAROLINA

*Charter schools demonstrate academic growth from year to year, with less funding than their traditional counterparts*

Almost all of the public schools in North Carolina are measured by the Accountability in Basics (ABC) exam.

Currently, there are 97 charter schools operating in North Carolina, serving over 20,000 students. Charter schools serve roughly the same percentage of minority and low-income students as traditional public schools. Charter schools serve a slightly higher percentage of special education students than non-charter schools.

Charter school students have demonstrated strong improvement from year to year. The 2000-2001 writing test scores revealed that charter students achieved significant passage rate increases from the prior year's test scores. The passage rate for 4<sup>th</sup> graders increased by 17.4 percent, for 7<sup>th</sup> graders it increased by almost 8 percent, and for 10<sup>th</sup> graders it increased by 13 percent. These results indicate that while students enter charter schools at a lower achievement level than their non-charter school cohorts, charter students are catching up at a faster rate than non-charter students.

In 2002-2003, 54 percent of all charter schools met their NCLB AYP, while more than 50 percent of the state's non-charter schools failed to make AYP using the NCLB rubric. Charter schools accomplished this while saving taxpayers \$1,000 per year per student in facilities cost.

Preliminary test results on the 2002-2003 ABC exams show that only four charter schools are considered low-performing. These schools are considered to be "alternative charter schools." If the 78 traditional alternative school were evaluated the same way all traditional schools and charter schools are measured, 68 of them would be considered low-performing.

Charter schools are North Carolina community assets providing taxpayers, parents and students with more education for less money.



For More information refer to “The State of Charter Schools: National Study of Charter Schools, 4<sup>th</sup> Year Report,” by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement at the U.S. Department of Education in January 2002; “The Charter School Experience in North Carolina,” by John Manual & Mike McLaughlin of the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research, Inc, in April, 2002; and “North Carolina’s Charter Schools Pass Accountability Test,” by Roger Gerber of the League of Charter Schools in March 2003.

## PENNSYLVANIA

*Charters school students show moderate gains from year to year*

There are 91 charter schools in Pennsylvania, serving almost 34,000 students. Charter schools in Pennsylvania tend to be in communities that serve populations of students that are disadvantaged.

Charter schools have demonstrated a positive influence on student achievement. Students who lag behind tend to be drawn to the charter school environment, and they are producing measurable gains (15 points per year, on average), in achievement levels on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment.



For more information refer to “Strengthening Pennsylvania’s Charter School Reform: Findings from the Statewide Evaluation and Discussion of Relevant Policy Issues,” conducted by The Evaluation Center at Western Michigan University in October 2002.

## SOUTH CAROLINA

### *Diverse student population finds success with diverse curriculum*

More than 4,000 students in South Carolina attend charter schools, which have been permitted in the state for only six years. All schools in South Carolina are subject to performance measurement using the Palmetto Achievement Test (PACT), the Basic Skills Assessment Program, or the High School Exit Exam.

Half of all charter schools serve disabled and at-risk youth. These schools also serve larger populations of minorities than do traditional public schools. Notably, more than half of charter schools in South Carolina report attendance rates of 90 percent, compared to 63 – 88 percent at traditional public schools.

Although 75 percent of charter school curriculum emphasizes South Carolina standards, students in these schools are also exposed to rich and diverse instruction programs. This includes Core Knowledge, Mastery Learning, International Baccalaureate, Character Education, and rehabilitative therapy for those in need.

With the high concentration of students with disabilities and at-risk youth, comparing achievement is difficult and is compounded by the fact that students are not tested upon entering their charter school, which would allow for a measure of progress. However, some measures of success have been clear. For example, the 2001-2002 PACT English/Language Arts yielded comparable or better scores than those from traditional public schools. In addition, each of the charter high schools have increased passage rates for tenth graders in all subject areas and two of the charter high schools are considered among the highest performing high schools in the state based on the annual school report card.



For more information consult “South Carolina Charter Schools: Five-Year Evaluation Report” conducted by Weaver B. Rogers, Ph.D. and Associates, Raleigh, North Carolina, July 1, 2002 and/or David Church, Executive Director, South Carolina Association of Public Charter Schools.

## TEXAS

### *Charter school students demonstrate achievement gains over time*

Charter schools in Texas bring a value-added component to evaluation, and it has proven incredibly useful when measuring student progress from year to year.

Currently, there are 224 charter schools in Texas, serving over 66,000 students, at more than 300 different sites. Test scores for students enrolled in charter schools for 2 years show a 7 percent increase in reading and a 9 percent increase in math.

From 1998-1999 to 2000-2001 the annual dropout rates for all students in all charters decreased. The four-year graduation rate nearly doubled for all charters and more than doubled for at-risk charters over the past two years.

Texas charter schools serve a higher percentage of at-risk students than traditional public schools. In 2002, 48 percent of charter school campuses were rated under the alternative accountability procedures, because of their high at-risk student populations. In comparison, only 4 percent of the traditional campuses chose to be rated under the alternative accountability system.

The all charter and at-risk charter passing rates improved from 2000 to 2002 for reading, mathematics, writing, and social studies for all charter school student groups.

Increasing their Texas Learning Index (TSI) growth in reading by 7.06 to 11.37, at-risk charter schools passed the all charters average of 10.78 and greatly narrowed the gap with traditional school districts that had an average reading TSI growth of 11.82.



For more information refer to “Texas Charter Schools: Do They Measure Up?” conducted by Matt Moore for the National Center for Policy Analysis in June 2002.

## UTAH

### *Minority, disabled, and at-risk students find a place in charter schools*

There have been charter schools in Utah since 1998. Today, there are twelve such schools, serving more than 1200 students. Academic performance in the state of Utah is measured using either the Utah end-of-level CRT or SAT exams.

The student population in Utah charter schools is diverse. As of the 2001-2002 school year, charter schools were measured to be more integrated than traditional public schools and had greater representation of Black, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, and American Indian students.

In addition to racial diversity, Utah charter schools also serve a greater percentage of students with disabilities and at-risk youth. High concentrations of these students can be found at half of all charter schools. In secondary schools alone, 3 out of 4 schools serve at-risk student populations.

In the spring of 2001, charter schools outperformed statewide scores on the CRT math section levels 1-7 and on the CRT language arts section, levels 1-6. Also, Elementary level charter schools achieved superior scores on the end-level exam and the SAT.



For more information please consult the “Utah Charter School Evaluation: A Comprehensive Evaluation of Utah Charter Schools, 2002” compiled by the Center for the School of the Future.

## WISCONSIN

### *Diverse Schools Succeed*

Wisconsin passed charter school legislation in 1993 and today 130 charter schools serve more than 25,000 students. Academic achievement is measured with the Wisconsin Reading Comprehension Test (WRTC) and the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concept Exams.

Charter schools have twice the percentage of Black students than traditional public schools have. They also serve more low-income students and more disabled students than their traditional counterparts. Charter schools' popularity and demand is unquestionable – in Milwaukee alone this year there was a 21.8% increase in enrollment.

Charter schools provide a good educational opportunity for minorities, low-income students, and those with disabilities, and demand for this option is growing every year.



For more information please consult “The State of Charter Schools: National Study of Charter Schools Fourth – Year Report” from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement published in January 2002; and “An Evaluation of Charter School Program 98-15, 1997-98” Wisconsin Joint Legislative Audit Committee, December 1998.

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## SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Phil Andrews, *Georgia Charter Schools Association, Inc.*

Josephine Baker, *DC Public Charter School Board*

Linda Brown, *Pioneer Institute for Public Policy*

David A. Church, *South Carolina Association of Public Charter Schools*

Jim Geiser, *Louisiana Charter Schools Association*

Roger Gerber, *The League of Charter Schools*

Gary Larson, *California Network of Educational Charters*

Martha Manning, *Delaware Charter School Network*

Joe Nathan, *Humphrey Institute for Public Affairs*

Patsy O'Neill, *Charter School Resource Center of Texas*

Bill Phillips, *New York Charter Schools Association*

Joseph H. Proietta, *Philadelphia Alliance of Charter Schools*

Greg Richmond, *Charter Schools Office – Chicago Public Schools*

Colleen Schulz, *New Jersey Department of Education*

Paul Seibert, *Charter Consultants*

William Windler, *Colorado Department of Education*

Cindy Zautcke, *Institute for the Transformation of Learning*

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