

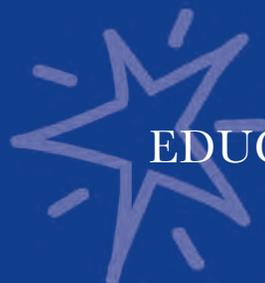


THE Center for Education Reform



THE
2009
ACCOUNTABILITY
REPORT

Charter Schools



EDUCATION REFORM

Today



THE Center for Education Reform



THE
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REPORT

Charter Schools

Contributing editors:

Jeanne Allen

Alison Consoletti

Kara Kerwin

The Center for Education Reform

Washington, DC

February 2009

*The Center for Education Reform changes laws, minds
and cultures to allow good schools to flourish.*

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THE ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT • 2009

Charter Schools

As our nation endures the challenges of an economic crisis and struggles to remain competitive, the cries for accountability across all public sectors are deafening. We are at a crossroads in the American experience where we can either tackle the priorities that will most directly affect our future or simply give in to the status quo and let history repeat itself. There is no greater investment in rebuilding our nation than fixing our public schools. To do so, lawmakers must boldly embrace education reform. Today.

For more than 15 years, the Center for Education Reform has thoroughly studied what works and what does not. Many policies have been debated over the years, most having little to do with student achievement. Only the biggest issues in education reform—school choice, transparency, accountability, teacher quality and charter schools—have had any effect on improving educational outcomes for our children.

Lawmakers should look no further than the 4,600 charter schools serving 1.4 million students in 40 states and the District of Columbia to see these five pillars of reform at work. Charter schools are innovative public schools designed by educators, parents or civic leaders, open and attended by choice, free from most rules and regulations governing conventional public schools and accountable for results.

In 1991 when the first charter school law was passed in Minnesota, the idea was simple—give parents and teachers a choice and allow schools to operate with freedom and flexibility in exchange for accountability. If charter schools failed to educate or attract enough students to remain financially viable, they would be closed.

Unlike all other public schools, charter schools must be proactive in their efforts to stay open. They must set and meet rigorous academic goals and actually meet or exceed their state's proficiency standards. Also unlike conventional public schools that intentionally remain under the radar, charter schools operate under intense scrutiny especially by teachers unions, the media and lawmakers.

What the Data Reveals

Nearly 18 years since the first charter school opened, individual state data indicates that charter schools are outpacing their conventional public school peers with fewer resources and tremendous obstacles. The data also proves charter schools are being held accountable for these results.

Looking at results of student achievement and data on closed charter schools simultaneously in the 40 charter states and the District of Columbia, we are able to determine whether charter schools are reforming public education. What is clear from this analysis is that in states with strong charter school laws and where good data is available to all parties, charter schools are making notable gains. Those schools that have not performed, especially in states whose laws ensure objective oversight from independent authorizers, have been closed.

The Record of Success

To fully understand the academic progress of students in all public schools, it is important to look to local and state-level assessments in the absence of an objective and longitudinal study. Opponents and proponents of the charter school concept both agree that comparisons at this level offer a more accurate report on student success.

The Center for Education Reform last documented state-by-state charter school achievement data in its 2003 report, *A Record of Success* and just six years ago only 24 states with charter schools offered good data. Today about 30 states out of 40 and DC that allow charters provide a more comprehensive look at charter school success, but more in-depth research is still needed.

This report finds that the absence of good data correlates to the strength of the state's charter school law. For example, states like Iowa, Mississippi, Virginia and Wyoming have laws ranked either "D" or "F." All authority for creating and managing charters in these states rests with local school boards. Therefore, there is no distinction between the resulting schools and their conventional district schools. Progress among these schools has not been tracked objectively, clearly or differentiated and any record of success is anecdotal at best.

States with stronger laws and rapidly growing charter movements provide a more detailed look at student success and a few offer insights on student progress over time. In DC, the research shows charter school students improving by four percentage points in reading and nearly nine percentage points in math over the course of one year. An independent study of Chicago's high school students found that charter high school students in the Windy City were 11 percent more likely to graduate and attend college than their conventional school peers. An independent authorizer in Ohio found charters in Dayton outperforming conventional public schools when tracking individual student performance.

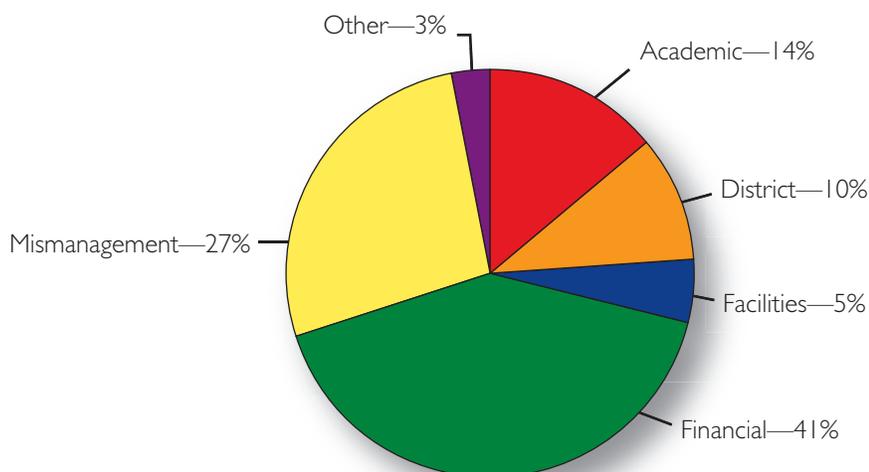
This body of research maintains that charter schools are making notable gains in raising student achievement serving a diverse student population in urban, suburban and rural settings. While more in-depth assessments are needed that track the individual progress of students as they begin attending a charter school, these positive results show promising trends in student achievement when parents are given a choice and schools are able to operate with freedom and flexibility in exchange for higher accountability.

Laws Matter

Performance-based accountability is the hallmark of charter schools. Unlike conventional public schools that remain open year after year despite their inability to maintain strong operations or raise student achievement, charter schools close if they fail to perform according to their charter. And while opponents claim that charter schools are not being held accountable or that only “responsible” charters should remain open, the data on closed charter schools across the states proves that the performance-based accountability inherent in the charter school concept is working—especially in states with strong and clear charter laws.

Of the over 5,250 charter schools that have ever opened, 657 have closed since 1992. While reasons vary, 41 percent of the nation’s closed charter schools were a result of financial deficiencies caused by either low student enrollment or inequitable funding. This figure should come as no surprise considering charter schools across the country are funded at only 61 percent of their conventional public school counterparts according to the *2008 Annual Survey of America’s Charter Schools*. An additional 27 percent were closed for mismanagement. The data shows that ineffective schools first demonstrate the inability to remain financially viable or effectively operate well before there are signs that the school is struggling academically. Therefore, only 14 percent of the nation’s charters have been shut down for poor academic performance—meaning they reached a point at which meaningful measures could be used to close a school.

U.S. Charters Closed by Category (657 Schools)



The research shows that accountability is lost in states with weak charter laws and poor processes to vet schools and collect student assessment data.

About ten percent of the nation’s closed charter schools were closed for reasons that had nothing to do with the quality of the charter school, but everything to do with a hostile policy environment. Such cases, called “district” closures, are instances where local school boards or state entities have intentionally created problems that compromised the school’s ability to remain operationally sound. *For a complete list of closed charter schools by state visit the National Charter School Online Directory at www.edreform.com/charter_directory/.*

This report is the first time the Center for Education Reform has provided a state-by-state analysis of the closed charter schools. Previous reports provided only a national overview of the data. Through this in-depth look at each state’s closed charter schools it is evident that strong state laws ensure accountability. We found that those states with multiple and independent authorizers provided stronger, more objective oversight to ensure the successful charter schools remained open and those that failed to perform were closed. The research shows that accountability is lost in states with weak charter laws and poor processes to vet schools and collect student assessment data.

The state-by-state pages that follow offer a clear picture of the states whose charter schools are making the grade and those where there is room for improvement. Knowing where charter schools are achieving and the reasons why 12 percent of the nation’s charter schools have closed is important to understanding what makes a school successful. Success starts with creating strong policy environments in states that provide educators with the flexibility to innovate while holding them accountable for student results.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Charter schools can be closed for a number of reasons, and in this report, closures are broken down into eight general categories. The following explanations will help you to identify the reasons behind why charter schools close.

Academic: This applies to schools whose sponsors found them unable to meet the academic goals and performance targets set by the state or written in their charter.

District: Applies to schools that were closed because its school district sponsor had issues with the independence of the charter and chose to cut it from the budget, or decided to close it as a cost saving measure. Some of the schools became involved in long, arduous fights with the district and due to additional costs of these lawsuits, were forced to close. Final control of these charter schools' existence ultimately was with the district.

Facilities: Applies to schools that were unable to contract for a viable facility and had to close or voluntarily gave up their charter. While it is the charter's obligation to find a facility, the roadblocks created by zoning boards, school districts, funding shortages and even community opposition make up the bulk of facilities problems that result in a school closing.

Financial: Charters with budgetary problems resulting from involuntary causes, such as a lack of enrollment, insufficient funds, costs that exceeded projected revenues, etc. In most cases, these schools tried to become financially healthier, but for a variety of reasons, they could not sustain the institution. Many of these charters voluntarily returned their charter when the financial problems became too great.

Mismanagement: Closures under this heading were due to deliberate actions on the part of organizers or sponsors, such as mispending, failure to provide adequate programs, materials, etc., failure to adhere to the school's charter, or an overall lack of accountability. There can also be extreme cases of mismanagement such as fraud or theft, but these cases are rare. Schools in this category could also be called "bad-apples." These problems are generally uncovered quickly and charters are closed before mismanagement affects student learning.

Other/Unknown: A handful of charter schools close for reasons that do not fit into any of these categories, like schools that closed due to damage from Hurricane Katrina. Other school operators returned the charter with no explanation, and there are no recorded reasons for closure.

NATIONAL CHARTER SCHOOL DATA

State	Total Operating	Total Closed	Total Enrollment
Alaska	26	5	5,198
Arizona	510	96	119,903
Arkansas	25	6	6,750
California	802	103	316,468
Colorado	151	10	54,497
Connecticut	21	5	3,932
Delaware	21	2	8,740
DC	93	16	25,385
Florida	382	82	108,382
Georgia	83	5	40,807
Hawaii	32	0	7,317
Idaho	32	1	10,492
Illinois	74	8	27,683
Indiana	50	2	12,631
Iowa	10	0	1,462
Kansas	40	10	3,361
Louisiana	66	10	23,634
Maryland	34	2	7,301
Massachusetts	64	6	23,905
Michigan	250	27	94,092
Minnesota	159	29	28,371
Mississippi	1	0	367
Missouri	39	5	13,125
Nevada	26	7	7,295
New Hampshire	11	2	1,212
New Jersey	64	19	17,986
New Mexico	70	3	11,426
New York	118	10	32,602
North Carolina	103**	32	30,445
Ohio	293	48	94,171
Oklahoma	14	1	4,770
Oregon	93	8	13,612
Pennsylvania	133	12	61,823
Rhode Island	11	0	2,894
South Carolina	36	10	8,705
Tennessee	14	1	2,585
Texas	331	33	108,541
Utah	68	1	23,233
Virginia	4	3	275
Wisconsin	221	37	41,799
Wyoming	3	0	244
TOTAL	4,578	657	1,407,421

** Although North Carolina has a state charter school cap of 100, the total number of campuses (which are allowed under the same charter) currently operating is 103.



STATE-BY-STATE ANALYSIS



ALASKA

Forging ahead in the nation's last great frontier

Alaska's charter schools are providing students with a solid educational and cultural experience, though they could benefit many more students.

Alaska's Standards Based Assessment is used to evaluate both student and school performance in grades three through ten. As with charter schools nationwide, accountability standards help to determine which of Alaska's charter schools will have their charters renewed in upcoming years.

Based on test scores for grades three through eight, students in Alaska charter schools at all grade levels consistently perform at or above the level of their peers in conventional public schools. In reading, charter school students in grades three and seven outperformed their peers by between one and six percentage points; 86 percent of charter school students in grade seven demonstrated proficient or advanced reading while only 81 percent of those at conventional public schools did so.

Charter school students demonstrated even more impressive results in math. Students attending charter schools in grades six, seven, and eight all outperformed their conventional

school peers by at least three percentage points. In seventh grade, at least 73 percent of charter students demonstrated proficiency in math while only 68 percent did so in conventional public schools. And in fourth and fifth grades, an equal percentage of charter school and conventional school students scored proficient or advanced in math.¹

While the law states that charters should receive 100 percent of the state and district funding, charter schools actually are funded at 49 percent. Charter schools receive on average \$6,022 per pupil whereas the districts receive approximately \$12,229 per pupil.² This shortfall illustrates why many charter schools struggle.

As of this publication, only five of the charter schools in The Last Frontier have been closed. Two had financial difficulties, one had management troubles, and the other two closed because of the district's unwillingness to work with these innovative schools.

Fast Facts

- Alaska is home to only 26 charter schools, serving approximately 5,200 students.
- Alaska's charter law was passed in 1995. It is ranked the 6th weakest out of the nation's 41 charter school laws and received a "D" from the Center for Education Reform.
- Several of Alaska's charter schools have curricula that focus on native culture.

1. "2007 Assessment Results," Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/assessment/results/results2007.html.

2. "National Charter School Funding Database," www.edreform.com/charter%5Fschools/funding/, December 2008.



ARIZONA

Charters show impressive results in the fastest growing state in the nation

Data from one of the first charter states in the nation—and one that is often criticized for having come too far too fast—demonstrates the power of strong laws and strong accountability mechanisms. Nine percent of public school students are enrolled in charter schools, which tend to outperform their peers by huge margins on all measures.

Students attending both charter and conventional public schools are assessed using the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS). Arizona charter school students tend to start academically behind their peers in district schools but make faster overall gains on test scores.³ In 2007 charter school students in grades three through seven outperformed their peers by up to five percentage points in both math and reading.

In the 2007–2008 school year, 74 percent of fourth graders passed reading versus 68 percent in conventional public schools. For eighth grade reading scores, it was 67 percent for charters as compared to 63 percent passing in conventional schools. Math scores were even for students in both types of public schools in fourth grade. Across the state, charters are serving a highly disadvantaged population; 71 percent of students in charters are eligible for the free and reduced lunch program.

Charter success is especially noteworthy among Hispanic students. Over the course of the last year the percentage of fifth grade Hispanic students demonstrating proficient or advanced levels in writing increased by 15 percentage points, and by five percentage points in math and reading. Increases in writing scores for Hispanic charter school students are even more impressive when one considers the high percentage of students who are classified as English Language Learners.⁴

Fast Facts

- ✦ 510 charter schools operating in Arizona serving approximately 120,000 students.
- ✦ Passed in 1994, Arizona's law is considered 4th strongest out of the nation's 41 charter laws and received an "A" from the Center for Education Reform.
- ✦ Twenty percent of Arizona's charter schools report having a longer school day than conventional public schools.
- ✦ According to a recent survey, 42 percent of Arizona's charter schools serve an at-risk student population.

3. "Fortune Favors the Bold: Reforms for Results," Goldwater Institute, July 2, 2008.

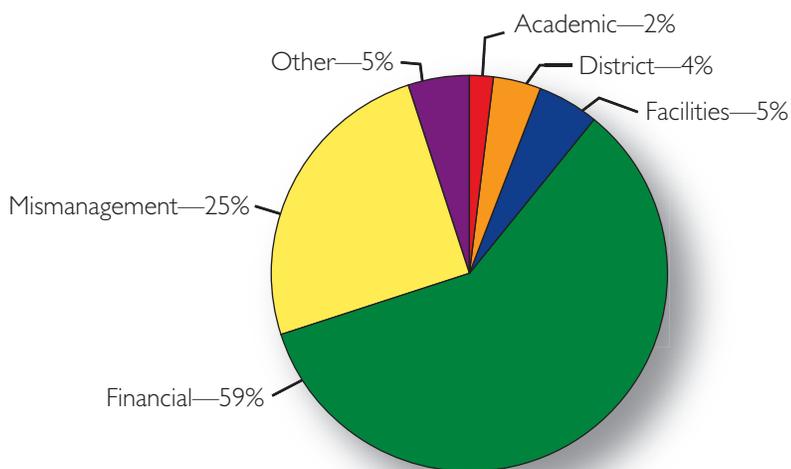
4. "Arizona Instrument Measure Standards Results," Arizona Department of Education, www.ade.az.gov/profile/publicview/.

In addition, math and reading standardized test scores indicated that 17 of the 25 highest performing Arizona schools in 2003 were charter schools.⁵

Since the first school opened in 1994, ninety-six charter schools have been closed, which is about 16 percent. Most of those closed within the first 10 years of the state’s movement, as early and intensive momentum had authorizers scrambling to keep pace. However the recent results show that progress has been significant and steady.

Only two percent of Arizona’s charter schools have been closed for academic deficiencies. The majority of charters were closed because of financial difficulties. The remaining—about 30 schools—had their charters revoked for failing to be accountable to the state’s standards and rules. The Arizona State Board for Charter Schools (ASBCS) has a proven track record for holding its charter schools accountable.

Arizona Charters Closed by Category (96 Schools)



5. “Charter Schools Today: A Record of Success,” Center for Education Reform, 2003, www.edreform.com/_upload/CSTRecordSuccess2003.pdf.



ARKANSAS

A small but growing charter school movement demonstrates success in educating minority students

Arkansas charters enroll a greater percentage of minority students and economically disadvantaged students and are achieving at levels comparable to their district counterparts.

A look at the 2007 Arkansas Benchmark Exams is telling. In grades three through eight, 67.6 percent of charter school students scored proficient or advanced in literacy, whereas only 59.2 percent of students attending conventional public school did so. In mathematics, 62 percent of both charter-public and conventional-public school students demonstrated proficient or advanced levels of competency.⁶

To date, six charter schools have closed in Arkansas, and each is traceable to the conditions presented by Arkansas' weak law. Charters in Arkansas are funded at only 64 percent of the per pupil expenditure, approximately \$3,260 less than conventional public schools.⁷ It comes as no surprise then that half of all charters that closed did so for financial reasons. These three schools surrendered their charters when low enrollment caused financial strain.

The remaining three charters were forced to close because of school district hostilities. For example, the Arkansas School for Information Systems and Technology was closed after only three years when the local school district complained that the charter was outperforming its peers in the Greenland School District and claimed that the success of the charter school reflected poorly on the district. In 2005, the charter high school had a 91 percent graduation rate with 81.5 percent of its students proficient in math, compared to only 53.6 percent proficient in the conventional high school.

Fast Facts

-  25 charter schools serving 6,750 students are operating in Arkansas.
-  Arkansas' charter school law is the 12th weakest out of the nation's 41 laws, receiving a "C" grade.
-  The charter movement has been growing rapidly in Arkansas, with seven new schools opening this year alone.
-  Arkansas' charter schools enroll a greater than average percentage of minority and economically disadvantaged students.

6. "2007 Test Scores," Arkansas Department of Education, arkansased.org/testing/test_scores.html.

7. "National Charter School Funding Database," www.edreform.com/charter%5Fschools/funding/, December 2008.



CALIFORNIA

Big results from the largest charter school market in the country

The state of California has a sophisticated and reliable tracking system for student achievement throughout all districts. Thanks to this system, it is possible to compare apples to apples and understand how well—or poorly—certain schools work to educate kids.

As with students at conventional public schools throughout California, charter school students are evaluated using the Standardized Testing and Report (STAR) system, which includes the California Standards Tests (CSTs), administered in grades two through eleven. Schools also are held accountable via the Academic Performance Index (API), which aggregates student test scores into a school-wide average to better analyze year-to-year progress. Schools can earn a low score of 200 or a high score of 1000, and California has set a goal for each school to earn a minimum of 800.

Fast Facts

 California's charter school law was passed in 1992, one of the nation's first, and has earned an "A" grade. It is currently the 5th strongest charter school law in the country.

 There are 802 charter schools operating in California serving over 316,468 students.

 California's charter schools tend to serve more low-socioeconomic students (SES) than conventional public schools.

Students at California's charter schools outpace their peers at conventional schools, especially in the middle school years. Statewide, the median API score for charter middle schools was 767 compared with 726 in conventional middle schools. In school districts like Los Angeles Unified, charter schools earned an overall median API of 711 compared with a median score of 697 for the conventional public schools.⁸

California charters are also demonstrating their ability to close the achievement gap between white and minority students. In elementary charter schools, African American students consistently outperformed their peers who attend conventional public schools. Statewide these charter school students had a median score of 678, while in the Los Angeles Unified District they scored 718, a 74-point disparity over their peers in conventional public elementary schools.⁹ In schools where at least 70 percent of the students qualify for free and reduced lunch, 12 of the top 15 public schools in California that serve primarily poor children are charters.

8. "Charter School Performance in Los Angeles," California Charter Schools Association, June 2008.

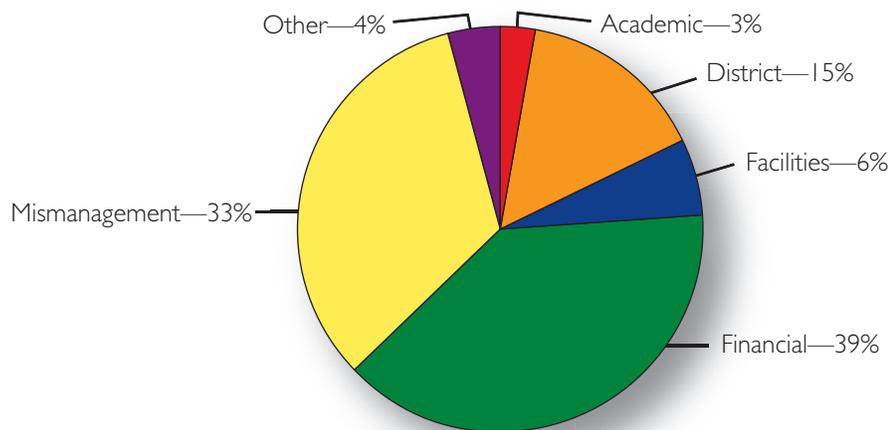
9. "Charter Schools in California: Demographic and Performance Data (2007)," California Charter Schools Association, www.myschool.org/Charter_Research/AM/ContentManagerNet/Default.aspx?Section=Charter_Research&Template=/TaggedPage/TaggedPageDisplay.cfm&TPLID=18&ContentID=4196.

In its early days, like those of Arizona, not all of the roads to California reform were paved with gold. Charters were often plagued by hostile local school districts, funding inequities, and some tales of mismanagement. In addition, prior to the passage of Senate Bill 740 in 2001 establishing the Charter School Facilities Grant Program, many schools struggled to secure facilities. But since that time, a focus on quality and quantity has helped to transform the largest charter school movement in the country.

Since 1992, of 972 charter schools approved to operate in The Golden State, 11 percent (103 schools) have been closed for failing to meet the basic expectations of their contract. Another category of schools—consolidations—are those that were opened by their school district but rolled back into the conventional public school structure, usually because they did not intend to provide the school real autonomy that would allow the charter to work.

The majority of California’s closed charters are a result of financial difficulties. Only three are due to poor academic performance. This data shows that California’s charter schools are being held accountable while offering a superior education to both urban and suburban children across the state.

California Charters Closed by Category (103 Schools)





COLORADO

The highest performing public schools in the state

Colorado has one of the nation's most rigorous accountability systems. On the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP), students attending charter schools are consistently outperforming their peers who attend conventional public schools in both math and reading. In grades three through eight, 73.3 percent of charter school students performed at or above proficient in reading, whereas 67 percent of conventional public school students performed at this level. In math, 63.8 percent of charter school students were at or above proficient on the CSAP, which topped the statewide average of 60 percent for grades three through eight in conventional public schools.¹⁰

In 2007, 74 percent of charters made federal accountability targets of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) while only 59 percent of conventional public schools did the same. Charter middle schools in Colorado are making the grade as well. In 2006, 55 percent of middle school charters were rated excellent or high by the state Department of Education, compared with 41 percent of conventional public middle schools.¹¹

Examples of this success can be found throughout the state. Four of the state's top five high schools are charter schools according to the recent School Accountability Report. In 2007, the

Cesar Chavez Academy in Denver was one of six schools honored by the U.S. Department of Education for its success in closing the achievement gap among Latino students. This achievement is especially impressive when one considers that Cesar Chavez Academy receives 40 percent less per-pupil funding than its conventional school counterparts.¹²

Colorado's charter law funds most charter schools at approximately 85 percent. This funding disparity appears to account for 60 percent of the state's ten closures. Three of the state's charter schools authorized by their local school district were closed for poor academic performance. Another closed when problems with securing a new facility became insurmountable. One school never opened. Four more conversion charter schools consolidated back to their local school districts.

Fast Facts

- ☺ Colorado is home to 151 charter schools serving 54,497 students.
- ☺ An additional 41,000 students are on waiting lists for charters. Demand is high!
- ☺ Colorado's charter school law is ranked the 9th strongest out of 41 in the nation, earning it a "B" rating.

10. "Colorado Charter School Data," Colorado Department of Education, www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/datamgmt.htm.

11. "Focus on the Facts," Colorado League of Charter Schools, www.coloradoleague.org/colorado-charter-schools/charter-schools-fact-sheet.php.

12. "Charter school merits imitation, not resentment," *Denver Post*, August 2007, www.denverpost.com/ci_6727643?source=rss.



CONNECTICUT

Closing the largest achievement gap in the country

In a state with the nation's largest achievement gap, African American students attending charter schools outperformed their peers statewide at conventional public schools.

The Connecticut Master Test (CMT) measures all students in their progress. The average black student at a charter middle school had a score of 229.9 on the 2007 test, which was 6.8 points higher than the average score for comparable students statewide. In reading, the average African American charter school student outperformed her peers statewide by 1.5 points. Among African American charter school students in grades six through eight, students in charters outperformed their peers a full ten percentage points more—68.4 to 58.3 percent.

Meeting Connecticut's high standards and being held accountable for student results is something in which the state's charter schools take pride. Recent studies have evaluated the following aspects of Connecticut charter schools' development: student progress, accomplishment of mission, organizational viability, financial status/governance, and efforts to reduce racial and economic isolation. Across these five objectives, over half of Connecticut's charter schools have met their measurable goals, and 80 percent have met the objectives of their mission statement.

Since Connecticut's charter school law was passed in 1996, five schools have been closed. One charter was closed for poor academic performance and one closed for mismanagement (see glossary). Sixty percent of the state's closed charters are categorized as financial. That is largely because charter school students in Connecticut are funded on average \$4,278 less than regular public school students.

Fast Facts

- ⊙ Connecticut's charter law is the 10th weakest in the nation, earning it a "C" grade.
- ⊙ Charter elementary schools provide their students with 18.2 percent more hours of instruction.³

13. "The State of Connecticut Public Education: a 2007 Report Card for Elementary and Middle Schools," ConnCan: the Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now, 2007, www.conncan.org/matriarch/MultiPiecePage.asp_Q_PageID_E_178_A_PageName_E_2007StateofConnecticut.



DELAWARE

Big things in the Small Wonder State

The small state of Delaware started early and strong in the charter reform effort, and since 1995, its charter schools continue to measure up against other public schools. But only a few comparisons of charter to conventional public school students make objective data about student achievement scarce. In a sample of 500 students in various grades, charter school students in grades six through eight scored as well as their peers in conventional public schools in reading, and beat the state average by five points in grade seven.

On the Delaware Student Testing Program (DSTP) math section, charter school sixth graders finished an average of eight points below their peers, but seventh and eighth graders finished an average of four points and six points higher, respectively.¹⁴

While a total of 34 schools have been approved to date, only 21 have come to be. The reasons why these schools never opened vary, but research indicates many struggled with obtaining facilities and points to holes in the processes in place to assist schools in becoming operational.¹⁵

Difficulty in securing adequate facilities played a role in the closing of the Georgetown Charter School in Laurel, DE. The Georgetown School closed when the state made expansion of grades for this school contingent upon securing a permanent facility. The school struggled to do so, and in 2002 the state closed its doors.

Fast Facts

- ✦ The law creating charter schools in Delaware is considered strong—ranked the 7th strongest of the nation’s 41 laws. However, recent challenges to charter schools in Delaware are cause for concern in this “A” law state.
- ✦ Delaware is home to 21 charter schools serving nearly 9,000 students throughout the state, including many minority and low-income students.

14. “Delaware Student Testing Program-Online Reports,” Delaware Department of Education, dstp.doe.k12.de.us/DSTPMart9/default.aspx.

15. “Charter School Disruption of Service in Delaware: Report and Recommendations,” University of Delaware, May 2005, dspace.udel.edu:8080/dspace/bitstream/19716/1291/1/charterservicedisruption.pdf.



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Charter schools prove to be a bright spot among public schools

The Nation's Capital and power center has attracted attention for its robust reform environment, which includes a record number of children in charter schools. Despite serving comparable students, these schools outperform regular neighborhood public schools by leaps and bounds.

An in depth investigation by *The Washington Post* in December 2008 found that DC middle school charter students scored 19 points higher than conventional public school students in reading and 20 points higher in math on national standardized tests. On the DC Comprehensive Assessment System (DC-CAS) test, the passing rate for charter middle schools was 13 percent higher than conventional schools. Data also showed that charter school students had higher attendance and graduation rates than other public schools in the city.¹⁶

In 2007, charter students taking the DC Comprehensive Assessment System (DC-CAS) in grades three through eight and grade ten also demonstrated progress among some of the nation's most disadvantaged children. For example, an average of 44.6 percent of charter school students were rated as proficient or above in reading, and an average of 41.5 percent of charter school students were rated as proficient or above in math. Those performances eclipsed the conventional public schools by a wide margin. In that same period of time, an average of 31 percent of conventional school students were rated as proficient or above in reading, while 25 percent of conventional school students received the same rating in math.

DC charter success has been steady over time. In 2005–06, an average of 40.7 percent of charter school students were rated as proficient or above in reading and an average of 32.9 percent were rated as proficient or above in math. Overall, this means that over the course of one year, reading proficiency rose by 3.9 percentage points, and math proficiency rose by 8.6 percentage points among charter school students.¹⁷

Charter school students also outperformed their district peers on the DC-CAS, especially among economically disadvantaged students, who make up about 80 percent of DC public school students. In

Fast Facts

 As of this report, there are 93 charter school campuses operating in the District, enrolling more than 25,000 students and representing almost 33 percent of the total public school student population.

 The District's law is the 2nd strongest in the nation, and has been given a rating of "A."

16. "Charter Schools Make Gains on Tests," *Washington Post*, December 15, 2008, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/story/2008/12/13/ST2008121302293.html.

17. "School Performance Reports," The DC Public Charter School Board, www.dcpubliccharter.com/publications/docs/SPR2007Book.pdf.

secondary schools where 76 percent or more of the students were classified as economically disadvantaged, 39 percent of charter school students were rated as proficient in reading and 40 percent were rated as proficient in math. District schools with similar characteristics scored less favorably with 17 percent of students rated as proficient in reading and 14 percent rated proficient in math.¹⁸

As of this report, 16 charter schools have closed in the District. One school never opened, and two more consolidated with other charter campuses. The majority of DC's closed charters resulted from operational or management issues (see glossary of terms). All of these schools fell under the oversight of the DC Board of Education (now defunct and all charters have been transferred to the DC Public Charter School Board). Another four schools were closed for poor academic performance. The final two schools closed were casualties of low enrollment resulting in financial challenges.

The District's charter school sector, now governed by the DC Public Charter School Board, has created the gold standard in charter school accountability.



**All smiles at DC's Friendship Public Charter School—
Chamberlain Campus**

18. "Analysis Shows that Public Charter Schools Greatly Outperform DCPS Schools," Friends of Choice in Urban Schools (FOCUS), November 6, 2007.



FLORIDA

Strong performances from the Sunshine State

Prior to the federal government mandating accountability measures under No Child Left Behind, Florida had in place the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). Results on that test were calibrated by the state into letter grades, with schools ranking anywhere from an A to an F. Until the AYP designation came along, these grades were the staple of all public school measurements, and the results for charters were promising. Each year, only a few failed to make a grade of A-C and those that did were immediately on notice. In 2007, 72 percent of charter schools in Florida received either an A or B grade. Not all schools receive grades due to some restrictions based on size or students served.

In 2006–07, 63.7 percent and 62.4 percent of Florida’s charter school students were reading and performing math, respectively, at grade level. One of the more impressive findings was that 85.6 percent of Florida’s charter students were writing at grade level.¹⁹

Not only are charter students in the Sunshine State performing at grade level, but students that were achieving at a lower proficiency level have made continual progress in core subjects. Among students that were struggling in reading 62.4 percent made at least one year’s progress, while 65.5 percent of students struggling in math also made at least one year’s progress.

From 2005 to 2007, a higher percentage of charter elementary and middle school students scored proficient or above in reading than conventional public school students. Elementary school students scored 2.5 percentage points higher and middle school students 4.4 percentage points higher than their public school counterparts. In mathematics, more charter students also scored proficient or above than conventional public school students, although the gap was smaller.²⁰

As of today, 82 charter schools have been closed in Florida. Roughly one-third were closed for involuntary financial reasons, another quarter by management deficiencies, and almost a third for academic failures.

Fast Facts

-  As of this report, there are 382 charter schools operating in the state of Florida, enrolling 108,382 students.
-  Florida’s charter law currently boasts an “A” grade and ranks the 6th strongest charter school law out of 41 in the nation.
-  According to a recent survey, a large percentage of charter school students in Florida are minority (58 percent) and at-risk (49 percent).

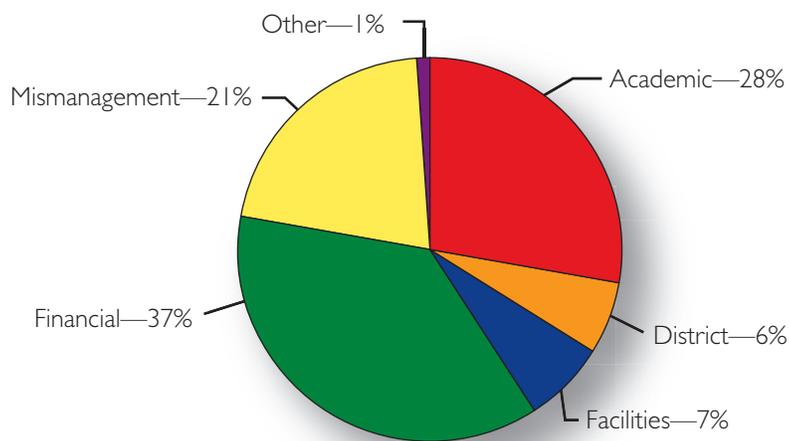
19. “Florida Charter Schools,” Florida Department of Education, www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/Charter%5FSchools/Directory/.

20. “Student Achievement in Florida’s Charter Schools: A Comparison with Traditional Public Schools,” Florida Department of Education, March 2008.

Obstacles in finding or funding an adequate facility are common in a state like Florida, where capital funding is scarce.

In 2006, the Florida legislature created an independent state-level entity to approve and oversee more high quality charters. However, on December 2, 2008, the Florida circuit court ruled that the Florida Schools of Excellence Commission (FSE) was unconstitutional and the state's leadership failed to appeal.

Florida Charters Closed by Category (82 Schools)





GEORGIA

Success in serving disadvantaged and minority students

Though Georgia charter schools educate students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, they have made great gains. In the 2007–08 school year, 75.9 percent of charter schools made AYP compared with 68.8 percent of public schools statewide, though both sectors experienced a slight decline due to more rigorous testing. Charters continue to display higher levels of achievement, however.²¹ According to state test data, students in the Peach State’s public charter schools outperformed their peers in conventional public schools in grades three through eight on the math and reading tests. In a measure of math and reading proficiency, 61 percent of charter schools outperformed the comparable district average, while 64 percent of charter schools actually outperformed the surrounding two conventional public schools from which they drew their students.²² Charters also boasted a graduation rate of 89.9 percent in 2007 while their conventional public school counterparts only graduated 72.3 percent of students.

Filling a huge niche for students, 56 percent of Georgia charter school students qualify for the federal free or reduced price lunch program, whereas only 50 percent of those in conventional public schools are eligible. Minorities make up 61 percent of charter school students in Georgia.

Since Georgia’s charter school law passed in 1993, only five schools have closed. None of these closures were a result of poor academic performance. Early on in Georgia’s charter school history, many local school districts chose to convert their schools to charters. Eighteen of these conversions ended up becoming conventional public schools again between 1998 and early 2000. Some schools struggled with hostile districts. For example, the Achieve Academy was forced to close its doors in 2007 when Atlanta Public Schools failed to adequately fund the school, providing approximately half of what the law intended. Such inequities may be resolved when the new Georgia Charter Schools Commission is fully operational.

Fast Facts

- ☺ There are 83 public charter schools in Georgia serving close to 41,000 students.
- ☺ Seventeen new schools opened this year, for the largest increase in charter schools since the Georgia law was passed in 1993.
- ☺ Currently the state’s law is graded a “B” and ranked 18th strongest in the country.

21. “Georgia’s Charter Schools Continue to Lead the Way in Achieving AYP,” Georgia Charter Schools Association, July 30, 2008.

22. “Charter Schools: 2006–2007 Annual Report,” Georgia Department of Education, www.doe.k12.ga.us/pea_charter.aspx.



HAWAII

Growing in numbers and achievement

Aloha State students perform at levels equal to or above the proficiency objective indicated by the state in both reading and math, according to measures on the Hawaii Content and Performance Standards, administered in grades three, five, eight, and ten. Many of Hawaii's charter schools infuse a strong academic curriculum with cultural lessons and native Hawaiian traditions.

Hawaii has not closed any charter schools. It is estimated that the average per pupil expenditure is \$14,799 in conventional public schools, compared to only \$8,000 for charter school students.²³ Yet despite one of the highest per pupil allotments in the nation, Hawaii's conventional public school students rank only 46th out of the 50 states and the District of Columbia in terms of student achievement.



Award-winning Kihei Charter School in Maui is a model of innovation

Fast Facts

- ☉ Hawaii is home to 32 charter schools serving a total of 7,300 students.
- ☉ Three new charter schools opened in Hawaii this year.
- ☉ Hawaii's charter school law was passed in 1994 and is ranked the 7th weakest of the nation's 41 charter school laws earning only a "D" grade.

23. "National Charter School Funding Database," www.edreform.com/charter%5Fschools/funding/, December 2008.



IDAHO

Shining performances in the Gem State

Charter school students are held to the same accountability standards as all public school students in Idaho; they are evaluated using both the Idaho Reading Indicator and the Idaho Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT).

According to testing data from the 2006–07 school year, charter schools are faring well in comparison to their conventional public school counterparts. Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) goals set by the Idaho Department of Education were met by 50 percent of charter schools, with some schools posting significant gains above the 78 percent benchmark for proficiency.

Two exemplary charters stand out. The Coeur d’Alene Charter Academy recently was named a 2008 Top 100 high school in the country by *U.S. News and World Report*. At the Meridian Medical Arts Charter School, over 90 percent of students demonstrated proficiency in both reading and math.

Overall, 81 percent of conventional public school students scored in the proficient or advanced categories on the ISAT for reading, 77 percent did so in math, and 64 percent scored proficient or above in language arts. Charter schools outperformed conventional schools on all three tests. Eighty-seven percent of charter students demonstrated proficiency in reading, 81 percent of charter students achieved this level in math, and 74 percent were proficient in language arts.²⁴

Idaho does not provide facilities assistance to its charter schools and the schools receive on average \$6,703 per pupil compared to \$7,257 per pupil in conventional public schools.²⁵ Additionally, Idaho’s charter schools operate with very little autonomy. As a result, over the past ten years, one school never opened and one school closed when facilities costs led to financial difficulties.

Fast Facts

- ✦ There are 32 charter schools operating in the state of Idaho, serving nearly 10,500 students statewide.
- ✦ With a cap of only six new schools per year and only one per school district, Idaho’s charter school growth has been slow since its law was passed in 1998.
- ✦ Idaho’s charter school law is graded a “C” and is the 14th weakest out of the nation’s 41 laws.

24. “Idaho Charter School Student Achievement 2006–2007,” Idaho Department of Education, www.sde.idaho.gov/site/charter_schools/docs/IdahoCharterSchoolStudentAchievement_2006-2007.pdf.

25. “National Charter School Funding Database,” www.edreform.com/charter%5Fschools/funding/, December 2008.



ILLINOIS

Blowing away the competition in the Windy City

Achievement in both conventional public schools and charter schools is measured with two state examinations: the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) and the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE), which determine proficiency in math and reading.

When comparing students in inner-city charters to those still attending low-performing conventional schools in the same neighborhoods, charter schools shine. In 2007, charter school students in Chicago scored significantly higher than their peers in conventional public schools; in fact, an average of seven percent more students demonstrated proficiency in math and reading in grades three through seven.²⁶

African American, Hispanic, and Asian students make up 45.1 percent of students in charter schools statewide, but in inner-city charter schools in Chicago, that number reaches close to 100 percent.

A recent report by Chicago Public Schools found that 36 out of the 41 charter schools reporting had a higher percentage of students meeting or exceeding state accountability standards than their conventional public school peers. Elementary charter schools in the Windy City are narrowing the achievement gap, with 60 percent or more of students in each minority subgroup meeting or exceeding state standards.²⁷

Also in the 2006–07 school year, only 42 percent of Chicago Public Schools met the national performance standard, compared to 64 percent of Chicago’s charter schools. The RAND Corporation analyzed Chicago charter schools and found that attending a charter high school had positive effects on students and increased the chances of a student graduating and attending college by as much as 11 percentage points.²⁸

In 2007, charter school students in Chicago scored significantly higher than their peers in conventional public schools; in fact, an average of seven percent more students demonstrated proficiency in math and reading in grades three through seven.

26. “Illinois Charter School Annual Report: January 2008,” Illinois State Department of Education, www.isbe.net/charter/pdf/charter_annual_08.pdf.

27. “2006–2007 Charter Schools Performance Report,” Chicago Public Schools, January 2009, www.ren2010.cps.k12.il.us/docs/2006-2007_Performance_Report.pdf.

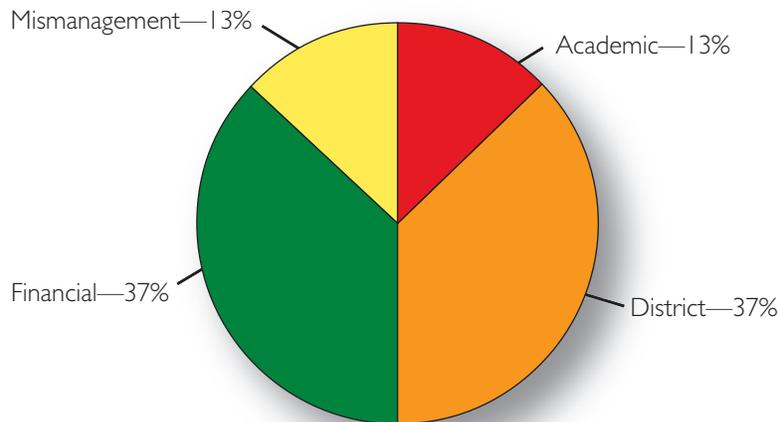
28. “Achievement and Attainment in Chicago Charter Schools,” RAND Corporation, May 2008, www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/2008/RAND_TR585.pdf.

Fast Facts

- ☀ As of this report there were 74 charter schools serving 27,700 students in Illinois, with a large percentage of the schools located in the greater Chicago area.
- ☀ With a “C” grade, the state’s charter school law is ranked 25th out of 41 laws in the nation.

Illinois’ charter school movement is not only a model for improving educational outcomes for students most in need but also provides a critical lesson in accountability. Since the state’s charter school law was passed in 1996, a total of eight schools have been closed. The charter schools office of the Chicago Public Schools was quick to revoke the charter of one school when signs of mismanagement were evident. Many had financial difficulties stemming from low enrollment, which led to financial instability.²⁹ Perhaps their programs were not in demand, but whatever the reason, Chicago has helped demonstrate that it’s not right for any school to subject students to financial or academic challenges that cannot be remedied in short order.

Illinois Charters Closed by Category (8 Schools)



29. “National Charter School Funding Database,” www.edreform.com/charter%5Fschools/funding/, December 2008.



INDIANA

*Doing more to raise student achievement
with fewer resources*



**Grammar lesson at
Gary's 21st Century
Charter School**

Indiana assesses all students in grades three through ten using the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress-Plus (ISTEP+). Students at both charter public schools and conventional public schools must demonstrate proficiency in reading, writing, and math skills in order to pass this test.

Indianapolis is home to the largest market of charters in the Hoosier State. When comparing the academic achievement of students in Indianapolis' charter schools to those in conventional district schools, charter students outperformed their peers in English language skills. Fifty-three and a third percent of charter school students scored proficient or above on the English portion of the ISTEP+ compared with 50.9

percent of conventional public school students.³⁰ Charter school students are also making gains in other areas of academic achievement. Eighty-six percent of the charter schools authorized by the Mayor of Indianapolis have had consistent annual gains on the ISTEP+ test in all subjects.³¹

Though Indiana charter schools receive less funding than their local counterparts, their students are producing similar if not more impressive results than students attending non-charter public schools. In fact, 54 percent of students at both charter schools and conventional public schools in Indianapolis scored proficient or above in math.

Indiana's charter school law allows local school boards, public universities and the mayor of Indianapolis to create and oversee charter schools.

Only two charter schools have closed in Indiana for deficiencies. Both closed charters were a result of operational deficiencies and both the mayor's office in Indianapolis and Ball State University acted quickly to hold these schools accountable.

Fast Facts

There are 50 charter schools operating in Indiana. These schools, many of which are centered in and around the cities of Indianapolis and Gary, serve over 12,500 students from a variety of ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

The state's law was passed in 2001 and has earned an "A" as the 8th strongest charter law in the country.

30. "School Data," Indiana Department of Education, www.doe.state.in.us/asap/data.html.

31. "2007 Accountability Report on Mayor-Sponsored Charter Schools," October 19, 2007, www.indygov.org/NR/exeres/AFC7BC5A-59E2-4B3F-A1C1-D2E793756FBD.htm.



IOWA

Weak charter law is hampering growth in state

Iowa's weak law places all authority for starting and managing schools with school boards which appear not to track progress clearly and objectively. Not only are most charters in this state mostly extensions of traditional school districts, thus blurring the distinction between them and their host districts, but the data, while promising, is anecdotal at best.

In 2006, the percentage of students at Northeast Iowa Charter High School who scored proficient on the statewide testing program in grade 11 on reading increased by 13 percentage points to 96 percent, and increased 16 percentage points in math, to 92 percent, from the previous year. Elma Elementary Charter School also has shown growth on all tested subjects in grades three to six, with some students in the sixth grade performing math and science at an eighth grade level.³²

Given the law's limited scope and the fact that school districts "own and operate" charters as part of their own district, no charter schools have closed.

Fast Facts

- ☺ Iowa is home to ten charter schools that serve approximately 1,400 students.
- ☺ The state's law is almost dead last at number 40 out of 41 laws, earning it one of only two "F's" in the nation.

32. "Charter Schools in Iowa: Progress Update 2006-07," Iowa Department of Education, December 28, 2007, www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=5371.



KANSAS

Achievement data masked by a weak law

Kansas is a lot like Iowa in the scope of its law. Eighty percent of charter schools in Kansas are alternative programs or credit recovery programs started by school boards for students who dropped out of high school, and the low-income student population is almost double the state average for high schools (45 percent to 26 percent). Looking at the minimal data provided by the Kansas Department of Education, elementary and middle school charter students are performing the same as or slightly better than their peers in traditional public schools.³³

Kansas' charter school law was passed in 1996, initially only allowing for conventional public school conversions. The local school boards used the ability to convert their schools to charters as an excuse to receive more federal funds designated for charter schools. As of this report, 17 of these conversions have consolidated back to conventional public schools.

Ten charter schools have closed in Kansas, but it appears a majority are the result of simple school board politics. From funding shortfalls to poor oversight and the imposition of bureaucratic hurdles, these charters were not given the support they needed to survive by their sponsor.

In the absence of multiple authorizers and autonomy from the local school districts, the data strongly suggests that accountability in Kansas is compromised without objective oversight.

Fast Facts

- Ⓢ Kansas has a very weak charter law, meriting a low “D” grade.
- Ⓢ Kansas has 40 charter schools operating, serving nearly 3,400 students across the state.
- Ⓢ The Sunflower State has a growing virtual charter school community.

33. “Kansas Charter School Annual Report,” Kansas Department of Education, December 2005, [www3.ksde.org/presentations/Board Charter Schools Dec 05final.ppt](http://www3.ksde.org/presentations/Board%20Charter%20Schools%20Dec%2005final.ppt).



LOUISIANA

Charter schools demonstrate their ability to increase students' scores over time

Despite a hurricane and enormously poor communities, the Bayou State has shown how charters can help beat the odds. All Louisiana students are tested in grades four and eight using the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP), a criterion-referenced test. Students in grades ten and eleven are also required to take an exit exam, known as the GEE (Graduate Exit Exam).

LEAP scores correspond to one of five achievement ratings: Advanced, Mastery, Basic, Approaching Basic, and Unsatisfactory. In 2007, 76 percent of charter school students in grade four scored at the Basic level or above in math, whereas only 64 percent of students statewide achieved this level of proficiency. From 2004 to 2007, charter school students have improved steadily on their English Language Arts proficiency. In 2004, 59 percent of students scored at the Basic level or above, while that number jumped to 74 percent in 2007.

Testing of eighth grade students in English Language Arts yielded 73 percent scoring at the Basic level or above, whereas only 57 percent of students statewide performed at this level. Likewise, 70 percent of charter school students scored at the Basic level or above in math, compared with 55 percent of students in conventional public schools. Charter school improvement over time is apparent, especially in English. In 2004, 58 percent of charter school students demonstrated Basic, Mastery, or Advanced skills in English; this number has since grown to a remarkable 73 percent.³⁴

In a ranking of New Orleans' schools of the percentage of students scoring at Basic or above in English and math by the *Times Picayune*, 17 of the top 20 schools are charters. Six of the top ten performers on the GEE were charters.³⁵

The accountability data for charter schools in Louisiana is an anomaly since the state's charter school movement was essentially reborn after Hurricane

Fast Facts

- ✦ In the most recent ranking of the nation's 41 charter school laws, Louisiana is ranked the 19th weakest law.
- ✦ Louisiana's 66 charter schools serve a total of 23,600 students statewide, many of whom come from low-income families that are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch programs.
- ✦ New Orleans has the highest percentage of public students enrolled in charter schools, which is close to 60 percent.

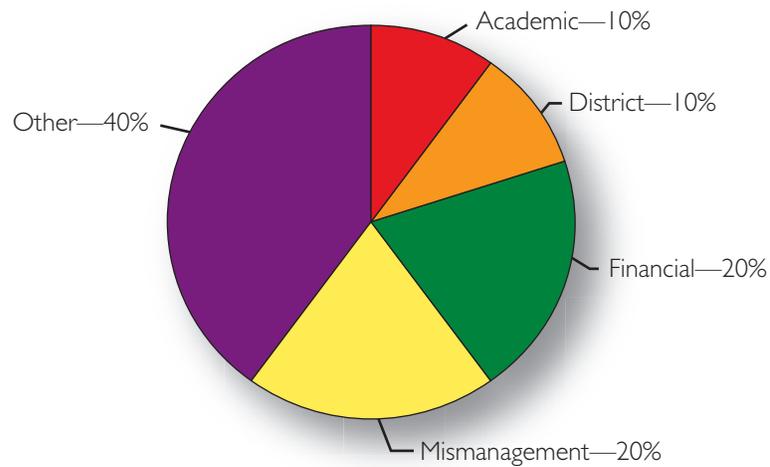
34. "Standards, Assessment and Accountability," Louisiana Department of Education, www.doe.state.la.us/lde/saa/759.html.

35. "Orleans charters score better on LEAP than traditional schools," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, blog.nola.com/times-picayune/2007/07/orleans_charters_score_better.html.

Katrina. Since the state's law was passed in 1995, ten charter schools have closed. One school was closed for poor academic performance, two for financial difficulties, and two more were closed because of operational or management deficiencies.

An additional three of those simply reopened in other locations after the storm. A KIPP academy relocated to Houston, TX, to serve the large portion of New Orleanians displaced immediately after the storm and has remained operational in the Lone Star State as NOW (New Orleans West) College Prep KIPP Academy.

Louisiana Charters Closed by Category (10 Schools)





MARYLAND

Turn-around for low-performing students

The majority of Maryland's charter schools are in Baltimore, where reform-minded parents and educators have successfully organized top-notch schools. There is evidence of improved math and reading proficiency in the Old Line State, especially in the middle school years. In sixth grade, charter schools outperformed their conventional school peers by 6.4 percentage points in reading and 20.6 percentage points in math. Charter school students in seventh and eighth grades fared just as well, outperforming their conventional public school peers by an impressive 10 to 18 percentage points in reading and math.

Charter schools are also making significant progress in combating the achievement gap. Overall, 57.7 percent of African American charter school students scored at or above proficient in math, whereas only 37.7 percent of white students from conventional public schools performed at this level.³⁶

Two charter schools have closed in Maryland but neither was due to poor academic achievement. The reason for both is owing to district politics. (see glossary). The KIPP Harbor Academy was forced to close its doors when the Anne Arundel County School Board refused to lease space to the charter at a district middle school. The Potomac Charter School in Prince George's County suffered from low enrollment when tensions with the district became too burdensome to remain operationally stable. In the absence of objective authorizers, true accountability in Maryland is compromised.

Fast Facts

-  Maryland's charter school law has earned a "C" grade is ranked 32nd out of 41 laws in the country.
-  As of December 2008, there were 34 public charter schools serving 7,300 students in the state of Maryland.
-  An overwhelming number of Maryland charter schools are located in Baltimore.

36. "2008 Maryland School Report Card," Maryland Department of Education, www.mdreportcard.org/rcounty.aspx?WDATA=School.



MASSACHUSETTS

Outperforming district public schools by enormous percentages

Massachusetts' charter school students outperform their neighborhood counterparts in conventional public schools by almost every measure. The state's test, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), is one of the nation's most rigorous. It is administered in fourth, eighth, and tenth grades.

In charter schools concentrated in Boston and Cambridge, 55 percent of eighth grade charter school students scored proficient or advanced in math while only 29 percent of conventional public school students did so. Likewise, an impressive 83 percent of eighth grade charter school students attained proficient or advanced standing in English while a mere 61 percent of their conventional school peers achieved at this level.

Worcester's charters are another example of great progress. In fourth grade, 40.5 percent of charter students tested at proficient or advanced levels versus 33 percent of conventional public school students. Eighth grade charter students outperformed their peers in conventional public schools by 8 percent in math and a staggering 22 percent in English.³⁷

Charter schools in Boston raise student achievement annually at a rate higher than all district public schools according to a recent report by the Boston Foundation. In fact, pilot school students lose ground relative to conventional public school students during middle school years. Charters outperformed pilot schools by as much as 50 percentage points on the MCAS according to a CER analysis. On the eighth grade math exam, 61 percent of charter school students were rated at proficient or above. Only 16 percent of Boston's conventional schools and 11 percent of pilot schools reached that standard. On the tenth grade English Language Arts exam, 71 percent of charter schools students were rated at proficient or above. Only 32 percent of Boston's conventional schools and 53 percent of pilot schools achieved that.³⁸ Many charter schools in Boston, such as the MATCH School and Roxbury Prep, are known throughout the country as some of the strongest public schools in the nation.

In its 15-year charter school history, the Bay State has witnessed the closing of only six charter schools and only one approved charter never opened. Three charter schools have closed due to academic deficiencies, accounting for half of the state's closures.

37. "Directory Profiles," Massachusetts Department of Education, profiles.doe.mass.edu/.

38. "Boston Charter Schools: Champions of School Achievement," The Center for Education Reform, March 2008, www.edreform.com/research/CER_BostonCharterStudy-mar08.pdf.

Fast Facts

- ♥ Charter school law has a "B" grade.
- ♥ Sixty-four charter schools are currently operating with 24,000 students statewide.
- ♥ More than 20,000 families are on waiting lists.



MICHIGAN

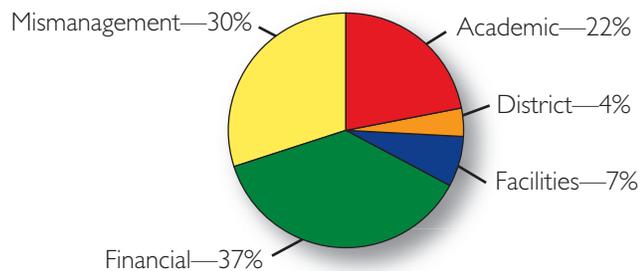
Schools of choice show increasing progress in educating minority and low-income students

Michigan charter achievement is noteworthy. Students in charters, called public school academies, are evaluated in grades three through eight using the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP). Overall, charter schools showed slightly higher proficiency rates than the 17 urban host districts from which they enrolled students. Charter students in grades three through eight were 4.5 percent more proficient than students in the host district schools on the English Language test. Host districts are mostly urban school districts that have three or more charter schools. In math, 52 percent of African American students at charters scored proficient or advanced, while only 47.3 percent of non-charter students from the host districts achieved at this level.

In the 2006–07 school year, 72 percent of Michigan’s charter schools made federal targets (AYP), compared with 69 percent of conventional schools in the same host districts.³⁹ Central Michigan University is the state’s largest charter school authorizer with 58 charter schools, or 25 percent of the state’s charters. One hundred percent of their elementary and middle schools made AYP in 2006–07, and 86 percent of their high schools also achieved this benchmark. This is compared to 83 percent of high schools statewide and 69 percent of host districts.⁴⁰

Over the past 13 years, 27 charter schools have closed across Michigan. More than one-third suffered financial difficulties due to low enrollment. Another third were closed for operational deficiencies and the remainder for academic failure. Multiple authorizers are the key to ensuring swift accountability when circumstances warrant.

Michigan Charters Closed by Category (27 Schools)



Fast Facts

- ☺ Michigan’s charter school law was passed in 1995 and is considered the 3rd strongest law.
- ☺ Michigan is home to 250 charter schools that serve over 94,000 students.

39. “2007 Public School Academy Report to Legislature,” Michigan Department of Education, www.michigan.gov/mde.
40. “Proving the Promise 2008,” The Center for Charter Schools at Central Michigan University, www.cmucso.org/modules.php?name=Documents&op=list&&id=351.



MINNESOTA

Charter schools in major cities show progress in closing the achievement gap

Minnesota charter schools serve a disproportionate number of low-income and disabled students when compared with district public schools. For this reason, data for charter school achievement on standardized testing can appear artificially imbalanced toward conventional public schools. Looking at statewide Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) data, more conventional public schools made AYP than charter schools. However, in major cities, a larger percentage of charters made AYP than conventional public schools.⁴¹

In Duluth, for example, fourth grade students attending charter schools outperformed their peers at conventional public schools by nearly 13 percentage points. In fact, 71.4 percent of charter school fourth graders in Duluth scored at proficient or advanced levels while only 58 percent of conventional public school students did. This was also the case in Minneapolis, where 13 percent more eighth grade charter students scored proficient or advanced in math as compared with their public school peers.⁴²

Fast Facts

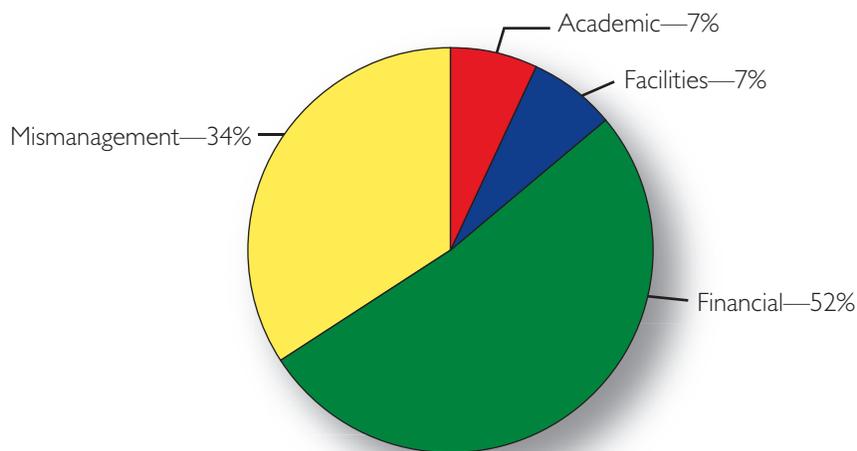
- ① Minnesota's charter school achievement is a direct result of its "A" charter school law, currently ranked the nation's strongest out of the 41 laws. The law allows for multiple authorizers, an unlimited number of schools, and freedom from burdensome red tape.
- ① As of this report there are 159 charter schools operating in Minnesota serving a total of 28,400 students. Of these schools, 45 percent are in the Twin Cities Metropolitan area, which includes St. Paul and Minneapolis.
- ① The North Star State passed its charter school law in 1991 and is home to the nation's first charter school.

41. "Evaluation Report: Charter Schools," State of Minnesota, June 2008, www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/ped/pedrep/charterschools.pdf.

42. "Minnesota Department of Education Accountability Data," Minnesota Department of Education, education.state.mn.us/MDE/Data/Data_Downloads/Accountability_Data/Assessment_MCA_II/MCA_II_Excel_files/index.html.

Twenty-nine charter schools have closed in Minnesota’s 17-year charter history. The majority closed for financial or management reasons (see glossary). Only two schools have closed for academic deficiencies. Schools typically show signs of financial or operational distress before academic problems surface. Strong authorizers identify these problems early on and intervene to either help the school remain operationally viable or make the tough decision to close the school. Most of Minnesota’s authorizers have demonstrated strong oversight of charter schools—allowing for success among traditionally hard to reach students.

Minnesota Charters Closed by Category (29 Schools)





MISSISSIPPI

Charter law in name only

This state's law, passed in 1997, is no more than an enabling law for public school boards to access additional funds. There is a public, separate record on the achievement for the lone charter school in Mississippi. That school, Hayes Cooper Center was created in 1997 by a school board as an alternative to serve 367 students in Pre-K-6th grade but is operated by the district, not a separate governing board.

States like Mississippi, such as Iowa and Virginia, vest all authority for opening and operating charters with school boards which ensure no distinctions in governance or operational components.

Fast Facts

- ✦ Mississippi's charter school law has earned an "F" grade as the nation's weakest out of 40 states and the District of Columbia.
- ✦ Only existing public schools may convert to charter schools with a majority of the faculty and parents demonstrating support.
- ✦ The number of charter schools that may operate in the Magnolia State is capped at only 15.



MISSOURI

Charters are top performers in the Show Me State

Missouri’s robust charter attendance puts its biggest cities in the top tier for highest market share of charter students in the country. Approximately 23 percent of all public school students in Kansas City and 20 percent of students in St. Louis attend a charter school. Thanks to data from the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) test, which measures the proficiency of students in English and mathematics in various grades, it is clear that charter schools are performing better than the majority of schools in their host districts. On the fifth grade English (communications arts) test, four of the six top public schools in Kansas City were charter schools, including the top performer. On the seventh grade math test and the eighth grade English test, five of the top seven performing public schools in Kansas City were charters. In St. Louis, the top performing school in sixth grade math was a charter school.⁴³



Students at Kansas City’s Scuola Vita Nuova Charter School

Charter schools have begun to demonstrate success in closing the achievement gap. In Kansas City, African Americans graduate at a rate of 77 percent, while white students graduate at a rate of 87 percent. In St. Louis, African American students graduate at an abysmal rate of only 58 percent. But the largely minority Don Bosco Education Center and Hogan Preparatory Academy have African American graduation rates of 86 and 98 percent, respectively.⁴⁴

Fast Facts

- ☀ There are 39 charter schools operating in Missouri, serving over 13,000 students, the majority of who are at-risk or minorities.
- ☀ Missouri’s charter law was passed in 1998 and is currently ranked the nation’s 10th strongest out of 41 laws in the country, receiving a “B” grade.
- ☀ Under the Missouri law, charters may operate only within the Kansas City and St. Louis school districts.

43. “Charter FAQ 2007,” Missouri Charter Public School Association, www.mocharterschools.org/MO_Charter_Schools/Charter_FAQ.aspx.

44. “Charter Schools Help Minority Students Catch Up,” Show-Me Institute, September 21, 2006, showmeinstitute.org/publication/id.15/pub_detail.asp.



NEVADA

Some bright lights in the desert

The majority of Nevada’s charter schools are located in Las Vegas or Reno and generally serve at-risk student populations. Despite serving those less-advantaged, more charter schools in Nevada made accountability targets in 2007–2008 than conventional public schools, with 74 percent compared to 62 percent making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

Statewide data are scarce, but there is good news from among a few charter schools that

have made substantial progress with the most difficult to reach students in Nevada. The André Agassi College Preparatory Academy in Las Vegas, for example, was named a National Model Charter School by the U.S. Department of Education and in 2005 was the only public school in Clark County to receive an “Exemplary” ranking by No Child Left Behind.⁴⁵ In addition, The Coral Academy of Science elementary school has received the “High Achievement Designation” from the Nevada Department of Education three years in a row.

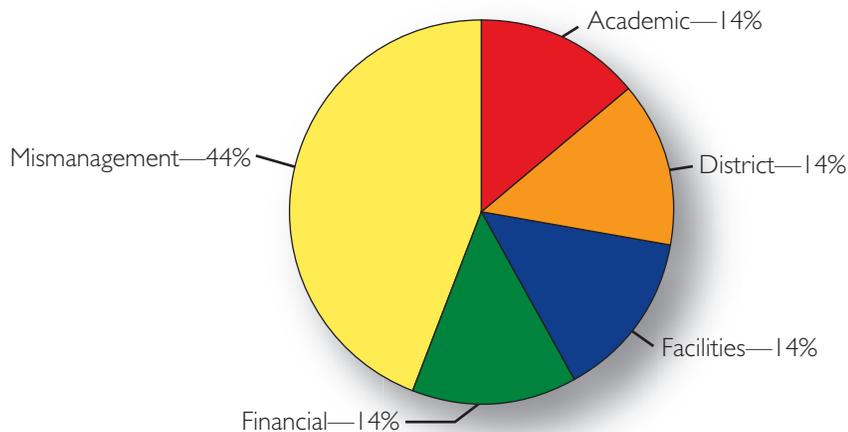
To date only 33 charter schools have been approved and seven schools have closed over the state’s 11-year charter school history.

Fast Facts

📌 Nevada’s charter school law was passed in 1997 and the Sagebrush State is currently home to 26 charter schools serving 7,300 students.

📌 The Nevada charter law has earned a “B” and is ranked 22nd out of the nation’s 41 charter school laws.

Nevada Charters Closed by Category (7 Schools)



45. “Agassi Prep Offers Kids of Las Vegas a Reason to Learn,” *USA Today*, August 25, 2006, www.usatoday.com/sports/tennis/2006-08-25-agassi-prep_x.htm?loc=interstitialskip.



NEW HAMPSHIRE

Solid results in the Granite State

A required assessment of the charter school program in the Granite State was conducted in 2007, and revealed that the state's lack of support for the program has undermined its ability to accurately evaluate and fund progress.⁴⁶ "The loss of federal funding which would have allowed the Department of Education to develop systems and procedures to regulate charter schools now hampers the building capacity... Because the charter school accountability process is not fully implemented, accountability for raising student achievement...continues to be [an] elusive goal..."

There are exceptions, however, that show charter students performing at remarkable levels. Charter school students are evaluated, as are all other public school students in New Hampshire, using the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) in grades three through eight, with a final round of assessment completed in grade ten.

Seacoast Charter School students scored above the state average on all areas of the NECAP. In the 2006-07 school year, 90 percent of Seacoast's students in grades three through seven performed at levels designated proficient or proficient with distinction in reading, and 79 percent achieved this level of success in math.

Reading scores from the tenth grade assessment show that students at Great Bay eLearning Charter School and Cocheco Arts and Technology Charter Academy outperformed students at the district schools from which their students are drawn.⁴⁷

New Hampshire's law allows districts to set funding levels. As a result, charter schools are funded at only 37 percent of the funding of their public school counterparts.⁴⁸

Due to these funding shortfalls, two charter schools in New Hampshire have closed and one school never got off the ground. The Franklin Career Academy could not keep its doors open on the state's funding without additional outside funds and closed when federal start-up funds dried up in 2005. The school reopened in 2006, but the 2008 legislation providing for more funding for charters came a bit too late to save this school from closing for good.

Fast Facts

- ☺ As of 2008, a small but successful group of 11 charters are operating, serving approximately 1,200 students.
- ☺ While the Granite State passed its law in 1995, the first school did not open until 2003.
- ☺ New Hampshire's charter law is ranked 28th out of 41 laws in the country and has earned a "C."

46. "State of New Hampshire Charter School Program Review 2007," New Hampshire Department of Education.

47. Ibid.

48. "National Charter School Funding Database," www.edreform.com/charter%5Fschools/funding/, December 2008.



NEW JERSEY

*Charters make the grass a little greener
in the Garden State*

In 1997, a Supreme Court ruling found that cities with the lowest socio-economic status in New Jersey were failing to provide equal and adequate education. These 31 Abbott school districts (cities like Paterson, Newark, etc) were mandated to receive additional funding for programs to improve student achievement, but it wasn't until charter schools arrived in the state that real success in the Abbotts became apparent. While not all charters are limited to these urban centers, an objective picture of charter versus conventional public school achievement in the Abbotts demonstrates the success of local charters.

All New Jersey public school students are assessed using the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) in the third through seventh grades, while eighth graders complete the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA). An average of 4.5 percent more charter school students in grades three through seven scored proficient or advanced in Language Arts as compared with students in conventional Abbott schools. In math, 4.5 percent more eighth

graders from charter schools demonstrated proficiency. These findings support the notion that charter schools, which target underperforming minority students, produce better results than those regular public schools serving similar populations.⁴⁹

Fast Facts

⌚ The Garden State's law, passed in 1996, is considered the 20th strongest out of 41 in the nation and is graded "B."

⌚ Sixty-four charter schools operate in New Jersey, serving a total of 18,000 students. Of these schools, about 58 percent are concentrated around New Jersey's four largest cities: Newark, Jersey City, Trenton, and Camden.

Charters in Newark and Camden made federal accountability targets at a much higher rate than conventional public schools. In Newark, 75 percent of charters made AYP compared to only 40 percent of conventional district schools, and in Camden, 66 percent of charter schools made AYP, compared with only 18 percent of conventional public schools. In Newark, every charter school outperformed the district on the state test and five of the top 12 schools on the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment were charter schools, with one charter, the Robert Treat Academy, ranked number one overall.⁵⁰

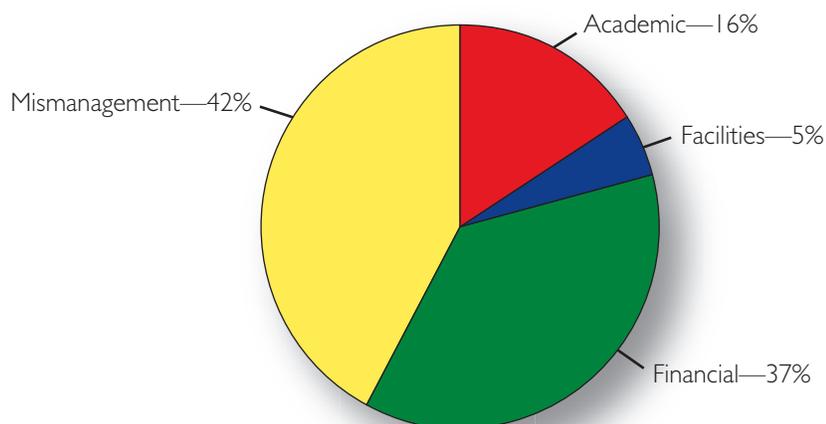
The New Jersey charter law allows for an unlimited number of charter schools. To date, 19 charter schools have closed their doors.

49. "2007 New Jersey Statewide Assessment Reports," New Jersey Department of Education, www.nj.gov/education/schools/achievement/2008/.

50. "New Jersey's Charter Public Schools: Quality Schools of Choice," New Jersey Charter Public Schools Association, August 2008, www.njcharters.org/docs/r_qualityschoolschoice_20080718.pdf.

Most of New Jersey's closed charter schools suffered from either being under-funded or managed poorly. Three schools were closed for poor academic performance and one school closed when it lost its building lease. Such struggles stem from problems in New Jersey's charter law. While the law states charter schools should be funded at 90 percent, charters receive on average only 70 percent of the actual per pupil allotment. Even with changes to the state's school funding formula this past year, some charter schools will still receive as little as 58 percent of their districts' per-pupil funding level.⁵¹

New Jersey Charters Closed by Category (19 Schools)



51. "Position on the School Funding Reform Act of 2008: Funding is *Not* Following the Child to Their Charter School," New Jersey Charter Public Schools Association, November 3, 2008, www.njcharters.org/docs/pp_20081103.pdf.



NEW MEXICO

*Charters outperforming district schools
in the Land of Enchantment*

New Mexico evaluates both student and school performance using a Standards Based Assessment (SBA) administered to all students in grades three through nine in Language Arts, math, and science. These standards help to determine which of New Mexico's charter schools will have their charters renewed in upcoming years.

Fast Facts

- ✦ In 1993, the New Mexico legislature passed a charter school law that is ranked the 13th strongest law out of 41 in the nation meriting a “B” grade.”
- ✦ To date, there are 70 charter schools operating in New Mexico serving over 11,000 students.
- ✦ Fifty-three percent of all charters are located in Albuquerque, the state's capital.

An analysis by the University of New Mexico found that charter schools in the state tend to have higher rates of proficiency than conventional public schools. Compared with schools in the same district, charters have higher rates of proficiency in reading in grades four through nine by as much as 10 percentage points. In math, charters do better in grades four through seven, and in fourth grade, charter students score 19 percentage points higher. For schools that serve large poor, at-risk, and minority students, once again charter schools outperform district schools in nearly all grade levels on both reading and math.⁵²

In the 2005–06 school year, 56 percent of charter schools made their federal accountability targets (AYP), an increase of seven percentage points in one year. But, only 45 percent of conventional public schools made these targets, and in some school districts, charters were the only schools to make AYP.⁵³

Previously, charter schools could only be approved by local school boards and would appeal to the state if they were denied. In 2006, however, the legislature created the Public Education Commission, a state-level independent authorizer. As of June 2008, four schools have been approved by this new body, which is expected to have a positive impact on accountability.

As of this report, three charters, under the watch of their local school districts, have been closed.

52. “Student Achievement in New Mexico Charter Schools,” University of New Mexico, https://nmccs.org/images/stories/Charter_Schools/Data_and_Achievement/Student_Achievement_Study.pdf.

53. “Summary of 2006 Charter School Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP),” New Mexico Coalition for Charter Schools, August 8, 2006.



NEW YORK

Models of success and accountability in the Empire State

Approximately 40 percent of the state’s charters are sponsored by the State University of New York (SUNY) Charter Schools Institute, and these schools consistently make gains in student achievement. In addition to SUNY, charters may be authorized by the State Board of Regents and local school boards. In New York City, the Chancellor has this capability.

New York charter students are assessed in grades three through eight with state mathematics tests as well as English Language Arts exams. New York state charter schools for the fourth consecutive year outperformed their comparable district peers considerably. Eighty-six percent of charter schools outperformed their districts in math and 66 percent outperformed them in English.⁵⁴

Charter schools sponsored by SUNY, which are located throughout the state and New York City, posted impressive results in 2007–2008. When compared with their local district, 76 percent of SUNY charter schools scored higher in English and 92 percent outperformed their local districts in math.⁵⁵

*New York’s charter
school success is
a product of high
standards and
accountability that
is enforced.*

Fast Facts

- There are currently 118 charter schools operating in New York serving a total of 33,000 students statewide.
- New York passed its charter law in 1998. The law currently is ranked 11th out of the nation’s 41 laws and earns a “B” in the national rankings.

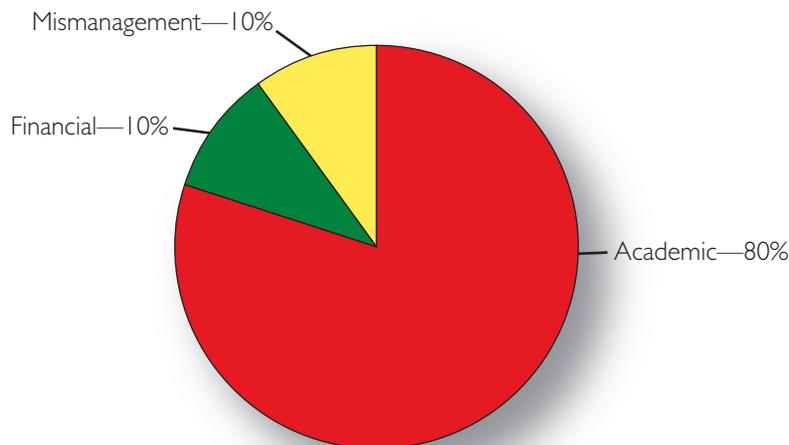
54. “Charters Rock on 07–08 State Test Scores,” New York Charter School Association, *Charter School Notebook*, Summer 2008.

55. “Institute Analysis of SUNY-Authorized Charter School Performance on the 2007–08 New York State Exams,” SUNY Charter Schools Institute, www.newyorkcharters.org/documents/2007-08MathELAResultsSUNYAuthorizedSchools.pdf.

In New York City, charter schools are making the grade as well. Nearly 85 percent of charter school students met or exceeded standards in math, which is an increase of 7.7 percentage points from the previous year. In English, 67 percent of students met or exceeded standards, an increase of almost 11 percentage points. To compare, 58 percent of New York City public school students met or exceeded standards on the English test.⁵⁶

Since 1998, 130 charters have been approved in New York and 90 percent are still operational today. Ten charters have been closed for failing to meet academic standards, even though some were doing better than the regular neighborhood public schools.

New York Charters Closed by Category (10 Schools)



56. "2007-08 New York State Assessments Charter Schools—New York City," New York City Center for Charter School Excellence, www.nycchartercenter.org/pdf/2007-2008ELA_MATHSummarySheet.pdf.



NORTH CAROLINA

Positive charter opportunities lost to 20,000 on waiting lists

North Carolina's charter schools are home to roughly the same percentage of minority and low-income students as conventional public schools, and they serve a higher percentage of special education students than non-charter public schools. This, combined with their student achievement, paints a bright picture of progress in the Tarheel State.

North Carolina charter school students, like those at conventional public schools, are evaluated using the Accountability in Basics (ABC) exam. The results show that at most grade levels, charter school students perform at a level equivalent to their peers at conventional schools even though charters receive approximately \$1,200 less funding per pupil (about 86 percent), while spending a greater percentage of their funding on facilities and maintenance.

Charter school students fared particularly well in reading proficiency as assessed by the ABC. In sixth grade, 83 percent of both charter school and conventional school students achieved proficient or advanced levels in reading, while in eighth grade this number jumped to 87 percent. Fifty-three percent of charter schools made federal progress targets in 2007⁵⁷ and nearly eight percent of charter schools achieved the Honors School of Excellence standing, which is the highest grade on the state test, compared with 3.5 percent of conventional public schools. Some exceptional charters have been recognized by national rankings. Raleigh Charter was number 20 of 100 on the *U.S. News and World Report* ranking of top high schools in the U.S.

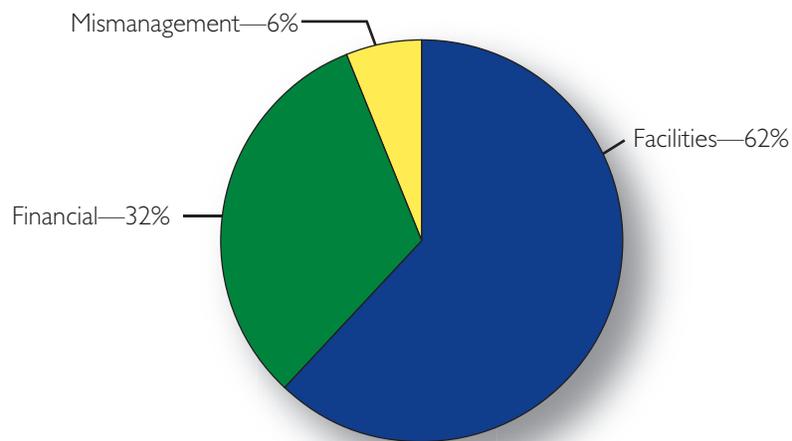
Fast Facts

-  North Carolina is home to 103 public charter school campuses, which serve a total of 30,450 students statewide. While capped at only 100, some charters operate multiple campuses.
-  It is estimated that 20,000 North Carolina students are on charter school waiting lists.
-  The Tarheel State passed its charter school law in 1996 and earned a "B" as the nation's 17th strongest law.

57. "NC School Report Cards," North Carolina Department of Education, www.ncreportcards.org/src/main.jsp?pList=4&pYear=2006-2007.

Since 1996, 143 charters have been approved in North Carolina and 73 percent remain operational today. Twenty-two percent (or 32 charter schools) have closed and another seven approved charters never opened. Financial issues were the cause of the majority of school closings, as schools have often struggled with lower per-pupil funds and hostilities from neighboring public school leaders. Some have had management troubles, forcing them to go out of business, which should occur in other public schools as well. Two schools closed their doors when they struggled to secure permanent facilities.

North Carolina Charters Closed by Category (32 Schools)





OHIO

Reinventing public education through competition and accountability

Ohio's charter movement, dating back to 1997, is well documented. While charter students are required to administer state tests and meet additional accountability requirements, they have been challenged by years of litigation from teachers unions and legislative opponents. This is a state where accountability is taken seriously.

Ohio's charters are clustered in the state's "Big 8" school districts—their largest, most troubled cities. According to a report by the local charter association, 48 percent of Ohio's 115 public charter schools within the Big 8 boundaries exceeded the state's expectations for yearly progress as measured by the Ohio Achievement Test, while only 39 percent of traditional district schools met this standard. An additional 27 percent of public charter schools met the state's yearly progress goal, for a total of 75 percent of charter schools that met or exceeded the expectations set forth by the State Board of Education.⁵⁸

Another indication of progress comes from an authorizer known for leading the quality schools debate. The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, based in Dayton, currently authorizes seven schools. Fordham charters outperformed district schools in value-added student performance, with 63 percent of their students performing at or above the expected levels.⁵⁹ Charters located in Dayton accounted for 12 of the top 20 schools in the city, while only two of

Fast Facts

- ☺ Today, the Buckeye State is home to 293 charter schools that serve more than 94,000 students.
- ☺ Ohio's charter school legislation has a "B" and is currently the 16th strongest of the nation's 41 laws.
- ☺ Geographical preference for new charter schools is given to schools that fall within the "Big 8," which are the eight largest school districts in the state. Sixty-six percent of Ohio's charters are located in Akron, Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo, or Youngstown.

58. "OAPCS's Analysis of Value-Added Data," Ohio Alliance of Public Charter Schools, www.oapcs.org/content/pdf/ValueAddedAnalysis06-07.pdf.

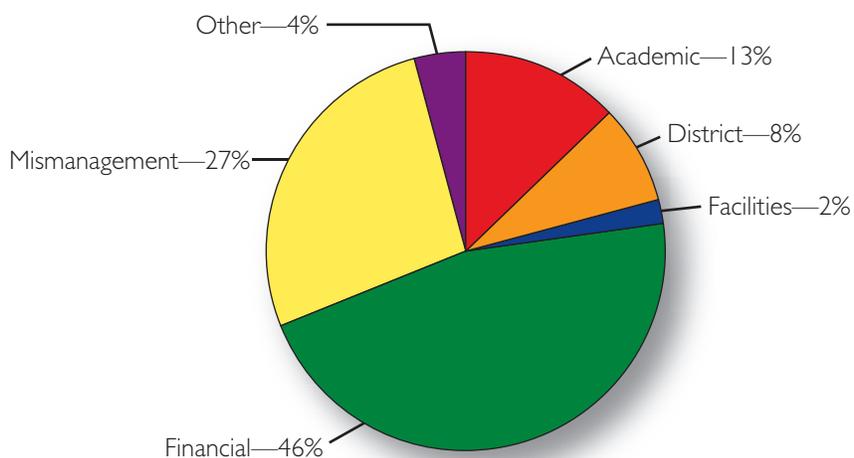
59. "Climbing to Quality: 2007–08 Fordham Sponsorship Accountability Report," Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, November 2008, www.edexcellence.net/doc/Sponsorship08web.pdf.

the remaining eight schools fell into the traditional category (the remaining were magnet schools or selective high schools).

To date 48 of Ohio’s charter schools have been closed. While financial issues lead the pack of reasons why these schools have closed, there have also been governance issues as well as a few closed for academic deficiencies. Today, Ohio’s charter law requires reviews on progress and proficiency among all charter schools and authorizers are required to shut down schools that fail to meet expectations.

Ohio’s charter school authorizers also rely on success to survive. Only those authorizers that have demonstrated their own financial stability and have proven academic success may create additional charter schools.

Ohio Charters Closed by Category (48 Schools)





OKLAHOMA

Limited access stifles The Sooner State

Oklahoma permits charters to operate in Tulsa and Oklahoma City. Only three of the 14 charters are located in Tulsa and the rest of the charters serve a largely minority and at-risk population in the capital city.

The Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests (OCCT) are taken by all students in grades three through eight and are aligned to the state-mandated curriculum.

The Academic Performance Index (API) was created to measure the progress of school's among various factors, including OCCT scores, attendance rates, graduation rates, and participation and scores on Advanced Placement tests. Schools can score up to 1500. In Tulsa and Oklahoma City, charter schools on average have a higher API than the school district average. Charter schools in Tulsa had an API of 1360 in 2008, and the district average was 1117, almost a 250 point difference. In Oklahoma City, the difference was not as drastic, but charters had an average API of 1156, compared with 1074 for the school district average.

There are some clear beacons of educational excellence among the Oklahoma charter schools. The Dove Science Academy has the highest test scores in the state and 100 percent of students were accepted to college last year. Ninety percent of students at the school qualify for free and reduced lunch and 60 percent are from families where English is not their first language. On state tests, 100 percent of seventh and eighth graders scored satisfactory or advanced in math and 97 and 98 percent scored satisfactory or advanced in reading. Meanwhile, sixth graders at the KIPP Reach College Preparatory School in Oklahoma City have improved 33 percentile points in math, 22 percentile points in reading, and 26 percentile points in language arts.⁶⁰

Only one charter school has closed in Oklahoma, and it was located in Tulsa. The Tulsa district has behaved antagonistically towards charters, filing suit against the state department of education claiming that charters are unconstitutional and that the district is "irreparably harmed" by funding them. Tulsa makes this claim in spite of the fact that charters receive only 57 percent of the per pupil allotment.⁶¹

60. "Looking at KIPP, coolly and carefully," *Washington Post*, April 24, 2007, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/24/AR2007042400558.html.

61. "National Charter School Funding Database," www.edreform.com/charter%5Fschools/funding/, December 2008.

Fast Facts

- ⊙ Oklahoma is currently home to 14 charter schools serving almost 5,000 students.
- ⊙ By law, charter schools are currently only allowed to open in Oklahoma City and Tulsa.
- ⊙ Due to these boundary restrictions, Oklahoma is ranked 19th out of 41 charter school laws in the country earning a low "B" grade.



OREGON

Steady increases in student enrollment help charter schools prove their worth

Oregon currently has 93 charter schools operating serving 13,600 students. Oregon has seen recent growth in the charter movement, with 24 charter schools opening over the past two years. Using the Oregon State Assessment Test (OSAT), charter schools are measured for progress against state goals and in comparison to all other public schools. With the increase in the number of charter schools, a better picture of charter school achievement can be painted.

Of the 52 charter schools that received a federal rating for 2006, 60 percent met their yearly goal for student improvement. In the 2007–08 school year, 66 charter schools were eligible for AYP and 64 percent met this annual goal. According to this same data, 51 percent of charter schools performed better than the state average in both reading and science. Statistics from 2003 to 2007 show a significant increase in both reading and math achievement. The average percentage of students meeting the standard in math increased from 62 to 74 percent, and the average percentage of students meeting the standard in reading increased from 68 to 79 percent.⁶² On the 2007–08 state standardized tests, charter schools students performed well, on average

across the state. Seventy-three percent of charter students met or exceeded state standards in reading and 63 percent met or exceeded standards in math. There were some charter schools, such as the International School of the Cascades and the Portland Arthur Academy, where ninety five percent of students met or exceeded state standards.

Since Oregon’s charter school law was passed in 1999, 93 schools remain open and eight schools have been closed. Since only local school boards may approve charter schools in Oregon, objectivity in the charter school oversight and authorizing process is hampered. Four schools were closed for financial instability, two schools were closed for failing to make academic progress and another two schools closed as a result of tensions with the local school district.

Fast Facts

✧ Oregon has 93 charter schools operating serving a total of about 13,600 students statewide. This number represents an enormous growth in charter schools over the past seven years; in 2000 there were only eleven operational charter schools.

✧ The state’s law is the 15th strongest with a grade of “B.”

62. “Oregon Charter Schools 2006–2007 Evaluation Report,” Oregon Department of Education, www.ode.state.or.us/opportunities/grants/nclb/title_v/b_charterschools/200607finaleval.pdf.



PENNSYLVANIA

Freedom rings in Philadelphia and personalized learning shapes this state's reform effort

While students in charter schools are making progress across the state, the most remarkable results are found among those students whose school systems typically claim are hardest to educate—minority and at-risk children. Using the 2007 Pennsylvania System of School Assessment test results, there is much to celebrate.

Throughout the state, African American charter school students outperformed their conventional school peers in reading in all grades except fifth and sixth. An average of 43.3 percent of African American charter school students were rated at or above proficient in reading, compared to 42.1 percent of African American students in conventional district schools. By eleventh grade, 7.2 percent more African American charter school students were at or above reading proficiency than their peers attending conventional schools. This indicates that charter school students make substantial gains the longer they stay in charter schools.⁶³

In 2006, 62 percent of charter schools in Philadelphia made AYP, compared with only 40 percent of conventional public schools in the city. The percentage of charter school students reaching proficiency in reading and math has increased from 24 percent and 16 percent in 2001–02 to 46.7 percent and 45 percent in 2006–07.⁶⁴

State leaders have not been hesitant to shut down schools that are failing to measure up. A total of 133 charters are operating today. Only twelve schools have closed and another seven never opened. Some were closed for management failures, and a few because of tensions with their districts. Currently only local school boards may authorize charter schools, and the state board may approve on appeal.

Fast Facts

-  Pennsylvania's 133 charters serve approximately 62,000 students.
-  The RAND Corporation found positive effects of charters in the city of Brotherly Love.
-  With a grade of "B," Pennsylvania has the 12th strongest of the 41 laws in the nation.

63. "2006–07 PSSA and AYP Results," Pennsylvania Department of Education, www.pde.state.pa.us/a_and_t/cwp/view.asp?A=3&Q=129181.

64. "Evaluating the Performance of Philadelphia's Charter Schools," RAND Corporation, March 2008, www.rand.org/pubs/working_papers/2008/RAND_WR550.pdf.



RHODE ISLAND

A growing school reform movement demonstrates positive results

Rhode Island evaluates all public and charter school students according to Grade Level Evaluations (GLEs) in conjunction with the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP). Students in grades three through five, eight and eleven take the NECAP in math and reading. Of the ten charter schools reporting data in Rhode Island, nine either met or outperformed reading and math proficiency levels of the district schools from which they enroll new students. Three of those charter schools even outperformed the average level of proficiency statewide. All charters in the Ocean State met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the last school year.

One outstanding example of success is the Paul Cuffee School in Providence, Rhode Island, which serves a disproportionate number of at-risk students. Cuffee middle school students exceed the performance of every other public middle school in the state, on every subject tested. The TIMES2 charter, also in Providence, saw 80 percent of their eleventh grade students proficient in reading. The Learning Community School located in Central Falls ranks among the top 10 highest scoring urban elementary schools in the state, while having the highest poverty rate.

Charter schools face many obstacles in educating their students in Rhode Island, including a weak charter school law, a cap on the number of schools that can open, and a lack of funding and facilities.⁶⁵

In spite of this, since 1995, no charter school in Rhode Island has closed. But in the absence of impartial authorizers and true autonomy for charter operators, charter growth and true accountability are hindered.

Fast Facts

-  Rhode Island is home to 11 public charter schools serving a total of 2,894 students.
-  Rhode Island's charter school law was passed in 1995 and is currently ranked 3rd weakest of the nation's 41 charter laws. However in light of some bold efforts in the legislature we're likely to see this "D" law state improve in subsequent reports.

65. "Office of Assessment and Accountability NECAP Results, Reports, and Interpretation Guides," Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment/Results.aspx.



SOUTH CAROLINA

The climate around charters is hotter than the weather

South Carolina’s charters have demonstrated positive achievement when compared to conventional public schools in the Palmetto State. The Palmetto Achievement Challenge Tests (PACTS) measure how well students in grades three through eight have mastered math and reading. High school students take the High School Assessment Program (HSAP) test.

In 2008, only 18 percent of public schools in South Carolina were able to meet the federal accountability goals (AYP),⁶⁶ while roughly 30 percent of charters made AYP. While charters in this state on average still have a long way to go, there are some exceptional charters that are masked by this data.⁶⁷

At the Greenville Technical Charter High School in Greenville, students can take college courses and earn college credit while obtaining their high school diploma. Seventy-five percent of the Class of 2008 completed at least one college course while enrolled in high school. Ninety-nine percent of their graduates have been accepted into higher education since the first class graduated in 2002. Academically, GTCHS is at the top of the state. The school received a rating of Excellent on the South Carolina report card for the past five years and has won the Palmetto Gold Award every year since 2003⁶⁸ and is a Bronze Medal Winner on the 2007 *U.S. News and World Report* America’s Best High Schools List.

Districts have faced scrutiny for withholding key funds from charters and causing many to go out of business. Ten charter schools in South Carolina have been closed since the state passed its charter law in 1996. Most were closed either because of operational deficiencies or financial struggles caused by low enrollment and district hostilities which withhold otherwise guaranteed funding. Only one school closed due to academic problems.

Fast Facts

- ☺ South Carolina is home to 36 charter schools serving approximately 8,700 students.
- ☺ In 2008, three virtual schools opened in the Palmetto State, enrolling 2,100 students, half of who are from low-income families.
- ☺ The state’s law is the 18th weakest out of all 41 laws and has a grade of “C.”

66. “Only 20 percent of area schools meet AYP goals,” *Spartanburg Herald Journal*, October 2, 2008, www.goupstate.com/article/20081002/NEWS/810020389.

67. 2008 State Report Card—No Child Left Behind—Adequate Yearly Progress. South Carolina Department of Education. ed.sc.gov/topics/assessment/scores/ayp/2008/default.cfm

68. “Greenville Technical Charter High School 2007–08 Accountability Report.” Dr. Howard V. Coleman, UNC Wilmington. October 2008.



TENNESSEE

A small charter school movement is paving the way for further success

Because Tennessee limits the charter option to students who are in failing schools, the development of charters has been slow and focused on at-risk students.

Students in grades three through eight take the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) achievement test in a variety of different subjects. High school students must also take Secondary TCAP tests, which are end of course exams to measure the student's knowledge in the completed subject.

The Center for Research in Educational Policy (CREP) at the University of Memphis used control groups to compare charter student achievement on the TCAP with district student achievement among various grades, cohorts and subject areas. Sixty-three different comparisons were made in middle and high school, and it was found that in 35 of these comparisons, a higher percentage of charter students reached proficient or advanced.

One school in particular, the Memphis Academy of Health Sciences had a significantly larger percentage of students score proficient or advanced than the control group in math and reading. At the Circle of Success Learning Academy (COSLA) and STAR Academy, both in Memphis,

a higher percentage of students scored proficient or advanced in all categories of the state TCAP test when compared with students statewide and across districts.⁶⁹ In 2008, all eligible charter schools in Tennessee made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

Fast Facts

- ① As of this report, Tennessee has 14 operating charter schools that serve a total of 2,600 students statewide.
- ① With a law permitting only students in failing schools to attend charters, this law merited only a low "C" grade and is ranked 31st out of 41.

Since Tennessee's charter school law was passed, only one charter school has closed. While the explanation given by the district was because of academic reasons, some have argued that this revocation was really a result of district hostility, which is prevalent in this state, moving lawmakers to again begin considering new legislation to open up oversight and authorization to other bodies.

69. "Charter Schools in Tennessee: Issues of Innovation and Sustainability," Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury, www.comptroller1.state.tn.us/repository/RE/CharterSchools2008.pdf.



TEXAS

Students at risk of dropping out find new opportunities in charter schools

Texas-style accountability for all schools has been robust and nationally recognized. So a full evaluation of charter performance is more apparent than in some states.

Like students in conventional public schools, charter school students are evaluated using the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), administered in grades three through eleven. When comparing schools, it is important to note that the State Board of Education makes a distinction between charter schools that report at least 51 percent of students as being at-risk of dropping out of school and those that do not. These “at-risk,” (or AEA charter schools) accommodate students who often enter their schools struggling academically. Yet they continue to demonstrate impressive gains on standardized testing and in student achievement. In the 2007–08 school year, 43 percent of charters were recognized as AEA.

From 2007 to 2008, the passing rates for AEA charter school students taking the English-version TAKS increased in all subjects. The largest increase was on the science test, up 11 points to a 73 percent passing rate. In reading, the passing rate for AEA charters was 73 percent and for non-AEA or “standard” charters it was 90 percent. In grades six through eleven, standard charters had passing rates equal or slightly higher than conventional public schools. The results on the math TAKS test were also positive, and all charters made positive gains. For standard charters, the passing rate increased by five points (to 80 percent) and ninth grade students saw a nine-percentage point increase in their math score.

In reading, students in grades six through ten attending non-AEA charters passed the TAKS at a rate three to five percentage points greater than students at conventional public schools. Results for the mathematics portion of the test were quite similar; the non at-risk charters had higher passing rates than school districts in grades six through eleven.

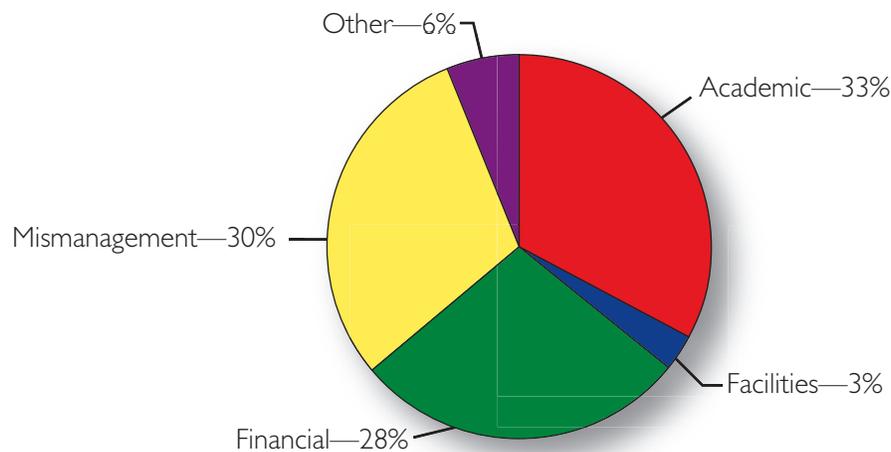
Fast Facts

- ✧ 331 charter schools in Texas serve approximately 108,500 students.
- ✧ Texas has a “C” grade and is the 15th weakest among 41 laws.

Texas charter schools appear strongest in their ability to educate groups of students that are historically underserved by the conventional public school system. Among the typical charter schools in 2007, a higher percentage of Hispanic students passed the TAKS exam than Hispanic students in local school districts. Economically disadvantaged students enrolled in these charter schools passed the TAKS at a higher rate than their district school peers in every subject except writing.⁷⁰

To date, 33 charter schools have closed in Texas, most for administrative failures. But Texas has also closed schools for academic deficiencies, in large measure because of a push from the charter community itself to the state to allow only quality schools to remain operating.

Texas Charters Closed by Category (33 Schools)



70. "2007 Comprehensive Annual Report on Texas Public Schools," Texas Education Agency, www.tea.state.tx.us/reports/.



UTAH

A best in class charter state

Utah charters demonstrate remarkable achievement and an ability to integrate students of diverse backgrounds in the classroom.

Charter school students at all grade levels are evaluated using the Utah Performance Assessment System for Students (U-PASS), which is a collection of criterion-referenced tests that are carefully aligned with the Utah State Core Curriculum. In all three testing categories, charter school students achieved equal or higher levels of proficiency compared to their peers at conventional schools. In language arts, 83 percent of charter students achieved at the proficient or advanced level, whereas only 79 percent of those in conventional schools reached this standard. In both math and science, charter school students and conventional public school students performed at almost the same levels, with a slight edge in proficiency going to charter school students.⁷¹ Ninety-five percent of charter schools made AYP, in comparison with 80 percent of conventional public schools. Utah also issues a “pass rate” for schools that do well on the U-PASS Test. Ninety-three percent of charters passed the test, compared with 87 percent of conventional public schools.⁷²

Demographic trends show that charter schools in this homogeneous state are becoming more ethnically diverse over time. This is most likely a result of charter proponents who encourage the establishment of schools with missions to serve students of all ethnicities. For example, the Guadalupe School in Salt Lake City focuses on literacy for immigrant children, and the Success School is part of the Juvenile Probation System and helps students graduate from high school.

Ninety-six percent of all the charter schools that have ever been approved in Utah remain operational today. Only one school closed as a result of management deficiencies.

Fast Facts

-  Since the opening of the first charter school in 1998, Utah has seen a slow but steady increase in the number of schools applying for charter status.
-  Today there are 68 charters that serve 23,200 students statewide.
-  Graded a “C,” Utah’s charter law is ranked the 17th weakest out of 41.

71. “Utah Performance and Assessment System for Students,” Utah State Office of Education, u-pass.schools.utah.gov/u-passweb/UpassServlet.

72. “Charter Schools Far Outshine Public in No Child Left Behind Standards,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 7, 2008.



VIRGINIA

School boards use charter law to open last-resort schools

In a state that has had a long history of fighting most independent charter proposals and where the school boards who do permit them have tended to provide charters only for their most challenging students, academic achievement is not documented for the few students who have attended these schools over time.

Since Virginia's charter school law was passed in 1998, three schools have closed, one never opened, and two more consolidated back to conventional public schools. The three were closed either because of district hostilities or a lack of funding, which is not surprising considering that Virginia's charter schools do not have fiscal autonomy and are funded depending on school district preference at often less than 60 percent.⁷³ Four charters are open today that break from that mold somewhat, and it may be possible in a few years to document their progress on the state's well-regarded Standards of Learning.

Fast Facts

-  Virginia is home to only four charter schools serving nearly 300 students.
-  The state's law is ranked 4th weakest of all laws, and has consistently received a "D."
-  The Richmond School Board has approved the state's fifth charter to open in 2009.

73 "National Charter School Funding Database," www.edreform.com/charter%5Fschoools/funding/, December 2008.



WISCONSIN

Students show impressive gains the longer they are in schools of choice

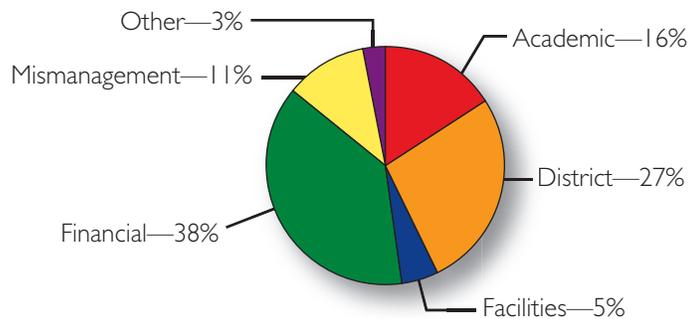
Charter school students, like all public school students must take the Wisconsin Knowledge Concepts Examination (WKCE) in grades three through eight and again in tenth grade.

This state assessment measures achievement in reading, language applications, mathematics, science, and social studies using multiple-choice and short-answer questions.

Data from both public and private sources is limited, but a 2007 analysis on ten University of Wisconsin-Madison (UWM) authorized charter schools illustrates academic growth in the state’s largest urban area. When students enter UWM charter schools, they are performing seven percentage points below students enrolled in the Milwaukee Public Schools in reading and math. However, by the eighth grade, 77 percent of UWM charter students are performing at proficient or advanced levels in reading compared with 63 percent of conventional public schools. Math test scores also improve over time. On the eighth grade state test, 50 percent of the University’s charter students scored proficient or above compared to 41 percent of Milwaukee public school students.⁷⁴

Thirty-seven charters schools have been closed in Wisconsin, largely due to under-funding. Interestingly, another 34 were opened over time by local schools districts to capitalize on additional funds but then consolidated (see glossary) back into the district programs, usually because the district felt having a separate school was not worth the trouble or expense.

Wisconsin Charters Closed by Category (37 Schools)



Fast Facts

- ☺ Wisconsin is home to 221 charter schools serving approximately 42,000 students.
- ☺ The state’s charter school law earned a “B” grade and is ranked 21st out of 41 in the nation.

⁷⁴ “Office of Charter Schools: Annual Report 2006–2007,” University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee, www4.uwm.edu/soe/centers/charter_schools/upload/2006-07-Annual-Report.pdf.



WYOMING

Slow progress in the Equality State when it comes to quality education

Wyoming school districts have had a hostile relationship with charter schools, so it is no surprise that only three are open today, making any concrete evaluation impossible. While a majority of residents support charters and the existing three are filling important niches, there is little movement to open more and understand their ability to educate kids well.

Lawmakers in Wyoming are primed to act in the coming legislative session to change that.

Fast Facts

- ⊙ Wyoming has only three charter schools serving 244 students.
- ⊙ The Equality State has one of the weakest charter laws in the country, with a “D” grade.

THE 2009 ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

Charter Schools

As our nation endures the challenges of an economic crisis and struggles to remain competitive, the cries for accountability across all public sectors are deafening. We are at a crossroads in the American experience where we can either tackle the priorities that will most directly affect our future or simply give in to the status quo and let history repeat itself. There is no greater investment in rebuilding our nation than fixing our public schools. To do so, lawmakers must boldly embrace education reform. Today.

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