



HIGH PERFORMING CHARTER SCHOOLS

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About ExcelinEd

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Content Overview

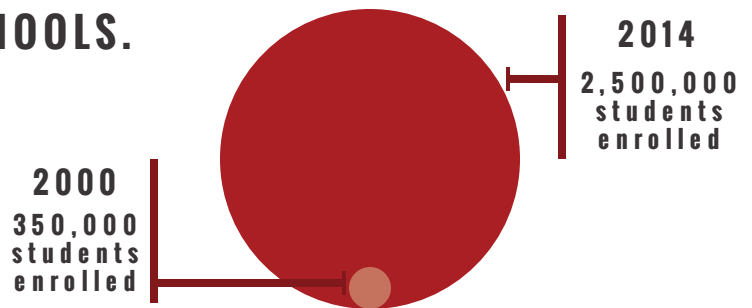
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Overview

Parental demand for charter schools is at an all-time high. The goal of a high-performing charter school policy is to increase access to the best charter schools by identifying schools with a demonstrated record of improving student learning and giving those schools the opportunity to grow.

THE NEED FOR QUALITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

In 2014, more than 2.5 million students were enrolled in charter schools across the country – a 635 percent increase from 2000, when 350,000 students were enrolled. Despite this incredible growth, more than a million student names are on waiting lists for charter schools across the country.



WHAT IS A HIGH-PERFORMING CHARTER SCHOOL?

To be considered a high-performing charter, a school must:

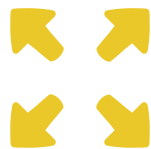
- Demonstrate financial soundness through annual audits; and
- Maintain high levels of academic performance on the state’s accountability system. In a state that grades schools A through F, for example, a school must receive at least two ‘A’ grades during the previous three school years and have no grade lower than a ‘B’ during that time.

WHAT BENEFITS DO HIGH-PERFORMING CHARTERS RECEIVE?

Under a high-performing charter schools program, a state gives charter schools designated “high-quality” authorization to do any or all of the following:



Increase student enrollment



Expand the number of grade levels served

15

Modify or renew its charter for a term of 15 years

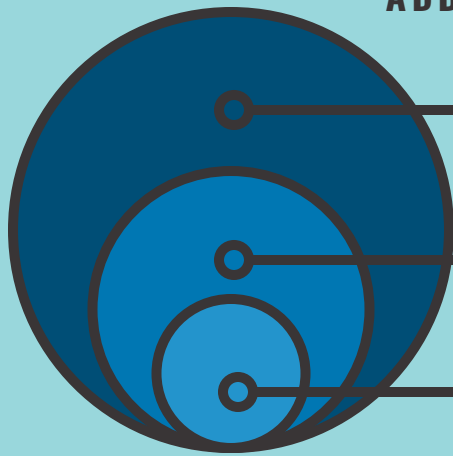


Consolidate multiple high-performing charter schools operated under the same authorizer under a single charter



Submit a “fast-pass” application to establish new charter schools in the state that substantially replicate its successful model. If a “fast pass” is denied by a district, a high-performing charter can appeal the decision to the State Board of Education and enjoy a reduced burden when seeking to overturn the decision.

ADDRESSING THE NEED: FLORIDA



In 2009-10, 57,500 students were on the waiting lists to get into charter schools in Florida

37,000 students were turned away from their school of choice

Only 36 percent won an enrollment lottery

Of the 37,000 students turned away, 97 percent were on a waiting list for schools rated an "A" or "B" charter on the state accountability system.

These numbers helped spur Florida lawmakers to create the state's high-performing charter policy in 2011.

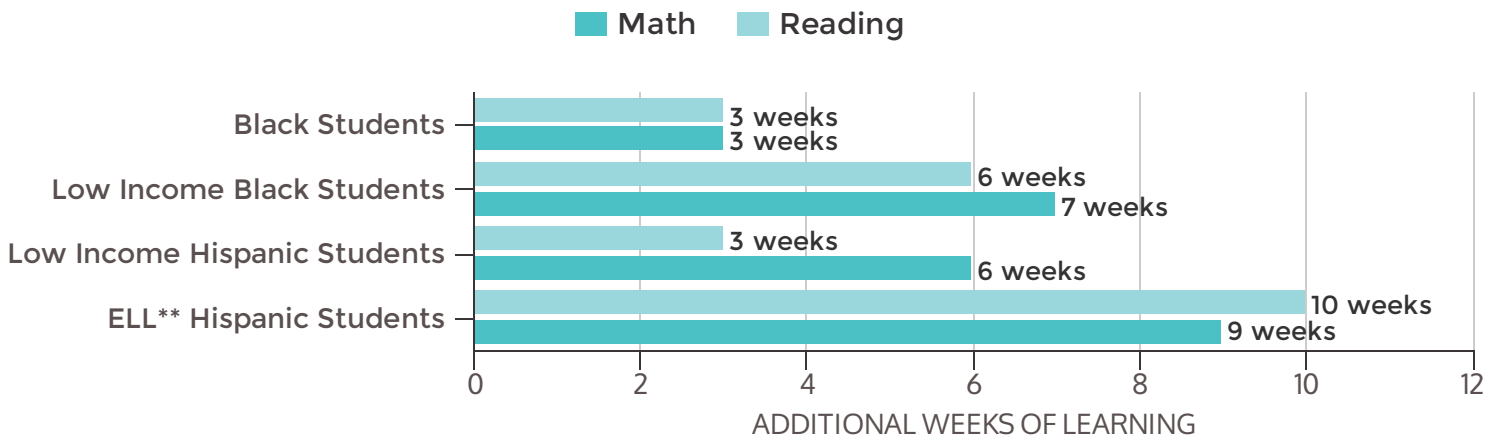
CHARTER SCHOOL RESEARCH

Nationally, charter schools receive nearly 30 percent less per pupil per year in public funding than their neighboring traditional public schools. Despite this inequity, charters are producing amazing results.

A 2013 study by Stanford's Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) compared minority students in charter schools and traditional public schools nationwide. The study found that minority students are learning more in charter schools, as measured by additional weeks of learning. In some states, students are learning an additional year's worth of math and reading content when compared to their traditional public school peers. Similarly, a 2015 CREDO analysis of urban charter schools found that the typical student in an urban charter gains the equivalent of an additional 40 days of learning in math and 28 days of learning in reading compared to his or her peers in traditional urban public schools.

In addition to evidence of improved student learning, research on charter schools across the country has found the following positive effects for charter school students: increased graduation rates and college attendance, persistence and completion; higher earnings; and lower rates of teen pregnancy and male incarceration.

ADDITIONAL WEEKS OF LEARNING



Fundamental Principles

The goal of a High-Performing Charter School policy is to increase access to the best charter schools by identifying schools with a demonstrated record of improving student learning and giving those schools the opportunity to grow. In order for a school to be considered a high-performing charter, the school must prove financial stability and maintain high levels of academic performance on the state's accountability system. A comprehensive High-Performing Charter School policy includes the following fundamental principles:



ELIGIBILITY

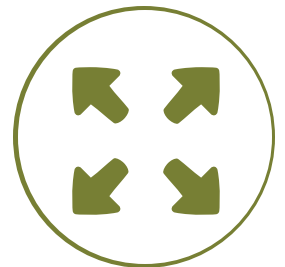
To be considered high-performing, a charter school needs to:

- Demonstrate financial soundness through annual audits; and
- Maintain high levels of academic performance on the state's accountability system. For example, in a state that grades schools A through F, a school must receive at least two 'A' grades during the previous three school years and have no grade lower than a 'B' during that time.

EXPANDED AUTONOMY

Once a charter school has met the criteria to be designated "high-quality," the school should be granted expanded autonomy and empowered to serve additional students in the following respects:

- Increase student enrollment
- Expand the number of grade levels served
- Modify or renew its charter for a term of 15 years
- Consolidate multiple high-performing charter schools operated under the same authorizer under a single charter
- Submit a "fast-pass" application to establish new charter schools in the state that substantially replicate its successful model
- If a "fast pass" is denied by a district, a high-performing charter can appeal the decision to the State Board of Education and enjoy a reduced burden when seeking to overturn the decision



MAINTENANCE OF PERFORMANCE

In order to maintain their high-performing status, charter schools must continually meet the academic and financial eligibility requirements.

Frequently Asked Questions

1

ARE CHARTER SCHOOLS PUBLIC OR PRIVATE SCHOOLS?

As defined in federal and state law, charter schools are public schools.*

Like traditional public schools, charters are tuition free and open to all students; publicly funded by local, state, and federal tax dollars based on enrollment; and held accountable for meeting state academic standards. Charters are approved, funded, and overseen by a government-endorsed authorizing entity, just as traditional public schools are overseen by a school district.



2

DO CHARTER SCHOOLS RECEIVE MORE MONEY THAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

On average, charter schools receive less public funding than traditional public schools.



Charter schools actually receive nearly 30 percent less per pupil per year in public funding than comparable traditional public schools. And in many states, charter schools receive no public funding for their facilities.**

* 20 U.S.C. 7221i; 20 U.S.C. 7801.

**Meagan Batdorff, Larry Maloney, Jay May, Sheree Speakman, Patrick Wolf, and Albert Cheng, Charter School Funding: Inequity Expands, University of Arkansas, 2014, <http://www.uaedreform.org/wp-content/uploads/charter-funding-inequity-expands.pdf>.

3

SINCE CHARTER SCHOOL BOARDS AREN'T ELECTED, ARE CHARTERS SCHOOLS ACCOUNTABLE TO THE PUBLIC?

Charter schools actually face greater scrutiny over their finances than traditional public schools do.



Like traditional public schools, charter schools are subject to state laws regarding financial management and must comply with state reporting laws, which vary by state. But charters are also subject to an additional layer of oversight through their authorizers. Public charter school authorizers may approve and renew only those charter schools that have demonstrated they can increase student performance in a fiscally and organizationally sound manner. To support these authorizers in their efforts, the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) sets clear requirements and recommendations for an authorizer's oversight of its charter schools' financial operations.***

4

ARE CHARTER SCHOOLS TRANSPARENT REGARDING THEIR USE OF FUNDS?

Charter schools are directly accountable to the public in two respects:

- First, charters sign a contract with their government-endorsed authorizers that explains how the schools will operate and the student results they will achieve. If schools aren't able to achieve those results, their authorizer can require immediate improvement or close the school. In contrast, traditional public schools can fail for years without being closed for bad performance.
- Second, charters must assess their students on the same tests as traditional public schools, must meet the same state and federal academic standards and must undergo the same financial audits.



Charter schools are subject to the same state accountability mechanisms that traditional public schools must satisfy.

***National Association of Charter School Authorizers, Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing, 2012, http://www.qualitycharters.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Principles-and-Standards_2012-Edition.pdf.

5

DO CHARTER SCHOOLS SELECT THE BEST STUDENTS FROM TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

Public charter schools are generally required to take all students who want to attend.



Federal law requires charter schools to accept all students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities. Unlike public magnet schools run by a schools district, charters cannot selectively admit students based on academic performance.

When there are more interested students than available seats, charter schools are generally required to hold lotteries to determine which students will win a seat. In fact, where it is permitted by state law, charters now may use weighted lotteries that give preference to “educationally disadvantaged” students, allowing charter schools to serve an even greater share of disadvantaged children.

6

DO CHARTER SCHOOLS STUDENTS ACTUALLY DO ANY BETTER THAN TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS?

According to 15 of 16 studies performed between 2010 and 2013, students attending charter schools outperform their traditional school peers.****



For example, a 2013 study by Stanford’s Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) found that overall, students in public charter schools perform better than their traditional public school peers in reading (gaining an average of seven additional days of learning per year) and perform as well as students in traditional public schools in math. The study also showed that charter school attendance had particularly positive results in math and reading for several demographic groups, including students of color, students in poverty, English language learners and students with disabilities. The academic benefit for Hispanic students who were also categorized as English language learners was particularly significant. Those students learned the equivalent of 50 additional days in reading and 43 additional days in math when compared to their traditional public school peers.

****National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, Separating Fact & Fiction: What You Need to Know About Charter Schools, 2014, <http://www.publiccharters.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Separating-Fact-from-Fiction.pdf>.