



Charter School Results

All Charter School Students Show Academic Gains

In 2013, the Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford University conducted a national study of charter schools in 27 states with data through the 2010-2011 school year, covering 95 percent of students attending charter schools across the country.ⁱ Overall, the 2013 CREDO study found:

- Students in charter public schools outperformed their district-run public school peers in reading and performed as well as students in district-run public schools in math.
- The study showed strong positive results in both math and reading for many subgroups, including Black students, students living in poverty, English Learners (EL), and students receiving special education services.

The 2013 CREDO study also compared the performance of charter public schools with district-run public schools in their local markets and found that the percentage of charter schools outperforming district-run public schools grew from 17 percent in 2009 to 29 percent in 2013. Moreover, the percentage of charter schools that underperformed district-run public schools dropped from 39 percent in 2009 to 31 percent in 2013. This shows that charter school movement is serious about quality: growing high-performing schools and closing under-performers.

Charter Schools Get Results for the Most Underserved Students

A 2015 CREDO study of district-run and charter public school data in 41 large urban regions found strong positive findings for charter schools.ⁱⁱ This is an important finding as more than half of all charter schools are in urban areas.ⁱⁱⁱ

Overall, students enrolled in urban charter public schools:

- Gained 40 additional days of learning in math per year and 28 additional days in reading over their district-run public school peers.
- Achieved greater learning gains the longer a student attended an charter public school. Four or more years of enrollment in an urban charter school led to 108 additional learning days in math and 72 more days of learning gains in reading.

Charter Schools Improve Students' Long-term Outcomes

Studies that examine the long-term outcomes—like high school graduation, college attendance, college persistence, and future earnings—for charter school students consistently find significant positive effects.

A 2011 study by Mathematica, an independent research organization, examined high school students in Chicago and Florida who were enrolled in charter schools in 8th grade, and then either enrolled in a charter or district-run public school for high school.^{iv}

The study found that, compared to their peers who switched to a district-run public high school, charter high school students were:

- More likely to graduate by 7-15 percentage points; and
- More likely to enroll in college by 8-10 percentage points.

In 2014, the Mathematica study was expanded to include college persistence and future earnings measures. The study continued to compare students who attended a charter middle school and then enrolled in either a charter or district-run public high school, and found that students who continued attending charter schools for high school:

- Were more likely to persist for at least two years in college (both Florida and Chicago charter high school students).^v
- Earned approximately 13 percent higher earnings as 23- to 25-year-olds (only Florida had the data needed for this calculation).

Charter Schools Help Improve All Public Education

There have been several research studies that aim to study the competitive effects of charter schools. The theory is that by introducing competition to district-run public schools, the system will need to adjust and improve its performance to compete with charter schools for student enrollment.

In one of the first competitive effects studies that factored in school quality, researchers at CREDO measured the movement of students from district-run to charter public schools within Washington, D.C. The District of Columbia is a good test because there is nearly a half-and-half split between charter (44 percent) and district-run public school (56 percent) student enrollment.^{vi} The researchers found that opening more high-quality charter schools in a community can improve the quality of all schools—giving every student a better opportunity to attend a high-performing public school.^{vii}

ⁱ CREDO. (2013). National charter school study. Stanford, CA: CREDO. <https://credo.stanford.edu/documents/NCSS2013FinalDraft.pdf>

ⁱⁱ CREDO. (2015). Urban charter school study report on 41 regions. Stanford, CA: CREDO. <http://urbancharters.stanford.edu/download/UrbanCharterSchoolStudyReporton41Regions.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS). Data Dashboard. <http://dashboard.publiccharters.org/dashboard/students/page/locale/year/2012>.

^{iv} Booker K, Gill B, Sass T, Zimmer R. (2014). Charter high schools' effects on long-term attainment and earnings. Working paper. Mathematica Policy Research.

^v Booker K, et al. (2011). The effects of charter high schools on educational attainment. *Journal of Labor Economics*. 29:377–415.

^{vi} National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. (2015). A growing movement: America's largest charter school Communities, Tenth Annual Edition. http://www.publiccharters.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/enrollmentsshare_web.pdf.

^{vii} Cremata EJ and Raymond ME. (March 1, 2014). Competitive effects of charter schools: Evidence from the District of Columbia. CREDO. Stanford University. <http://web-app.usc.edu/web/rossierphd/publications/14/DC%20Competitive%20Impacts%20-%20Working%20Paper.pdf>