THE STATE OF THE NYC CHARTER SCHOOL SECTOR

2012

NEW YORK CITY
CHARTER SCHOOL
CENTER

It's about great public schools.

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ABOUT THE CHARTER CENTER

The New York City Charter School Center envisions a future in which all of New York's students have access to a first-rate public education, so that, no matter their background, they can participate in society on fair terms. We believe that charter schools are partners in a larger effort to build and maintain a great system of public schools. We help new charter schools get started, support existing schools, and build community support so that highly effective schools can flourish.

ABOUT THE DATA TRANSPARENCY INITIATIVE

This report is part of a multi-year effort to promote data transparency within New York City's charter school sector. To explore other available data and analysis, visit www.nycCharterSchools.org/Data

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SPECIAL THANKS TO

New York City Charter Schools
New York State Education Department
KIPP Foundation
FOCUS DC
Colorado League of Charter Schools
Charter School Growth Fund
Rodriguez Valle Creative

The New York City Department of Education was instrumental in providing data, context, and advice to improve the work of this project. The Department's shared commitment to data transparency, accuracy, and fairness is greatly appreciated.

Support for this project comes from the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation.

Responsibility for the final content and any errors is the Charter Center's alone.

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FOREWORD:

LOOKING BACK TO **MOVE AHEAD**

When the legislation to allow charter schools was passed in late 1998, it was hard to imagine what would arise in New York City just over a dozen years later: inarguably, the best and most vibrant charter school sector in the United States. Because of NYC charter schools, tens of thousands of largely disadvantaged students have received a better education. Their parents were given, often for the first time, a meaningful choice of public school. Even students who never attended a charter school have benefitted from charter schools' infusion of new ideas—and more importantly, new ***urgency****—for a system of public schools that works for all students.*

While from our current vantage point, we might view the growth and success of charter schools as inevitable, the fact is that there was nothing inevitable about it. Certainly, many believed and fervently hoped the effort would fail. It is worth reviewing, then, how we got here and why.

First, there are 136 charters schools in NYC today only because hundreds of dedicated educators, parents, community members, partners, volunteers, and supporters came together to create these new schools from the ground up. Many did so when there was little organized assistance available, and when charter school authorizers were still figuring out how to oversee them and hold them accountable. The sheer work of building these schools (which are both educational institutions and complex not-for-profit entities) was and remains immense.

It is because of this that those pioneers who first ventured down the charter school path must not be forgotten. If the daunting challenge of school-building were not enough, they faced a slew of lawsuits and political attacks (as our well established sector still faces today). Yet they persevered, because they saw in charter schools a way to wrest control of public schooling from a large, clumsy and mandate-bound bureaucracy and restore it to communities, passionate educators and the students they teach. And parents responded enthusiastically.

What would the new charter schools do with their flexibility? They worked on new ideas, but also existing theories that had rarely been implemented. A longer school day and longer school year, for example, had been discussed for years as a way to provide hundreds of hours of additional instruction. Charter schools made it their hallmark. A school-wide culture of hard work and academic focus had been an extraordinary accomplishment. Charter schools made it an expectation.

NYC charter schools also used their flexibility to find new ways to structure educators' employment in order to promote student achievement, re-thinking how work is divided; how educators are compensated; and how they could be recruited, hired, developed, retained, and (if necessary) dismissed. Over time, this flexibility and new way of thinking has started to find its way into labor arrangements between charter schools and unions, and even between traditional districts and unions.

Even with the almost heroic commitment of NYC charter school founders, it would be naïve to think that New York City's charter sector could have thrived without a critical decision by Mayor Bloomberg, Chancellor Joel Klein, and then-Deputy Mayor (now Chancellor) Dennis Walcott. Had they not made space in district school buildings available to charter schools, the sector would have faced NYC's expensive real estate market without public facility funding, and would be a fraction of its current size and strength as a result. That decision reverberated throughout American education; the leader of the nation's largest public school system had recognized that charter schools were a source of hope, not a competitive threat, and that public resources should be tied to *students* and *results* above all else. Increasingly, other districts from across the country have adopted this approach—entering into collaboration compacts with their respective charter sectors, just as has happened in NYC.

These contributions from the NYC charter sector's past should frame its approach to the present and future.

Today, as this report's review of the data confirms, the state of the sector is strong and worth celebrating. But it is by no means perfect. It would be a disservice to public education's difficult work to suggest otherwise. There are old challenges still remaining, and new ones on the horizon. In particular, as charter schools establish a larger presence in the school system, and demand access to public facilities on par with their district counterparts, their role in that system will inevitably shift. That will include increasing the number of high-need students that the law requires them to enroll, retain, and teach. Equally, charter schools—like their district counterparts—will need to continue seeking improvement in the crucial subject of English Language Arts and the ultimate challenge of college readiness.

Charter school educators and their supporters have every right to take pride in the sector's historic accomplishments. Of equal importance is, of course, what happens next. The NYC charter school sector must continue to stake its claim as a powerful force to improve education for all. The same elements that brought the charter sector this far—audacious effort, creative leadership, a "no excuses" mentality, accountability for results, transparency about those results, as well as visionary support from outside—will be essential to the sector's continued success and viability. New York City is counting on it.

James Merriman
CEO
New York City Charter School Center

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Charter schools were created to change things. *A bold and controversial concept when they came to New York City in 1999, charter schools have had remarkable success in creating choices for families, raising students' academic achievement, and experimenting with innovative ideas for education. Today, New York City's charter school sector is higher-performing and more vibrant than any in the United States, and has grown from two schools in 1999 to 136 schools educating 47,000 students today. The accomplishments reflect the hard work of dedicated school founders and educators, the support of public officials, and, of course, the commitment and trust of the families who have chosen to enroll in these independent and autonomous public schools.*

Having become an established (if at times controversial) part of a larger system of public schools, charter schools will continue to expand, still working to refine their programs and obtain even better results. But as they pursue familiar goals, they will also face a new set of questions about their scale and role. For instance, as charters move to serve ever greater numbers of students, to what extent can the charter school model be adopted (and adapted) to improve traditional district schools? To what extent are charter schools' results shaped by their differences in governance structures or enrollment patterns? And are those differences intrinsic to the charter school model, or simply present-day features of it?

Since the charter school sector was built on a commitment to achievement and accountability, such questions are as important as any the sector has faced—and some early, partial answers have begun to emerge. For instance, charter schools are now required to enroll and retain certain groups of at-risk students at rates comparable to the local district schools, or risk closure, a shift that is likely to narrow differences in charter and district school demographics. Charter schools are also acting collectively to share best practices for students with special needs and make it easier for families to find and apply to charter schools (including through a common online application). And with the signing of a District-Charter Collaboration Compact, charter schools are joining their district colleagues to find new ways to work together and share best practices.

As charter schools adjust to their growing size and the changing public debate, there is too often a key ingredient missing: meaningful, transparent, and accessible data about the state of the NYC charter school sector. This State of the Sector report attempts to do something about that. Its approach is to offer a descriptive portrait based on data provided by public agencies. While it does not show all the variety among individual charter schools, nor does it predict what may change as these generally small and very young schools continue to grow, it does represent a first step toward a more data-driven conversation.

The report focuses on four pressing questions and presents the following findings.

What choices do NYC charter schools provide?

Charter schools' steady growth over 12 years has been fueled by enormous demand from students and families, many of whom previously had few if any choices. In last year's admissions lotteries, an estimated five students applied for each available seat. Enrolling 47,000 students today, charter schools will in a few years' time educate one in ten public school students. Charter schools have undoubtedly provided additional choices; but it is important to remember that charter schools today are one small part of what has become a vast system of school choice in NYC, including many district schools that require much more than an application form to enroll a student.

Charter schools' freedom to implement new and unconventional ideas about education has also broadened families' choices. Among the most prominent innovations have been

the longer school days and longer school years that allow schools to provide hundreds of hours of additional instruction in core areas while still leaving time for art, music, humanities, and science. Parents have welcomed this innovation as well as charter schools' focused concentration on a purposeful, college-bound culture that permeates every aspect of the school day.

What are NYC charter schools' results?

Even after controlling for student characteristics, rigorous academic research consistently finds significant, positive academic benefits to attending a NYC charter school. In addition, charter school students consistently outperform Community School District (CSD) averages on state Math and English Language Arts (ELA) exams in grades 3-8, although such comparisons do not control for student demographics (and should be used with caution in comparing the two sectors). The same pattern holds among students in all at-risk subgroups.

While the overall results are strong, charter school students' performance in Math is stronger than in ELA (which is also true for district students). At the few charter high schools that have existed long enough to graduate students, rates of college readiness and college enrollment lag those of district high schools. However, trends in Regents completion suggest that high school outcomes will improve as a larger and more representative number of these schools start to graduate students.

Charter schools tend to have higher attendance rates than NYC district schools. On the Department of Education's Learning Environment Surveys, charter school parents, teachers, and secondary students respond more positively to questions in every category: Academic Expectations, Engagement, Safety & Respect, and Communication.

Who are NYC charter schools' students?

Three in four charter school students come from low-income families. Over 60% of charter school students are Black (compared to about 30% of district school students), reflecting the demand from the African-American community.

At present, the charter sector serves a smaller percentage of students in special education than the citywide average, although this difference may partly stem from students being over-identified in district schools. Charter school students in special education are more likely to move toward less restrictive settings.

The charter sector also serves a smaller proportion of English Language Learners (ELLs), but ELLs in charter schools are more likely to pass the English proficiency tests required to leave that category.

The charter school law was amended in May 2010 to require charter schools to enroll and retain comparable percentages of ELLs, students with disabilities and low-income students. That change is likely to result in a narrowing of the present demographic differences between charter schools and district schools.

What is the outlook for the future of NYC charter schools?

Charter schools have a small but growing foothold in NYC, serving about four percent of all public school students, but as much as 25% of students in neighborhoods where charter schools are most concentrated. Those numbers will continue to increase as charter schools add more grade levels, and as more charter schools open each year. Given present levels of demand, there is good reason to believe that parents will seek these new seats out and demand will continue to outpace supply.

Charter schools' physical place in the city is uncertain, however. As a rule, charter schools do not receive public facilities support. A majority of charter schools operate in district buildings, which, given the lack of facility funding, has been a critical factor in charter school growth. Yet it must be remembered that even schools in district buildings have no assurance of continued access.

The report finds that charter schools, on average, have higher rates of teacher and principal turnover compared to NYC district schools. Such rates of turnover are, in part, consistent with a dynamic, growing and still quite new sector, and one which operates with different background labor rules and more varied compensation structures. And while low rates of attrition are not an outcome valuable for its own sake, lower staff attrition could help charter schools sustain or expand their positive influence on academic achievement, while continuing to grow. Charter school leaders are paying close attention to this issue, and seeking ways to improve educator pipelines and keep effective educators on the job longer.

In sum, the present state of the NYC charter school sector is strong and the outlook for the future is very promising. Charter schools as a sector are meant to reach at-risk students, improve their education and life prospects, and provide avenues for improvement for the larger public school system. The available data suggest real accomplishments to date and increasing progress on the path toward that lofty summit. Every indication is that NYC charter schools intend to keep climbing.

To learn more about charter schools and the Data Transparency Initiative, visit www.nycCharterSchools.org/Data.

INTRODUCTION

A State of Change

Charter schools were created to change things. *When they came to New York City in 1999, the idea was something new and different: public schools run independently of a traditional district, working with unprecedented flexibility and yet accountable for academic results. It was a bold and controversial experiment, with the potential to change families' choices, educators' assumptions, and, most importantly, students' futures.*

Today, the NYC charter school sector serves 47,000 students, with an estimated five applicants per available seat. Parents have overwhelmingly embraced this choice. NYC charter schools have sparked innovations in areas ranging from teacher practices, to school leadership, to integrated student supports. Established social service agencies are using the charter structure to create new public schools that meet local needs. Most importantly, rigorous research has found that NYC charter schools make a significant, positive difference in students' academic achievement, with particularly strong results in Math.

The change continues, though, including within the NYC charter school sector itself. While building on its past achievements, the sector's increasing size and maturity bring new kinds of challenges and opportunities.

Growing organizations require larger and different systems. In every area—from instructional leadership, to teacher recruitment, to parent engagement, to governance—charter schools and networks are learning to do their work on a larger scale. Scale also brings a growing need for physical facility space, an increasing challenge given the organized opposition to co-location in district buildings (from constituencies who also oppose facility funding for charter schools).

The passing of years brings changes, too. No longer a novel experiment or an untested promise, the still-young charter sector has a growing track record that can be analyzed to see what has worked well and what has not, and what those results may mean for reforming traditional district schools. Time also brings a growing interest in organizational sustainability at charter schools, to ensure that positive results can continue over time.

Perhaps the most significant shift is taking place in the public debate about charter schools. As it becomes obvious that the charter sector is an integral (and growing) part of our public school system, discussion is turning to the role it plays (and should play) in the larger system of public schools. This is a conversation not just in NYC but across the country. To what extent can the charter school model be adopted (and adapted) in reforming and improving traditional district schools and structures? To what extent are charter schools' results shaped by their differences in governance structures or enrollment patterns? And how much are these differences intrinsic to the charter school model or simply present-day features of it?

Whether framed by ideological critics or charter school educators, such questions are of obvious importance to a movement premised on achievement and accountability. Indeed, that conversation has already led to the amendment of New York State's charter school law, which now requires charter schools to meet targets for enrolling and retaining at-risk student subgroups—or risk closure.

As charter schools work through all of these changes, and especially in the shift of public debate, there is too often a key ingredient missing: meaningful, transparent, and accessible data about the state of the NYC charter school sector. The most important charter school discussions tend to be dominated by generalizations, simplifications and anecdotes, while the decentralized nature of charter schooling makes actual data hard to find and understand.

Key Questions

This report represents a modest first step toward a more informed and data-driven conversation about charter schools. Looking across NYC's diverse charter school sector, the report presents information that addresses four pressing questions:

- What choices do NYC charter schools provide?
- What are NYC charter schools' results?
- Who are NYC charter schools' students?
- What is the outlook for the future of NYC charter schools?

Readers will note that none of these questions relates to any individual charter school. Descriptions of the "charter sector" are statistical abstractions, useful for thinking about trends but not a full description of any individual school. Many NYC charter schools have had successes, some of them inspirational and even paradigm-shifting. Other schools are steadily progressing, or trying to change direction, or just opening their doors. Still others have fallen short and will be closed, as they should be. Given the independence and autonomy that charter schools enjoy, wide variety is inevitable, and it is critical that all readers—including parents and policy makers alike—keep this in mind.

Sources and Comparisons

This report is a portrait of the NYC charter school sector, not a controlled research study designed to isolate and test hypotheses about it. It relies almost entirely on pre-existing data sets collected and provided by public agencies, and does not make use of student-level records.

Wherever available, this report presents charter school data alongside comparable data on district schools as a reference point. These comparisons were constructed as carefully as possible given the data sources, for example by looking at comparable grade ranges and excluding the same special cases from both sides. (See the endnotes for more detail about the calculations of particular figures and charts.) Yet the comparisons shown here are still not controlled for outside variables, and the differences they show may not be statistically significant.

Especially given these limitations, it is important to understand charter school data points together and in context, rather than as isolated numbers or comparisons. Students' characteristics and academic results are especially important to consider together, since everyone acknowledges that the former influences the latter. That is not to excuse unacceptable results, but to avoid drawing simplistic conclusions about causes and effects in something as complex as a public school.

Readers should also keep in mind that district schools enroll 20 times as many students as charter schools do, and that a majority of charter schools are in their first five years of operation. Both of these factors suggest that charter sector averages will be prone to vary over time, particularly in the high school grades, where charter school numbers are especially small and fast-changing.

Further Research

In developing this report, the Charter Center and its Advisory Committee of charter school leaders sought to present information that is available, accurate, important, and understandable. Each of these criteria ruled out some possible data points, even when erring on the side of transparency. Our hope is that, over time, better data in a wider variety of formats will come to fill any gaps—and we are committed to pushing that process along.

What is a charter school?

Charter schools are free public schools open to all New York City children.

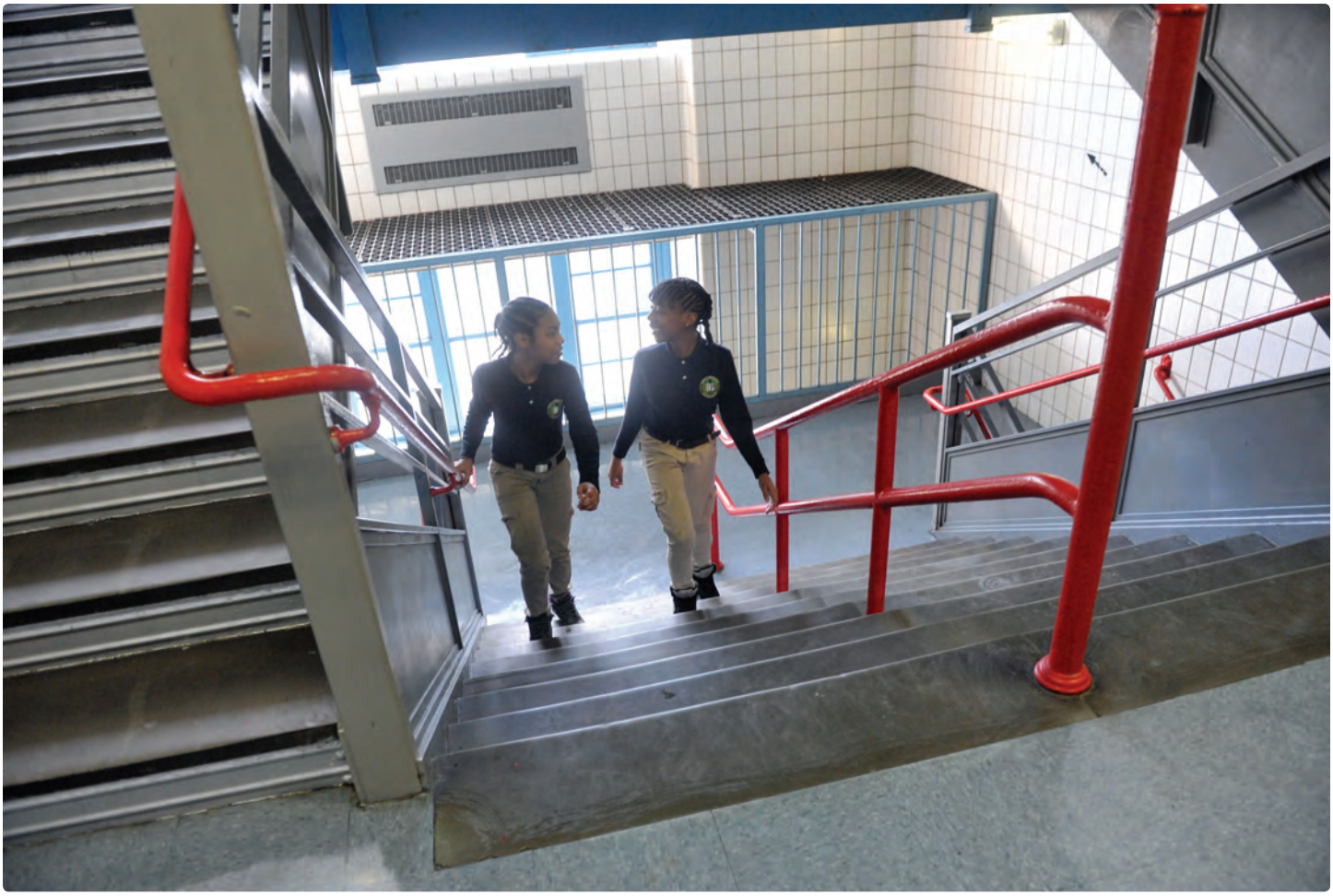
Though public, they are not run by the NYC Department of Education; instead they are governed by independent, not-for-profit boards of trustees, and authorized and regulated by public agencies (including the New York State Education Department). Charter schools operate according to the terms of a performance contract or "charter." Charter schools commit to meeting specific academic goals, then make their own decisions about how to achieve them. If the goals are not met, the charter may be revoked and the school closed.

Because they are independent from the district system, charter schools have greater flexibility in the way they operate. Charter schools are free to develop their own academic programs, set budgets, choose staff, set educational goals, offer a longer school day and school year, and establish their own standards for student behavior. Enrollment at a charter school is always by a parent's choice, never mandatory.

Charter schools are tuition-free and non-sectarian. Students are admitted by a random lottery, without regard to their academic background. Charter schools follow state standards and participate in state exams. They are subject to health, safety, non-discrimination, and open meetings laws, as well as specific regulations to ensure fair admissions and prevent conflicts of interest.

Charter schools commonly open their doors with only one or two grade levels, then gradually "build out" by adding one grade level per year until they reach their authorized grade range.

WHAT **CHOICES** DO NYC CHARTER SCHOOLS PROVIDE?



Steady Growth, Popular Demand

In their thirteenth year of operating in New York City, charter schools now serve 47,000 students in 136 schools, spread across all five boroughs. There is at least one charter school in 28 of the 32 Community School Districts (CSDs), but a large majority (77%) are clustered in three areas: Harlem, Central Brooklyn, and the South Bronx.[1] Since families must actively choose charter schools, the sector's steady growth can be attributed to citywide demand from parents for better educational choices.

NYC charter schools serve all grade levels, but most are elementary schools. They may be authorized by the New York State Board of Regents, the Trustees of the State University of New York (SUNY), or the NYC Schools Chancellor. The Chancellor has not authorized new charter schools since state law changed in 2010.

Most charter schools have been open for less than five years.

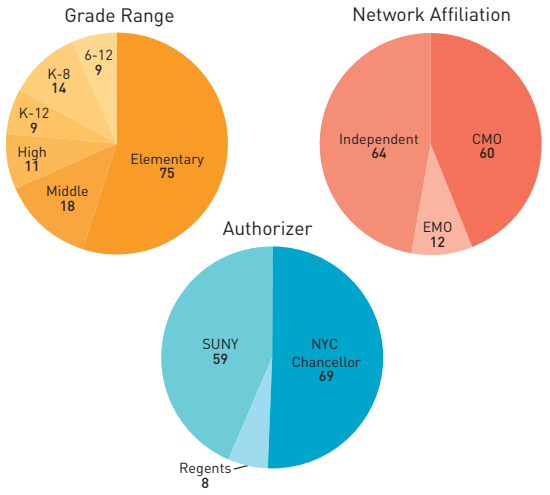
About half of charter schools are affiliated with a network, in most cases a nonprofit Charter Management Organization (CMO). A dozen charter schools contract with a for-profit Education Management Organization (EMO), but new charter schools are no longer allowed that option.[2]

5 applicants per available seat

in NYC charter schools' admissions lotteries (estimated, spring 2011)[4]

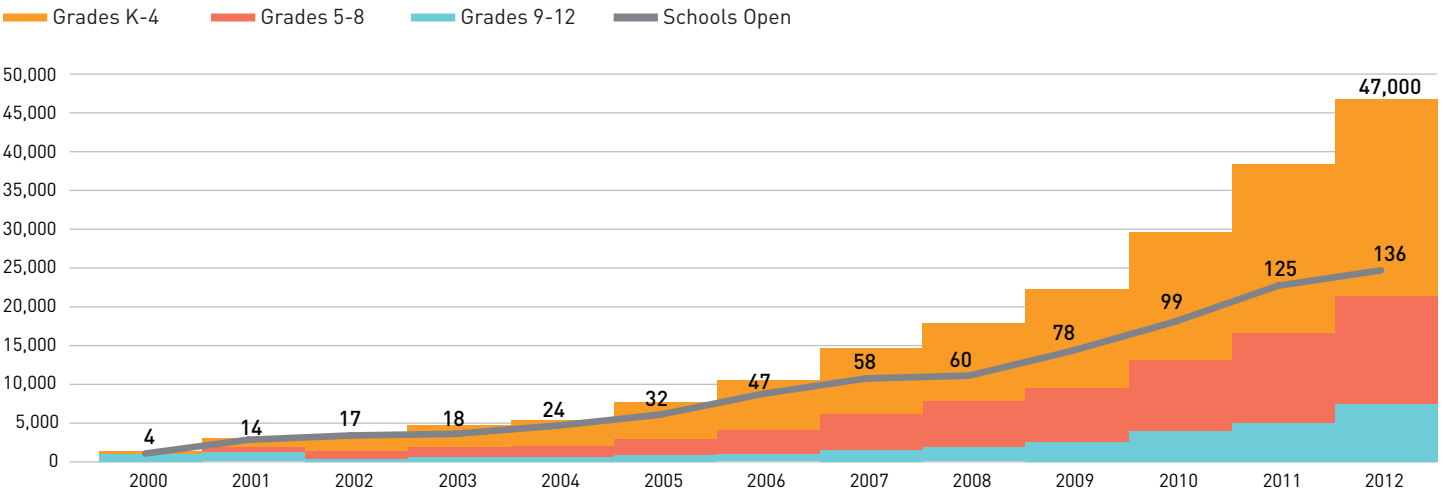
Source: Charter Center survey and analysis

NYC CHARTER SCHOOLS BY GRADE RANGE, AUTHORIZER, AND NETWORK AFFILIATION, 2011-12



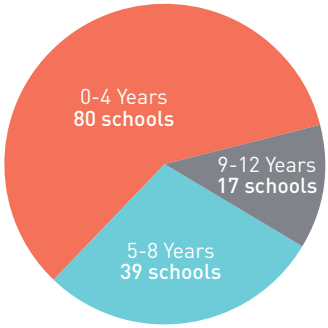
Source: Charter Center analysis

TOTAL ENROLLMENT IN NYC CHARTER SCHOOLS, 2000-2012[3]



Source: NYS Report Cards, Charter Center analysis

NYC CHARTER SCHOOLS BY YEARS OF OPERATION, 2011-12



Source: NYS Report Cards, Charter Center analysis

LAST YEAR, IN 2010-11, CHARTER SCHOOL STUDENTS ACCOUNTED FOR:

3.9% **of all public school students in NYC**

5.6% of public school students in grades K-5

9.2% of public school students in Harlem, Central Brooklyn, and the South Bronx[5]

25.1% of public school students in CSD 5 (Harlem)

Source: NYS Report Cards, Charter Center analysis

Extending School Choice

In many cities and school districts, the ability to choose among public schools is a novel proposition. Not so in New York City. The NYC school system is full of public school options, including many schools that practice selective enrollment of one form or another. The result is a public school system in which the word "public" does not imply any particular form of enrollment or selectivity. Traditional neighborhood-based admission is in effect at most elementary schools, about half of all middle schools, and virtually no high schools. The other public schools are all, to some degree, public schools of choice.

New York City's non-charter school choices include specialized high schools; high schools that enroll students through a mutual "matching" process; middle schools where admission is "screened" by test scores and even personal interviews; and schools for gifted and talented students. There are magnet schools, dual-language immersion schools, and zoned schools that are high-performing, but require residence in an expensive neighborhood. Families of students with special needs also often sue the NYC Department of Education (NYC DOE) to obtain placement in private schools, entirely at public expense.

In a city with options like these, *whether* there is school choice is not the relevant question so much as which students are given choices, and which choices, under which terms? Many charter school leaders would respond with a more pointed question: Why shouldn't disadvantaged students have the high-quality public school choices that other students have always had?

Charter schools extend families' options through a choice that does not depend on test scores or interviews, but does require a parent to complete a simple application form (see p.11). Once those forms are submitted, the enrollment lottery is random, with preference for students in the local CSD. This structure, not exactly "zoned" nor "selective," puts charters schools in a somewhat unique place on the school choice landscape. Like any enrollment policy, the charter school choice structure influences the characteristics of incoming students.[6] As a result, comparisons of schools' results must be made with great caution.

Does the parent "market" for charter schools react to test scores?

Since families must actively choose a charter school, do they avoid schools with poor academic results? Comparing charter schools' average proficiency rates to the applications they received per seat, two interesting patterns emerge.

Parent demand is significantly correlated with test scores. For every 10 percentage points its scores increase in proficiency, a charter school with 50 open seats can expect 100 additional applications.[7] This suggests that parents are sensitive to academic results. (And the link is still significant when controlling for the scores in the local CSD.)

Yet almost every charter school has more applicants than seats.[8] Even the lowest-performing charter schools operate at full enrollment, which means that their motivations to improve academically do not include financial pressure. If the "market" alone does not enforce charter schools' promises of high achievement, then charter authorizers must—by enforcing high standards and closing schools that fail. In some cases, however, the charter school being closed may still be the best option in the neighborhood. There is no easy answer to parents who see this outcome as unfair.

Is it difficult to apply to a charter school?

As public schools of choice, charter schools require parents to proactively indicate their interest by submitting an application form prior to the admissions lotteries, which are conducted each April for the following school year. While the need to apply may influence the characteristics of students who ultimately attend charter schools (see discussion on p. 15), it is important not to overstate the effort required.

A charter school "application" consists of one short and simple form, which asks for only basic information about the student. Since November 2011, the NYS Education Department has mandated that charter schools require *only* the following information:[9]

About the Student
Name
Date of Birth
Gender
Home Address
School District / CSD (if known)
Grade Applying for
Enrolled Sibling, if any

About the Parent/Guardian
Name
Relationship to Student
Phone Number

Charter schools may optionally request other information if it relates to approved preferences for at-risk students. They may not consider "measures of achievement or aptitude" or "require any action by a student or family (such as an admissions test, interview, essay, attendance at an information session, etc.)" in order to receive or submit an application.

Most charter schools work extremely hard to see that all eligible students have access to the application and know about the choices they have. This year, for the first time, a large majority of charter schools offer a common online application, which further simplifies the application process.

Ideas at Work

Charter schools control their own lessons, budgets, staff, schedules, and culture, with an autonomy no district school enjoys. This flexibility makes the charter school sector a place for new educational ideas to be tried, and for existing ideas to be applied, refined, and re-combined.

Many NYC charter schools operate with a longer school day and year that provides students with hundreds of hours a year of additional instruction. This, in turn, allows charter schools to spend extra time on core subjects yet also provide music, art, science and other enrichment areas. The additional time can also be used for teacher development. Other charter sector hallmarks include practices to reinforce an orderly and college-centered school culture and a professional focus on instructional data. Yet these are only a few themes within a sector whose schools are philosophically diverse, including approaches that are progressive, project-based, Montessori, "No Excuses," and everything in between.

Another emerging area for innovation is in the education and training of new teachers. Already one new graduate school has been founded to educate both charter and district teachers; other programs are deep in the planning stages.

Given this diversity, it is no surprise that little systematic data exists on the new and old ideas at work in charter schools, but here is a sampling.[10]

49 teaching techniques

Best practices named in the "taxonomy" developed by Doug Lemov of the Uncommon Schools charter school network and implemented in Uncommon and other NYC charter schools

135 experiments in Kindergarten

What students complete at Success Network charter schools, through 50-minute lessons every school day

350 extra hours

Annual difference in instructional time at many NYC charter schools, compared to the NYC DOE calendar

$125,000

Minimum teacher's salary at The Equity Project Charter School

Agriculture

High school science sequences offered at The Renaissance Charter School, making use of a rooftop greenhouse to teach students about environmental stewardship

Cheap video cameras

A key tool used to record lessons for later critique at the new Relay Graduate School of Education, which was co-founded by three NYC charter school networks

College Success Office

Arm of the Harlem Children's Zone providing academic, administrative, financial, and emotional support to college-enrolled graduates of Promise Academy Charter Schools I and II

Co-teaching in every class

Uniform practice of using two teachers per class to teach students with and without special needs, in place at a growing number of charter schools

Data Days

Sessions when educators at many charter schools review results from interim academic assessments, administered every six weeks, and adjust their teaching plans in response

"I can't vote, but you can!"

Message of the get-out-the-vote campaign run each Election Day by Democracy Prep Charter School students in grades 6-8

Kounaikenshuu

Japanese practice in which teachers work together to continuously improve curriculum and instruction, and the inspiration for professional development at Harlem Village Academies

Legal help, adolescent health services, and evening meals

Free services available to students at Broome Street Academy Charter School, which focuses on students who are or have been in the child welfare system, or are homeless

Mississippi

Destination of bus ride to honor the Freedom Riders, the culmination of a Civil Rights Practicum at Renaissance Charter High School for Innovation

Mock Doctor's Office

One place to practice real-world interactions at the New York Center for Autism Charter School

Partners

Title given to master-teachers, who replace traditional administrators at Teaching Firms of America Charter School by leading and supervising colleagues while maintaining teaching duties

"Professional Work Day"

Term used in lieu of a specific number of minutes in the collectively bargained teachers' contract at Green Dot Charter School

Quinoa

Example of a lunch menu item—served with Chilled Cucumber Soup, and Tuna with Lime Vinaigrette—prepared on-site by the professional chef at Family Life Academy Charter School

Robot-building

One competitive enrichment activity for students at Inwood Academy of Leadership Charter School

Summer Family Projects

Program used to help students at Bronx Charter School for Excellence integrate and apply learning, while leaving teachers time to rejuvenate and plan

Sustainable Operations

What the Ascend charter school network calls its combination of higher class sizes, teacher supports, and lean administration, allowing schools to operate in private space without philanthropic support

Zest

One of seven character strengths measured on KIPP charter schools' "character report cards," alongside *Grit, Self-Control, Social Intelligence, Gratitude, Optimism, and Curiosity*

WHAT ARE NYC CHARTER SCHOOLS' **RESULTS**?

An Academic Bottom Line

Every charter school's existence depends on its students' academic achievement, judged primarily by standardized test scores. The stakes are highest for the students, for whom a great public school can be life-changing, and can make the difference between high school dropout and college success. Preparing every student for college and career is a daunting and far-off goal, but successful charter school educators have seen too many changed lives to lower their sights.

Because charter schools' mission is to increase academic achievement, it is especially important to take care in evaluating their academic results. Since demographic differences are known to influence achievement, students' incoming characteristics should always be among the factors considered when evaluating their academic outcomes.

This section presents data on NYC charter schools' academic results, viewed alongside the results of district schools. There are academic studies of this topic that control for student characteristics, but at this time the bulk of available evidence does not include student controls. Even without such controls, it is useful and interesting to look at charter and district school results comparatively, to see trends, compare the size of various differences, note surprises, and simply have a reference point. Readers are strongly cautioned not to treat simple test score averages as straightforward measures of school quality, and to keep demographic differences in mind. Differences presented here are not necessarily statistically significant.

Controlled Research Studies

In many states and cities, charter school studies have rarely or never included controls for student characteristics. As University of California economists Julian R. Betts and Richard C. Atkinson recently wrote in the journal *Science*, this is a serious problem: "The potential for self-selection into charter schools is great, which makes naïve comparison of student outcomes at charter schools and traditional public schools misleading. But rigorous research on charters is beginning to appear...."[11]

As Betts & Atkinson note, the NYC charter sector has actually been the subject of multiple academic studies with rigorous controls. Hoxby, Murarka, & Kang (2009) used a lottery-based analysis to compare charter school students with students who applied for charter schools but were not selected in the random lotteries, thus controlling for self-selection.[12] CREDO (2010) used a "virtual twin" method to match charter schools students with district school students with similar characteristics, then compared their academic results.[13] Both studies found a significantly positive effect of attending a charter school on student test scores.[14]

Despite a strong research base, further rigorously controlled studies of academic achievement are well warranted.

What does the "national" research say about NYC charter schools?

When the Center for Research on Educational Outcomes at Stanford University (CREDO) issued its study of charter school achievement in 16 states, it found more charter schools with negative academic effects than positive ones. Yet that study *did not include New York City charter schools*. The next year, CREDO conducted a NYC-specific study using the same methodology and found significantly positive results for NYC charter schools (see p. 15).[15]

Unfortunately, the two studies are regularly confused in NYC charter school debates, with some critics even citing the study of charter schools in other states—while neglecting to mention the NYC-specific research.

The CREDO reports' lead researcher, Margaret Raymond, made the distinction in the *Los Angeles Times*: "Not only were charter schools as a whole better in New York than in any other city we have studied; there also was less range in quality. Although there were some underperforming charter schools in New York City, they made up a far smaller proportion of the whole than in California or the rest of the nation."[16] Raymond went on to speculate about which New York City factors, such as strong authorizers, may have contributed to charter schools' impact.

State Tests for Grades 3-8

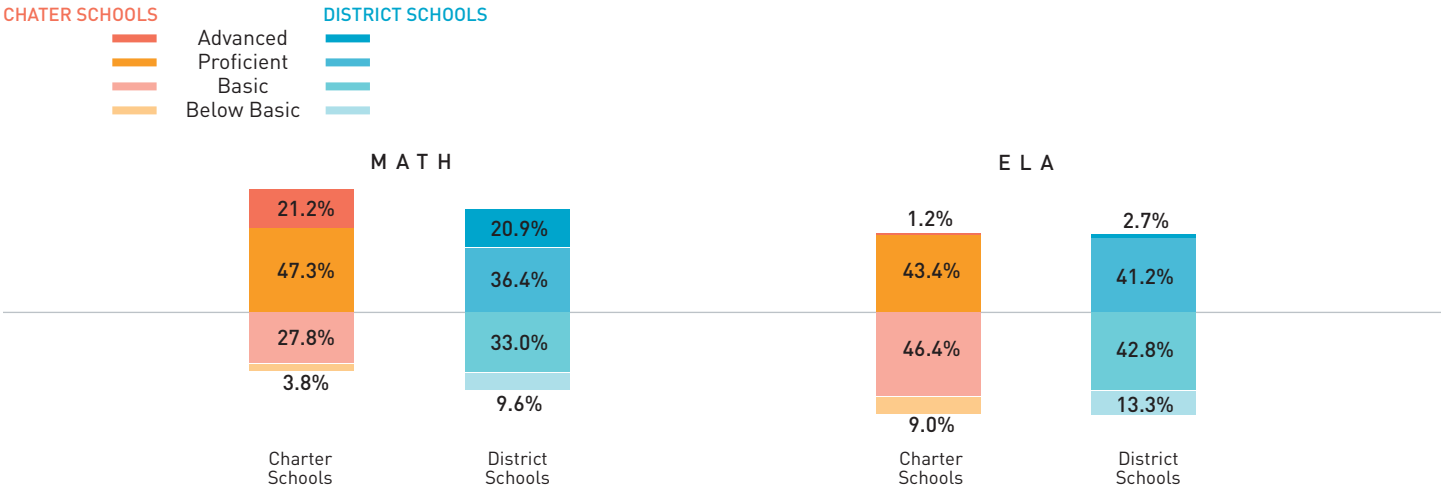
After years of inflated proficiency rates for all New York State public schools, the 2010-11 school year marked the second year of more accurate proficiency standards on the New York State Math and English Language Arts (ELA) assessments in grades 3-8. It also saw the debut of tests that are longer, more writing-intensive, and intended to be less predictable by covering a broader spectrum of the content that students are expected to master in each grade.

Compared to district school students citywide, charter school students scored Proficient at a higher rate in Math, and at a virtually identical rate in ELA. Compared to the CSDs where charter schools with tested grades are located, however, the differences are larger in both subjects (68.5% vs. 52.7% in Math, 44.6% vs. 40.1% in ELA).[17]

Charter school students also exceed the city average proficiency in both subjects at every grade level, except for ELA in Grade 5.

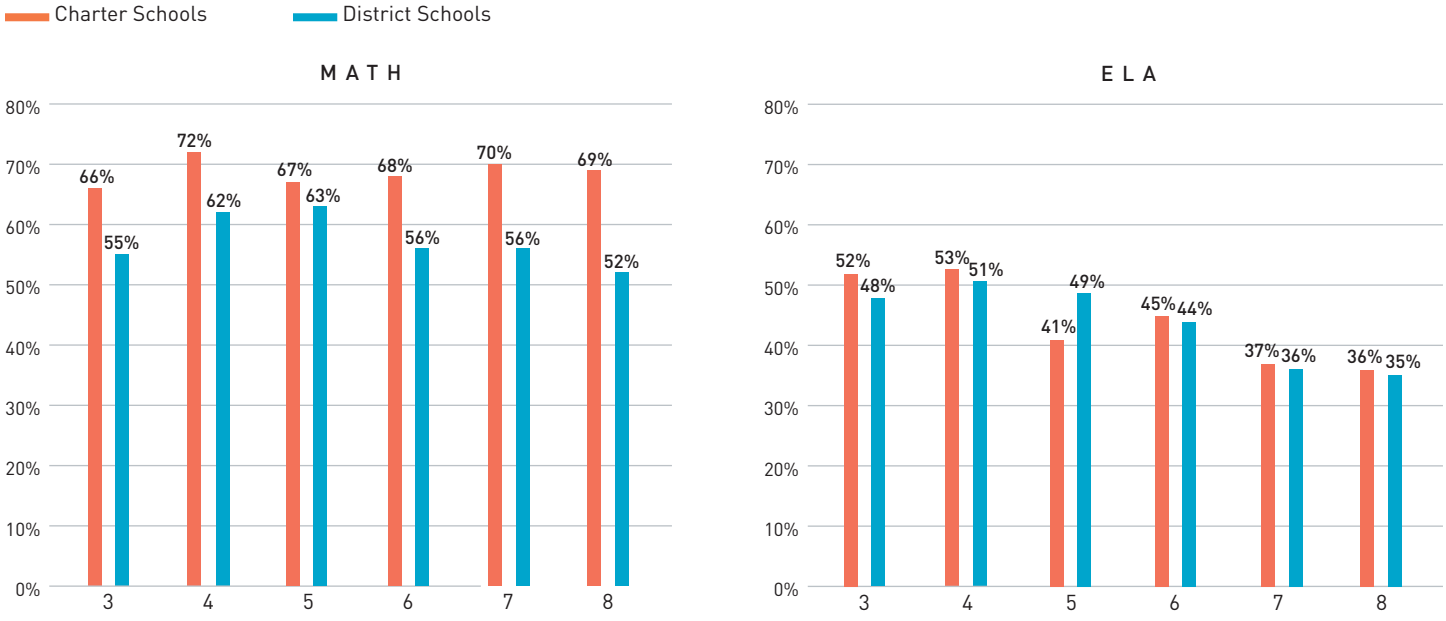
Despite the favorable comparisons, charter school performance reflects some stubborn challenges, particularly with literacy—one of the keys to higher-order analytic achievement. This is consistent with long-standing patterns in district schools. Less than half of all charter school students are Proficient in ELA, and only 1.2% of charter school students scored at the Advanced level, compared to 2.7% for district school students. Charter and district school students scored Advanced in Math more often (21.2% and 20.9%, respectively).

NYC STUDENT PERFORMANCE ON NY STATE EXAMS, 2010-11[18]



Source: NYSED Grade 3-8 State Test Results

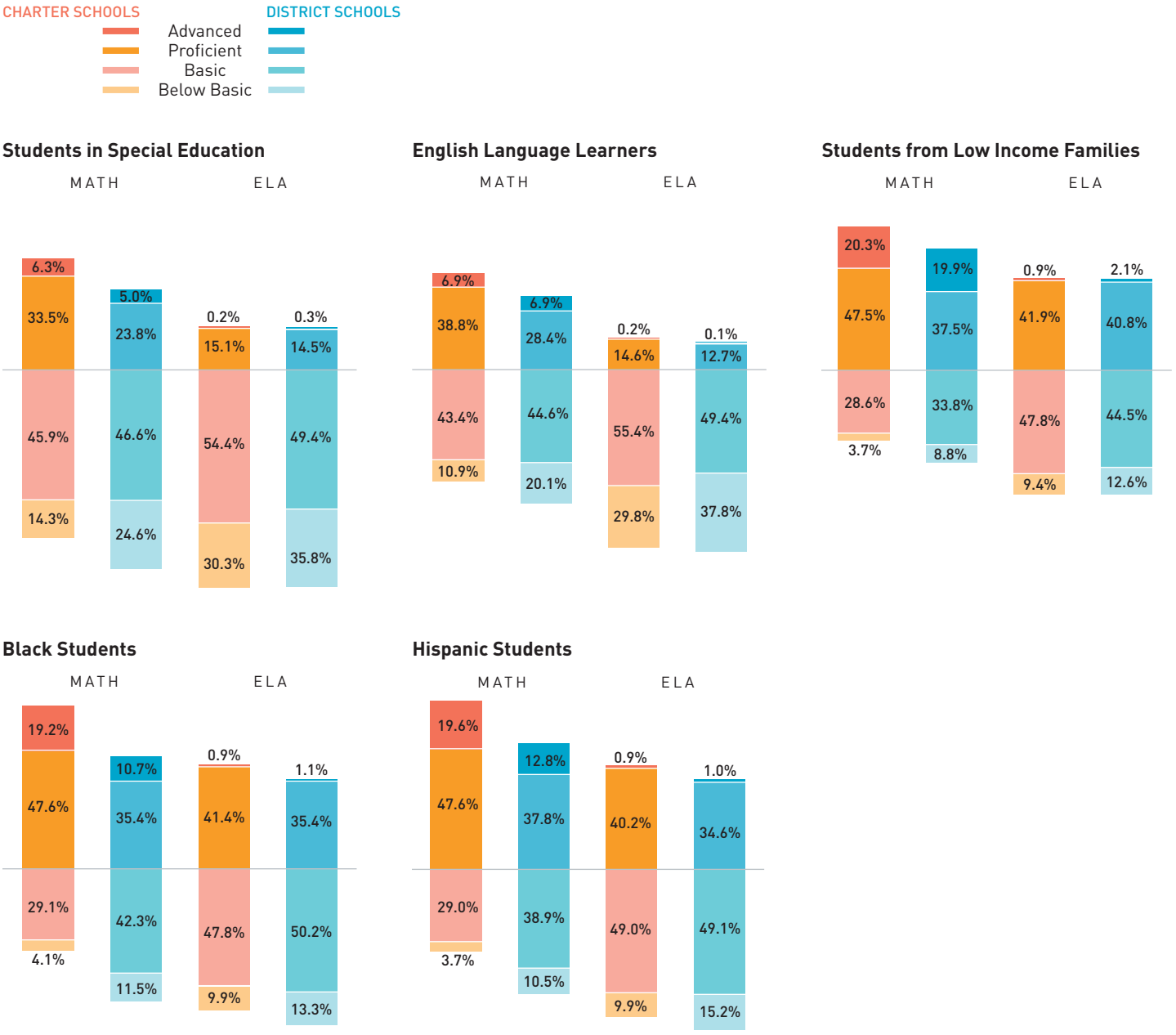
ALL NYC STUDENTS: RATES OF PROFICIENT OR ADVANCED PERFORMANCE, BY GRADE LEVEL, 2010-11[19]



Source: NYSED Grade 3-8 State Test Results

Comparing within student subgroups, charter school students consistently have higher proficiency rates in Math than the district school average. In ELA, charter school students score about the same among the Low-Income, Special Education, and ELL groups. Among Black students and Hispanic students, ELA proficiency is higher at charter schools.

NYC STUDENT SUBGROUP PERFORMANCE ON NY STATE EXAMS, GRADES 3-8, 2010-11[20]



Source: NYS Report Cards

Academic Growth in Middle School

Academic proficiency standards reflect crucial goals, but they are an incomplete standard for evaluating schools' success with students. A student who arrives at school far below the proficiency standard may make dramatic progress in a year, yet still not be Proficient. Similarly, a student who arrives far above proficiency may regress over the year, yet still exceed the standard.

In New York State, the Board of Regents has proposed holding schools accountable using a new combination of proficiency and student *growth*—calculated by a method that compares students' progress against other students with similar scores in the prior year. A similar calculation has been part of NYC DOE's School Progress Reports, although it is not available in unadjusted form. In the next few years, NYC charter schools will likely have public data on student growth from one or both of those sources.

Until that point, one (much rougher and more limited) growth indicator is available: a comparison of charter and district middle school students' test performance to the same students' performance in Grade 4 (where available). This comparison, also from the NYC DOE Progress Reports, shows two interesting patterns.

In 2010-11, there were 29 charter middle schools operating in NYC. Their students had higher fourth-grade proficiency scores than district middle school students, by 0.067 on average (where a full performance level is equal to 1). Overall, 62% of charter middle schools had higher incoming proficiency scores than students at district middle schools in their respective CSDs.

On the other hand, charter middle school students made academic gains as a group since Grade 4, by 0.121 proficiency levels. Nearly all charter middle schools can claim to be moving their students in the right direction.

District middle schools in the same CSDs did not make academic gains as a group since Grade 4, actually decreasing by 0.011 levels. It is not clear how much this pattern may be influenced by students who enrolled in district middle schools without fourth-grade test scores. If such students arrived with academic disadvantages, this measure would be a poor indication of academic growth. At the very least, it is another reason for public school observers to look forward to the release of student growth data.[21]

Regents Exams

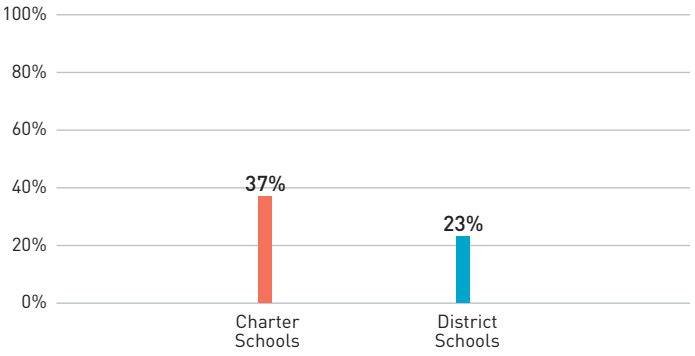
Before considering high school results, it must be noted that the high school share of the charter sector is extremely small; only seven charter schools serving high school grades have had a graduating class. As the high school portion of the charter sector matures, there will be more data available about how charter school students are being prepared for college. In 2011-12, there are 25 charter schools serving high school grades, which means they will all have data on all high school metrics to report in the near future.

In high school, New York State public school students do not sit for grade-level tests. Instead, they take course-culminating Regents exams, which are administered three times per year and may be taken more than once. Students must pass Regents exams in five different subjects in order to graduate.

On the Regents exams in Integrated Algebra and English (which both fulfill graduation requirements), charter high school students passed at a higher rate than students in district high schools. Charter school students reach the top scoring category (at least 85 points out of 100) at the same rate as district school students in English, but a lower rate in Integrated Algebra.

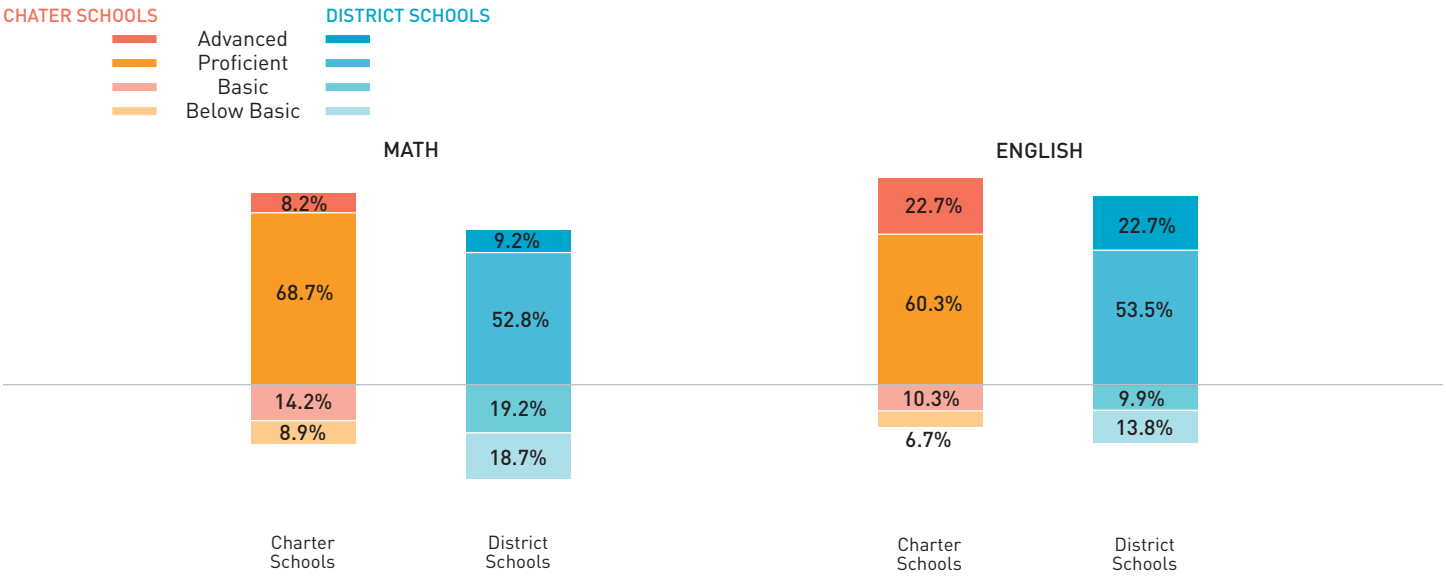
Regents exams are sometimes also administered in grade 8, allowing middle school students a head start on their high school graduation requirements. Eighth-grade students at charter schools are more likely to pass a Regents exam and the corresponding course, thereby earning high school credit, than their counterparts at district schools.

NYC GRADE 8 STUDENTS RECEIVING HIGH SCHOOL CREDIT, 2010-11[23]



Source: NYC DOE Progress Reports

NYC REGENTS PASSING RATE, 2010-11[22]



Source: NYS Report Cards

Graduation and Beyond

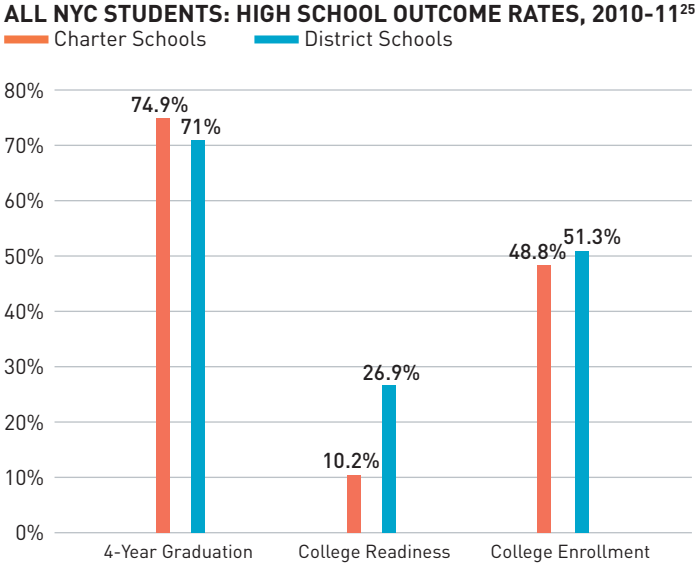
High school achievement is measured by more than Regents exams. A critical indicator, obviously, is graduation rate. Among students who entered high school in the fall of 2007, the graduation rate after four school years (in spring 2011) was higher in charter high schools than district high schools. Of this same cohort of students, however, district high school students demonstrated college readiness by earning high marks on their Regents exams and/or SATs at more than twice the rate of charter high school students.

After high school, college enrollment data are available for the cohort of students who entered high school in fall 2006. District school graduates in this cohort were more likely than charter school graduates to be enrolled in a degree program at a 2-year or 4-year college by December 31, 2010. NYC students who do enroll in college are hardly guaranteed to be successful. Citywide, a large majority (74%) of public school graduates who enroll in CUNY community colleges are required to take remedial, non-credit coursework.[24]

Relying on recent data about high school seniors paints an incomplete picture of the charter sector, however, because only seven charter schools serving high school grades have had a graduating class.

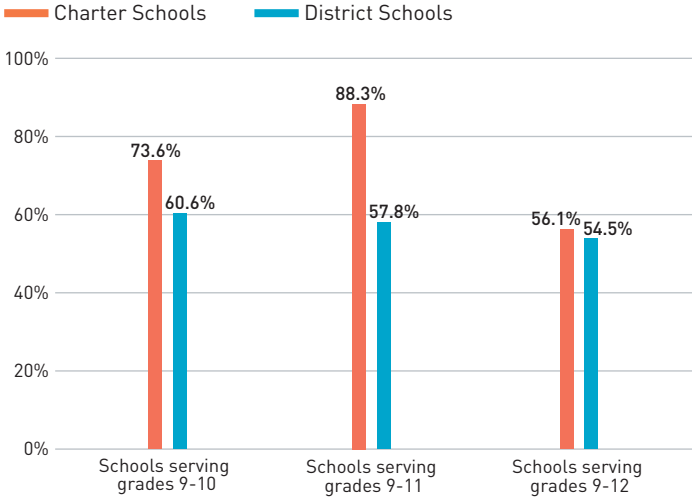
To gain some insight into charter high schools that have not yet built out to 12th grade, it is useful to compare the "completion rate of remaining Regents exams," a metric included in the NYC DOE's School Progress Reports. This metric shows the number of Regents exams that the average student successfully completed during the year, as a percentage of the tests he or she should have passed to be on track for graduation. Among high schools without a 12th grade, Regents completion rates were higher at charter schools than district schools.

ALL NYC STUDENTS: HIGH SCHOOL OUTCOME RATES, 2010-11[25]



Source: NYC DOE Progress Reports

NYC REGENTS COMPLETION RATES, 2010-11[26]



Source: NYC DOE Progress Reports

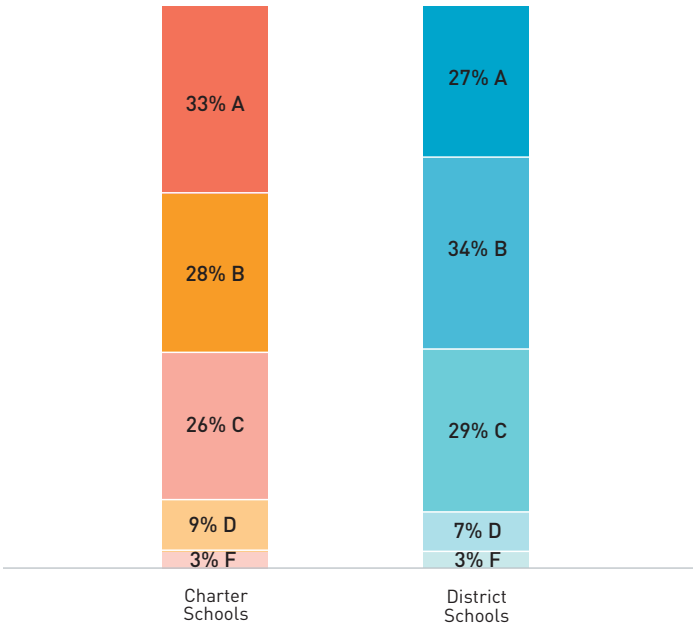
NYC Progress Report Letter Grades

One of the most recognized measures of NYC public school performance is the letter grade assigned to each charter and district public school as part of the annual NYC DOE Progress Reports. Letter grades are based on measures of student performance, student progress, and school environment, with some (but not all) measures weighted by student characteristics. Within each category, a school's results are compared primarily to schools that serve similar student populations, and also to schools citywide that serve the same grade levels. It is important to note that, except for high schools, the grades are assigned from a fixed distribution, which means that NYC DOE pre-determines how many of each grade will be assigned across the city.

Because the letter grades are based on such a complex formula, with weightings based on NYC DOE policy judgments, they should not be viewed as the only "quality" measure of a school. Nevertheless, the grades offer a common point of comparison across all public schools, which—unlike similar systems elsewhere—takes steps to account for student characteristics and to measure student academic progress.

On the 2010-11 Progress Reports, charter schools received a higher percentage of A grades than district schools (33% vs. 27%) and the same proportion A or B grades (61%). Charter schools received a higher proportion of D grades (9% vs. 7%), but the same proportion of C, D, or F grades (39%). Among charter schools, charter middle schools received the highest proportion of A grades (52% vs. 23% for district middle schools) and charter schools serving grades K-8 received the lowest proportion of A grades (22% vs. 26% for district K-8 schools).

NYC PROGRESS REPORTS, PERCENT OF OVERALL GRADES RECEIVED, 2010-11



Source: NYC DOE Progress Reports

Conditions for Success

Spurred by their commitment to be judged by academic outcomes, the best charter schools pay deliberate attention to everything that goes into creating a successful learning community. While the metrics presented below may not be considered educational outcomes, they reflect charter schools' fulfillment of important social commitments—and arguably can serve as leading indicators of academic success.

Parent, Teacher, and Student Surveys

The NYC DOE's "Learning Environment Surveys" gauge the opinions of all teachers, all parents, and students in grades 6-12, at both charter and district schools. The survey poses multiple questions about four topics, resulting in a composite score for each.

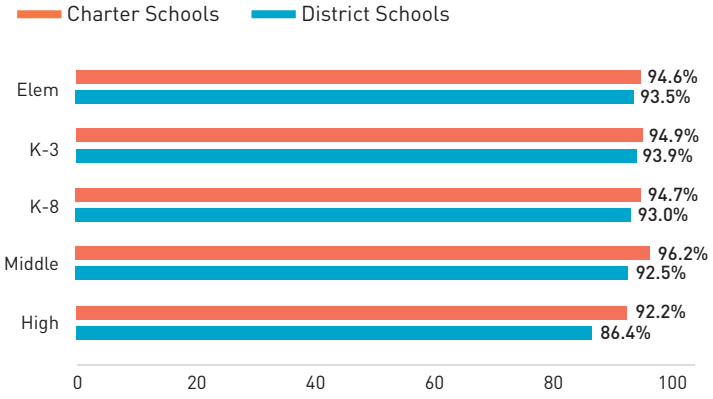
Survey Category	*Questions Designed to Measure...*
Academic Expectations	...whether the school encourages students to "do their best by developing rigorous and meaningful goals."
Engagement	...whether parents, students, and teachers feel "engaged in an active and vibrant partnership to promote learning."
Safety and Respect	...whether "all members of the school community feel physically and emotionally secure, allowing everyone to focus on student learning."
Communications	...whether the school provides "information about the school's educational goals and offers appropriate feedback on each student's learning outcomes."

Looking across categories and school grade ranges, charter schools receive higher average scores in every case, with the exception of Engagement in high school.

Attendance

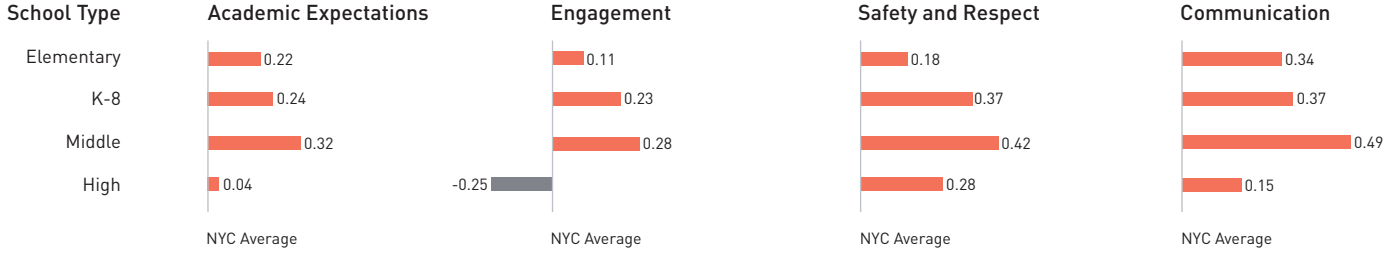
Attendance at school is critical to academic success for each student; for a school community, it can reflect overall engagement with students and families. Compared to district schools, charter schools have higher attendance rates across all grade levels.

NYC DAILY ATTENDANCE RATE, 2010-11[28]



Source: NYC DOE Progress Reports

NYC SURVEY SCORES (2010-11): CHARTER DIFFERENCE VS. NYC DISTRICT SCHOOLS[27]



Source: NYC DOE. Learning Environment Surveys

WHO ARE NYC CHARTER SCHOOLS' **STUDENTS**?

Reaching and Teaching At-Risk Students

One of the original purposes for New York State charter schools was to "increase learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are at-risk of academic failure."[29] The charter sector will always be judged against that mission, which requires a two-part plan of action.

First, charter schools must *reach* at-risk students. To allow that to happen, at-risk students and their families must first learn about the charter school; apply to the admissions lottery (by filling out a simple form); be selected in the lottery, or from a waiting list when a space becomes available; decide to enroll; and decide to remain enrolled over time.

Charter schools can influence what happens at each of these stages by offering an appealing educational experience, actively recruiting students, and doing the labor-intensive work of community outreach. (For many charter schools and networks, proactively soliciting applications requires a substantial investment of staff time and resources.) Depending on the student group, a charter school may also receive permission to employ a lottery *preference* for students considered at-risk, e.g., students receiving special education services, though by law the selection of students always remains random. A number of charter schools have recently implemented such preferences, which are likely to become a more commonly used tool in the coming years.

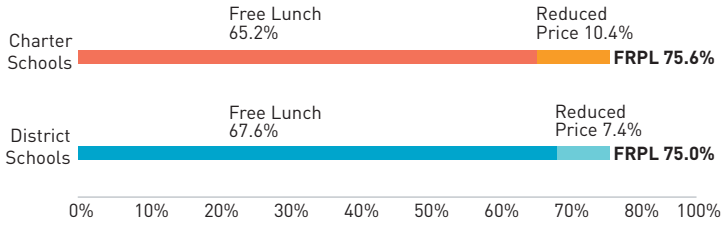
Charter schools' second and crucial task is to actually *teach* at-risk students—to "expand" their "learning experiences," as the law says—and thereby keep risk from becoming reality. Charter school students' academic results were described in the last section. This section describes the students they enroll, including patterns of movement in and out of at-risk categories.

Students from Low-Income Families

One at-risk group is students from low-income families, who are identified by their eligibility for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch (FRPL). Compared to other public schools citywide, charter schools serve an equal share of FRPL-eligible students. Charter schools' share of students in the lowest-income Free Lunch category, though, is smaller (65.2% of all students vs. 67.6%).

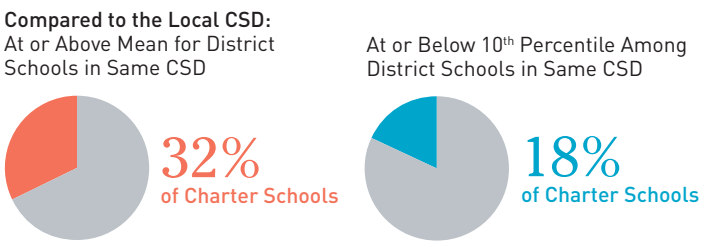
Compared to the CSDs where they are located, however, only 32% of charter schools have an equal or higher percentage of FRPL-eligible students (20% for Free Lunch only). This suggests that, while charter schools serve low-income students in low-income neighborhoods, most have not attracted an economically representative sample of local families.

NYC ENROLLMENT OF STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR FREE OR REDUCED-PRICE LUNCH, 2010-11[30]



Source: NYS Report Cards[31]

ENROLLMENT OF STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR FREE OR REDUCED-PRICE LUNCH, NYC CHARTER SCHOOLS, 2010-11[32]



Source: NYS Report Cards, Charter Center analysis

Students with Special Education Needs

Students with physical, emotional, and/or cognitive disabilities are at significant risk for academic failure.[33] These students may enroll at any public charter school through the lottery process, and a growing number of charter schools place a special emphasis on serving them.

Similar to district schools, however, a given charter school may not offer every special education service that may be listed on a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), but charter schools also have the flexibility to work out alternative arrangements to meet students' special needs—often by inclusion in a mainstream classroom with extra supports.

Compared to district schools in NYC, charter schools enroll a lower percentage of students with IEPs—both citywide and compared to the CSDs where they are located. This pattern varies by grade level: charter schools that first enroll students in Kindergarten have a smaller share of students with IEPs than district schools, but charter middle and high schools have a larger share (see p. 27). This is consistent with the idea that charter schools may be more effective at preventing referrals to special education, but a more detailed study would be required to test that hypothesis.

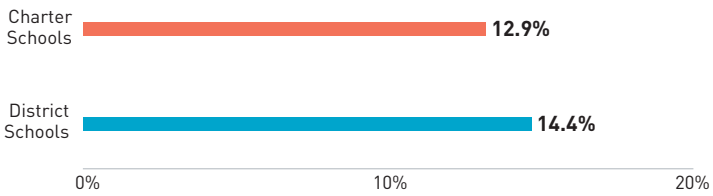
Among such students, charter school students also tend to spend a lower percentage of the school day receiving special education services. This is consistent with the fact that charter schools offer fewer self-contained classes for students with special needs. Many charter schools operate at small scale, which presents a serious logistical obstacle when considering how to offer self-contained classes. Out of several hundred spots, a charter school lottery may select only a few students who require a self-contained classroom, and those students might be spread across different grade levels. The logistical difficulty is exacerbated by the lack of facility funding, at least for those charter schools in private space.

What is the proper response to this situation? Some students with IEPs that require a self-contained classroom can be served better in more inclusive settings. For others, creating a self-contained classroom when even a single student requires it would be financially prohibitive, but allowing lack of scale to become an excuse—and simply referring such students back to the district—is not consistent with the charter school vision. Charter school leaders have been exploring options to provide intensive special services collectively, across charter school networks for example, but the legality of this approach is not clear and charter advocates' legislative efforts to make it easier to accomplish have not gained support.

NYC DOE also tracks which students with IEPs have moved toward less time receiving services. While this is not the appropriate educational decision in every case, movement toward more-inclusive settings can be a sign of student progress and an indication that the school is oriented toward supporting the progress of all students.

Charter schools are more likely to have students who have moved toward spending less time receiving special education services over the last four years, either due to progress made at the charter school or after re-evaluation of an incoming student's needs. In fact, charter school students in special education average nearly one full move across NYC DOE's service classifications over a four-year comparison period.

NYC ENROLLMENT OF STUDENTS WITH IEPs, 2010-11[34]



Source: NYC DOE, Charter Center analysis

ENROLLMENT OF STUDENTS WITH IEPs, NYC CHARTER SCHOOLS, 2010-11[35]

Compared to the Local CSD:

At or Above Mean for District Schools in Same CSD

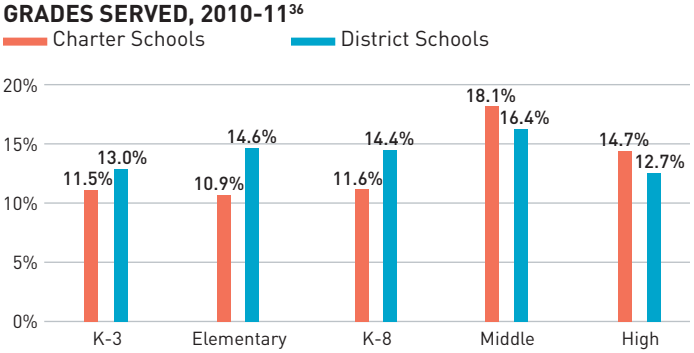
28% of Charter Schools

At or Below 10th Percentile Among District Schools in Same CSD

23% of Charter Schools

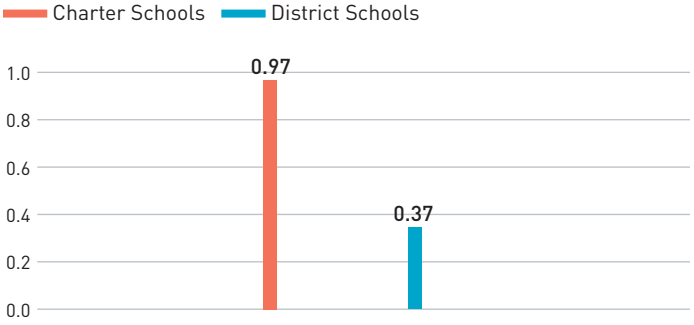
Source: NYC DOE, Charter Center analysis

NYC ENROLLMENT OF STUDENTS WITH IEPs BY SCHOOL GRADES SERVED, 2010-11[36]



Source: NYC DOE, Charter Center analysis

AVERAGE MOVES TOWARD LESS RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENTS (NYC STUDENTS WITH IEPs, LAST FOUR YEARS), 2010-11[37]



Based on classifications of time spent receiving special education services: None (General Education), <20%, 20-60%, >60%. Moves toward more restrictive settings not available, so net movement not available.

Source: NYC DOE Progress Reports

Does NYC over-identify students with special needs, under-serve them, or both?

Special education needs are identified by the schools themselves through the NYC DOE's Committees on Special Education, with input from teachers and with parent permission. As a practical matter such identification can move a challenging student to a separate classroom or even a different school. Given this arrangement, it is fair to ask whether Individualized Education Program (IEP) rates reflect students' underlying needs, or may be distorted by other factors.

In fact, ample evidence suggests that certain students—particularly African-American males from low-income families—are disproportionately identified for special education, and in more restrictive settings. This may be due to many factors such as systematic shortfalls in classroom management or differentiated instruction, or cultural differences. Among students in special education, a higher percentage receives services at least 60% of the day in New York State, than any other state except one. Only Hawaii has a higher percentage.[38]

In New York City, consecutive Schools Chancellors have led an ongoing reform effort aimed to promote inclusive and flexible educational strategies and reduce the number of recommendations for more restrictive settings. Recently, the city's selective middle and high schools have been explicitly instructed to enroll greater numbers of qualified students with special education needs.

Despite nascent reforms, the use of service rates as a proxy for actual disability places educators in a difficult position, setting up a perverse incentive to place students in inappropriately restrictive settings. For charter school educators, this danger will only heighten as charter school authorizers implement the enrollment and retention target-setting process now required by state law (p. 29).

At the same time, there exists a perception that some charter schools have discouraged applications from parents of students with special needs. While there is little documented evidence of this, the perception itself has the potential to depress the number of such parents who apply. Charter school leaders and their authorizers recognize charter schools' obligation to actively welcome all students and prevent ethical or legal violations. There is also increasing interest in using the charter model to create schools that are devoted to serving those children most at-risk, including special needs students.

English Language Learners

Students identified as English Language Learners (ELLs)[39] comprise another group of largely at-risk learners, though one that is extremely diverse. As the National Governors Association notes, "ELLs are a heterogeneous group with differences in ethnic background, first language, socioeconomic status, quality of prior schooling, and levels of English language proficiency."[40]

NYC charter schools enroll ELLs at lower rates than district schools, both citywide and in the CSDs where they are located. The geographic patterns of immigration and housing within individual CSDs do not explain away these differences.

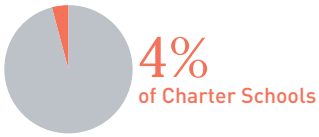
As the word "Learner" suggests, ELL status is not meant to be forever: *all* ELLs should eventually leave the category, which occurs when the student scores Proficient in both components (Reading and Writing, and Speaking and Listening) of the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT). Yet, among citywide public schools, progress in turning ELLs into non-ELL students is woefully scarce. By one study, more than one third of NYC students classified as ELLs by age six are still ELLs by the time they finish seventh grade.[41]

Recent cohort comparisons are not available, but a comparison of proficiency (i.e. passing) rates on the NYSESLAT suggests that charter schools are more successful on average in moving students out of ELL status. More careful study would be required to determine whether ELLs in charter schools have any meaningful differences from the citywide ELL population.

ENROLLMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS, NYC CHARTER SCHOOLS, 2010-11[42]

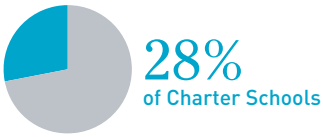
Compared to the Local CSD:

At or Above Mean for District Schools in Same CSD



4%
of Charter Schools

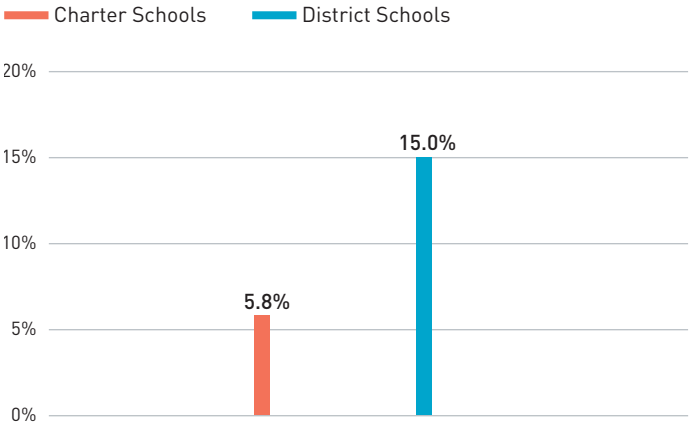
At or Below 10th Percentile Among District Schools in Same CSD



28%
of Charter Schools

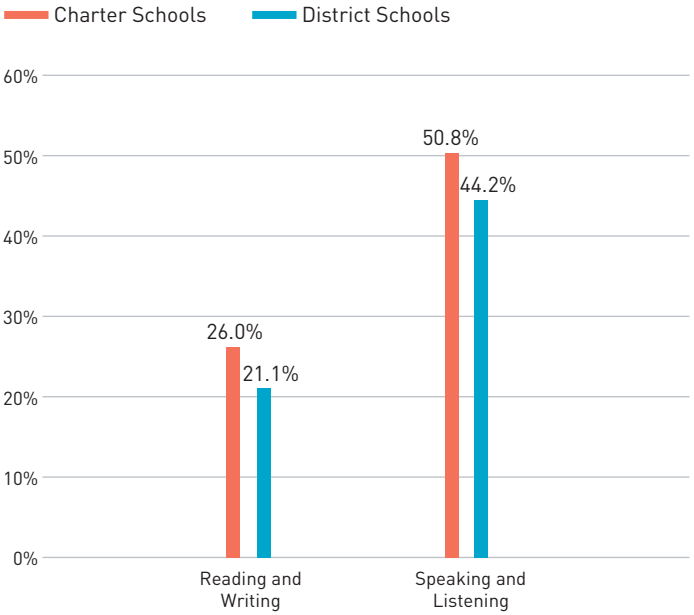
Source: NYS Report Cards, Charter Center analysis

NYC ENROLLMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS, 2010-11[43]



Source: NYS Report Cards

NYC ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS ACHIEVING PROFICIENCY ON NYSESLAT, 2010-11[44]



Source: NYS Report Cards

Race and Ethnicity

Although they are not a pedagogical category, Black and Hispanic* students are often described as being statistically at-risk for academic failure. NYC charter schools enroll more than twice the share of Black students as the overall district school system, and a lower share of every other category of race/ethnicity including Hispanic. There is no evidence that charter schools' racial and ethnic enrollment patterns are caused by discrimination, let alone a desire to "segregate" Black students. There are other explanations, including charter schools' concentration in Black neighborhoods and the fact that Black families show more interest in charter schools than other groups—a phenomenon that is not evident in every state, and deserves more study.

One study also suggests another factor: enrollment trends that self-perpetuate. Hoxby, Murarka, and Kang (2009) find that students who enroll in charter schools, then voluntarily transfer to a district school, are more likely to be White or Asian. The researchers speculate that parents' desire to avoid racial isolation may explain this correlation.

*This is the term used in city and state education data.

NYC ENROLLMENT OF BLACK STUDENTS, 2010-11

Compared to the Local CSD:
At or Above Mean for District Schools in Same CSD

93% of Charter Schools

At or Below 10th Percentile Among District Schools in Same CSD

2% of Charter Schools

NYC ENROLLMENT OF HISPANIC STUDENTS, 2010-11

Compared to the Local CSD:
At or Above Mean for District Schools in Same CSD

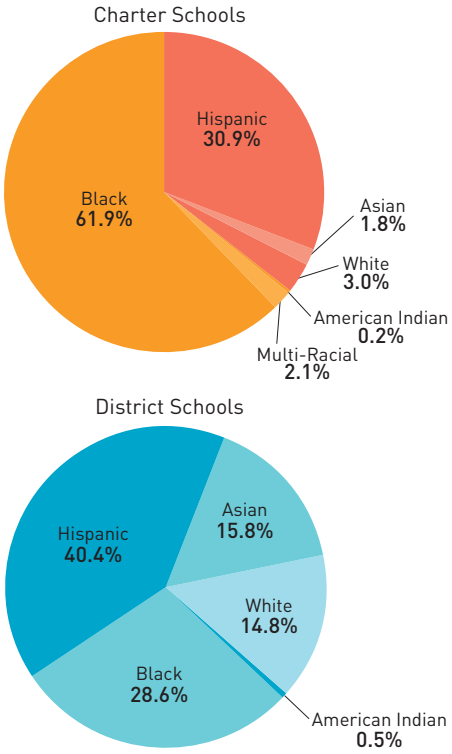
14% of Charter Schools

At or Below 10th Percentile Among District Schools in Same CSD

40% of Charter Schools

Source: NYS Report Cards, Charter Center analysis

NYC CHARTER AND DISTRICT SCHOOL ENROLLMENT BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 2010-11[45]



Source: NYS Report Cards, Charter Center analysis

Do charter and district schools serve "comparable" populations?

When the New York State Charter Schools Act was revised in 2010, a new provision was added to strongly encourage charter schools to be more demographically similar to their local districts or CSDs.

By law, charter school authorizers must set enrollment and retention "targets" for each charter school, in each of three categories: low-income (FRPL-eligible), special education students, and English Language Learners. Failure to meet the targets can result in school closure (via charter non-renewal). The first set of targets will be released later this year.

Can charter schools value diversity, too?

Many families and educators value public schools that are racially and economically diverse. If diversity is important, it can seem odd to compare enrollments of minority or low-income students—as if charters should strive for 100% enrollment of each group. To be clear, this report implies no such thing.

Diversity also creates a political catch-22 for charter schools. If charter schools locate in largely Black and Hispanic neighborhoods, they are accused of segregation; when they locate in middle-class neighborhoods, the charge is that they are "creaming" easier-to-serve students.

Student Mobility

A full view of the charter school sector, and its academic results, also requires a sense of how students enter and leave charter schools over time. For example, if charter schools lose struggling students each year and do not replace them, achievement results in the upper grades will be affected by this pattern. Although data about student mobility is woefully limited, it is possible to glean some general patterns from the available information.

First, state data sources can be used to show how charter schools' individual cohorts change in size from one year to the next—for example, from the fall of the cohort's third-grade year to the fall of their fourth-grade year. Although these calculations only show net changes in cohort size, without isolating patterns of student transfer in and out of the cohort, they can still test for the "shrinking class" phenomenon.

Overall, the average cohort sizes of returning grades shrink at a lower rate at NYC charter schools than at district schools. It is more useful, however, to compare cohort change at different grade ranges. For elementary and K-8 schools, the differences between charter and district schools are negligible.

Charter middle schools tend to see their cohort sizes decrease by about six percent, year to year, while district middle schools grow by more than three percent. At that rate, a charter school with 100 students at the start of sixth grade would open eighth grade with only 89 students; a district school would have 107. (Since that is a net change, many more than seven students may have come and/or gone in the meantime.) Charter high school cohorts also tend to decrease, by nearly seven percent year-to-year, but district high school losses amount to 16% (a rate strongly influenced by dropout).

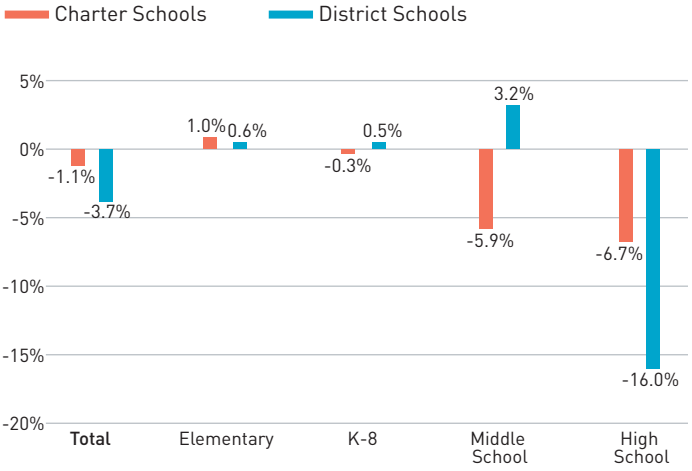
Data on NYC schools' student transfers out (attrition) and in ("backfill") provide some richer detail about enrollment for the 2010-11 school year (between October and May), and for tested grades only. Notably, charter schools have lower rates of transfer in both directions, suggesting a higher level of in-year stability in the student population.

There is no enrollment change information available about the summer period, when many transfers occur.

A central difference between district schools and charter schools is that many charters have the option not to backfill when a student transfers out, rather leaving that seat empty (and foregoing that portion of per-pupil funding). Although many charter schools do backfill, this is a key point of contrast: it is not that charter schools lose more students—it is possible that they lose fewer—but that they do not consistently replace them.

NYC charter school leaders have mixed opinions about backfill enrollment. By one view, charter schools should embrace backfill in order to serve a community mission and be exemplars for the larger school system. Since all students, even

NYC YEAR-TO-YEAR NET ENROLLMENT CHANGE BY GRADE RANGE, FALL 2010 TO FALL 2011[46]



Source: NYS Report Cards, Charter Center analysis

newcomers to the district, must enroll *somewhere*, charter schools should not be out of the question when they have space available.

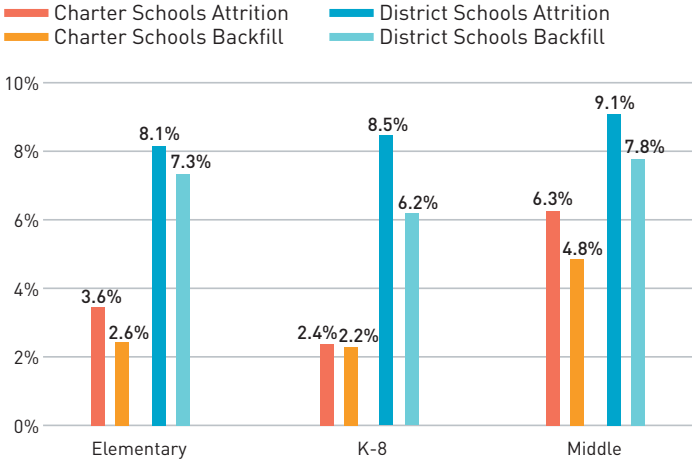
By another view, backfill—especially in older grades—of large numbers of students undermines a promise to families: to take students with large academic deficits, establish an extraordinary culture and work ethic, and put those same students on track for academic success. By this reasoning, a charter school that makes such a promise should be expected to assimilate older students only if they would be academically similar to their new classmates—or could be placed at a more appropriate grade level.

From an observer's standpoint, charter schools' differences in student mobility could color their academic results in two possible ways. To the extent that enrollment change is *selective*, with low performers leaving, charter schools' average test scores would be skewed in a positive direction. The one longitudinal study that has tested this found no significant achievement difference between students who leave NYC charter schools for district schools, and students who remain.[47] Common sense suggests that struggling students may be more likely to leave, but there are also nonacademic causes of attrition. Depending on the charter school and its grade range, students may even leave for positive academic reasons, such as entry into a selective middle or high school.

Enrollment patterns also may have an impact through what researchers call "peer effects," or the impact of being surrounded by one group of classmates rather than another. If charter schools' mobility patterns select for better students, there may also be positive peer effects at work. Yet even if students who remain at charter schools are not better academically, charter school critics point out that they may still be a better "fit" to the particular charter school's culture and expectations. For many charter school leaders, this latter kind of "peer effect" is not an unfair advantage—it's an advantage that more schools should offer. By this logic, schools *should* be full of students who share a common culture of learning, provided that the culture is not defined in an exclusive fashion. Indeed, in a city full of public school choice, a student who leaves one school to find a better fit at another should be considered a success story.

Whatever its possible interpretations, data about student mobility in NYC are incomplete for charter and district schools alike. The more detailed information that can be collected and made public, the better educators and observers will be able to test their theories about this critical facet of life in a district *or* charter school.

IN-YEAR STUDENT ATTRITION AND BACKFILL AT NYC CHARTER AND DISTRICT SCHOOLS, GRADES 3-8 ONLY, 2010-11[48]



Source: NYS Report Cards, Charter Center analysis

What does grade retention have to do with student mobility?

The wildcard at play in charter school student mobility debates is grade-level retention, i.e. students being held back for academic reasons. In 2009-2010 about 4.7% of charter students were retained in grade, according to state data that, unfortunately, does not include district schools.[49]

Grade-retained students are not part of student attrition, a distinction some analysts have overlooked. (It is because of grade retention that we cannot measure student mobility by the size of test-taking cohorts each year, for example.) Still, deciding to hold a student back may affect mobility patterns. In the best case, a successful retention can put a student on track to graduate rather than dropout. Sometimes, though, students who would have been retained in-grade will instead elect to transfer to the school district, which typically has a less demanding promotion standard.

WHAT IS THE **OUTLOOK** FOR THE FUTURE OF NYC CHARTER SCHOOLS?

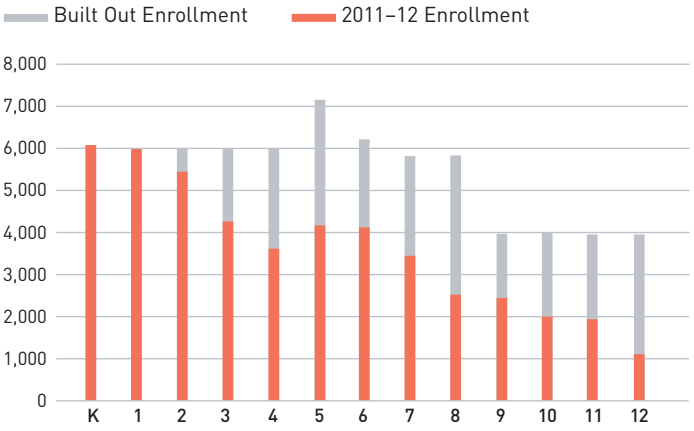
Room to Grow

The NYC charter sector is on a path to continued growth, as existing schools expand and new schools open their doors.

Most NYC charter schools (68%) are still "building out" by adding grade levels each year. Across NYC, existing charter schools have 24,000 authorized seats still to add. Thus, while the sector is now 13 years old, many of its schools are still teaching new grades for the very first time. By fall 2017, it is expected that charter schools will enroll 10% of all NYC public school students.[50] Given past demand, there is every reason to expect that parents will seek to enroll their children in these new and growing schools.

State law limits the number of charter schools allowable in NYC. Under that cap, 116 new charter schools are still allowable, 31 of which have already been chartered to open in future years. As new charter schools open, others may be closed for poor academic performance or mismanagement.

CURRENT AND PROJECTED ENROLLMENT: NYC CHARTER SCHOOLS OPERATING IN 2011-12 ONLY



Source: NYS Report Cards, Charter Center analysis

Building Uncertainty

In New York State, charter schools receive a per-pupil share of each dollar the local school district spends on school operations. When it comes to school ***facilities****, however, charter schools have no reliable source of public funding.*

Since every school needs a building, charter schools around the state make mortgage or rent payments by diverting operating funds, raising private donations, or both. In New York City, there is sometimes another option. NYC DOE houses a majority of the city's charter schools in district buildings, typically in shared space with one or more other public schools. (Such "co-location" is common across the school system. In fact, a vast majority of co-locations are one district school with another, with no charter school involved.) Reflecting the view that all public school students are equally worthy of access to public school space, NYC DOE does not charge an occupancy fee to charter schools (just as it does not charge its own schools). Charter schools must pay use fees, however, when they operate with longer school days and/or school years in DOE facilities.

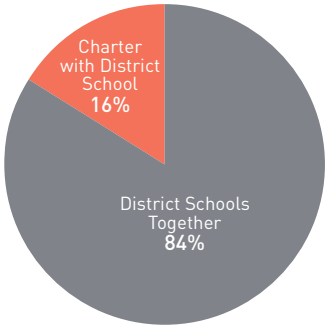
Charter schools' access to district space is in accordance with an important principle: charter schools are public schools, serving public school students, and therefore worthy of public resources.

The principle is not fully reflected in law, however, so charter school co-locations only exist at the discretion of the NYC Schools Chancellor and, in some instances, by approval by the Panel for Education Policy. Co-located charter schools do not even have lease agreements to rely on.

The use of NYC DOE buildings has been, and continues to be, a tremendous boon to the NYC charter school sector, including charter school students and their families. Without free space, the charter sector's present size and growth rate would have been unthinkable. Many of the city's successful charter schools would not exist in such a scenario, with reduced educational options in many disadvantaged neighborhoods as a result.

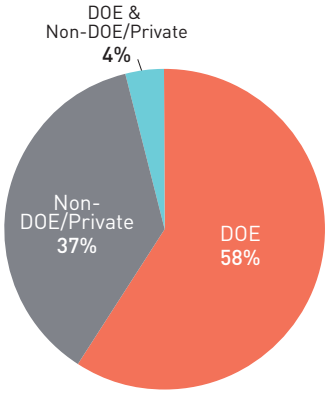
Despite the opportunities provided for by co-location, it is still only a finite opportunity with inherent challenges. Whether or not a charter school is involved, multiple schools sharing a single building is an exercise in communication and compromise. The process to seek co-location creates an enormous

NYC CO-LOCATED FACILITIES BY SCHOOL TYPE(S), 2010-11



Source: NYC DOE, NYC School Construction Authority, Charter Center analysis

NYC CHARTER SCHOOLS BY FACILITY TYPE(S), 2011-12



Source: Charter Center analysis

time and resource burden, and its outcome can be uncertain. Once co-located, the lack of control over an NYC DOE building may limit charter school autonomy. New co-locations require regular attention and communication. Ultimately, of course, most co-located schools work through any conflicts with professionalism, and some even find opportunities to collaborate.

In addition, when a charter school does secure space in an NYC DOE facility, it is not always a lasting solution—even if the school could act as if it had a lease agreement—because many growing charter schools are sited in "incubation" spaces that will not house all the grade levels the schools will ultimately serve. In the coming years, an increasing number of charter schools currently housed in DOE buildings will experience this squeeze, leading them to seek additional DOE space or find resources to secure a non-DOE or private facility.

None of these disadvantages changes the great importance of NYC DOE space to a charter school. Unfortunately, not all charter schools have access to DOE space, which creates a serious resource gap between schools in public and private space. To the extent that the debate over NYC school facilities is about equity, the lack of facilities support available to all charter schools should be recognized as fundamentally unfair. To date, advocates who have historically fought to equalize funding between districts in New York State have not advocated for such equity between charter and district schools.

Are crowded facilities a charter school phenomenon?

No. Critics sometimes point to New York City charter schools co-locating in district buildings as a driving cause for school overcrowding across the city, but an analysis of building utilization rates from the City's "Blue Books" (2009-10 and 2010-11) does not support that theory. On average, co-located schools are less crowded than single-school buildings. **Co-located buildings with charter schools are less crowded than those without, on average (76% vs. 85%)**. Even within co-located buildings that contain charter schools, there tends to be less crowding on the district school side.

These differences are wider than the Blue Book margin of error estimated by the Office of the NYC Comptroller (7.22%). School crowding and charter school co-location are both important, but they are separate issues.

NYC SCHOOL BUILDING UTILIZATION RATES, 2009-10[51]

	Single-school buildings	Co-located buildings	Co-located buildings with charter school
Average utilization	103.7%	84.7%	75.7%
Buildings	991	389	63

Source: NYC Independent Budget Office, Charter Center analysis, both based on NYC DOE building utilization data

Staff Changes

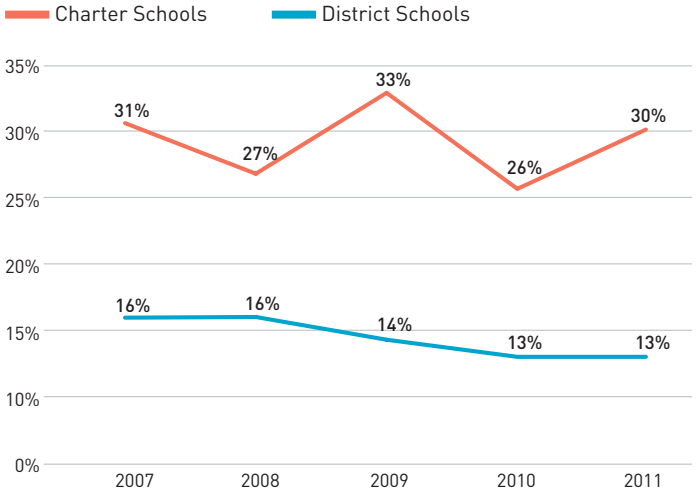
While charter school student achievement in NYC is high, there are myriad factors that, over time, can affect whether it will be sustainable and even improved upon. One of the less-studied aspects of the sector is charter schools' ability to attract, develop and retain effective school teachers and leaders.

Citywide data about charter school educators' professional skills and development are unfortunately scarce, but the New York State BEDS Survey of all public schools provides interesting insight into teacher and principal turnover—although even here the numbers are imprecise. The BEDS data do not capture why teachers left their positions or where they went, so there is no way to tell how many departing teachers left voluntarily vs. involuntarily; how many moved to other charter schools; or even how many left the classroom because they were promoted within the same charter school or network. Even considering these limitations, the trends are striking: 26%-33% of charter school teachers leave their positions annually, while teacher turnover at district schools is in the 13-16% range.

The data on principal turnover are also notable; the BEDS Survey does not report this directly, but it is possible to arrive at a conservative estimate by tabulating changes in the "principal name" field. (Since the Survey is administered once per year, this method of analysis would not capture when a school changes school leaders more than once in a year.) Based on data for school years 2005-06 through 2010-11, the average year-to-year turnover among principals was at least 18.7% for the charter sector, compared to at least 3.6% across district schools.

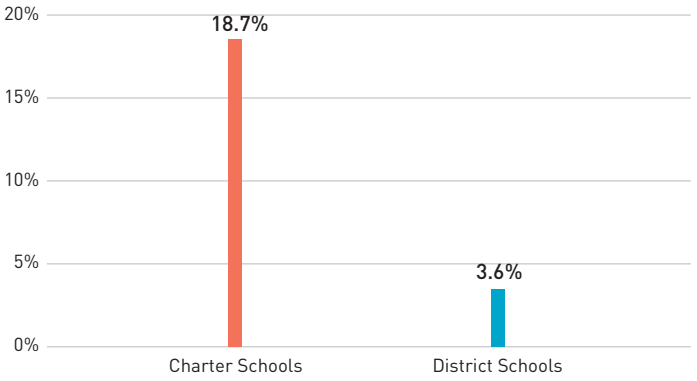
Charter schools' teacher turnover rates may be related to their use of younger and less experienced teachers, who would be more likely to change jobs in any context. In the 2010-11 school year, BEDS data indicate that 29% of charter teachers had no more than three years of teaching experience, compared to five percent of district teachers.[52] Both

NYC TEACHER TURNOVER RATE[53]



Source: NYS Report Cards. Includes turnover due to promotion.

NYC ANNUAL PRINCIPAL TURNOVER RATE (CONSERVATIVE ESTIMATE), 2006-2011[54]



Source: NYS Report Cards, Charter Center analysis

teacher and principal turnover rates may also be influenced by the demanding nature of any school in "start-up mode"—as most charter schools are for years as they recruit students, hire staff, and otherwise build a school from scratch.

To be clear, high staff retention is not an end itself, nor a sign of an effective school. Some schools consistently produce low levels of academic achievement, despite high staff retention. (It was precisely that pattern that led to such strong support for charter schools from legislators, educators and parents in the first place.) There are also instances of "turnover" that can be a net help to a school, as when an under-performing staffer is dismissed, or a successful teacher takes a leadership position as a charter school or charter network grows.

Nevertheless, NYC charter school leaders are paying close attention to turnover. It is financially and educationally costly to lose teachers, especially before they reach their prime years of effectiveness.[55] Losing a school leader may be even more costly, especially for young charter schools still facing the numerous challenges of starting up and building out. Moreover, as the sector scales, increased stability in personnel will become more important. Finding ways to grow capable leaders and keep teachers longer, including through the phase of life when many decide to start families, are goals many charter schools and networks see as critical to sustaining their success, and building on it, even as they grow.

A Movement in Motion

If the New York City charter school sector is in a state of change, its outlook continues to be profoundly promising and exciting. Charter schools have shown their ability to make a positive difference in academic achievement, attracting families and trying out new ideas along the way. With many schools chartered to add new grade levels, and with room to grow under the statewide charter limit, NYC charter schools are poised to become an even more established part of the city's choice-infused system of public schools. As that happens, they will only gain momentum as a force to improve education and raise academic achievement.

Data from public sources highlight several difficult challenges that the charter sector faces. Strengthening academic achievement, especially in the high school grades and in reading and writing, is still job number one. Attracting and retaining effective educators is another challenge, and there is a critical need to maintain access to public facility space.

Also, while differences in enrollment have arisen for many reasons, the task falls to the charter sector to serve more students with disabilities, more English Language Learners, and even more students from low-income families. Doing so would provide expanded opportunity to those students and ensure that charter schools remain relevant to the larger school system. Making progress in these areas is eminently possible, and individual charter schools and networks are already hard at work.

To further this last goal, the sector is also acting collectively, with support from the New York City Charter School Center:

- The sector supported, and will soon be responding to, a new system of targets for the enrollment and retention of special student populations—set by reference to the surrounding district schools.
- A new NYC Special Education Collaborative now connects 125 charter schools and networks for professional development and practice sharing.
- A common online charter school application is in place, with translations into multiple languages, to help more families apply to charter schools with ease. Over 100 NYC charter schools are participating in this project, and at the time of this publication they had received over 21,000 applications.
- Work has begun under New York City's *District-Charter Collaboration Compact*, which promotes sharing and collaboration across different types of public schools.

The NYC charter sector has brought new resources, attention and energy to public education. It has provided choice to parents who previously had little or none, which is why parents are flocking to enroll their children in these schools. Overall, it has improved academic achievement, and become a national model for how much charter schools can accomplish. It has done this through the hard work and dedication of its leaders, teachers, staff, parents, students and board members, who collectively created new school communities that enrich our city's system of public schools with their success. We owe them, as we owe all those who are dedicated to improving public schools, our deepest thanks and our strongest support in the years to come.

Get the Latest

For updates, or to download this report, visit:
www.nycCharterSchools.org/Data

Note on Comparison Methods

This report includes comparisons of charter schools and district schools. Such comparisons reflect the weightings and exclusions described below. Overview figures that do not show comparisons do not reflect weightings or exclusions.

Weightings

Figures that collectively describe "charter schools" / "charter sector" or "district schools" are weighted averages of the results for all charter schools in the indicated grade(s) and school year(s), with the exclusions noted below. Specific weightings are described in the notes below. In general, results are weighted by student enrollment, from the same grade level(s) if possible, and from the same data source if possible.

Exclusions

Charter sector figures exclude two schools: the New York Center for Autism Charter School (an ungraded school serving students with autism) and John V. Lindsay Wildcat Academy (a "transfer high school" for students who have dropped out or are at serious risk of doing so). District school figures exclude special education schools in District 75, all transfer high schools, and all other alternative schools and programs in District 79.

Endnotes

[1] Harlem is defined as CSD 4, 5; Central Brooklyn 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 23, 32; South Bronx 7, 8, 9.

[2] There are also no more than six charters available for charter schools with for-profit management partners, statewide, which remain from a previous version of the law. These charters may or may not go to charter schools with such arrangements in New York City.

[3] 2012 enrollments are projected. Some 2000-2002 grade levels are estimated. All enrollments exclude ungraded students.

[4] Lottery applicants are the estimated unique applicants to the charter sector in Spring 2011; this is not an estimate of total applications.

[5] For neighborhood definitions, see Note 1.

[6] As Commissioner John B. King, Jr. has written of a charter school he co-founded in Boston, "[S]election bias (as a result of requiring parental applications) must be acknowledged as a factor in Roxbury Prep's impressive results..." although other factors mitigate against that bias. "Thus, important lessons can be learned from Roxbury Prep's experience even if one assumes that some portion of the school's success can be traced to student inputs." King Jr., John B. "Fulfilling the Hope of Brown V. Board of Education Through Charter Schools." *The Emancipatory Promise of Charter Schools: Toward a Progressive Politics of School Choice.* Eds. Eric Rofes and Lisa M. Stulberg. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004. 64. Print.

[7] Analysis is based on combined proficiency rates in Math and English Language Arts, on 2010-11 NYS exams. Significance is at $p<0.05$.

[8] Charter Center survey and analysis

[9] New York State Education Department. (2011) *New York State Charter School Uniform Application Form.* Web. 27 March 2012. http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/documents/CSUniformAppFormNov2011.pdf

[10] Selected sources for "Ideas at Work":

Harlem Children's Zone. (2008). *A Look Inside*. Web. 20 Feb. 2012. http://www.hcz.org/images/stories/pdfs/ali_college_success_office.pdf

Otterman, Sharon. "Ed Schools' Pedagogical Puzzle." *New York Times* 21 July 2011, n. pag. Web. 20 Feb. 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/24/education/edlife/edl-24teacher-t.html?_r=2&pagewanted=all

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Tough, Paul. "What if the Secret to Success Is Failure?" *New York Times Magazine*. 14 Sept. 2011: n. page. Web. 20 Feb. 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/18/magazine/what-if-the-secret-to-success-is-failure.html?pagewanted=1&_r=2&sq=kipp&st=cse&scp=3

[11] Betts, Julian R. & Richard C. Atkinson. "Better research needed on the impact of charter schools." *Science.* 335.6065 (2012): 171-172. Print.

[12] Hoxby, C. M., Murarka, S., and Kang, J. (2009). *How New York City's Charter Schools Affect Achievement, August 2009 Report*. Cambridge, MA: New York City Charter Schools Evaluation Project. p. VI-1. Web. 27 March 2012. http://www.nber.org/~schools/charterschoolseval/how_NYC_charter_schools_affect_achievement_sept2009.pdf

[13] Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO). (2010). *Charter School Performance in New York City*, Palo Alto: CA. Web. 27 March 2012. http://credo.stanford.edu/reports/NYC%202009%20_CREDO.pdf

[14] This report does not focus on performance at individual charter schools or networks, but other controlled studies have. See, for example:

Dobie, Will & Roland G. Fryer, Jr. "Are High-Quality Schools Enough to Increase Achievement Among the Poor? Evidence from the Harlem Children's Zone." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*. 3.3 (2011): 158-87. Web. 20 Feb. 2012.

Tuttle, Christina C., Bing-ru Teh, Ira Nichols-Barrer, Brian P. Gill, and Philip Gleason. "Student Characteristics and Achievement in 22 KIPP Middle Schools." Mathematica Policy Research Inc. June 2010.

Teh, Bing-ru Teh, Moira McCullough, and Brian P. Gill, "Student Achievement in New York City Middle Schools Affiliated with Achievement First and Uncommon Schools." Mathematica Policy Research Inc. July 2010.

[15] Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO). (2009). *Multiple Choice: Charter School Performance in 16 States*, Palo Alto: CA. Web. 23 March 2012. http://credo.stanford.edu/reports/MULTIPLE_CHOICE_CREDO.pdf

[16] Raymond, Margaret. "L.A. Could Learn a Lot About Charter Schools from the Big Apple." *Los Angeles Times*. 1 Feb. 2010, n. pag. Web. 20 Feb. 2012. http://articles.latimes.com/2010/feb/01/opinion/la-oe-raymond1-2010feb01

[17] Source: NYSED 3-8 Grade State Test Results, with charter and district school aggregates weighted based on the number of test takers. CSDs 20, 24, 25, 26 did not have charter schools during the 2010-11 school year.

[18] Performance levels are labeled with their informal, conventional names ("Advanced" through "Below Basic"). Officially, the levels are *Exceeds Proficiency Standard* (Level 4), *Meets Proficiency Standard* (Level 3), *Meets Basic Standard* (Level 2), and *Below Standard* (Level 1). "Proficiency" generally refers to Level 3 + Level 4. Charter and district school aggregates are weighted based on the number of test takers.

[19] Charter and district school aggregates are weighted based on the number of test takers.

[20] Subgroup performance data are from NYS Report Cards. Charter and district school aggregates are weighted based on the number of test takers. Students are considered low income if their family participates in economic assistance for one of the following: free or reduced-price lunch (family income below 185% of federal poverty line), social security insurance, food stamps, foster care, refugee assistance, earned income tax credit, home energy assistance program, safety net assistance, Bureau of Indian Affairs, or temporary assistance for needy families. Subgroup test result aggregates are affected by NYSED data suppression rules designed to protect student confidentiality at the school level. https://reportcards.nysed.gov/

[21] Incoming proficiency level is an average of grade 4 ELA and Math exams for all students currently enrolled at the school. Proficiency level gain is the difference between incoming proficiency and 2010-11 averaged ELA and Math proficiency. Charter and district school aggregates are weighted based on individual school sample sizes for the indicated measure as provided by NYC DOE.

[22] A scaled score of 65 or higher is considered a passing Regents score. The district school comparison group includes all non-charter, non-transfer NYC high schools, weighted for number of test takers.

[23] Eighth-grade students receive high school credit for passing both a Regents exam and the course aimed at preparing the student for the exam. Charter and district school aggregates are weighted based on individual school *sample* sizes for the 8th grade high school credit Progress Report measure as provided by NYC DOE.

[24] Logue, Alexandra W. *Evaluating the Impact of College Remediation at Community Colleges and Other Postsecondary Institutions*. Testimony Before the New York City Council Committee on Higher Education. 24 Oct. 2011. Web. 27 March 2012. http://www1.cuny.edu/mu/academic-news/files/2011/11/Testimony_AWL_10_24_111.pdf

[25] The four-year graduation rate is the percentage of students in the four-year 2010 graduating cohort who graduate with a Regents or Local Diploma, including August graduates. The four-year cohort includes all students who first entered high school in the 2007-2008 school year. These are unofficial graduation rates. Official graduation rates for 2010-11 have yet to be released by NYSED. The col-

lege enrollment rate measures the percentage of students in the four year 2010 graduating cohort who graduate and enroll in a degree program at a two- or four-year college or university by December 31 of their graduation year. The college readiness index is included in the NYC DOE annual Progress Reports. This metric measures the percentage of students in the 2011 cohort (all students who entered high school four years earlier) who graduated and met the standards for passing out of remedial coursework at the City University of New York (CUNY), by August 2011. The standards are: (1) graduating with a Regents diploma; and (2) (a) earning a 75 or higher on the English Regents or (b) scoring 480 or higher on the Critical Reading SAT; and (3) (a) earning an 80 or higher on one Math Regents and completing coursework in Algebra II/Trigonometry or a higher-level Math subject, or (b) scoring 480 or higher on the Math SAT. Charter and district school aggregates are weighted based on individual school sample sizes for the indicated Progress Report measures as provided by NYC DOE.

[26] Each year students must pass a certain number of remaining Regents exams to stay on track for graduation. The "Regents completion rate" metric gives the percentage of those Regents passed by students in grade 10 grade or higher. Charter and district school aggregates are weighted based on individual school sample sizes for the remaining Regents completion Progress Report measure as provided by NYC DOE.

[27] Learning environment survey scores are based on responses of parents, middle and high-school students, and teachers on a school survey included in the NYC DOE annual Progress Reports. These scores are recorded in four categories: academic expectations, engagement, safety and respect, and communication. Charter and district school aggregates are weighted based on total October 31, 2010 enrollment. Schools with K-12 grade configurations are classified with K-8 schools, and schools with 6-12 grade configurations are classified with middle schools.

[28] The "attendance rate" is the average daily attendance rate for the 2010-11 school year. Charter and district school aggregates are weighted based on total October 31, 2010 enrollment. Schools' grade configurations are based on progress report classifications, with K-2 and K-3 early childhood schools combined into one category.

[29] See NYS Ed. Law, Article 56 §2850 2.

[30] Students with a family income below 130% of the federal poverty threshold qualify for free lunch. Students with a family income between 130% and 185% of the federal poverty threshold qualify for reduced-price lunch. Counts are based on registered students as of the first Wednesday in October, 2010, and the lunch form status of those students updated by schools up through January, 2011. Charter and district school aggregates are weighted based on overall enrollment on the first Wednesday in October ("BEDS day"). By common practice, students at charter or district schools participating in the Universal School Meals program, an NYC DOE program that allows schools with high FRPL eligibility to give all students free lunch, are counted based on their personal eligibility, and are not automatically assumed to be free lunch eligible.

[31] NYSED data reflect school lunch forms reported in October, as well as updates submitted through January, 2011. Later in the year, school or NYC DOE totals may be higher, especially for charter schools. The new enrollment and retention targets for FRPL eligible students in charter schools will be calculated based on NYSED data.

[32] School data based on registered students as of BEDS day, and the lunch form status of those students updated by schools up through January, 2011.

[33] Students in one of 13 disability categories may have special education needs. Not all disabled students require special education.

[34] Charter school data are based on October 31, 2010 registered students with biographic information updated at the end of the school year. District school data are based on October 31, 2010 registered students. Charter and district school aggregates are weighted based on total October 31, 2010 enrollment.

[35] Charter school data are based on October 31, 2010 registered students with biographic information updated at the end of the school year. District school data are based on October 31, 2010 registered students.

[36] Charter school data are based on October 31, 2010 registered students with biographic information updated at the end of the school year. District school data are based on October 31, 2010 registered students. Charter and district school aggregates are weighted based on total October 31, 2010 enrollment. Schools with K-12 grade configurations are classified with K-8 schools, and schools with 6-12 grade configurations are classified with middle schools.

[37] Charter and district school aggregates are weighted based on individual school sample sizes for the LRE Progress Report measure as provided by NYC DOE.

[38] U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. "Table 2-2. Number of students ages 6 through 21 served under IDEA, Part B, by educational environment and state: Fall 2010" https://www.ideadata.org/arc_toc12.asp#partbLRE

[39] Students are classified as English Language Learners at intake based on Home Language Survey and LAB-R test results.

[40] "Application of Common Core Standards For English Language Learners." *Common Core State Standards Initiative*. Web. 27 March 2012. http://www.corestandards.org/assets/application-for-english-learners.pdf

[41] Success Charter Network. (2011) *The Parking Lot of Broken Dreams: How English Language Learner programs in NYC Hurt Children*. Web. 27 March 2012. http://www.successacademies.org/uploaded//SCN_NYSESLAT_Report_March_2011.pdf

[42] School data are based on registered students as of BEDS day, 2010, and the ELL status of those students as updated by schools up through January, 2011.

[43] School data are based on registered students as of BEDS day, 2010, and the ELL status of those students as updated by schools up through January, 2011. Charter and district school aggregates are weighted based on BEDS day overall enrollment.

[44] Charter and district school aggregates are weighted based on number of test takers.

[45] School data are based on registered students as of BEDS day, 2010. Charter and district school aggregates are weighted based on BEDS day overall enrollment.

[46] Net enrollment change is the percent change in the number of students within expected returning cohorts of students from year to year. Data are from the fall of 2010 to the fall of 2011 from NYS Report Cards.

[47] Hoxby, Murarka, and Kang (2009). See Note 12.

[48] Backfill measures the percentage of students entering a school between October and spring state test administration, in terms of October enrollment. Data are for the 2010-11 school year, from the difference between test time total enrollment and continuous enrollments reported by NYSED for NCLB accountability purposes. Attrition measures the percentage of students leaving the school between October and spring state test administration. Data are for the 2010-11 school year, from the difference between NYSED BEDS day enrollment and test time continuous enrollments reported by NYSED for NCLB accountability purposes on NYS Report Cards.

[49] NYS Education Department, Fall 2010 BEDS Survey Data, by request from NYSED.

[50] Projections are based on historical patterns of size and growth in the NYC charter sector.

[51] See NYC Independent Budget Office, NYC Public School Indicators (2011), adapted from p. 23, Table 3.19. Note that "Number of buildings" is incorrectly labeled "Number of schools" in Table 3.19. Values include District 75 schools, per IBO methodology.

[52] Source: NYS Report Cards

[53] The teacher attrition rate is the percent of teachers who leave the school from one year to the next. The district school comparison group includes all non-charter NYC teachers. The 2011 rate is for the percent of teachers leaving between the 2009-10 school year and the 2010-11 school year. The 2010 rate is for the percent of teachers leaving between the 2008-09 school year and the 2009-10 school year. The 2009 rate is for the percent of teachers leaving between the 2007-08 school year and the 2008-09 school year. The 2008 rate is for the percent of teachers leaving between the 2006-07 school year and the 2007-08 school year. The 2007 rate is for the percent of teachers leaving between the 2005-06 school year and the 2006-07 school year. Charter and district aggregates are weighted by number of teachers.

[54] Principal turnover measures how often schools changed leaders between 2006 and 2011. The metric is calculated by taking one less than the number of leaders a school had between 2006 and 2011, and dividing it by one less than number of years the school was in existence between 2006 and 2011. This gives the percentage of school years in which a school had a new school leader on BEDS day.

[55] For example, see Stuit, D. A. and Thomas M. Smith. (2009). *Teacher Turnover in Charter Schools*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University. Web. 27 March 2012. http://www.vanderbilt.edu/schoolchoice/documents/briefs/brief_stuit_smith_ncspe.pdf Also see discussion in Brill, Steven. *Class Warfare: Inside the Fight to Fix America's Schools*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011. Print.

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