



FAX ALERT

DECADE OF RESEARCH PROVES RECENT DATA FALLS SHORT OF GAUGING TRUE CHARTER SUCCESS

(August 12, 2004) Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is sparking increased debate over how best to measure charter school success. Last year charter schools were asked for the first time to identify themselves as part of the assessment, commonly known as the “Nation’s Report Card.”

Simply, NAEP data alone is not a comprehensive analysis of charter success. Without comparative data that demonstrates students’ progress from year to year, the Report Card falls short of the big picture. NAEP data puts charter schools in the same box as traditional public schools – not taking into account that fact that many charter students enter the classroom two to three grade levels below average.

Fortunately, a myriad of research conducted over the last 12 years has used comparative data in analyzing charter schools. These studies go beyond one-time statistics to take a thoughtful look at the many indicators that measure student progress.

Below is a snapshot of some of this research, the overwhelming majority of which reveals that charter schools are, indeed, increasing student achievement – and doing so among students facing the greatest challenges.

- **Traditional schools increasingly fail.** A 2003 report by the Brookings Institution shows that test scores at charter schools are “rising sharply” and out-gaining traditional schools. Additionally, more traditional schools throughout the nation are being added to lists of failing schools while, over time, more charters are being added to the lists of successes.
- **Charters serve the under-served.** Data shows that charter schools are providing quality education to under-served students at higher rates than traditional schools. For instance, over half of all charters serve populations with over 40 percent of their students considered at risk or dropouts. Still, charters are outperforming traditional schools when gauged on student-to-student analysis. Michigan charters serve more than twice as many minorities and about 1.5 times as many economically disadvantaged students – and 75 percent of these schools saw increased test scores in 2001.

- **Reports show improvement.** Eighty-eight out of 98 major reports issued over the past decade reach the same conclusion – charter schools are improving education for America’s children. In some states, charters dominate academically. Consider Arizona where 17 out of the state’s 25 highest performing elementary and middle schools are charters.
- **Long-term advantages now.** In a 2001 Arizona study widely recognized by those on both sides of the charter debate, researchers analyzed data for 60,000 students and concluded that the longer a child is in a charter school, the higher he/she achieves.
- **Parents are satisfied.** Studies show that in addition to higher student scores, parents are extremely satisfied with their charters’ performance. A study by the New Jersey Department of Education states that 93 percent of parents responding would recommend their charter school to other parents and students.

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The Center for Education Reform (CER) is a national advocacy and research organization working with states and communities to provide more choices in education and better schools for all children. For more information, contact CER at (202) 822-9000 or email mkayne@edreform.com