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**For Immediate Release**

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**CHARTER SCHOOLS PRODUCE STRONG STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**  
*Comprehensive data discounts New York Times account;  
reveals charter schools performing at or above traditional schools*

**(Washington, DC 8/17/04)** Charter schools are helping thousands of low-income and challenged students across the country succeed, despite headlines that appeared in newspapers across the country this morning. *The New York Times* caused a flurry of media activity when it used a single sample from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to inaccurately portray charter performance (NAEP tested less than 1 percent of charter students in 7 states).

Although NAEP provides valuable information, it is necessary to combine that information with more comprehensive data to accurately assess school performance. Such data does exist and clearly demonstrates that charter schools are succeeding at promoting high student achievement among their students.

**NAEP data shows that charter achievement is significant:**

- Fourth grade students in Arizona, California and Colorado charters outperform their traditional public school counterparts in their states in reading. *Note that one third of all charter schools operate in California and Arizona.*
- Eighth grade charter students in Washington, D.C. and California outscored all other public schools in their states in reading.
- Eighth graders in Colorado and Delaware charters schools outperformed 8th graders at all other public schools nationally in reading and math.

**State data substantiates charter success:**

- **Arizona** charter school students perform better than their traditional counterparts. The longer a child is in a charter school, the better he or she achieves, according to a study of 60,000 students in Arizona.
- In **California**, charter schools produce stronger student achievement among low-income students than traditional public schools by a margin of nearly 5 percent.

(more)

- **Wisconsin's** charter schools are doing better than traditional schools based on the results of state tests in 4th and 8th grade for two academic years (this information was announced this week by Dr. John Witte, University of Wisconsin at Madison).
- In **Michigan**, charters showed greater gains than the statewide average in all but one of 10 grades and subjects on the 2003 Michigan Assessment of Educational Progress (MEAP) test.
- Sixty percent of urban charter schools in **Massachusetts** outperformed comparable traditional schools on the 2003 MCAS exams.

#### **National data supports charter achievement:**

- A 2003 national 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.
- National survey data finds that charter schools serve a disproportionate share of children least prepared and most behind. Over half of charters serve populations where over 40 percent of their students are considered at-risk or previously dropped out. For example, the majority of Texas charter schools serve a significantly greater percentage of minority and low-income students – and many of these students have dropped out of traditional public schools.
- A majority of all charter schools serve a minority population of over 41 percent or above.
- According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES 1999-2000), 27.3 percent of the students in charter schools were African Americans – compared to 16.9 percent in traditional public schools; 20.8 percent were of Hispanic origin – 14.9 percent in traditional ones; and 2.3 percent were Native Americans – against 1.2 percent found in traditional ones.

#### **FACTS ABOUT CHARTER SCHOOLS**

- Over 3,000 charter schools serve nearly 800,000 students in 38 states.
- Unlike traditional schools, charter schools not meeting the needs of their students may be shut down. As of January 2004, 311 charter schools have closed, representing 9 percent of all charters ever opened.
- The primary source of data for *The New York Times* was the American Federation of Teachers, whose criteria for support of charter schools matches less than 1 percent of those currently in operation.

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*More data and information on charter schools is available at [www.edreform.com](http://www.edreform.com). 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.*