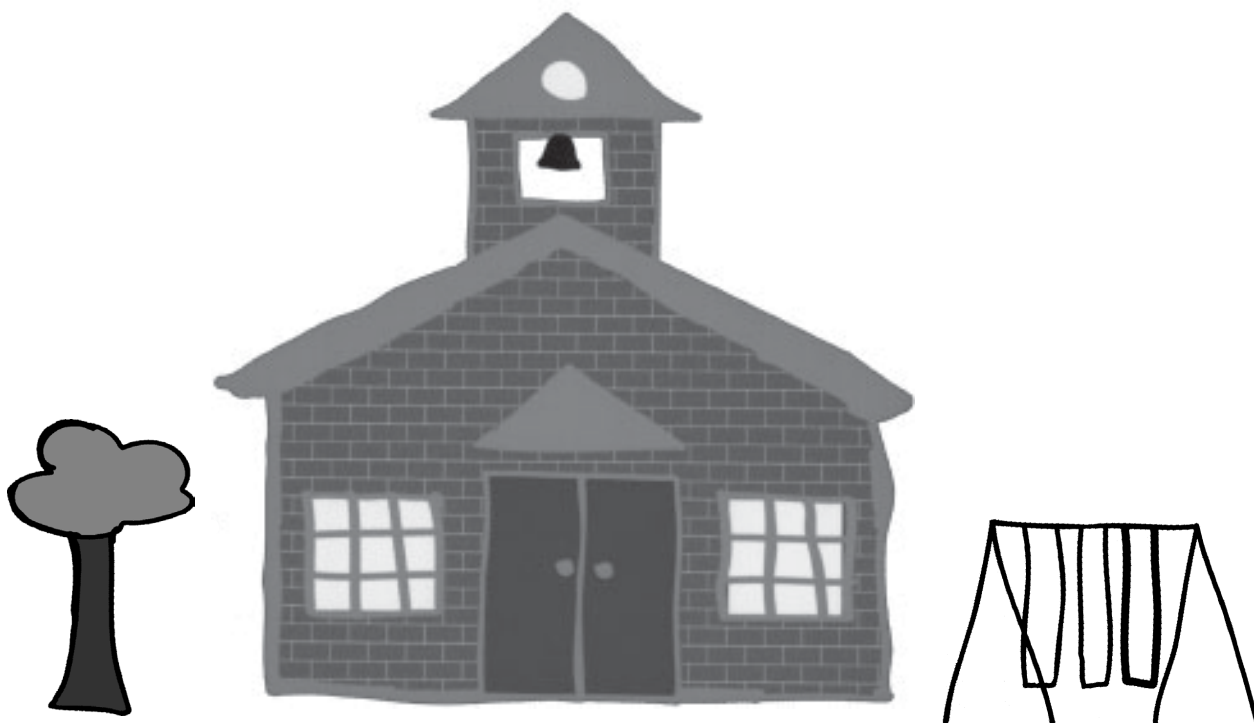




WHAT THE RESEARCH REVEALS ABOUT CHARTER SCHOOLS

SUMMARY AND ANALYSES
OF THE STUDIES



THE CENTER FOR EDUCATION REFORM
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WHAT THE RESEARCH REVEALS ABOUT CHARTER SCHOOLS

Introduction

Three years ago, the Center for Education Reform (CER) conducted a review of all existing research on charter schools, using studies and reports published from the mid-1990s through the fall of 2000. By the end of that review, CER had discovered a trend: of the 53 studies that met the standard for objectivity, the overwhelming majority – 50 – had determined that charter schools were living up to their mandate to be innovative, accountable, and successful.

In the 36 months that have passed since CER first published *What the Research Reveals*, the number of operating charter schools in the nation has expanded from slightly over 2,000 to nearly 3,000. In that same period, the body of charter school research has also grown, standing now at a total of 98 reports having been issued since 1995 — 45 more than were in the original report.

The third edition of *What the Research Reveals About Charter Schools* builds on the first. It contains all the report summaries found in the first two editions, but adds overviews of major research published during the past two years. Where it does not differ from the first two is in the trend that runs through it: charters are doing the job they were designed to do, with 88 major reports now showing that charter schools are improving education for America's kids.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeanne".

Jeanne Allen
President

THE STUDIES

2003

1) Apples to Apples: An Evaluation of Charter Schools Serving General Student Populations (Jay Greene, Greg Forster and Marcus Winters, Manhattan Institute): July 2003

Findings: This study compares charter schools with the traditional public schools most likely to have similar student populations. The authors hope to improve on studies that frequently look only at raw achievement data without accounting for student populations. Nationally, they found that charter schools serving “general student populations” (meaning schools not targeted to specific groups) outperformed the geographically-nearest traditional public schools by about three percentile points in math and two points in reading. In addition, charter students in Texas and Florida significantly outpaced the nearest traditional public schools – by seven to eight percentile points in Texas and six points in Florida. A large percentage of the nation’s charters – those targeting specific groups of students – were excluded from this analysis in order to compare schools with populations similar to traditional public schools.

2) Catching the Wave: Lessons from California’s Charter Schools (Nelson Smith, Progressive Policy Institute): July 2003

Findings: This study analyzes extant research on charter schools in California and finds that charters are performing as desired. The authors find that California’s charters are expanding learning opportunities especially for at-risk students, and are showing faster improvements on the state’s Academic Performance Index (API) than traditional public schools. In addition, they are producing innovations that are being adopted by many traditional school districts, though evidence of a charter competition-induced “ripple effect” appears inconsistent, with some districts changing and others seemingly unaffected. The report ends by calling for an expansion of charters and lowering the restrictions on them.

3) Charter School Operations and Performance: Evidence from California (RAND Corporation): June 2003

Findings: California’s charter schools produce levels of reading and math achievement on par with the state’s conventional public schools, despite employing teachers with fewer credentials, suffering from pronounced facilities shortages, and receiving less money per pupil. In addition, the authors find that charters that started from scratch outperform traditional public schools; conversion charters perform on par with traditional public schools; and charters with a home-based learning component lag behind traditional public schools. This third point is qualified, however, because it is very likely that students schooled at home often have disabilities for which the study could not control. Demographically, charter enrollment is roughly equivalent to traditional schools, with larger African-American, smaller Hispanic, and proportionately equal white populations attending charters.

4) State University Authorized Charter Schools' Achievement on the 2003 State English Language Arts Examination (Charter Schools Institute, State University of New York): June 2003

Findings: Results of the 2003 English Language Arts (ELA) exam in New York show charter schools authorized by the State University of New York (SUNY) are making significantly greater fourth and eighth grade language arts progress than are traditional New York public schools. Taken together with the other charter schools in New York – those authorized by the Board of Regents and the Department of Education – 14 out of 15 charters showed greater improvement between 2002 and 2003 than New York's traditional public schools. The report also reveals that the improvements aren't just taking place at the top, as more charter students exceeded state standards and fewer performed at "Level 1" (serious academic deficiencies).

5) What Parents Think of New York's Charter Schools (Duncan McCully and Patricia Malin, Zogby International/Manhattan Institute): June 2003

Findings: When asked to grade their schools, 42 percent of New York charter school parents assigned their school an "A" grade overall, compared to only 21 percent who gave the same grade to their child's previous school (65 percent reported that their child previously attended a public school). 51 percent gave their charter an "A" for its quality of instruction. In answer to a question about what their previous school did better than their charter, the most common reply (33 percent) was "nothing."

6) Delaware Charter Schools Sixth Annual State Report (Delaware Department of Education): June 2003

Findings: This collection of reports on the state's eleven charter schools offers no statewide analysis, but provides data for each school. All schools taken together, this report shows that students at Delaware's charter schools do at least as well as the students in their host districts, that charter students are consistently making achievement gains, and that charter parents are very satisfied with the education their children are receiving. Because no overall demographic or other state data is provided, no in-depth comparisons were conducted for this report.

7) The Performance of California Charter Schools (Margaret Raymond, CREDO/Hoover Institution): May 2003

Findings: Charter schools at the elementary level outpace traditional elementary schools according to 1999-2001 data based on state Academic Performance Index (API) scores. (2002 data is not used because the tests involved have changed). When charter elementary schools are compared only with elementary schools in districts with charters, their superior rate of growth is even higher. When compared to "local competitor" schools (schools in the same areas) there are no statistically significant growth scores differences, but this is attributed to the fact that California charter schools serve higher proportions of low-performing students. Charter middle schools lagged significantly behind both traditional middle schools and "local competitors," but there are too few schools in the sample to make it statistically sound. Charter high schools have growth scores nearly twice the rate of conventional high schools or "local competitors." Finally, the authors found that teacher credentialing has only a slight impact on API scores, while there is a significant correlation between API scores and school size, with smaller being better.

8) North Carolina's Charter Schools Pass Accountability Test (The League of Charter Schools): April 2003

Findings: Scores on the end-of-grade ABC (North Carolina's accountability system) tests show that students at the state's charters are achieving at roughly the same level as their peers in traditional public schools. In reading, traditional public school students scored an 87.6 percent composite while charter students scored 86.7 percent. In math, traditional publics scored 91.3 percent and charters hit 89.1 percent. Included in the charter scores were nine schools that would be identified as "alternative schools" which, were they traditional publics, would not have been included in score tallies. As charters, however, they were included.

9) The State of Charter Schools in Colorado 2001-02 (Colorado Department of Education): March 2003

Findings: The state's annual report on charter schools suggests that when controlling for race and reduced-price lunch eligibility, Colorado's charters do slightly better than the state's traditional public schools in reading, writing, math and science. Colorado's charters tend to serve fewer minorities and poor kids, but also have a high percentage of schools that specifically target at-risk students. Finally, a finding that especially stands out is that a significantly higher percentage of charters than traditional public schools received accountability ratings of "excellent" (20 percent vs. 7 percent), though a slightly higher percentage were also "unsatisfactory" (7 percent vs. 2 percent).

10) Veteran Charter Schools Outperform Non-Charter on API (Michael Agostini, Charter Schools Development Center): March 2003

Findings: This analysis of base 2002 API scores shows that California charters that have been in existence for five or more years outperformed non-charter public schools and younger charters. Charters in existence for five or more years had an average API score of 708, versus 689 for all publics and 667 for all active charter schools. (The goal for a school is a score of 800.) The report does not measure longitudinal growth (how well individual students progress over time), but when compared to other California studies this one reinforces the notion that the longer a child is in a charter school, the more progress he or she makes.

11) Findings from the 2002 Survey of Parents With Children in Arizona Charter Schools: How Parents Grade Their Charter Schools (Lewis Solmon, Human Resources Policy Corporation): March 2003

Findings: In a survey administered during the 2001-2002 academic year, 66.9 percent of Arizona charter parents assigned their charter schools an "A" or "A+" rating, up from 64 percent a year earlier. Moreover, the percentage of parents giving charters such a grade far exceeds the 38 percent of Arizona's traditional public school parents who gave their schools similar grades in May 2000 (the last time the state conducted such a survey). In addition to the data, researchers found a strong correlation between high grades and parental interest in a school's academics. Academics were also found to be much more influential in grading than were items such as after school programs, technology, or building quality. Finally, arguably the most important finding in the report is that "parents are clearly capable of soundly assessing the quality of a given school," indicating that parents tend to make informed decisions about where to have their children educated.

12) Illinois Charter School Annual Report (Illinois State Board of Education): January 2003

Findings: As in the two previous years, in 2003 the Illinois State Board of Education found that a majority of the state's charters are doing better than similar schools in their home district, but not all are exceeding district scores. The greatest change occurred in Chicago, where seven of the city's charter schools recorded better average scores on the Illinois Scholastic Achievement Test (ISAT) than did other district schools, while only three charters scored below the district average. However, although children in charters come in performing at lower levels of achievement on the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE), because the state's test does not yet measure growth from year to year, its results cannot be used to make absolute comparisons. Illinois' charters and traditional public schools in their districts serve roughly equal minority and low-income populations.

2002

13) Annual Charter School Report 2001-02 School Year (Office of Student Learning and Achievement, Georgia Department of Education): October 2002

Findings: Georgia's charter schools serve slightly lower percentages of minority and socio-economically disadvantaged students than traditional public schools, but slightly higher percentages of special education and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students. Achievement data shows charters doing as well or better than traditional public schools academically. On almost all standardized tests charters recorded gains, exceeding state scores on the Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) for 4th, 6th, and 8th grade Reading and Mathematics, as well as on the Middle Grades Writing Assessment for grade 8. In addition, in all subject areas of the Georgia High School Graduation Tests (GHSGT), charters had greater percentages of students passing on their first try than did traditional public schools.

14) Strengthening Pennsylvania's Charter School Reform: Findings From the Statewide Evaluation and Discussion of Relevant Policy Issues (Gary Miron, Christopher Nelson and John Risley, The Evaluation Center, Western Michigan University): October 2002

Findings: Pennsylvania's charters are making noticeably greater academic achievement gains than similar traditional public schools. They do this while serving disproportionately higher percentages of traditionally under-served students than their host districts, including minorities (63 vs. 54 percent) and free lunch qualifiers (56 vs. 53 percent). However, the authors also point out that charters serve an appreciably smaller percentage of students with disabilities. The teacher attrition rate is also significantly higher in charters than traditional Pennsylvania public schools, though charter teachers are much more likely to report having autonomy in the classroom than are teachers in traditional public schools. Finally, the authors saw little evidence that traditional public schools are changing in response to competition from charters. This report, however, has little scientific data to support that claim.

15) Utah Charter School Evaluation (Center for the School of the Future): October 2002

Findings: This state-mandated study of Utah's charter schools finds that the eight schools in existence long enough to be measured (three years) serve larger percentages of minority and at-risk students than Utah's traditional public schools. It also finds no evidence of "creaming," pointing out that half of the charters examined serve predominantly at-risk and disabled students, and the four remaining schools show no signs of taking the best students. The authors also indicate that there is no indication of a ripple effect, largely because only 1/800th of the state's students attended charter schools. Academic achievement between charters and traditional schools is found to be comparable, with charter elementary schools generally outperforming traditional elementary schools, but secondary charters being surpassed by traditional high schools. This is reported with a strong qualification that no information about academic improvement was available.

16) Evaluation of Connecticut Charter Schools and the Charter School Initiative (Gary Miron and Jerry Horn, The Evaluation Center, Western Michigan University): September 2002

Findings: Charter school students in Connecticut are typically drawn from traditional public schools (89 percent), have disproportionately large minority populations (41 percent black, 26 percent Hispanic), and travel an average distance to school that is more than two times farther than their nearest traditional public school (4.78 compared to 2.18 miles). In addition, though charter students' raw scores on such tests as the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) are lower than their host districts, their rate of improvement is much greater.

17) Michigan Public Charter Schools See MEAP Scores Rise Faster than Regular Public Schools (Kirk Johnson, Mackinac Center for Public Policy): September 2002

Findings: Between 2000 and 2001 Michigan charter school students improved their scores on the Michigan Education Assessment program exams at a considerably faster pace than did their public school peers. In 4th grade reading, charters saw a 43 percent increase in the number of students passing. Traditional public schools saw only 10.1 percent improve. In 4th grade math charters outpaced other public schools 28.3 to 0.5 percent. Finally, 7th grade reading scores at charters outpaced traditional publics by 55 to 28.8 percent.

18) South Carolina Charter Schools: Five-Year Evaluation Report (Weaver B. Rogers, Ph.D. and Associates): July 2002

Findings: Because of the small number of charter schools and students in South Carolina, this report offers no definitive conclusions about charters there, including achievement data. It reveals, though, that more than 40 percent of charter students are minorities and over a third receive free lunches. In addition, 94 percent of charter school teachers are certified, and charters tend to have consistently smaller classes in subjects like math and English.

19) Texas Open-Enrollment Charter Schools Fifth-Year Evaluation (Texas Association of School Boards): July 2002

Findings: Charter schools in Texas serve significantly larger African-American (41 percent vs. 14 percent) populations than traditional public schools and more than a third serve populations that are composed of more than 75 percent at-risk students. Reflective of this service to historically under-served populations, Texas charters produce significantly lower raw scores on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) than traditional public schools, and a much larger percentage of charters are identified as "low performing." However, when individual student achievement data is analyzed, the researchers found TAAS passing rates for charter students increasing quickly, and students who stay in charters longer have greater gains than students newly arrived at charter schools.

20) Texas Charter Schools: Do They Measure Up? (Matt Moore, National Center for Policy Analysis): June 2002

Findings: Though charters in Texas struggle in their first couple of years, for students who remain in them for at least two consecutive years achievement improves at a much faster rate than at other public schools. For instance, for such students in open enrollment charters, Texas Learning Index (TLI) scores increased 1.6 points in reading and 2.8 points in math, versus 1.4 and 1.5 points, respectively, in traditional public schools, between 1999 and 2000. In addition, this study reports that much of Texas charters' initial score lags can be explained by the typically under-served populations with which they

work; 39.7 percent of charter students are African American, though they comprise only 14.4 percent of traditional public school students. In general, charters also cater disproportionately to at-risk kids.

21) Annual Report to the Governor, The Temporary President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the Assembly on the Status of Charter Schools in New York State in the 2000-01 School Year (The New York State Department of Education): May 2002

Findings: Charter schools in New York serve populations that are 68 percent African American and 18 percent Hispanic. Valid achievement data is not available in this report because no longitudinal scores were recorded to demonstrate progress, and for several of the charters the scores represented first year, baseline data.

22) State of Charter Schools 2000-01 (Colorado Department of Education) March 2002

Findings: In general, with the exception of the 9th grade Reading assessment, Colorado's charter schools surpassed state averages on the 2000-01 Colorado State Assessment Program (CSAP). Charters also outscored economically and ethnically "matched" public schools, indicating that charters did not surpass state average scores simply because they have, in some cases, fewer minority students and students eligible for free and reduced price lunches. The report also notes that since 1997, the percentage of charter students eligible for free or reduced lunches has increased by 40 percent.

23) Charter Schools in New York: A New Choice in Public Education (Charter Schools Institute: State University of New York): March 2002

Findings: This report finds that SUNY-sponsored charter schools initially start out with students who are much worse academically than student populations in the traditional public school districts from which they come. For instance, the average charter school enrolled a population scoring only a 95.3 across all tests on the state's School Performance Index (SPI). The average sending district scored an SPI of 114.8 on the same tests for the same year. (The major cities discussed are New York City, Rochester, Albany and Buffalo.) In addition, the authors identify a charter "ripple effect," citing the implementation of new education programs in districts hosting large numbers of charter schools; advice issued by the New York State School Boards Association urging its members to view themselves as competing for students; and the conversion of five New York City district schools into charters.

24) California Charter Schools Serving Low SES Students: An Analysis of the Academic Performance Index (Simeon Slovacek, Antony Kunnan and Hae-Jin Kim): March 2002

Findings: This study compares charter and non-charter public schools serving high numbers of children from poor socio-economic backgrounds, and concludes that poor children in charter schools perform better than children in non-charter public schools. In schools with at least 50 percent of their students in the Free and Reduced-price Lunch Program, charter schools' scores on California's Academic Performance Index (API) improved by 22 percent, versus 19 percent for non-charter public schools. In schools with 75 percent Free and Reduced Lunch participation, charter schools' scores improved by 28 percent, four percentage points better than non-charter schools. The study also discounts as factors in student achievement such items as school day length, type of instruction, and length of time a school has been open.

25) Making the Grade: Comparing DC Charter Schools to Other DC Public Schools (Mark Schneider and Jack Buckley, FOCUS): March 2002

Findings: Using a survey of parents and econometric statistical analysis, this study compares Washington, DC charter schools to traditional DC public schools. The authors find that DC's charters have teachers that are better regarded by parents; have cleaner, more stimulating school buildings; and are given higher overall grades by parents, even when controlling for non-school factors that often bias opinion surveys. However, there is no achievement data available in this report.

26) Illinois Charter School Annual Report (Illinois State Board of Education): January 2002

Findings: As in the previous year, the 2002 Illinois State Board of Education found that a majority of the state's charters are doing better than similar schools in their home district, but not all are exceeding district scores. Data also show that Illinois' charters and traditional public schools in their districts serve roughly equal minority and low-income populations.

2001

27) 2001 New Jersey Charter Schools Evaluation (KPMG): October 2001

Findings: This study shows that charter students in New Jersey are making faster progress than students in their districts of residence on assessments such as the math section of the Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA) and the language arts portion of the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA). Also highlighted are charters' disproportionately large minority population, smaller average class sizes (19 vs. 21 students), greater instructional time (on average, 40 minute longer days and years that are 25 days longer than districts of residence) and better faculty attendance rates. Finally, it focuses on the "extremely high" parental and student satisfaction rates for charter schools.

28) U.S. Department of Education: Challenge and Opportunity: The Impact of Charter Schools on School Districts (John Ericson and Debra Silverman, RPP International): June 2001

Findings: Charters do affect how school districts behave, confirming the "ripple effect" theory of charters. More than half of the school districts became more customer service oriented, increasing the frequency of their communications with parents as a result of competition from charter schools. As a result of charter school growth, most districts implemented new educational programs, made changes in educational structures in district schools, or created new schools with programs that were similar to the local charter schools. After examining 49 districts with the highest critical mass of charters in five states, the study concludes that districts do make positive changes in their educational services and district operations as a result of charter schools.

29) Navigating Newly Chartered Waters: An Analysis of Texas Charter School Performance (Timothy Gronberg and Dennis Jansen, Texas Public Policy Foundation): May 2001

Findings: Continuing students in charter schools have greater improvement in their Texas Assessment of Academic Skills test scores in both reading and math than do continuing students in traditional public schools. At-risk charters are performing well and have a positive value-added effect relative to traditional public schools. Students moving into a charter, however, often exhibit a first-year drop in Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test scores. Charter schools serve larger percentages of African-American students and at-risk students than do traditional public schools, and the study also notes that charter schools are cost efficient and achieve a given level of student performance at a lower expenditure per student than a comparable traditional public school district.

30) A Study of Charter School Accountability (Paul Hill, Robin Lake, and Mary Beth Celio, Center on Reinventing Public Education, Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs, University of Washington): April 2001

Findings: Although charter schools experience start-up periods of confusion, operators quickly learn to maintain the confidence of authorizers, families, teachers and donors in order to focus on providing quality instruction. The study concludes that conventional school district offices concentrate on detailed compliance-oriented oversight, rather than performance-based oversight. Agencies unaccustomed to working with individual schools sometimes deal with charters "by the book" more severely than they treat conventional public schools.

31) The State of Charter Schools in Colorado, 1999-2000: The Characteristics, Status and Performance Record of Colorado Charter Schools (Colorado Department of Education): March 2001

Findings: More than 90 percent of the charter schools use more than one assessment tool to measure different dimensions of student learning. The average score of the charter schools on the Colorado Student Assessment Program exceeded the state average by a significant margin, and also exceeded the scores in “matched” public schools. Charters’ student population is nearly as racially diverse as the state’s public school enrollment. Most charter schools offer a program that serves students continuously from elementary through middle school, from middle school through secondary school, or throughout K-12. Forty-two percent of charters enroll 200 students or less, and the schools offer a diverse array of education programs and instructional approaches.

32) Does Charter School Attendance Improve Test Scores? The Arizona Results (Lewis Solmon, David Garcia, Kern Paark, The Goldwater Institute): March 2001

Findings: This study concludes that the longer a student attends a charter school, the greater the academic gains, with no similar result in district school students. Charter students generally are making greater gains in reading and about the same gains in math as traditional public schools. The research also suggests that mobility within the charter sector is usually better than stability in a district school. Also noted is that charters do not “cream” the best students, and that charter school students starting with lower average test scores in math and reading were more likely to be classified as special education, were less likely to be gifted, and were more likely to be white and to speak English. The study looked at 40,000 to 60,000 students who spent one to three years in charter schools or who have been enrolled in comparable district schools. The analysis controls for race, gender, grade level, number of days absent, Limited English Proficiency (LEP), years in the district, and gifted/special education identification.

33) Illinois Charter School Annual Report (Illinois State Board of Education): January 2001

Findings: Academically, some charters are doing better than similar grades in their home school district, but not all are exceeding district scores. However, parental satisfaction is high. The report concludes that charter schools have been successful for the students they serve and that, although they have been in existence “for only a brief period of time, they are serving as seeds of change in their local communities.” Data also show that Illinois’ charters and traditional public schools in their districts serve roughly equal minority and low-income populations.

2000

34) Annual Charter School Report for Georgia, 1999-2000 School Year (Georgia Department of Education): October 2000

Findings: Academic performance at the 20 charter schools operating for at least three years shows slightly better performance between 1997 and 2000. Eight schools showed stable or increased achievement on all tests, three schools showed decreasing achievement over the same time period and results at the remaining schools were mixed. Charters in Georgia served a smaller proportion of minority and socio-economically disadvantaged students than did the state. The participation rate of students with

Limited English Proficiency was similar to the state, while the gifted and talented and special education rates grew higher than the state.

35) Autonomy in Exchange for Accountability: An Initial Study of Pennsylvania Charter Schools (Gary Miron and Christopher Nelson, The Evaluation Center, Western Michigan University): October 2000

Findings: The proportion of low-income students enrolled in charter schools is roughly comparable to host districts, and charters enroll a significantly higher proportion of nonwhite students (80 percent) than host districts (57 percent). Parents choose charter schools mainly because of the perceived quality of instruction, dissatisfaction with the previous school or the charter's academic reputation. Half the schools require parent volunteerism, and 25 percent of parents report that they volunteer more than three hours per month. Curricular innovations in charter schools often come in the form of a focus on a particular ethnic or cultural perspective, social and vocational skills, or a form of individualized instructional plans for all students. As a group, schools for which there is data outgained their host districts by 86 points (on a 600-point scale).

36) Innovations in Charter Schools: A Summary of Innovative or Unique Aspects of Michigan Charter Schools (Kim Reynolds, The Evaluation Center, Western Michigan University): July 2000

Findings: Charter schools are to some extent innovative, since many have taken traditional practices or new practices and recombined them to fit their particular needs. Marketing is an innovation in accountability, and charters are now accountable for accommodating parents' requests. Charter schools have had some influence on the district public schools, prompting traditional public schools to create additional thematic schools focused on a particular educational philosophy – most prevalently the expansion of back-to-basics and Core Knowledge schools.

37) An Evaluation of the Michigan Charter School Initiative: Performance, Accountability, and Impact (Jerry Horn and Gary Miron, The Evaluation Center, Western Michigan University): July 2000

Findings: Competition from charter schools appears to have spurred districts to offer new services. Parents are not transferring their children back and forth between charters and traditional public schools, with charter school growth coming mostly from kindergarten students and those who did not previously attend traditional public schools. The charter school initiative has provided additional choices and options for parents and children. In elementary school, on the Michigan Educational

Assessment Program tests, charters open for five years both outgained and had higher maximum scores than host districts on 4th grade reading, while science rates outscored the host district. A school-by-school comparison of individual charters and their host districts reveals many charters significantly outgained their host districts. Because of the nature of many charter high schools (i.e., serving at-risk students), a direct comparison with the host district's high school was deemed inappropriate.

38) Texas Open-Enrollment Charter Schools, Third Year Evaluation: March and July 2000

Findings: In comparing Texas charter schools with traditional public schools, it was found that charters contain higher percentages of African-Americans (33 percent vs. 14 percent), Hispanics (43 percent vs. 39 percent), and economically disadvantaged children (52.6 percent vs. 48.5 percent). More recently opened charters tend to serve a higher proportion of African-American, Hispanic, and special education populations than those opened longer. More than half of charter school students, most of which were at risk of dropping out, passed all TAAS tests given, with at least 67 percent passing at least one. The percentage of at-risk students in charter schools passing all TAAS tests increased by 15.9 points vs. a 5.2 point increase for all state students.

39) Does Charter School Competition Improve Traditional Public Schools? (Paul Teske, Mark Schneider, Jack Buckley and Sara Clark, SUNY-Stony Brook): June 2000

Findings: Charter competition has not induced large changes in district-wide operations, despite significant numbers of students leaving districts schools for charter schools, because state policymakers have created a cushion to alleviate any financial effect of departing students on districts. States provide resources to districts to "prop them up." Despite the mitigated effects of competition, however, the authors found widespread evidence of school officials responding to charters, especially where superintendents were already pre-disposed toward reform of their operations. Faced with competition from charter schools, principals do adopt more innovations at their schools. This study also finds that charters are more consumer-friendly, treat parents better than traditional public schools, and may be evolving as substitute for private schools.

40) Initial Study of Pennsylvania Charter Schools (Western Michigan University, Gary Miron, The Evaluation Center): Spring 2000

Findings: A complete survey of staff, student, and parents in Pennsylvania charters for school year 1998-99. This survey finds that 82 percent of charter teachers are certified (Pennsylvania law requires at least 75 percent), that they are well qualified, attrition is low, and attitudes toward facilities and salaries are mixed. Enrollment of boys and girls is even and minorities (mainly African-Americans) make up 75 percent of charter enrollments. Most of who had previously been in traditional public school, and parents tended to choose these schools in search of something better. Parents of charter students are not the privileged, with an even split between single and two parent homes, and only 32 percent of parents holding college degrees.

41) A Report on Philadelphia Charter Schools: Facing Challenges, Forging Solutions, (Drexel University/Foundations): May 2000

Findings: This study examines what helps or hinders charters, finding that the lack of funding, unclear policies, and local district tensions impede charters negatively while community support and thorough communication helps charters succeed.

42) Community Schools in Ohio: First Year Implementation Report (Ohio Legislative Office of Legislative Oversight): March 2000

Findings: Based on the experience of the first 15 Ohio charter or “community” schools, the report finds that most charter operators started their schools in response to deficiencies in traditional public schools, but start-up obstacles affected their first year in operation, including difficulty getting start-up money, finding facilities, and recruiting experienced teachers. Community schools enroll a higher proportion of minority and poor students and have attendance rates that compare favorably.

43) U.S. Department of Education: National Study of Charter Schools, Fourth Year Report: January 2000

Findings: This report describes various operational details and effects of charter schools as of the 1998-99 year. It also documents the high waiting list numbers at 7 of 10 charters, and confirms that only four percent of all charters have closed down. The median student-teacher ratio is slightly below traditional public schools at 16 students per teacher, and most charter schools are small. Nationwide, students in charter schools have similar demographic characteristics to students in all public schools. However, charter schools in some states serve significantly higher percentages of minority or economically disadvantaged students. White students made up about 48 percent of charter school enrollment in 1998 compared to about 59 percent of public school enrollment in 97-98. Charters enroll slightly higher percentages of poorer children, and nearly identical numbers of LEP students. The reported percentage of children with disabilities is about three percent less than traditional schools at eight percent on average. 9 out of 10 charters are held accountable for student achievement, compliance with regulations, and student attendance.

44) Colorado Charter Schools Evaluation Study: The Characteristics, Status and Performance Record of Colorado Charter Schools (Colorado Department of Education): January 2000

Findings: This review of successes and failures of Colorado charter schools in the 1998-99 school year finds that performance of charters on state assessments is stronger than sponsoring district averages and when compared to other socio-economically similar traditional schools. Most charters were meeting or exceeding the goals set out in their contract. In addition, level of parental involvement, waiting lists, and satisfaction were all high. Charters are diverse in size, philosophy, and programs, but student populations enrolled in charter schools did not reflect the same diversity as in the state as a whole.

1999

45) Massachusetts Charter School Profiles, 1998-99 School Year (Massachusetts Charter School Resource Center): December 1999

Findings: This yearly review of the status of charter schools analyzes demographics, such as the fact that 43 percent of charter school students are racial or ethnic minorities compared with 23 percent on average in the state. Thirty-eight percent of charter school students are from low-income families compared to a state average of 26 percent, and demand continues to exceed supply, with a ratio of 5.1 interested applicants for every one slot. In May 1998, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tested proficiency of students in fourth, eighth and tenth grade in several core areas. Statewide averages fell in the “need for improvement area” but some charters showed promise. On average, charter school students scored about five points higher than students in host districts, including one charter (Francis W. Parker Charter) which had the third highest combined score among state high schools.

46) Making a Choice, Making a Difference? An Evaluation of Charter Schools in the District of Columbia (Jeffrey Henig, Michele Moser, Thomas Holyoke and Natalie Lacireno-Paquet, The Center for Washington Area Studies, The George Washington University): November, 1999

Findings: Charter schools in the District of Columbia have found an eager clientele, now enrolling one out of every 10 or 11 students in DC. Charters offer a smaller size and more intimate settings and most offer a special emphasis or theme to distinguish themselves from traditional public schools. It has also been found that they are not creaming the top pool of applicants. The charter school concept in many respects represents an extension of ongoing District efforts to reform education through decentralization and choice. Good and caring teachers, open and supportive attitudes toward children and their families, and an emphasis on achievement, draw parents to charter schools. There is a lack of support and personnel in the Board of Education to address charters’ questions and concerns, leading to tension and outright hostility.

47) First Annual Arizona Charter School Parent Satisfaction Survey (Arizona: Human Resources Policy Corporation, Lewis Solmon): October 1999

Findings: Surveys of 13,812 parents of charter school students statistically analyzed provide insights into parent attitudes from 1999. Thirty-one percent of parents rated their school an “A+” in terms of quality and 35 percent rated their schools an “A.” Only 14 percent rated their schools a “C,” “D” or “F.” The survey results indicate that fewer parents rated their previous school as an “A,” suggesting that charters are largely attracting dissatisfied parents. A high percentage (72 percent) of parents said they would reenroll their child in the charter school.

48) School Choice Policies in Michigan: The Rules Matter (David Arsen, David Plank and Gary Sykes, Michigan State University): October 1999

Findings: Michigan’s school choice policies (including public school choice) have had limited impact on enrollments in most districts. Innovations adopted in charters tend to be “add-ons,” such as all-day kindergarten. Along with oversight from chartering agents, the market is the primary instrument of charter accountability. If charters do not satisfy constituents, the schools will not survive. Some traditional public school responses to charters are competitive, and districts have added programs and

increased marketing to make themselves more attractive to parents and students. Many charters target parents who prefer schools featuring specific ethnic or values orientations.

49) Competition in Education: A 1999 Update of School Choice in Massachusetts (Susan L. Aud, George Mason University): September 1999

Findings: The effects of public school choice and charters on the racial and ethnic make-up of Massachusetts' school districts, as well as the effects on district budgets is compared. It found that charter schools have a higher percentage of non-white students than the state average (48 percent vs. 22 percent), that the highest percentage of transfers to charter schools came from minority districts and that the transfers themselves are over-representative of minorities. Those districts with the highest concentration of minorities experienced a greater balance of racial composition after the charter school program was enacted. Of the 12 districts experiencing the greatest losses of students (and funding) to charter schools as a percentage of enrollments, the largest losses were not concentrated in the highest poverty districts.

50) Competition and Collaboration: How Connecticut Charter Schools Relate to Their Neighborhood Districts (Institute for Responsive Education, Roblyn Anderson Brigham and Jennifer Nahas): September 1999

Findings: Connecticut's charter school law mitigates competition to protect traditional school districts from change. Most lines of communication between charters and peer district schools are in the non-educational areas (with the exception of special education) such as transportation, recruitment, food services, and extra-curricular activities.

51) U.S. Department of Education: Third Year Report: May 1999

Findings: Most charter schools have about the same percentage of white students as their district average. More than 70 percent of charter schools are within 20 percent of their district's racial/ethnic make-up; 16 percent had a significantly higher percentage of students of color and 12 percent had a significantly lower percentage. Charter schools generally mirror the state's racial composition. However, charter schools in 14 of the 24 charter states enrolled a considerably higher percentage of non-white students than did other public schools, in some cases resulting from provisions in state law that target charters to serve disadvantaged students. Charter schools serve a significantly higher proportion of economically disadvantaged students compared to all public schools.

52) Arizona Charter School Progress Evaluation (Morrison Institute for Public Policy at Arizona State University, Lori A. Mulholland): March 1999

Findings: As part of ongoing evaluation of Arizona charters called for by the State Department of Education, this study analyzes charter school progress to date and found that standardized test scores met or exceeded those of traditional public schools, and that the key reasons for student transfer to charters is that they were not doing well or were unhappy at their former schools. Teachers are the best feature of charters according to parents and students, as well as school size, class size and attitudes toward parents.

53) Evaluation of the Michigan Public School Academy Initiative (Western Michigan University, Jerry Horn and Gary Miron, The Evaluation Center): February 1999

Findings: Charters (Public School Academies) in Michigan are diverse in their offerings and have forced more accountability on traditional public schools. This report discusses some reasons for PSA closures but notes the ability of charter families to vote with their feet. Several challenges include lack of start-up funds, access to facilities, special education, and various legal issues relating to charter school operations.

54) Does the Public Sector Competition Stimulate Innovation: The Competitive Impacts of Arizona Charter Schools on Traditional Public Schools (Scott Millman, Frederick Hess, Robert Maranto, James Madison University): February 1999

Findings: School choice impacts traditional districts in desirable ways. Arizona school districts have responded to competition with slight to moderate changes in district and school level behaviors in the "leadership" dimensions (i.e., promoting experimentation in teaching, consulting with staff, following through on initiatives and new programs, providing for all-day kindergarten, promoting teacher professional development). In Arizona, competition appears to have produced changes primarily in more troubled school districts. The impact of competition depends partly on financial incentives, state-level maintenance and operations subsidies.

55) Michigan's Charter School Initiative: From Theory to Practice (Public Sector Consultants, Inc. and MAXIMUS, Inc. for the Michigan Department of Education): February 1999

Findings: The most common response of the surrounding district to a charter school opening within its boundaries has been to extend kindergarten to all day. The business side of school operations overwhelms some, but at most schools this early turmoil abates after a year or two of operation. "Creaming" occurs only rarely and many parents report that their children had been having difficulty in their former, traditional school. The percentage of minorities in the study-area charter schools is higher than in both the state as a whole (68 percent vs. 14 percent) and the traditional public school districts in which the charter schools are located (66 percent vs. 54 percent). Although starting at a lower point due to the "at-risk" nature of their student population, the improvement in MEAP (Michigan Educational Assessment Program) test scores among charters is greater than among a comparison group of traditional schools.

56) The Colorado Charter Schools Evaluation Study (Colorado Department of Education and the Center for Human Investment Policy at The University of Colorado, Denver): January 1999

Findings: Confirms high rate of parental satisfaction and finds that when comparing specific performance of charters to near-identical public schools, over 75 percent of charters outperformed the scores of their sponsoring district. Charter schools make up only 2 percent of Colorado public schools, but a full 20 percent of Colorado "schools of excellence" are charter schools.

1998

57) Texas Open Enrollment Charter Schools: Year Two Evaluation for Texas State Board of Education: December 1998

Findings: Eleven of nineteen schools were classified as “at-risk” schools because of their intention to serve primarily at-risk students. Charter schools enroll higher percentages of Hispanic and African-American students and lower percentages of Anglo students than traditional public schools. African-American students are evenly distributed among at-risk and non-at-risk schools; Hispanics more likely in at-risk schools; Anglos more likely at non-at-risk schools. Parents of students attending at-risk charters are of lower socioeconomic status, and aspirations for their children are lower. The most important factors to parents are educational quality of schools and lower class sizes. Public school officials reported minimal effects from charter schools in terms of funding, student or teacher attrition, parental involvement and programmatic changes. A majority of the schools in this study exist to serve students at risk of dropping out. Charter students performed at lower levels on TAAS than traditional students did; 40 percent of charter schools have an acceptable or higher rating compared with 91 percent of Texas public schools in general. Three charters outperformed the state average.

58) The Massachusetts Charter School Initiative: Expanding the Possibilities of Public Education (Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Education): December 1998

Findings: More than half the Massachusetts charter schools serve predominantly disadvantaged/at-risk youth; more than half are open longer than the state minimum of days and hours, and more than 70 percent provide before- or after-school programs. The percentage of students who are language minority is 20 percent vs. a state average of 13 percent; the percentage representing ethnic minorities is 48 percent vs. a state average of 22 percent; the percentage from low-income households is 40 percent vs. a state average of 25 percent. The academic performance of students entering charter schools has been at or below district and national averages. After several years, the test results for students in charter schools are promising, with many schools showing significant academic gains.

59) An Evaluation, Charter School Program, State of Wisconsin (Legislative Audit Bureau): December 1998

Findings: This review of the 18 charter schools operating during the '97-98 school year is required by law. School districts benefit from charter law in several ways, including flexible use of teachers, new programs, and innovations that would not have been developed had there not been a charter. Racial disparities existed in several schools in which the percentage of minorities did not reflect that of the district, but that is explained by first-come, first-serve enrollment policies that have since been changed. In terms of achievement, charter school test results indicate that charter school students score higher, on average, than other district students and that attendance and suspension rate suggest positive correlations. Contains policy recommendations designed to reduce tensions between charters and school districts are made.

60) The Findings and Implications of Increased Flexibility and Accountability: An Evaluation of Charter Schools in Los Angeles Unified School District (WestEd Policy & University of Southern California): August 1998

Findings: Motivations vary among those seeking a charter from decision-making control to the desire for neighborhood schools. Charters are found to maintain or slightly improve student performance as compared to similar non-charter schools, and were as good or better at retaining students than non-charter schools. Parents and teachers report high levels of satisfaction and collegiality, and both have much involvement in decision-making and opportunities to participate.

61) U.S. Department of Education: National Study of Charter Schools: Second Year Study: August 1998

Findings: Charter schools have an estimated median enrollment of 150 students vs. other public schools in charter states that have an estimated median enrollment of 500. Sixty-two percent of charter schools were newly created, 25 percent were pre-existing public schools and 13 percent pre-existing private schools that converted. Sixty percent of charter schools are similar to school districts on student racial/ethnic and income level characteristics, but about a third are more likely to serve students of color and low-income students.

62) Innovation and Massachusetts Charter Schools for the Massachusetts Department of Education (Rosenblum Brigham Associates): July 1998

Findings: Many innovations, special features, or non-traditional practices can be found in charter schools, the most prevalent of which seem to be attention to the development of character, citizenship, respect for self and others, and positive school climate. Rather than specific practices being innovative, it is the integration of such practices around a central vision. A sense of competition and even hostility towards charters prevents many traditional school districts from taking advantage of these innovations.

63) New Jersey Charter Schools: The First Year, 1997-98 (New Jersey Institute for School Innovation and Teachers College, Columbia University, Pearl Rock Kane): June 1998

Findings: Charter schools (13 first) provide more parental involvement, more community awareness and involvement, and have teachers and administrators who work longer hours than district counterparts and demonstrate higher level of job satisfaction.

64) Minnesota Charter Schools Evaluation Final Report (Minnesota State Board of Education and University of Minnesota Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement, CAREI): May 1998

Findings: Charter schools tend to enroll greater concentrations of students of color than host school districts. An estimated 25 percent of students attending charters have a disability with an active Individual Education Plan (IEP) vs. an average 15 percent in host districts and 47 percent are eligible for free or reduced lunch (vs. an average 29 percent in host districts). Approximately 10 percent of charter school students are limited English proficient (vs. 5 percent in host districts). Of the schools reporting reading and math standardized test data, 50 percent reported have a higher percentage of students scoring above the national mean in spring 1997 than in spring 1996 on the math tests. Fifty percent also had a higher percentage of students scoring above the national mean on the reading tests. When the 1997 results from those charter schools with students eligible to participate in the Minnesota

basic graduation tests in reading and math are compared with surrounding districts, 71 percent report higher percentages passing the reading test and 43 percent report higher percentages passing the math test – despite the fact that these schools are designed for “at-risk” students.

65) Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE): How Are School Districts Responding to Charter Laws and Charter Schools: April 1998

Findings: This examination of how traditional school districts respond to charter schools reports that almost half have felt strong or moderate impact, and effects on about 25 percent of districts includes increasing public relations, changing educational offerings and other noticeable changes in programs.

66) Making a Difference? Charter Schools, Evaluation and Student Performance (Center for School Change): March 1998

Findings: Charter schools in this preliminary report are meeting accountability requirements and student achievement in 20 schools is summarized, along with student behavior, attitudes, parental involvement and school climate, all of which are positive indicators.

67) 1997 Colorado Charter Schools Evaluation Study (Prepared by the Clayton Foundation for the Colorado Department of Education): January 1998

Findings: Colorado charter schools are serving students of color, students who are educationally disadvantaged by poverty and students who are eligible for special education services. As a group, students attending charter schools in the evaluation study performed better than the statewide average on the state 4th grade reading and writing assessment.

1997

68) Texas Open Enrollment Charter Schools: Year One Evaluation for Texas State Board of Education: December 1997

Findings: An overview of 20 Texas charters in operation as of September 1997 finds that “white-flight” and “bright-flight” are myths. Texas charter schools do not take the best students, and 72 percent of those attending open-enrollment schools are classified as “at-risk.” Seven charters are dropout recovery schools; 11 are specifically designed to meet the needs of “at-risk students,” and 80 percent of students enrolled in charter schools are minorities, compared with 53 percent in traditional district schools. Eleven schools have waiting lists. Smaller classes, innovative delivery systems, IEPs and creative curricula are all indications of success.

69) Evaluation of Charter School Effectiveness (SRI International for Legislative Analyst’s Office of the State of California): December 1997

Findings: Overall, charter schools have an ethnic composition, and served percentages of low-income, special education, and limited English proficiency students similar to the state average. Charter school teachers’ starting salaries are slightly higher than the public schools statewide average.

70) Charter Schools in Action Final Report (The Hudson Institute): July 1997

Findings: This is a book consolidates previous reports from 1996. Charter schools are diverse, with 63 percent of students being minority group members (1996). Eighty-one percent of students were previously enrolled in public schools, eight percent private, two percent home-schooled, and four percent had dropped out (1996). Approximately 70 percent of schools pay “comparable” salaries to most or all of their teachers (1996). Families and teachers seek out charters primarily for educational reasons (1997). Satisfaction levels are highest for all groups when it comes to educational matters such as curriculum, teaching, or class size (1997). More than half of the students are eligible for free/reduced lunches, one in five has limited English proficiency, and almost one in five has a disability or learning problem (1996).

71) Test Results from Massachusetts Charter Schools: A Preliminary Study (Massachusetts Department of Education): June 1997

Findings: In general, the academic performance of students entering charter schools was at or below district or national averages. The early preliminary test results for charter schools are promising. Six out of the eight schools for which test data are available are making academic gains. The most dramatic gains came from SABIS International Charter School, where students were performing below grade level when the school was a traditional public school. Seven months after conversion status, students had progressed, on average, 1.5 grades equivalent levels and were performing at or above grade level in grades 2, 4, 6, and 7 and only slightly below grade level in grades 3 and 5.

72) A Study of Charter Schools: First Year Report 1997 (U.S. Department of Education and RPP and CARE): May 1997

Findings: The study reviewed 252 charters in existence in January 1996. Variations among state laws determine a charter’s progress. Schools are drivers; there is no “typical” charter school. Charter

schools, on average, have a racial composition similar to statewide averages or have larger portion of minorities. No signs of discriminatory practices or “creaming.” Michigan, Minnesota, and Massachusetts enrolled higher percentage of students of color than conventional public schools, and approximately the same proportion of low-income students as traditional public schools (although some enroll drastically more). Charters have a difficult time accessing Title I funds – two-thirds of schools are eligible, but only 47 percent receive funding.

73) The Colorado Charter Schools Evaluation (Colorado Department of Education and The Center for Human Investment Policy at the University of Colorado, Denver): March 1997

Findings: Fourteen schools operating for at least a year were evaluated. The average charter enrollment is smaller than public school counterparts. Six charter schools met or exceeded a significant portion of their performance goals and are making further progress; five schools met or exceeded some of their performance goals and are making further progress. Nine schools received 80-85 percent of district Per Pupil Operating Revenue; on average all charter schools spend 82.5 percent on student specific expenditures, and 17.5 percent on rent, utilities, maintenance, transportation, etc.

74) Going it Alone: A Study of Massachusetts Charter Schools (Institute for Responsive Education and Northeastern University): March 1997

Findings: Charters gain a high degree of satisfaction: students feel challenged, teachers feel empowered, and parents are content. Parents are happy with the welcoming atmosphere at charter schools and are satisfied with academic attention, largely through IEPs their children receive. Governance is the most significant challenge; time, climate and culture, financial issues are major obstacles.

75) Evidence on School Choice: What we Learn from the Traditional Forms of School Choice in the U.S. (Harvard University, Caroline Hoxby): 1997

Findings: Public schools react to competition by offering better schooling and reducing costs. Increased competition results in significant improvements in student test scores, educational attainment, and wages. Parents with greater choice are more involved in their child’s schooling and prefer a higher standard of achievement for both their children (academic achievement) and their chosen school (standards and discipline).

1996 AND PRIOR

76) Minnesota Charter Schools Evaluation: Interim Report and Research Report (University of Minnesota, CAREI): December 1996

Findings: According to this examination of 16 Minnesota charter schools operating for at least one year. Minnesota charters are largely start-ups with class sizes smaller than traditional Minnesota public schools. Charter schools have a larger percentage of African-American, Hispanic, Native American and Asian-American students than traditional school counterparts, and also higher percentages of students with disabilities, LEP and free/reduced lunch. Parental and staff satisfaction is higher at charter schools than at traditional schools. More than 50 percent of parents report that their children have improved in both academics and social skills since enrolling in charter schools.

77) How Well are Charter Schools Serving Urban and Minority Students? (ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, Wendy Schwarz, NY, NY): November 1996

Findings: Charters attract urban students, but not the most vulnerable minority and disadvantaged students. Charters also attract dedicated and talented teachers, but teacher compensation is often not competitive with traditional public school salaries.

78) Surveys of Parents and Teachers (The Goldwater Institute): April, August 1996

Findings: Teacher Survey: Twenty percent of Arizona charters operate on a year-round calendar; the average student population is 187 students, with an average student/teacher ratio of 22:1; 80 percent of teachers have experience outside teaching, with largest part formerly in management positions in the private sector. Fifty-seven percent of teachers have accountability components in their contracts, unlike most Arizona districts.

Parent Survey: Children who attend charter schools are not high academic performers. Forty-nine percent of parents were "very satisfied with their child's last school, and 51 percent "very dissatisfied" or "dissatisfied". The main reason parents left former schools for charters were "curriculum/school theme", followed closely by "teacher attitude" and "class size."

79) The Massachusetts Charter School Initiative (Massachusetts Department of Education): July 1996

Findings: This report gives an overview of how charter schools operate in Massachusetts (i.e., serve public using public funds; operate independently of union work rules, collective bargaining agreements and conventional school management structure; mission driven; community based; etc.)

80) Massachusetts Charter School Profiles 1996-97 (Pioneer Institute): July 1996

Findings: This report profiles 26 charter schools. Reveals that charters do not skim economic or academic "cream;" almost 60 percent of charter schools are located in urban areas, with high percentages of minorities, and low socio-economic and ESL students; 90 percent of students rate teachers as "excellent" or "good"; and 96 percent of parents rate enthusiasm, commitment and quality of staff as "excellent" or "good."

**81) Charter Schools: Initial Findings (Education Commission of the States):
March 1996**

Findings: In this study data is reviewed from five states. It notes the growing number of charters trying to create a “one-room schoolhouse” effect by serving a broad range of students within a given school. 12 percent are K-12 schools. On average, charter schools exceed the state public school percentages among African-Americans (18 percent vs. 7 percent) and Native American (5 percent vs. 2 percent). It also reports examples of academic achievement by students in charter schools, despite the focus of most such schools on “at-risk” students.

82) The Charter Movement Education Reform School by School (Little Hoover Commission for the State of California): March 1996

Findings: Academic results are not yet clear, but schools can be judged on partial success of several criteria (based on on-site inspections of 26 schools). Criteria included progress on test scores and other pupil assessment tools, effective fiscal prudence, variety of academic innovations, increased focus on low-achieving students, and avoidance of discrimination. Generally, the findings and recommendations revolved around governance and legal issues.

83) A Profile of California’s Charter Schools 1994-95 (San Diego Chamber of Commerce): March 1996

Findings: This profile analyzes 44 of the 62 charters then operating and finds positive demographics and student test results from the California Test of Basic Skills, as well as obstacles. Charter schools are small, and larger ones broke up students into “clusters.” Sixteen operate outside the classroom environment, with several “home-based” or “independent study programs.” The majority of student populations are comprised of racial/ethnic minorities. Charters must demonstrate student progress or face revocation or non-renewal. California has seen its charters increase in daily student attendance, innovative facilities arrangements, and level of community support (corporations, community groups, and cooperative arrangements with universities). Major problems facing charter schools include legal challenges (labor relation issues), conflict with district on financial matters, state funding issues, vague legal status of charters and liability concerns.

84) The First 20 Texas Open-Enrollment Charter Schools (University of Texas, J.R. Llanes and Marsha Marchbanks): 1996

Findings: Sixty percent of approved charter schools anticipate that they will serve the same percentage of special education students enrolled in the local public schools. Twenty-two percent of charters believe their special education enrollment will be higher than the local rate. The average charter school is addressing basic educational needs. Fifteen percent of charter schools are specializing in serving students who have dropped out of the public school system. While some charters promise new approaches, most of the first twenty are traditional in their overall educational plan.

85) Freedom and Innovation California’s Charter Schools (U.S. Department of Education and WestEd): November 1995

Findings: This study reports findings from a second survey of California’s charter schools and from a survey of charter school teachers and non-charter school administrators. Examines varying levels of autonomy found in California’s participation.

86) Charter Schools, What Are They Up To?, 1995 Survey (Education Commission of the States and Joe Nathan): August 1995

Findings: This survey covers seven states, representing (at that time) 80 percent of authorized charter schools outside California, and 45 percent of those in California. Sixty-seven percent are designed to serve across-section of students. Most are small and an “integrated interdisciplinary curriculum” was the most popular academic focus. Lack of start-up funds, finances and facilities are the most cited obstacles.

87) GAO: Charter Schools: A New Model for Public Schools Provides Opportunities and Challenges, A Report to Congress: January 1995

Findings: This early report reviews the first charter schools in existence, their autonomy, methods by which they are held accountable, and challenges for federal education programs. It points out that charter schools’ instructional programs reflect diversity and innovation, including innovative approaches such as multiage grouping and thematic instruction.

88) Vision and Reality: A First Year Look at California’s Charter Schools: 1994-95 (U.S. Department of Education and WestEd, Marcella R. Dianda & Ronald G. Corwin)

Findings: Written after California’s first year of charter school operation, this study reviews why California had chartered less than half the number of schools authorized by that state’s charter school law. The greatest burdens identified were accountability provisions, lack of assistance and start-up funds, ambiguous laws concerning autonomy, lack of promotion on the part of the school district, unappealing prospect of board control, and a lack of interest. The report concludes that the continued resistance of districts to allow charter schools independence warrants on-going attention, as does the higher number of obstacles faced in developing urban charter schools.

Other analyses with credible, positive findings but not research per se:

- School Choice in the Real World, Lessons from Arizona Charter Schools, 1999 (Editor, Bryan Hassel) – This work finds that the “rapid spread of charters had an unexpected, overwhelming impact on Arizona education” and charter school competition has forced traditional public schools to improve communication with parents, change curriculum, advertise, and open magnet schools.
- A Charter School Survey: Parents, Teachers, and Principals Speak Out, Pacific Research Institute, Patricia Riley, February 2000 – This work finds student populations in California’s charters schools mirror demographic and socio-economic characteristics of traditional district schools.

MAJOR ANALYSES WITH CRITICAL CONCLUSIONS

89) Charter Schools and Race: A Lost Opportunity for Integrated Education (Erica Frankenberg and Chungmei Lee): July 2003

Findings: In most states charter schools tend to enroll higher proportions of minority students and lower proportions of white students than traditional public schools. In addition, in individual schools students of different races are less likely to be “exposed” to each other. While acknowledging that this is largely a result of minority parents themselves “actively seeking” alternatives to “low-achieving public schools,” the authors conclude that charters are contributing to segregation.

90) Charter Schools and Inequality: National Disparities in Funding, Teacher Quality, and Student Support (Bruce Fuller, Policy Analysis for California Education): April 2003

Findings: Using only information about inputs (i.e. the number of teachers, classrooms, etc.), this study asserts that charters do not have enough certified teachers, do not receive all Title I funds to which they are entitled, and fail to identify enough kids as learning disabled. The report does not present any academic achievement data.

91) How Well Are American Students Learning (Tom Loveless, The Brookings Institution): September 2002

Findings: This review of other charter reports concludes that charter students tend to do worse on standardized tests than their traditional public school peers, but they start off with students who are struggling compared to their peers. The author also notes that charters tend to enroll disproportionately high percentages of minorities, and proportionate numbers of low-income students. Additional findings include that large charters score higher than small ones; urban charters outscore suburban and rural charters; and new charters have depressed scores in their first two years of operation.

92) Do Charter Schools Measure Up? The Charter Experiment After 10 Years (The American Federation of Teachers): July 2002

Findings: This report offers a litany of conclusions about charter schools, including that while they are receiving funding equal to traditional public schools, they do not produce academic gains, are not innovative, are not held accountable, and contribute to segregation.

93) Impact of Charter School Attendance on Student Achievement in Michigan (Randall Eberts and Kevin Hollenbeck, W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research): April 2002

Findings: According to this report, attendance at Michigan charter schools produces achievement slightly worse than with traditional public schools. Though the authors control for such variables as populations served and free and reduced price lunch enrollment, the results are questionable. The first problem is that to calculate gain scores, the researchers compare performance differences on the fourth grade Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) math test with the fifth grade science MEAP, and fourth grade reading with fifth grade writing. Worse, the authors dismiss out of hand the possibility that charter students might do slightly worse than non-charter because charter students are typically those who struggled the most in traditional settings.

94) Rhetoric Versus Reality: What We Know and Need to Know About Vouchers and Charter Schools (Brian Gill, R. Thomas Timpane, Karen Ross and Dominic Brewer, RAND Corporation): December 2001

Findings: This meta-analysis of existing research reports is not a research study in and of itself. It reports that there is no conclusive evidence about the performance of charter schools, and that at worst they are the same as traditional public schools. Moreover, they find substantial evidence that a year or more in a charter has a discernable positive academic effect on students. Charters are also found to generate overwhelming satisfaction among parents, especially compared to their public school counterparts.

95) Charting a New Course: Fact and Fiction about Charter Schools (National School Boards Association, Thomas Good, Jennifer Braden): Fall 2000

Findings: After a review of existing literature, the authors conclude that there is no evidence that charters achieve any academic progress, are accountable or are diverse, and that policymakers should pursue changes to make charters fall more in line with existing public school requirements.

96) Broken Promises: Charter Schools in Texas (Jessica Whitt, Texas Freedom Network Education Fund): September 2000

Findings: The passing rate for economically disadvantaged high school students in charter schools is significantly lower than the passing rate for similarly defined students in traditional public schools. At-risk charter students are becoming decreasingly satisfied with their schools, whereas non-at-risk students' satisfaction is holding even. This report contends that charter schools are not held financially accountable when schools are closed or have their charter revoked, or are discovered to have inflated enrollment numbers. A lack of accountability also exists with un-elected charter school boards and nepotism on boards and with boards' hiring practices.

97) Ethnic Segregation in Arizona Charter Schools (University of New Hampshire, Casey Cobb and Gene V. Glass, Arizona State University): January 1999

Findings: This report examines issue of stratification along ethnic and class lines. Claims that charter schools are disproportionately white but these claims are not justified by the statistics/data provided.

98) Beyond the Rhetoric of Charter School Reform: A Study of 10 California School Districts (University of California, Los Angeles, Amy Stuart Wells): December 1998

Findings: This study evaluates 17 charter schools and concludes that advocates' claims are not justified by observations. It says charters are not accountable for student achievement, that their racial/ethnic requirements have not been enforced, and that charters and traditional public schools do not learn from one another.