National Charter School Study 3

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CREDO at Stanford University Finds That Students In Charter Schools, On Average, Perform Better Academically Than Those Attending Traditional Public Schools

STANFORD, Calif., June 6, 2023, The Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford University released, ***As A Matter of Fact, National Charter School Study III.*** The study assesses students' academic growth in charter schools across the United States. It is CREDO's most extensive research project, providing a comprehensive overview of U.S. charter school performance and offering insights for future K-12 public education options.

"More than ever before, educators and policymakers need reliable examples of strong student learning that they can emulate to make up for past shortfalls," said Dr. Margaret Raymond, Director of CREDO at Stanford University. "The results of this study, along with the longer story of improvement by charter schools, provide critical insights that can accelerate student learning in more communities."

The study uses student-level and school-level administrative data from 29 states, Washington, D.C., and New York City. The data window spans the school years from 2014–15 to 2018–19.

KEY STUDENT-LEVEL FINDINGS:

- Charter school students have an average of 16 more days of learning in reading and 6 more days in math in a school year compared to their matched peers in traditional public schools.
- In charter schools, Black and Hispanic students, as well as students in poverty, have stronger growth than their traditional public school peers. However, gains are not equal to their white peers, creating learning gaps for many students.
- Across the three CREDO national charter school studies, annual charter student learning in reading has risen by 22 days; math learning has increased by 23 days.
- Charter Management Organization-affiliated schools advance reading and math by 27 and 23 days, respectively, compared to traditional public schools, while stand-alone charter schools add 10 extra days of reading progress a year. Math remains equivalent.

- Students receiving Special Education services who attend charter schools have smaller learning gains than their matched peers in traditional public schools.
- Across the 31 data jurisdictions in the study, the spread between the state with the best learning result and the worst outcome is 109 days of learning in reading and 120 days in math.

KEY SCHOOL-LEVEL FINDINGS:

- Charter schools enroll and educate more diverse and academically challenged students than local traditional public schools.
- 36% of charter schools now have stronger annual gains than their local traditional public school in both reading and math, while weaker gains than traditional public-school alternatives have shrunk to 17% in reading and 25% in math.
- More than 1,000 charter schools provide "gap-busting" learning with equitable progress across minority, poverty, and English language learner students relative to their more advantaged peers and create school-wide achievement that exceeds state averages.
- The improvement in student learning in charter schools comes primarily from existing schools improving over time; positive learning gains from newly opened charter schools are a smaller influence.
- Stronger gains relative to traditional public schools are found in elementary, middle, and high schools but not multi-level schools.
- Charter Management Organizations open new network schools that are stronger in reading and math than the typical charter school in our study, demonstrating their ability to scale academically successful schools.

About CREDO at Stanford University: CREDO at Stanford University was established to improve empirical evidence about education reform and student performance at the primary and secondary levels. CREDO at Stanford University supports education organizations and policymakers in using reliable research and program evaluation to assess the performance of education initiatives. CREDO's valuable insight helps educators and policymakers strengthen their focus on the results from innovative programs, curricula, policies, or accountability practices. http://credo.stanford.edu