

Oh, the Places They'll Go!

ARIZONA PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE AND ITS IMPACT ON STUDENTS



About this Report

The Center for Student Achievement originated from support provided by the Arizona Charter Schools Association to help charter schools meet their statutory mandate of improving student achievement. Because of this beginning, the Center has a particular interest in the impact of public school choice on student achievement. Public school choice assumes that parents have access to information about school quality and that this information influences their educational decision-making. While that may be the case for many parents, far too often, parents lack access to important data about their child's school or other educational options available to them in charter or district schools. The Center is keenly aware of the importance of timely information about student achievement and school performance for parents, policy makers, and other key decision makers in our state. To that end, the Center developed the *Education Evaluator*, an online tool designed to provide easy access to school level data on all public schools in the state. It provides stakeholders a transparent way to view and compare enrollment information, student achievement and student funding data for all Arizona public schools. Over time and as they become available, the Center expects to add additional indicators of school performance.



AZCHARTERS.ORG/MAPS

The *Education Evaluator* is a useful tool that helps users navigate through the abundance of public school choice in Arizona. Clearly, if all students are to have access to a quality education, their parents, teachers and education leaders must know where it exists and where it does not. But this is only a first step.

The Center, in this inaugural report, takes available data about student enrollment and school performance and summarizes what we know about public school choice in Arizona and some of the potential policy implications of these findings. It then highlights some still unanswered questions, and lays out a research agenda designed to answer those questions.

Introduction

“Among the most accomplished and fabled tribes of Africa, no tribe was considered to have warriors more fearsome or more intelligent than the mighty Masai. It is perhaps surprising, then, to learn the traditional greeting that passed between Masai warriors: ‘Kasserian Ingera,’ one would always say to another. It means, ‘And how are the children?’ It is still the traditional greeting among the Masai, acknowledging the high value that the Masai always place on their children’s well-being. Even warriors with no children of their own would always give the traditional answer, ‘All the children are well.’ Meaning, of course, that peace and safety prevail, that the priorities of protecting the young, the powerless, are in place. That Masai society has not forgotten its reason for being, its proper functions and responsibilities, ‘All the children are well’ means that life is good. It means that the daily struggles for existence do not preclude proper caring for their young.”¹

Everywhere, states and the federal government are crafting policies, designing programs, and implementing plans to improve teaching and learning to dramatically change outcomes for our children. Few of these policies or programs, however, represent the kind of fundamental structural change in public education that public school choice does, and just like the Masai tribe, school choice struggles to always do the best for our young.

Public school choice, particularly in Arizona, breaks down the traditional system of local school districts in favor of an open enrollment system wherein district boundaries are either highly porous or cease to exist. The foundational premise is that by giving families options of where to attend school, children have the opportunity for a better education than they would receive if they were required to attend a school dictated by geographic boundaries. Not only will students be freed from attending failing schools based on their home address, but the resulting competition will lead to school improvement efforts in all schools.



Inspired by the choice of Arizona as the site for the launch of 2013 National School Choice Week, the Center for Student Achievement has chosen to use public school choice as the lens through which to analyze patterns of school performance and the impact these patterns have on Arizona public school students. In this inaugural report and in our reports to follow, the Center will focus not only on schools themselves, but on the potential impact that schools, both charter and district, have on individual students. Ultimately, what matters is the impact of our educational system on *students*, not the governance structure of the school.

Arizona is a great state from which to examine the effects of public school choice. In 1994, the state passed two landmark pieces of school choice legislation: open enrollment and charter schools. Since then, each year, increasing numbers of students attend charter schools and many more take advantage of open enrollment policies to attend schools in districts different from the district in which they reside. However, open enrollment data is not available at this time to evaluate the effect of open enrollment on choice in Arizona. But, the Center did evaluate the abundance of charter school choices on Arizona students because the numbers are not small:

- Arizona has the 13th largest student population in the country, one of only 15 states that have student enrollments greater than 1 million students.²
- Arizona charter schools enroll 14 percent of all public school students, the highest percentage of students in charter schools of any state, and second only to Washington, D.C.³
- One in four Arizona public schools is a charter school.
- If current enrollment trends continue, Arizona is poised to enroll nearly a quarter of all public school students in charter schools by 2020. This does not take into account the percentage of students who utilize open enrollment policies, as these data are not available.

In conjunction with the launch of 2013 National School Choice Week in Phoenix, this report focuses on Arizona's charter schools and its students. The Center for Student Achievement used available enrollment and school accountability information to determine the potential impact of charter school choices on students. The research questions are:

- Who is choosing to attend charter schools? Is the charter school student population markedly different from the district student population?
- What kinds of charter schools are students attending? Are these school types markedly different from school types available in districts?
- In general, how are charter school choices paying off in terms of student achievement? For how many students?

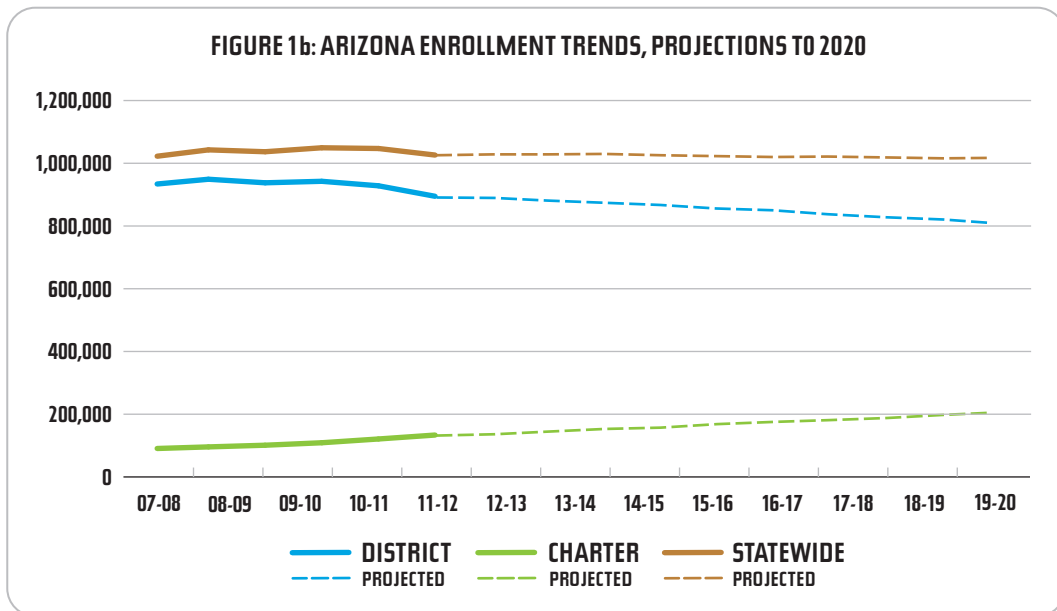
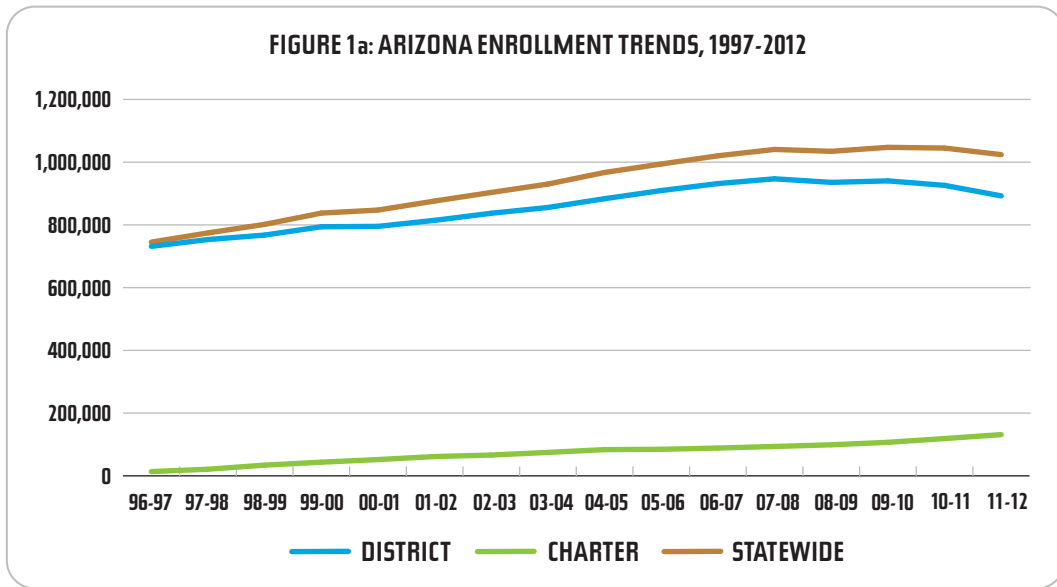
In order to answer the last bullet, the analysis used here shifts the focus away from the performance of individual schools to the overall impact on *students*. Most analyses of charter school performance focus on the school as the unit of analysis, thereby potentially masking the overall impact on students. For example, 25 percent of charter schools are designated as Small schools in the state school accountability model. However, these schools enroll only 5 percent of all charter school students. A higher or lower percentage of Small schools can severely distort the impact of charter schools on students.



Arizona Charter Enrollment Trends

According to Arizona Department of Education estimates for 2013, Arizona enrolls over one million students in public schools and nearly 14 percent of these students attend a charter school.⁴

Figure 1a shows student enrollment trends in charter schools relative to overall state and district enrollment. The growth over time has been steady, with the greatest percent increases in charter enrollment occurring in the late 1990s, but continuing to increase at an average rate of 8 percent over the last five years.



Should the current trend continue, charter school enrollment could double by 2020 and approach one-quarter of all public school students (see Figure 1b). This projection assumes statewide enrollment remains relatively flat and charter enrollment continues to increase at an average rate of 8 percent over prior year enrollment.

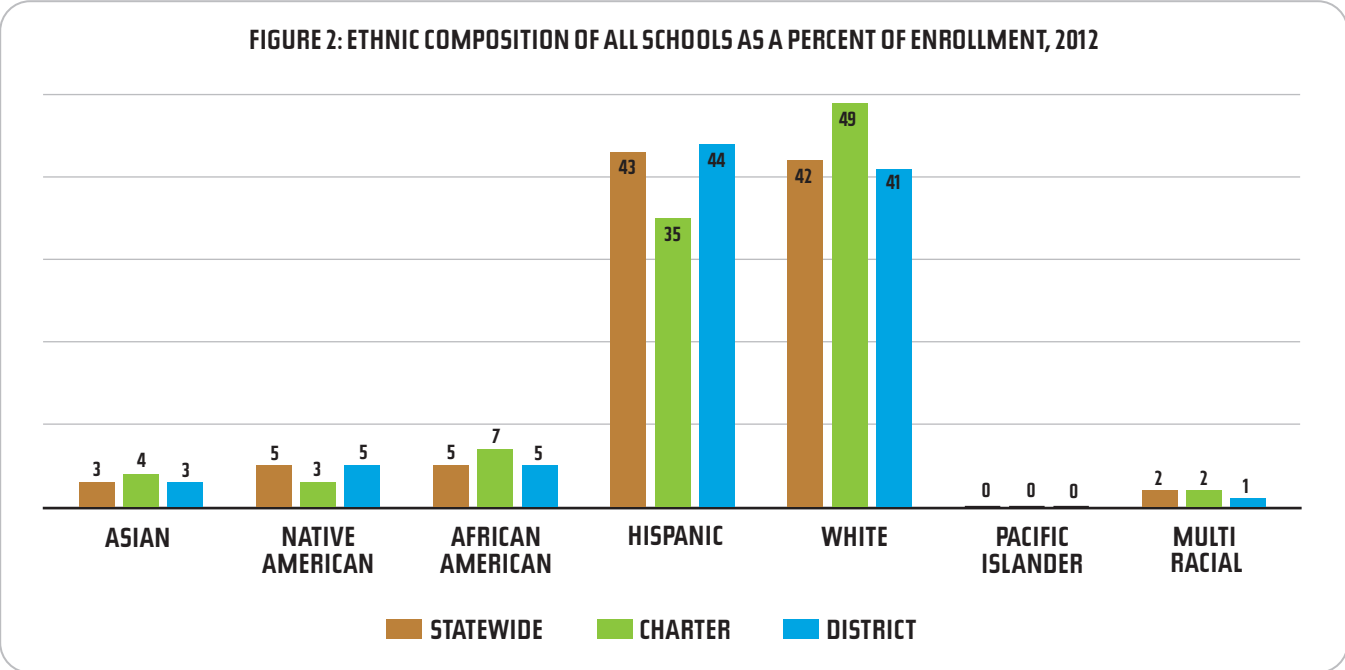
The implications are significant. From a regulatory standpoint, continued increases in the number of charter schools could result in an increased burden on the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools – the state’s primary charter authorizer. Even though the Arizona Board of Education, local school districts, as well as community colleges and universities are able to authorize charter schools, the State Board for Charter Schools is responsible for the review and renewal of over 500 charter schools, nearly all charter schools in the state. Without any significant changes to the distribution of oversight among all of the charter authorizers in the state, or an increase in resources, the already-overburdened Arizona State Board for Charter Schools may not be able to carry out the rigorous, data-driven scrutiny necessary to ensure that charter schools are meeting their statutory requirement to increase student achievement.

The financial implications are also significant. State funding for charter schools comes almost exclusively through the state’s general fund. As an increasingly greater proportion of Arizona students are completely funded through the state’s general fund, the budgetary burden is likely to reach a tipping point in the next 10 to 15 years.

But perhaps the most important policy implication of increasing charter enrollment and future growth is the degree to which students are enrolled in high quality schools. Charter school choice is only successful if it leads to a quality education for the students who choose to enroll in charter schools. This report will explore that question below.

WHO ARE CHARTER SCHOOL STUDENTS?

In school year 2011-2012⁵, charter schools enrolled a higher percentage of Asian, African American, White, and Multiracial students than did district schools, but a lower percentage of Hispanic and Native American students. The largest differences between district and charter schools are for Hispanic and White students. Almost half of students enrolled in charter schools are White, compared to 41 percent of the students enrolled in district schools. In contrast, 35 percent of students enrolled in charter schools are Hispanic, compared to 44 percent of students enrolled in district schools. Figure 2 provides an overview of the ethnic composition of all schools in the state, as well as district and charter schools separately.



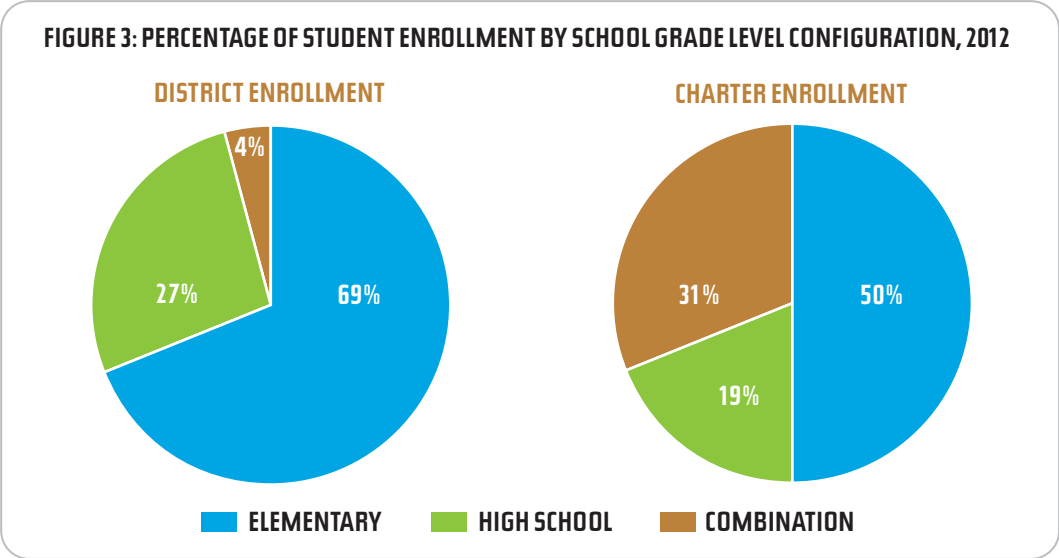
The significant gap in Hispanic and White enrollment in district and charter schools indicates that charter schools are not completely reflective of the ethnic composition of the state; however, the Center does not have the data needed to reach any conclusions about the underlying reasons for this difference. Further insight into this disparity is of particular interest to the Center because the Hispanic student population is projected to increase significantly in the next decade.⁶

Participation in English Language Learning programs (as distinct from ethnicity), Special Education, and the National School Lunch Program are other appropriate indicators by which to compare the compositions of district and charter student populations. The Center will analyze these indicators in future publications.

WHERE ARE CHARTER STUDENTS CHOOSING TO ATTEND SCHOOL?

Public school options in Arizona are varied and offer families an opportunity to find school types and grade level configurations that are best suited to them. (Please read Definitions of Terms on page 16 for a full description of school accountability models and grade level configurations.) Figure 3 shows the distribution of charter school enrollment relative to school grade level configurations.

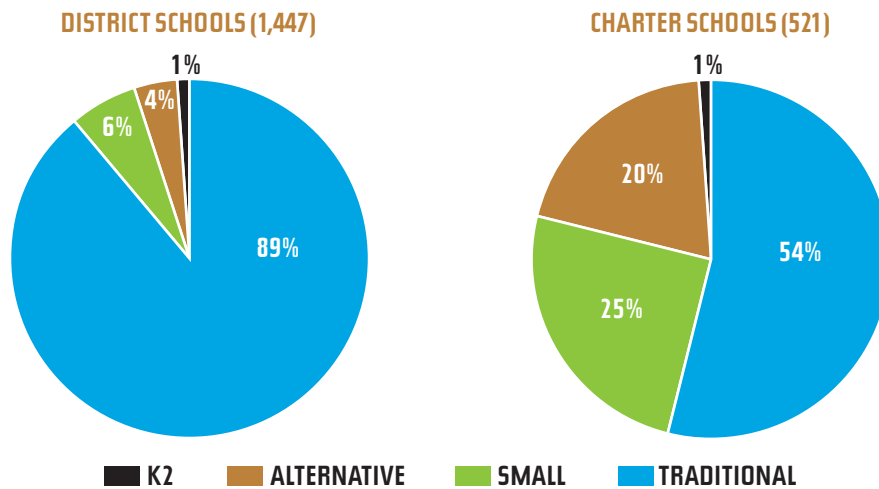
Half of charter school students are enrolled in an elementary school, while 69 percent of district students are similarly enrolled. Fewer charter students are enrolled in high schools compared to district schools, but the more striking difference is in the percentage of charter school students who are enrolled in a school with a combination configuration. A school with a combination configuration is a school that offers any grades that span across the elementary and high school grades. For example, a school that offers instruction in grades 6-12 is a combination school. Nearly one-third of students enrolled in charter schools attend a combination school, compared to four percent of students attending district schools. This finding suggests that the combination grade-level configuration is a popular choice for families and one that is not widely available in district schools.



Another way to gauge the different types of charter schools that students attend is to look at enrollment patterns for different school models, according to the state school accountability designations.

In an effort to create a school accountability system that is fair to all schools and accounts for the fundamental differences in school types and student populations attending different types of schools, the Arizona Department of Education created four discrete accountability models: Traditional, Alternative, Small, and K-2 (see Definition of Terms on page 16 for a full explanation). Figure 4 shows the percentage of district and charter schools that fall into each accountability category.

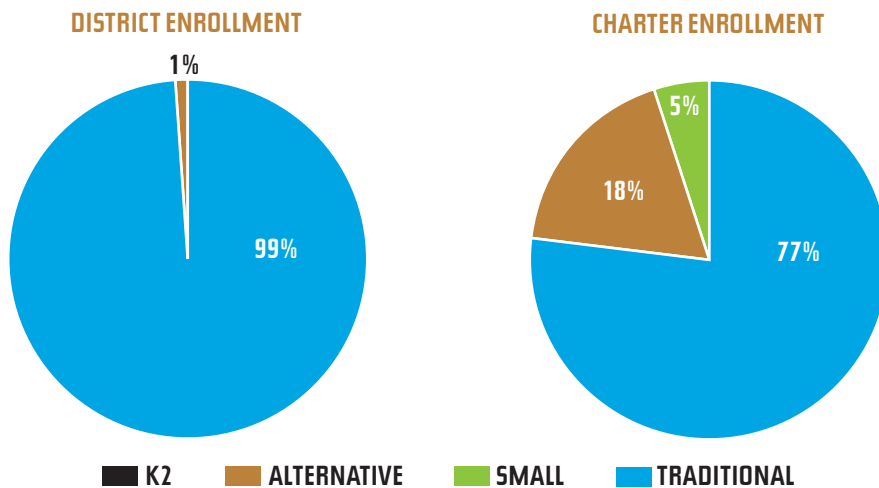
FIGURE 4: PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOLS IN EACH SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY MODEL, 2012



Traditional schools make up the majority of both district and charter schools, but the percentages are significantly different – 54 percent of charter schools and 89 percent of district schools. Almost half of all charter schools fall into a category other than Traditional, demonstrating that a significant number of charter schools provide public school options not widely available in district schools.

The vast majority of Arizona students attend a Traditional school, but nearly *all* students enrolled in a district attend a Traditional school. Charter school enrollment, on the other hand, is much more varied. Eighteen percent of charter school students attend Alternative schools, 5 percent attend Small schools and less than one percent attends a K-2 school. Figure 5 shows the impact of different types of schools in terms of student enrollment.

FIGURE 5: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENT ENROLLMENT IN EACH SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY MODEL, 2012



Overall, these enrollment patterns suggest that a significant portion of charter schools are attracting students that may not have a comparable district option, whether in an alternative or small school setting.

The distribution of enrollment is vastly different between district and charter schools. Both district and charter schools enroll the greatest proportion of students in Traditional elementary schools, though the percentages are significantly different. The second largest group of district students is enrolled in Traditional high schools whereas the second largest group of charter students is enrolled in Traditional combination schools. The third largest group of charter students is enrolled in Alternative high schools, a group that makes up less than one half of one percent of district enrollment. Table 1 shows the distribution of student enrollment in district and charter schools when the accountability model designation is combined with the grade level configurations.

TABLE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENT ENROLLMENT BY SCHOOL TYPE AND GRADE CONFIGURATION, 2012

	DISTRICT			CHARTER			TOTAL NUMBER OF SCHOOLS
	ENROLLMENT	% OF ENROLLMENT	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	ENROLLMENT	% OF ENROLLMENT	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	
TRADITIONAL							
ELEMENTARY	612,349	68.60%	1,076	60,144	45.81%	179	1,255
HIGH SCHOOL	240,297	26.92%	178	8,560	6.52%	40	218
COMBINATION	28,225	3.16%	34	32,473	24.74%	65	99
SMALL							
ELEMENTARY	2,386	0.27%	47	3,694	2.81%	71	118
HIGH SCHOOL	898	0.10%	27	2,054	1.56%	44	71
COMBINATION	341	0.04%	14	1,119	0.85%	17	31
ALTERNATIVE							
ELEMENTARY	187	0.02%	8	809	0.62%	3	11
HIGH SCHOOL	3,259	0.37%	35	14,673	11.18%	89	124
COMBINATION	1,766	0.20%	20	7,344	5.59%	10	30
K2							
ELEMENTARY	2,914	0.33%	8	412	0.31%	3	11
STATE	892,622	100%	1,447	131,282	100%	521	1,968

These data demonstrate a greater variety in the type and grade level configuration of schools in the charter school sector than in district schools. If one assumes that the greater variety of school type options is a reflection of demand for more varied options, these data suggest that charter schools are meeting an important need for a significant group of students.

It is striking to see the differences in numbers of students served in Alternative and Small schools, in particular. Despite the fact that the charter school enrollment makes up 14 percent of state enrollment, there are over 22,005 students in Alternative charter schools compared to only 4,374 in Alternative district schools. This suggests that either district schools are not vying for this population of students or they are doing so by way of programs within existing schools rather than stand-alone schools. If the latter is the case, then students and families searching for Alternative school options using a tool like the *Education Evaluator* may not be aware of what districts have to offer. In either case, the result is that the vast majority of students seeking Alternative school options enroll, and will likely continue to enroll in charter schools.

How are Charter School Choices Paying Off for Students?

This report uses the state’s school accountability system, the A-F Letter Grades, as an indicator of school quality (see Definition of Terms on page 16 for a full explanation). While not an ideal indicator, given its heavy reliance on one student assessment, it does provide a picture of school performance that takes into account the level of student achievement relative to the state academic standards and the amount of student growth over the course of a school year – a critical indicator of the impact of the school on student learning. The 2011-2012 school year is only the second year in which Traditional schools receive a rating and the first year in which Alternative, Small and K-2 schools receive a rating. As a result, this report focuses only on one school year, but subsequent analyses will pay particular attention to patterns of performance across school years.

OVERALL IMPACT OF CHARTER SCHOOLS ON CHARTER SCHOOL STUDENTS

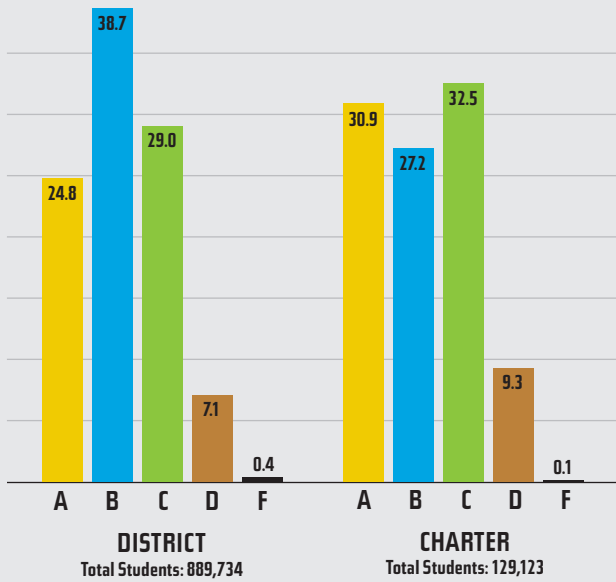
Nearly one-third of all charter students are enrolled in a school with an “A” rating, compared to one-quarter of district students. A significant portion of these students are enrolled in a school with a combination configuration – what appears to be a common school configuration in charter schools and one not widely available in district schools. Students enrolled in charter high schools, however, are less likely to attend an “A” rated school than students enrolled in charter elementary, charter combination, or district high schools.

A greater percentage of charter students are enrolled in “A” rated schools than district students. However, a smaller percentage of students attend “B” rated charter schools than district students, and a greater percentage are enrolled in “C” and “D” rated schools. Only 0.1 percent of charter students are enrolled in an “F” rated school, compared to 0.4 percent of district students. Figure 6a shows the percent of students that are enrolled in A, B, C, D, and F-labeled schools⁷ across all four accountability models and three grade configurations.⁸

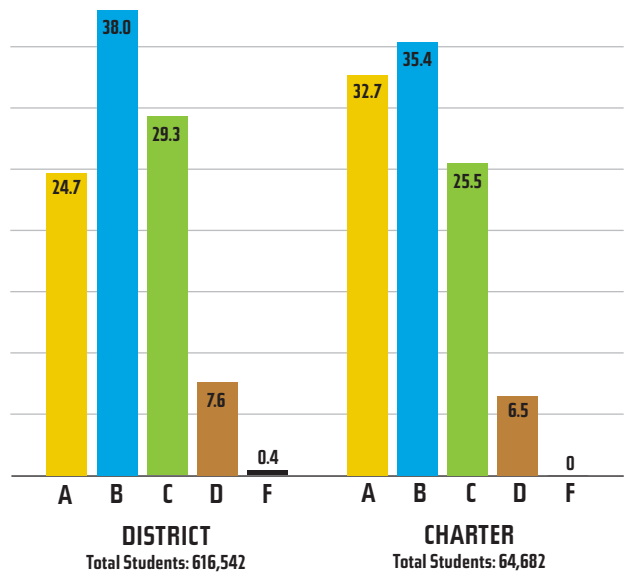
When the data are disaggregated by grade configuration (Figures 6b, 6c, and 6d), we see that the general finding remains true for elementary and combination charter schools – in both cases at least one-third of charter students enrolled in these schools attend an “A” rated school. High schools, however, show very different results. Only 16 percent of students enrolled in charter high schools attend an “A” rated school compared to 24 percent of students enrolled in district high schools. A much greater proportion of charter high school students attend a “C” or “D” rated school than their district high school counterparts. This finding points to a significant difference in the performance of charter high schools compared to elementary and combination charter schools. Some of these differences may be explained by the type of schools (e.g., Traditional, Alternative) these represent and the Center’s future analyses of school performance in each of the school accountability models will shed more light on this finding.



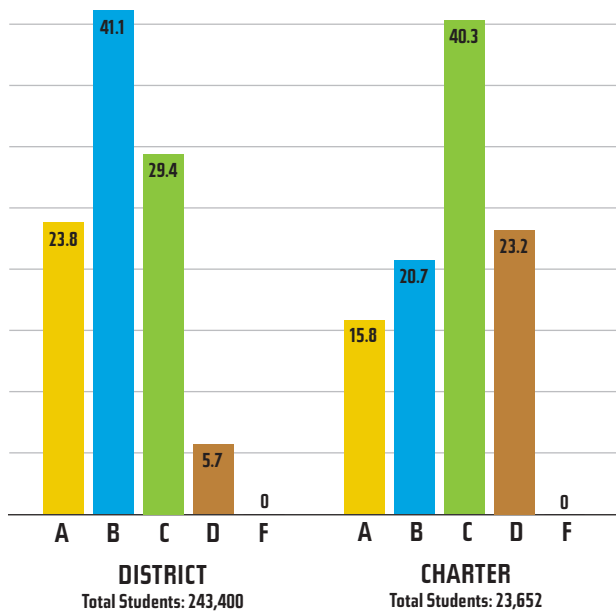
**FIGURE 6a: PERCENT OF ENROLLMENT IN A-F SCHOOLS, 2012
ALL MODELS, ALL GRADE CONFIGURATIONS**



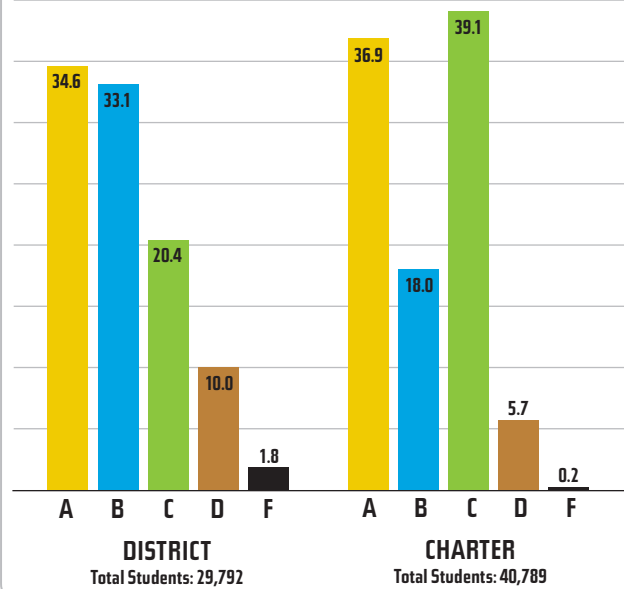
**FIGURE 6b: PERCENT OF ENROLLMENT IN A-F SCHOOLS, 2012
ALL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL MODELS**



**FIGURE 6c: PERCENT OF ENROLLMENT IN A-F SCHOOLS, 2012
ALL HIGH SCHOOL MODELS**



**FIGURE 6d: PERCENT OF ENROLLMENT IN A-F SCHOOLS, 2012
ALL COMBINATION SCHOOL MODELS**



Summary

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

The information presented above provides some insight into the impact of public school choice, in the form of charter school enrollment and charter school performance, on Arizona students. While there are questions that cannot be answered based on these data only, we can draw some overall conclusions.

Charter school enrollment patterns show that charter schools are meeting a need for types of schools not widely available in traditional school districts. Twenty percent of charter schools are Alternative schools compared to four percent of district schools. Similarly, 31 percent of charter schools have a combination configuration, compared to four percent of districts schools. Along with the 25 percent of charter schools that are Small, these findings suggest that charter schools are meeting a need for educational settings not widely available in district schools.

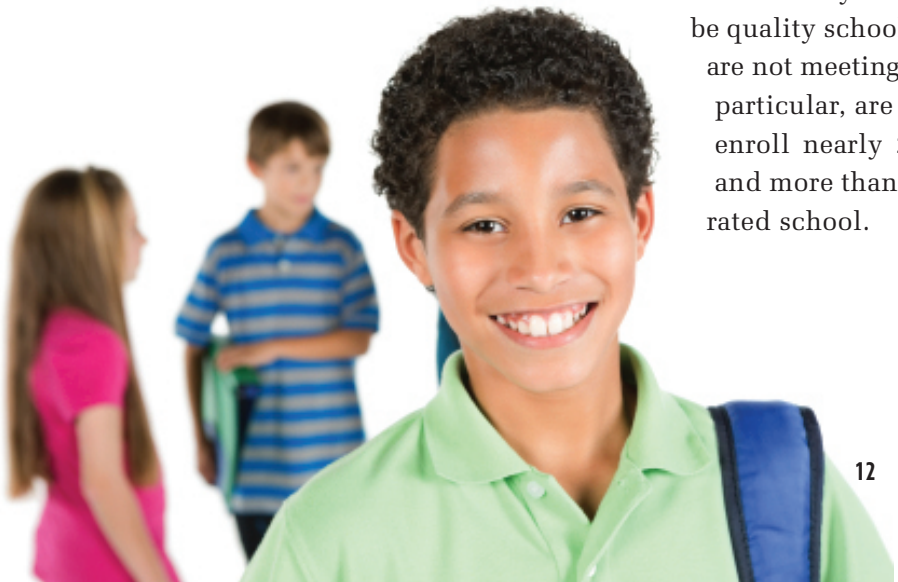
Data contradict the common misconception that charter schools attract, or “skim,” only higher performing students away from district schools. Eighteen percent of all students enrolled in charter schools are enrolled in an Alternative school, compared to less than one percent of students enrolled in district schools. Alternative schools are designed to serve students who have not performed well in traditional school settings, oftentimes students who have previously dropped out of school, are significantly behind on academic credits, or been adjudicated delinquent. While it is possible that some of the curricular and programmatic options available in charter schools attract higher performing students, it is equally likely that the same variety of charter school options also attract lower performing students.

Charter schools with combination grade configurations show particular promise as an effective educational strategy. Given the challenge that many students experience when they make the transition from middle school to high school, the relatively high number of combination schools is particularly interesting and merits further study.

Nearly one-third of all students enrolled in charter schools attend a school with an “A” rating, compared to one quarter of students enrolled in district schools. Traditional elementary and combination charter schools, in particular, are responsible for this finding – together they enroll over 70 percent of all charter school students. This finding suggests that these types of charter schools are more effective than similar district schools at achieving the higher levels of the school accountability measures.

Too many charter school students attend mid- or low- quality schools. Forty-two percent of all students enrolled in charter schools attend a school with a “C,” “D,” or “F” rating, compared to 37 percent of student enrolled in districts schools. If we define a quality school as a school with an “A” or “B” school

accountability rating and if the goal is that all charter schools be quality schools, then over one third of all charter schools are not meeting that goal. Alternative and Small schools, in particular, are responsible for this finding – together they enroll nearly 23 percent of all charter schools students and more than 70 percent of these students attend a lower rated school.



WHAT DO WE STILL NEED TO LEARN?

Education research oftentimes results in a substantial list of unanswered questions that emerge from the analysis performed. This report is no different. Each finding points to a line of inquiry that, if followed, will provide further insight into the extent of public school choice in Arizona and its impact on student learning. The items below represent only a partial list of the research questions the Center for Student Achievement hopes to explore in the coming months and years. The Center's research agenda extends beyond public school choice, however this context provides a solid starting point.

What is the extent and impact of district open enrollment policies? Public school choice is not limited to a district versus charter decision. Many families use open enrollment policies to enroll in a different school or program within their district of residence or a school in another district. At this time, we do not have a complete or accurate statewide picture of how many students are open-enrolled or what drives those open enrollment decisions. Knowing this information and what impact it has on student achievement is critical to determining the effectiveness of public school choice on student learning.

What are some better indicators of school quality; in particular, measures that reflect the wide array of school types and their curricular and programmatic diversity? One limitation of this analysis is the reliance on the state's A-F Letter Grades as the only measure of school quality. While this measure is robust to the extent that it incorporates both an absolute measure of proficiency and student growth, it is still heavily reliant on one student assessment and reflective of student performance during one annual testing window.

What data do parents and students use to make their public school choices? It is a foundational assumption of public school choice policies that families and students (i.e., choosers) base their enrollment decisions on available data about school performance, at least in part. That is one of the underlying rationale for standardized assessments and school accountability measures. However, the data presented here show that a significant number of students attend a "C" or "D" rated school. Are these parents choosing to remain in a low-performing school? Why? The Center found that 60 percent of the visitors to its *Education Evaluator* are parents and will leverage the data they provide in future research.

What is the impact of charter school closures on student enrollment and achievement? Arizona closed ten charter schools in 2012 – only three states in the country closed a greater number of charter schools.⁹ As charter schools are closed by their authorizers for failing to meet standards of performance, the Center will look at the impact of these closures on students. Where do those students go? Do they enroll in higher performing schools? Do they return to district schools or choose to attend another charter school? School closures will have a significant impact on the students they serve and it is critical that authorizers, parents, and education leaders know the effect school closures have on student enrollment patterns and achievement.

What are some of the underlying reasons for the significant gap in Hispanic and White enrollment in district and charter schools? The data in this report indicate that charter schools are not completely reflective of the ethnic composition of students in the state; however, the Center does not have the data needed to reach any conclusions about the underlying reasons for this difference.¹⁰ Further insight into this disparity is of particular interest to the Center because the Hispanic student population is projected to increase significantly in the next decade.¹¹ Participation in English Language Learning programs, Special Education, and the National School Lunch Program are other appropriate indicators by which to compare the compositions of district and charter student populations. The Center will analyze these indicators in future publications.

What does school performance look like for similar types of charter and district schools? The data provided in Table 1 offer a compelling reason for analyzing charter school performance relative to the appropriate school accountability model and grade level configuration. Given the significant differences in the population of schools and the students they serve, an analysis comparing all charter schools to all district schools has the potential to mask differences in performance across different types of district and charter schools. A future report by the Center will analyze the performance of schools and their impact on students in each school type/grade level configuration category.

CONCLUSION

Public school choice should be about instructional options for all students and not be a matter of “district vs. charter” or “us vs. them.” This report demonstrates that charter schools are providing public school options that are not widely available in district schools. Further study of programmatic and curricular focus in schools will shed light on this topic, but what we know right now suggests that charter schools are not so much competing with districts for students (though some of them are), as they are complementing district options.

After nearly twenty years of public school choice in Arizona, it is safe to assume that charter schools and district open enrollment policies are here to stay. If current enrollment trends continue, we can expect charter school enrollment to double by 2020 and approach one quarter of the state’s public school students. Given the potential reach of the charter school movement, it is critical that we ensure not only public school choice, but quality school choice for all students.

Endnotes

- 1 Excerpt from a speech by Reverend Dr. Patrick T O Neill.
- 2 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), “Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey,” 2010-11.
- 3 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), “State Nonfiscal Public Elementary/Secondary Education Survey”, 1997-98 v.1c, 1998-99 v.1b, 1999-00 v.1b, 2000-01 v.1c, 2001-02 v.1c, 2002-03 v.1b, 2003-04 v.1b, 2004-05 v.1f, 2005-06 v.1b, 2006-07 v.1c, 2007-08 v.1b, 2008-09 v.1c, 2009-10 v.1b, 2010-11 v.1a.
- 4 Communication with Arizona Department of Education on January 8, 2013.
- 5 Ethnicity data available in the SY2012 October 1 enrollment file available on the Arizona Department of Education website at <http://www.azed.gov/research-evaluation/arizona-enrollment-figures/>.
- 6 US Census Bureau National Population Projections, 2012.
- 7 Schools are given an F Letter Grade after three subsequent years of a D Letter Grade (or Underperforming rating under the previous school accountability system).
- 8 Alternative labels were combined with other accountability models for the charts in Figure 6. For example, “A” includes all “A” and “A-Alternative” ratings.
- 9 National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, January 2013 at http://www.publiccharters.org/data/files/Publication_docs/NAPCS%202012-13%20New%20and%20Closed%20Charter%20Schools_20130114T161322.pdf.
- 10 In order to address this disparity the Center has partnered with New Schools for Phoenix to provide low-income, minority students access to an increased number of high performing charter school options.
- 11 US Census Bureau National Population Projections, 2012.

DEFINITION OF TERMS: SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY MODELS AND GRADE LEVEL CONFIGURATIONS

SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY MODELS

The state's A-F Letter Grades are given to all public schools according to one of four school accountability models. The models are designed to provide a fair assessment of different types of schools that often enroll different groups of students. The four accountability models are:

Traditional School: A school that is not considered to be an Alternative, Small, or K-2 school. Traditional schools offer standard curricular options in a typical school setting. Most Arizona public schools are Traditional schools.

Alternative School: Alternative schools are held to a different accountability model due to the unique composition of their schools and the students they serve. Alternative status is granted to schools that apply to the Arizona Department of Education. Alternative high schools must award degree-granting credit and grant high school diplomas. In order to qualify as an alternative school, a school must serve one or more of the following student populations:

- Students with behavioral issues (documented history of disruptive behavior)
- Students identified as dropouts
- Students in poor academic standing who are either severely behind on academic credits (more than one year) or have a demonstrated pattern of failing grades
- Pregnant and/or parenting students
- Adjudicated youth

Small School: A school serving 100 or fewer students. A separate accountability model was defined for this group of schools due to the small number of students and the disproportionate impact that one or two students can have on the overall rating of a school.

K-2 School: A school serving only Kindergarten through grade 2. A separate accountability model was defined for this group of schools because of the limited amount of data available (i.e., AIMS state assessment is given in grades 3-8 and 10).

For a full description and additional information about the A-F Letter Grades, please visit the Arizona Department of Education at <http://www.azed.gov/research-evaluation/a-f-accountability/>.

GRADE LEVEL CONFIGURATIONS

Anyone who has been inside of an elementary school and a high school can see the significant differences in how the schools operate, their scheduling, curricular options, etc. In order to take these differences into account, this report uses the following three school configuration categories:

Elementary School: A school that offers any grades Kindergarten to 8th grade.

High School: A school that offers any grades 9-12.

Combination School: A school that offers any grades that span across the elementary and high school grades. For example, a school that offers instruction in grades 6-12 is a combination school.

For the purpose of analysis, each school is assigned to a single accountability model/grade configuration category. For example, a school that serves adjudicated students in grades 6-12 is considered an "Alternative combination school." Similarly, a school that serves students in grades K-5 in a traditional school environment is considered a "Traditional elementary school" in this analysis.



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By Dr. Anabel Aportela and Dr. Ildiko Laczko-Kerr

We would like to thank Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction
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A person wearing a light blue dress shirt and a dark tie with a small white pattern is holding a large blackboard with a wooden frame. The blackboard contains text about the Center for Student Achievement. The person's hands are visible at the top corners of the board, and their torso is visible at the bottom.

About the Center for Student Achievement

All students deserve a quality education, no matter where they attend school. Founded on that principle, the Center for Student Achievement was recently launched to support school leaders and teachers. The mission of the Center is to improve student achievement in all schools focusing our efforts on high-quality school improvement initiatives, with a particular focus on professional development and the publication of rigorous and transparent research and evaluation.

From this foundation, the Center developed a suite of supporting programs for school leaders and teachers, currently in use by a growing number of district and charter schools in Arizona. Nationally, the Center also provides consulting services to educators in other states about how to make student data analysis applicable and actionable. The Center has invested significantly in professional talent, hiring a team of experienced trainers and researchers who are capable of delivering customized, high-quality, practical and actionable data and professional development for teachers and leaders. The Center's goal is that these partnerships will expand the number of high quality public school choices available to all students.