# Student Achievement in Florida's Charter Schools: 

A Comparison with Achievement in Traditional Public Schools


FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION Improving K-12 Educational Choice Options

About This Report
Section 1002.33(23), Florida Statutes, requires the Florida Department of Education to prepare an annual statewide analysis of student achievement in charter schools versus the achievement of comparable students in traditional public schools. This report of charter school student performance fulfills the statutory requirement for the 2010-11 school year. The analysis examines the average performance of charter school students and traditional public school students using eight years of Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) reading and math scores, as well as the FCAT science test scores that were added to the school grading calculation in 2007-08. Only students who were enrolled in a charter school or a traditional public school for an entire school year are included in the analysis. Limiting the analysis to include only full-year students is consistent with the state's school accountability system for awarding school grades under the A+ Plan. In addition, the report compares charter and traditional public schools in terms of achievement gaps and student learning gains.

The analysis and production of this report was a coordinated effort between the Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice and the Bureau of Evaluation and Reporting in the Division of Accountability, Research, and Measurement. Additional information about charter schools and other school choice options is available on the Department's website at: www.floridaschoolchoice.org.

Section 1002.33(23), Florida Statutes (23) ANALYSIS OF CHARTER SCHOOL PERFORMANCE.--Upon receipt of the annual report required by paragraph (9)(k), the Department of Education shall provide to the State Board of Education, the Commissioner of Education, the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives an analysis and comparison of the overall performance of charter school students, to include all students whose scores are counted as part of the statewide assessment program, versus comparable public school students in the district as determined by the statewide assessment program currently administered in the school district, and other assessments administered pursuant to s. 1008.22(3).

## Key Achievement Findings

The ultimate proof of success for any charter school is the achievement of its students. The analysis of 2010-11 student achievement data demonstrates that charter schools offer parents and policy makers a viable option for improving education in the state.

The data contained in this report is derived from student performance on the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT), and is designed to allow a comparative analysis of the academic achievement of students attending charter schools versus students attending traditional public schools. The report contains data spanning eight years of FCAT results. Using data from the 2010-11 schoo year the report makes 168 comparisons covering three measurements: FCAT proficiency percentages, achievement gaps, and learning gains. Each of these measurement areas is further broken down to offer a more nuanced view of student achievement.

The FCAT proficiency percentages are used to measure both overall rates of proficiency by grade groupings, and comparisons of subgroup performance. Thi section of the report contains 54 separate comparisons of student achievement. Charter school students outperformed traditional public school students in 50 of the 54 comparisons, with one tie

The achievement gap section of the report contains both longitudinal and current data that are used to analyze the gap between white students and African American students and white students and Hispanic students, in reading, math, and science. This section of the report includes 18 separate comparisons of current achievement gaps. The achievement gap was lower for charter school students in 16 of the 18 comparisons

The learning gains section of the report includes 96 comparisons. The report compares the percentage of students in charter schools making learning gains against the percentage of students in traditional public schools making learning gains, by subject, grade level, and subgroup. The percentage of students making learning gains was higher in charter schools in 79 of the 96 comparisons. The percentage of students making learning gains was higher in traditional public schools in 7 of the 96 comparisons. There was no difference in the percentage of students making learning gains in 10 of the 96 comparisons.

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## Student Achievement in Florida's Charter Schools: A Comparison with Achievement in Traditional Public Schools

Charter schools are independent public schools created on the basis of an agreement between a group of school organizers and a sponsoring body. Florida's charter schools have been growing by near record numbers since the first five charter schools were opened in 1996. During the 2010-11 school year, 456 operated throughout the state in 43 school districts and at two state universities. While each charter school is unique in its educational approach, charter schools are generally classified as start-up schools, schools managed by educational management organizations, conversion public schools, or University charter lab schools. Each charter school has its own governing board that is responsible for setting policies and procedures. Charter schools have the autonomy and flexibility to provide expanded learning experiences to meet students' individual educational needs. In return, they are held accountable for achieving results. Although provided more freedom than traditional public schools, charter schools are held accountable on multiple levels. The charter contract delineates expectations of the governing board and the sponsor regarding the school's academic and financial performance. As part of their contract, charter schools are held accountable for academic and financial results, embodied in the following three guiding principles:

- Meet high standards of student achievement while providing parents flexibility to choose among diverse educational opportunities within the state's public school system;
- Promote enhanced academic success and financial efficiency by aligning responsibility with accountability; and
- Provide parents with sufficient information on whether or not the child gain at least a year's worth of learning for every year spent in the charter school.


## Students Served by Florida Charter Schools

Charter schools provide parents with additional choices for selecting the most effective educational programs for their children and offer creative solutions for improving student achievement in Florida. The charter school movement in Florida began as an avenue to improve student learning, increase parental choice, influence the traditional public school system, and foster innovative instructional practices. Charter school enrollment has grown steadily over the last decade. As shown below, charter schools served over 157,000 students in the 2010-11 school year, which translates to more than $6 \%$ of Florida's total public school population.

2010-11 Charter School and Traditional School Student Populations

|  | Charter | Traditional |
| :--- | :--- | :--- |
| Student Membership | 157,389 | $2,582,013$ |
| Gender |  |  |
| Male | $49.9 \%$ | $51.5 \%$ |
| Female | $50.1 \%$ | $48.5 \%$ |
| Race |  |  |
| White | $37.2 \%$ | $43.6 \%$ |
| African American | $22.8 \%$ | $22.9 \%$ |
| Hispanic | $35.0 \%$ | $27.5 \%$ |
| English Language Program | $10.4 \%$ | $11.5 \%$ |
| Free and Reduced Lunch <br> Eligible | $45.1 \%$ | $55.2 \%$ |
| Exceptional Student Education | $9.9 \%$ | $13.6 \%$ |

## Grading Charter Schools

Like traditional public schools, charter schools are assigned a performance grade if they meet the eligibility criteria and are not an alternative school. Changes to the school grade calculations in 2002-03 resulted in an increased number of charter schools receiving performance grades. The percentage of charter schools receiving an " $A$ " has increased from $42 \%$ in 2002-03 to a high of $63 \%$ in 2008-09 and $58 \%$ for the most current year

| YEAR | A | B | C | D | F |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| $2002-03$ | $42 \%$ | $11 \%$ | $18 \%$ | $13 \%$ | $16 \%$ |
| $2003-04$ | $38 \%$ | $11 \%$ | $24 \%$ | $13 \%$ | $14 \%$ |
| $2004-05$ | $36 \%$ | $15 \%$ | $22 \%$ | $14 \%$ | $12 \%$ |
| $2005-06$ | $50 \%$ | $20 \%$ | $21 \%$ | $6 \%$ | $3 \%$ |
| $2006-07$ | $48 \%$ | $21 \%$ | $19 \%$ | $8 \%$ | $5 \%$ |
| $2007-08$ | $52 \%$ | $20 \%$ | $19 \%$ | $4 \%$ | $5 \%$ |
| $2008-09$ | $63 \%$ | $16 \%$ | $12 \%$ | $6 \%$ | $3 \%$ |
| $2009-10$ | $57 \%$ | $14 \%$ | $15 \%$ | $8 \%$ | $6 \%$ |
| $2010-11$ | $58 \%$ | $15 \%$ | $16 \%$ | $5 \%$ | $6 \%$ |

2011 Charter School Performance Grades


## FCAT Reading

## Traditional Public Schools and Charter Schools

 2004-2011
## Reading

Percent of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on FCAT Reading Elementary School Grades 3, 4, and 5
Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools, 2004 to 2011


Percent of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on FCAT Reading ents Scoring a Level 3 or Above on
Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools, 2004 to 2011


Percent of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on FCAT Reading High School Grades 9 and 10
Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools, 2004 to 2011


FCAT Reading
Traditional Public Schools and Charter Schools
SUB-GROUP COMPARISONS 2011

Percent of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on FCAT Reading Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools White Students


Percent of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on FCAT Reading Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools African-American Student
Reoding


Percent of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on FCAT Reading Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools Hispanic Students


Percent of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on FCAT Reading Charter Schools and Traditional Public School


Percent of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on FCAT Reading Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools


## FCAT Math

## Traditional Public Schools and Charter Schools

 2004-2011Percent of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on FCAT Math Elementary School Grades 3, 4, and 5
Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools, 2004 to 2011


Percent of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on FCAT Math Middle School Grades 6, 7 , and 8
Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools, 2004 to 2011


Percent of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on FCAT Math High School Grades 9 and 10
Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools, 2004 to 201


FCAT Math
Traditional Public Schools and Charter Schools
S U B - G R O U P COMPARISONS 2011

Percent of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on FCAT Math Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools White Students


Percent of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on FCAT Math Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools African-American Student


Percent of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on FCAT Math Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools Hispanic Students


Percent of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on FCAT Math Charter Schools and Traditional Public School


Percent of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on FCAT Math Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools Exceptional Education Students


## FCAT Science

## Traditional Public Schools and Charter Schools

 2008-2011Percent of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on FCAT Science Elementary School Grade 5
Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools, 2008 to 2011


Percent of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on FCAT Science Middle School Grade 8
Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools, 2008 to 2011


High School Grade 10
Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools, 2008 to 2011


## FCAT Science

Traditional Public Schools and Charter Schools
S UB-GROUP COMPARISONS 2011
Percent of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on FCAT Science Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools


Percent of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on FCAT Science Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools African-American Students


Percent of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on FCAT Science Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools


Percent of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on FCAT Science Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools FRL Students


Percent of Students Scoring a Level 3 or Above on FCAT Science Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools


Closing the Achievement Gap in Reading Traditional Public Schools and Charter Schools 2004-2011

Traditional Public Elementary Schools
FCAT Reading Achievement Level 3 and Above Grades 3, 4, and 5 by Race/Ethnicity


Traditional Public Middle Schools
FCAT Reading Achievement Level 3 and Above rades 6, 7, and 8 by Race/Ethnicity


## Charter Middle Schools

FCAT Reading Achievement Level 3 and Above Grades 6, 7, and 8 by Race/Ethnicity


Traditional Public High Schools
FCAT Reading Achievement Level 3 and Above Grades 9 and 10 by Race/Ethnicity

## Reading

Closing the Achievement Gap in Math Traditional Public Schools and Charter Schools 2004-2011

Traditional Public Elementary Schools FCAT Math Achievement Level 3 and Above Grades 3, 4, and 5 by Race/Ethnicity


Charter Elementary Schools
FCAT Math Achievement Level 3 and Above Grades 3, 4, and 5 by Race/Ethnicity


Traditional Public Middle School
FCAT Math Achievement Level 3 and Above
Grades 6, 7, and 8 by Race/Ethnicity


Charter Middle Schools
FCAT Math Achievement Level 3 and Above
Grades 6, 7, and 8 by Race/Ethnicity


Traditional Public High Schools FCAT Math Achievement Level 3 and Above Grades 9 and 10 by Race/Ethnicity


Charter High Schools
FCAT Math Achievement Level 3 and Above
Grades 9 and 10 by Race/Ethnicity


## Achievement Gap Summary Data 2010-11 School Year

Achievement Gap in Reading Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools African-American Students and White Student


## Achievement Gap in Reading

Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools
Hispanic Students and White Students



Achievement Gap in Math Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools African-American Students and White Students

Achievement Gap in Math
Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools
Hispanic Students and White Students


## Learning Gains Comparison 2010-2011 School Year

Achievement Gap in Science Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools African-American Students and White Student


Achievement Gap in Science
Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools
Hispanic Students and White Students


Percent of Students Making Learning Gains on FCAT Reading All Students


Percent of Students Making Learning Gains on FCAT Reading African-American Students


Percent of Students Making Learning Gains on FCAT Reading White Students


Percent of Students Making Learning Gains on FCAT Reading Hispanic Students


Percent of Students Making Learning Gains on FCAT Reading FRL Students


Reading

Percent of Students Making Learning Gains on FCAT Reading Exceptional Education Students


Percent of Students in Lowest Quartile
Making Learning Gains on FCAT Reading All Students


Percent of Students in Lowest Quartile Making Learning Gains on FCAT Reading

African-American Students


Percent of Students in Lowest Quartile Making Learning Gains on FCAT Reading White Students


Reading

Percent of Students in Lowest Quartile Making Learning Gains on FCAT Reading Hispanic Students


Percent of Students in Lowest Quartile
Making Learning Gains on FCAT Reading FRL Students

## Reoding



Percent of Students in Lowest Quartile Making Learning Gains on FCAT Reading Exceptional Education Students


Percent of Students Making Learning Gains on FCAT Math All Students


Percent of Students Making Learning Gains on FCAT Math African-American Students


Percent of Students Making Learning Gains on FCAT Math White Students


Percent of Students Making Learning Gains on FCAT Math Hispanic Students


Percent of Students Making Learning Gains on FCAT Math FRL Students


Percent of Students Making Learning Gains on FCAT Math Exceptional Education Students


Percent of Students In Lowest Quartile
Making Learning Gains on FCAT Math All Students


Percent of Students In Lowest Quartile
Making Learning Gains on FCAT Math
African-American Students


Percent of Students In Lowest Quartile
Making Learning Gains on FCAT Math White Student

cent of Students In Lowest Quartile Making Learning Gains on FCAT Math Hispanic Students

ercent of Students In Lowest Quartile Making Learning Gains on FCAT Math FRL Students


Percent of Students In Lowest Quartile Making Learning Gains on FCAT Math Exceptional Education Students




FCAT LEARNING GAINS DATA

| READING | All Students <br> \% who made learning gains | African American $\%$ who made learning gains | White <br> \% who made learning gains | Hispanic <br> \% who made learning gains | FRL <br> \% who made learning gains | SWD <br> \% who made learning gains |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Charter Schools |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Grades 4 and 5 | 67 | 59 | 70 | 67 | 63 | 56 |
| Grades 6,7 and 8 | 68 | 63 | 69 | 69 | 66 | 61 |
| Grades 9 and 10 | 55 | 45 | 60 | 56 | 51 | 39 |
| All Grade levels | 65 | 58 | 68 | 66 | 62 | 56 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Traditional Schools |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Grades 4 and 5 | 66 | 59 | 70 | 65 | 63 | 56 |
| Grades 6, 7 and 8 | 64 | 58 | 66 | 63 | 61 | 57 |
| Grades 9 and 10 | 52 | 41 | 58 | 49 | 45 | 38 |
| All Grade levels | 61 | 54 | 65 | 60 | 57 | 52 |

FCAT LEARNING GAINS OF THE LOW 25\%

| reading | All Students <br> \% in the low $25 \%$ who made learning gains | African American \% in the low $25 \%$ who made learning gains | White <br> \% in the low $25 \%$ who made learning gains | Hispanic <br> \% in the low $25 \%$ who made learning gains | FRL <br> \% in the low $25 \%$ who made learning gains | SWD <br> \% in the low $25 \%$ who made learning gains |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Charter Schools |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Grades 4 and 5 | 63 | 58 | 65 | 63 | 60 | 53 |
| Grades 6, 7 and 8 | 72 | 70 | 73 | 72 | 71 | 64 |
| Grades 9 and 10 | 53 | 48 | 52 | 56 | 53 | 39 |
| All Grade levels | 66 | 62 | 67 | 67 | 65 | 56 |
| Traditional Schools |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Grades 4 and 5 | 61 | 56 | 65 | 61 | 58 | 52 |
| Grades 6, 7 and 8 | 68 | 65 | 69 | 68 | 66 | 60 |
| Grades 9 and 10 | 47 | 43 | 51 | 47 | 45 | 39 |
| All Grade levels | 60 | 56 | 63 | 60 | 58 | 52 |

Note: Retained 3rd grade students eligible for gains therefore included with grades 4 and 5 .

FCAT LEARNING GAINS DATA

| MATH | All Students <br> \% who made <br> learning gains | African <br> American <br> \% who made <br> learning gains | White <br> \% who made <br> learning gains | Hispanic <br> \% who made <br> learning gains | FRL <br> \% who made <br> learning gains | SWD who made <br> learning gains |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |

## Charter Schools

| Grades 4 and 5 | 61 | 57 | 61 | 64 | 59 | 55 |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| Grades 6,7 and 8 | 71 | 68 | 73 | 69 | 68 | 65 |
| Grades 9 and 10 | 79 | 72 | 82 | 81 | 78 | 65 |
| All Grade levels | 68 | 65 | 69 | 69 | 65 | 61 |

## Traditional Schools

| Grades 4 and 5 | 63 | 60 | 65 | 63 | 61 | 55 |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| Grades 6,7 and 8 | 70 | 65 | 72 | 69 | 66 | 62 |
| Grades 9 and 10 | 76 | 67 | 79 | 75 | 71 | 61 |
| All Grade levels | 69 | 64 | 71 | 68 | 65 | 59 |

FCAT LEARNING GAINS OF THE LOW $\mathbf{2 5 \%}$

| MATH | All Students <br> \% in the low $25 \%$ who made learning gains | African American \% in the low $25 \%$ who made learning gains | White <br> \% in the low $25 \%$ who made learning gains | Hispanic <br> \% in the low $25 \%$ who made learning gains | FRL <br> \% in the low $25 \%$ who made learning gains | SWD <br> \% in the low $25 \%$ who made learning gains |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Charter Schools |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Grades 4 and 5 | 66 | 64 | 66 | 68 | 65 | 59 |
| Grades 6, 7 and 8 | 71 | 71 | 73 | 69 | 69 | 66 |
| Grades 9 and 10 | 72 | 66 | 74 | 76 | 71 | 57 |
| All Grade levels | 70 | 68 | 70 | 70 | 68 | 63 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Traditional Schools |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Grades 4 and 5 | 65 | 63 | 64 | 66 | 63 | 56 |
| Grades 6, 7 and 8 | 69 | 68 | 70 | 69 | 68 | 65 |
| Grades 9 and 10 | 66 | 62 | 70 | 67 | 64 | 58 |
| All Grade levels | 67 | 65 | 68 | 68 | 65 | 61 |

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[^0]:    Note: Retained 3rd grade students eligible for gains therefore included with grades 4 and 5

