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CREDO at Stanford University Releases Evaluation on Charter Restart Model

STANFORD, Calif. – Stanford University’s Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO), released today a comprehensive online report titled *An Evaluation of the i3 Validation Grant: Scaling the New Orleans Charter Restart Model*.

The evaluation studied the experience and effectiveness of a unique approach to improving low-performing public schools in both the charter and traditional public-school sectors in New Orleans, Memphis, and Nashville. In 2010, the U.S. Department of Education awarded an Investing in Innovation (i3) Validation grant to New Schools for New Orleans (NSNO) and the Louisiana Recovery School District (RSD). The purpose of the grant was to test and replicate the New Orleans Charter Restart Model, a school improvement innovation that transferred the operation of previously low-performing schools to charter management organizations that had proven track-records with similar students. The project expanded the Charter Restart Model in New Orleans and sought to demonstrate the scalability of the model using Tennessee as a test site. CREDO was selected in 2010 as the independent third-party evaluator for the program. The evaluation tracked the implementation of the Charter Restart Model and its impact on school operations and student academic performance for seven years.

“The Charter Restart Model forged a new set of partnerships in the communities where it occurred with the ambitious goal of dramatically increasing the number of high-quality seats for all students. The lessons that emerged from the evaluation make an important contribution to our collective efforts to build strong schools for all students,” said Margaret Raymond, Director of CREDO at Stanford University.

Key Findings

- The Charter Restart Model aimed to transfer operation of low-performing schools to Charter Management Organizations (CMOs) with proven ability to improve student learning. Selection of strong partner CMOs was crucial to the success of the Charter Restart Model.
- The original aspirations for the program -- namely, that students in previously struggling schools would reach the top tiers of performance in their respective cities within five years -- were more aspirational than realistic. None of the 21 schools in the evaluation met the original targets outlined in the proposal in both reading or math. It bears noting that none of the comparison peers met the same targets either.
- The evaluation adopted a more reasoned standard for testing program efficacy: the actual progress of students in Charter Restart Schools was compared to peers in schools that were not involved in the program. None of the Charter Restart Model schools posted average academic gains that out-performed their peers in both reading and math. In five New Orleans schools, students reached achievement targets in one subject but not both.
- We observe better outcomes on average for fresh start schools compared to full school turnarounds, although we see instances of success for both models.



To download a copy of the full report, visit: <http://credo.stanford.edu>

About CREDO at Stanford University

CREDO at Stanford University produces rigorous, non-partisan research and evaluation to enhance the body of empirical evidence, driving education policy decisions toward improved education outcomes for all students.

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