

For Immediate Release

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A CREDO AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY STUDY FINDS WIDE VARIANCE IN THE PERFORMANCE OF CHARTER SCHOOLS IN PENNSYLVANIA COMPARED TO THEIR TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOL PEERS

Stanford, CA – A new report released today by the Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford University found that reading and math gains for charter school students in Pennsylvania were significantly below their traditional public school peers. The Pennsylvania report, examined charters from 2004-2008 and expands upon the national CREDO at Stanford report, entitled, “*Multiple Choice: Charter School Performance in 16 States,*” that was released in June of 2009.

Building on the methodology used for the national report, CREDO at Stanford found that overall, charter school performance Pennsylvania lagged in growth compared to traditional public schools. However, there was substantial variation in quality across individual schools. There were a handful of outstanding charter schools in each subject. More than one quarter of the charter schools have significantly more positive learning gains than their traditional public school counterparts in reading, but their performance is eclipsed by the nearly half of charter schools that have significantly lower learning gains. In math, 53% of charter schools performed with similar or better success compared to traditional public schools. Performance at cyber charter schools was substantially lower than the performance at brick and mortar charters. Charter schools of all ages in Pennsylvania on average perform worse than traditional public schools and charter school students grow at lower rates compared to their traditional public school peers in their first 3 years in charter schools, although the gap shrinks considerably in math and disappears entirely in reading by the third year of attendance.

“The story in Pennsylvania is not unlike many states across the country; a renewed focus on quality by the charter sector and among charter authorizers will help to ensure that the excellent performance provided by a significant proportion of the charter sector is emulated and reproduced, not mitigated by the poor performance of others. Without a vigorous focus on quality, the charter sector as a whole is put at risk by those schools that consistently underperform compared to their traditional public school peers,” said Devora Davis, Research

Manager of CREDO at Stanford University.

Hispanic students enrolled in charter schools perform significantly worse than their peers in traditional public schools in both reading and math, while Black students in charter schools perform significantly worse in math than Black students in traditional public schools but similarly in reading growth. Charter schools produced similar performance to traditional public schools in math and reading for both students in poverty and for those with learning disabilities. Retained students in charter schools performed better than their peers at traditional public schools in reading but worse in math. Elementary school students enrolled in charter schools outperformed their peers in traditional public schools in both math and reading, while those enrolled in middle and multi-level charter schools performed worse in both subjects than their peers at traditional public schools.

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

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>