City Study 2022: Austin - Summary of Findings

In 2022, CREDO at Stanford University completed a second analysis of the performance of public schools in Austin, Texas.[1] This summary highlights the findings about the academic performance of students in public K-12 schools in Austin. Performance is measured by one-year learning gains or growth students made from one school year to the next. We benchmark the growth of Austin students against the state average growth and then compare the progress of charter school students with that of similar district school students within Austin, accounting for student characteristics.[2]

Overall: Students in Austin posted stronger learning gains compared to the state average in reading and math throughout the 2018-19 growth period.

Sector: In both reading and math, Austin charter school as well as district school students made greater learning gains compared to the state average in the period.

Within Austin, charter schools exhibited greater learning gains in reading and similar progress in math compared to district schools in 2018-19.

A deeper dive into Austin student growth for the period ending in Spring 2019 reveals the following findings:

Charter School Type: Austin charter schools affiliated with a Charter Management Organization (CMO) make greater progress in both reading and math compared to the state average. Students attending Austin independent charter schools exhibit similar learning gains in reading and math. Within the Austin charter sector, there is a significant difference in learning gains between CMOs and independent charter schools in either reading or math.

Race/Ethnicity: Overall, Austin black students make similar learning gains in both reading and math compared to the state average black student. Breakout analyses by sector suggest that Austin charter black students also make similar learning gains in both subjects compared to the average black student statewide. Austin district school black students exhibit smaller growth in reading and similar gains in math compared to the state average of black students. Within Austin, black students enrolled in charter schools post similar growth than district school black students in both subjects.

Austin Hispanic students overall show similar growth in reading and math compared to the average Hispanic student in the state. Sector breakout analysis reveal that Hispanic students in Austin charter school make greater progress in reading and similar gains in math relative to the average Hispanic student statewide. Hispanic students enrolled in Austin district schools make similar learning gains compared to the average Hispanic student in the state in both subjects. Cross-sector comparisons within Austin indicate stronger growth among charter school Hispanic students than growth among district school Hispanic students in reading, while there are no statistical difference in math.

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[1] The conclusions of this research do not necessarily reflect the opinions or official position of the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the Texas Workforce Commission or the State of Texas.

[2] We also include the breakout for magnet schools with academically selective admission in the analysis. There are only two selective magnet schools with student growth scores in Austin during the span of this study; we redact the results for this type due to the small number of the schools.

Poverty, ELL, and Special Education: Austin students living in poverty overall post similar learning gains in both reading and math compared to the average student living in poverty in the state. Sector breakout analyses show stronger growth in reading and similar growth in math among students in poverty enrolled in Austin charter schools relative to the state average of students living in poverty. Austin district school students in poverty demonstrate smaller growth in reading and similar math gains compared to the average student in poverty in the statewide. Within Austin, charter school students in poverty outperform district school students in poverty in reading only.

English Language Learners (ELLs) in Austin as a whole demonstrate similar gains in both reading and math relative to the average ELL student in the state. School sector breakout analyses indicate that when compared to the statewide average ELL, Austin ELLs in charter schools made greater progress in reading and similar progress in math, while ELLs in Austin district schools post similar learning gains in both subjects. Cross-sector comparisons within Austin indicate that ELLs enrolled in charter schools make greater learning gains in reading than ELLs students attending district schools.

Austin students receiving special education services make similar progress in both reading and math compared to the state average of special education students, regardless of whether they attend charter or district schools. Sector breakout analyses within Austin indicate that special education students enrolled in charter schools do not grow differently in either reading or math compared with special education students attending district schools.

Gender: Male students in Austin, overall and by school sector, except for the math growth among charter students, demonstrate stronger learning gains in both reading and math relative to the average male student in the state. Within Austin, male students in charter schools make stronger growth in reading and similar progress in math compared to male students in district schools.

Female students in Austin post greater gains in reading and similar growth in math than the statewide average female student. Stronger reading gains relative to the state average of female students are found among Austin female students enrolled in both charter and district schools. For math, only Austin charter and district school female students performed on par with the average female student in the state. Comparisons within Austin show that charter school female students post similar learning gains relative to their peers in district schools in both reading and math.