

City Study 2022: Houston - Summary of Findings

This summary highlights major findings about students' academic performance in public K-12 schools in Houston, Texas.¹ Performance is measured by one-year learning gains or growth students made from one school year to the next. Houston students' progress is measured against the average growth of students throughout the state. The report examines the progress of students that attend charter and magnet schools in Houston, when compared to those who attend district schools with similar student demographics. This comparison takes into account the characteristics of all students.

Overall: Students in Houston exhibited similar growth in reading in the 2018-19 growth period compared to an average student statewide. In math, Houston students posted greater progress in the growth period compared to their peers in the state.

Sector: In both reading and math, Houston charter school students made stronger growth than the state average in the growth period. Houston magnet school students showed greater learning gains in reading and similar growth in math compared to the state average. District school students in Houston exhibited similar growth in reading and made greater progress in math.

Within Houston, charter schools exhibited stronger growth than district schools in reading and math. Houston magnet schools posted greater growth than Houston district schools in reading indicating no significant difference in math in the growth period. Relative to the Houston magnet school students, Houston charter school students showed weaker growth in reading and similar gains in math.

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

Charter School Type: Houston charter schools affiliated with a Charter Management Organization (CMO) post greater progress than the state average in both reading and math, while independent charter schools in Houston show no statistically different growth compared to the state average. In either subject, there is no significant difference in gains between CMOs and independent charter schools within the Houston charter sector.

Race/Ethnicity: Houston black students overall show similar growth in reading and stronger learning gains in math compared to the average black student in the state. Black students attending Houston charter and magnet schools outperform the average black students statewide in both subjects. Houston black students in district schools exhibit weaker gains in reading and stronger growth in math compared to the state average of black students. Within Houston, charter school black students exhibit stronger growth than district school black students in both subjects; magnet school black students outperform district black students in both reading and math.

Hispanic students in Houston do not perform differently in reading and make greater math progress than the average Hispanic student in the state. Hispanic students enrolled in Houston charter schools show greater learning gains in both reading and math than the state average of Hispanic students. Houston magnet school Hispanic students outperform the average Hispanic student statewide in reading and do not grow differently in math. Hispanic students in Houston district schools post similar growth in reading and greater gains in math relative to the average Hispanic student in the state. Within Houston, charter school Hispanic students outgrow district school Hispanic students in both subjects; magnet school Hispanic students make greater progress in reading than district school Hispanic students.

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.

Poverty, ELL, and Special Education: Houston students living in poverty overall are on par with the average student in poverty in the state in reading and make greater learning gains in math. The patterns differ by the sector of schools. Houston charter school students in poverty exhibit stronger performance in both subjects. Houston magnet school students in poverty outpace the average student in poverty statewide in reading and do not differ in math statistically and substantially. Houston district school students living in poverty show similar growth in reading while showing greater progress in math relative to the average student in poverty in the state. Within Houston, charter school students living in poverty outperform district school students living in poverty in both subjects; magnet school students in poverty make stronger learning gains than district school students in poverty in reading.

In Houston English Language Learners (ELLs) lag behind the state average of ELLs in reading and perform similarly in math. ELL students attending Houston charter schools make greater progress in reading and math than the average ELL in the state. ELL students in Houston magnet schools are on par with the average ELL statewide in both subjects. ELL students in Houston district schools are on par with the average ELL statewide math and underperformed their state peers in reading. Comparisons of sectors within Houston indicate that ELLs in charter schools outgrow their peers in district schools in both reading and math.

Houston students receiving special education services make similar growth in reading and greater learning gains in math compared to the state average of special education students. The same pattern is found among special education students served by Houston district schools. Houston charter school students with special education designations outperform the average special education student in the state in both subjects. Special education students attending Houston magnet schools are on par with the state average special education student in both subjects. Cross-sector comparisons within Houston indicate that special education students in charter schools make greater learning gains in reading while making similar progress in math than special education students in district schools. Special education students attending magnet or district schools in Houston do not differ from each other in terms of growth in either subject.

Gender: Both male and female students in Houston overall post similar gains in reading and stronger growth in math compared to the average student of the same gender in the state. Sector breakout analyses demonstrate similar patterns across genders for Houston charter school students. Both male and female students studying in Houston charter schools exhibit stronger growth in both subjects than the average student of the same gender in the state. Male students enrolled in Houston magnet schools make greater progress in reading and grow similarly in math relative to the state average of the male student. Female students enrolled in magnet schools outperform their female peers in the state in both subjects. Male students' attendance in Houston district schools is associated with similar reading growth and greater progress in math compared to the state average of male students. Female students in Houston district schools exhibit weaker gains in reading and stronger growth in math than the average female student statewide.

Within Houston, male and female students in charter schools make greater gains in both reading, while only the male students showed stronger performance in math than the students of district schools. Both male and female students in Houston magnet schools outgrow their peers in Houston district schools in reading and do not perform differently in math.