

THE IMPACT OF AMERICAN CHARTER SCHOOLS

By

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### **Abstract**

This thesis covers the topic of American charter schools at length. The thesis begins with an explanation of the origins of American charter schools and covers their brief history. The document then discusses the various types of charter schools around the nation and how they are funded and governed. The thesis includes a specific section on charter schools in the state of Arizona. Finally, this thesis examines and evaluates studies on charter schools in order to assess their effectiveness on student success.

## **Part I: Overview of American Charter Schools**

Since the first charter school in America was established in 1992, charter schools have spread across the United States yet failed to produce results that show that they are superior to traditional public schools in terms of academic results for their students. This is because they receive funding from sources with questionable interests, were founded without a research-driven basis, and most importantly failed to address the underlying issues in the struggling traditional schools they replaced. Successful charter schools are anomalies. The majority of charter schools are not superior in any way to the schools they replaced. However, before examining why charter schools are not the answer to educational disparities in this nation, it is best to begin by examining what charter schools are, how they function, and why they became so popular so quickly both across the country and in Arizona in particular.

The best definition of a charter school is that a charter school is an independent public school. The defining feature of a charter school is that every charter school sets forth a charter, in which they detail what results they aim to produce, and are accountable for it. (nea.org). The charter takes the form of a written agreement between the school's sponsors and the school organizers. School organizers may include parents, teachers, a religious organization, or a group of citizens from the community. Charter school sponsors might include the local school district, a philanthropic foundation, a wealthy individual or group of individuals, a think tank, or a corporation. Charter schools are a complex entity because they vary so widely, a point which shall be discussed later.

Some charter schools are a part of their local public school districts. State laws dictate whether this arrangement is legal, and which regulations charters must abide by if they

are part of the public school district. In every state that allows for public in-district charters, the charter schools that are under the public school system must employ certified school teachers (nea.org). Although most charter schools receive public funding they are not subject to many of the regulations that public schools are under, aside from regulations concerning the health and safety of students and staff.

By 2009, there were over 5,000 charter schools nationwide, enrolling over 1.5 million students. (isreview.org). According to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, charter school waiting lists are long and growing. In 2010-2011 there 420,000 students waiting nationwide. By the 2011-12 school year that number had grown to 610,000, and for the 2012-2013 school year there were 920,000 students on charter school waiting lists. For the 2012-2013 charter schools added 275,000 students nationally (Parker). As of 2014, according to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS) over a million students are on waiting lists to attend charter schools across the nation. However, this may be an overestimate because many families apply to multiple charter schools and end up on multiple waiting lists (National Education Policy Center). As of 2014 a total of over 2 million students attend US charter schools (Sanchez).

While charter schools are very popular across the country, it is important to note that they are not present in every state. Certain states have laws banning charter schools. The eight states without any charter schools are Montana, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, West Virginia, Vermont, Alabama, and Kentucky (edreform.com). Arizona is the state with the most charter schools, because no state laws are in place to restrict their numbers.

## History

The proliferation of American charter schools began with more widespread support for these schools. Public support came from increased media attention on calls for reform in American schools. In 1983, the National Commission of Excellence in Education produced a report called “A Nation at Risk” (Ravitch, 10). This report was the first time the American media began to sound the alarm about our nation’s public schools. Despite the report which declared, “Our society and its educational institutions seem to have lost sight of the basic purposes of schooling, and of the high expectations and disciplined effort needed to attain them” (National Commission on Excellence in Education), major changes would not come into effect until the 1990’s.

A group of educators in 1991 in Minnesota sought to establish a new public school that they thought would serve students more effectively based on three core values: choice, opportunity, and responsibility for results. This type of school was new because it was a specialized public school, governed by a charter document as a form of a contract. Minnesota passed a law that would allow schools like this to be created in 1991, and the first charter school in America opened in 1992. California also passed a law allowing for charter schools in 1992 (pbs.org). However, charter schools did not gain notoriety or popularity during the 1990’s. A piece of legislation in 2001 would change that and propel charter schools into the national spotlight.

In 2001, President George W. Bush introduced a piece of federal legislation that could change the climate and context of American education for years to come. This landmark legislation was called No Child Left Behind, or NCLB. The law mandated annual high-stakes

testing in math and reading and increased the federal government's role in public education (Ravitch, 11). Once testing was implemented nationwide, more data than ever before on American schools and students was available. The availability of data also generated comparisons. It became easier than ever before to see how the US compared to other nations, how states compared, how schools compared to each other, and how students compared to other students by the numbers. The charter school movement was bolstered by support from the federal government. The idea of "the charter sector" was proposed as "a remedy for failing public schools" (Ravitch, 11). The US Congress recommended that low-performing schools could be converted to charter schools (Ravitch, 13).

In 2008, when Barack Obama was elected individuals in the educational field waited to see if his administration would continue the focus on testing and the endorsement of charter schools that began in 2001 under George W. Bush. Once Obama rolled out his educational policy called Race to the Top, it became clear that it was. The Race to the Top program has lent further support to the charter sector. Because "among the premises of Race to the Top was the charters and school choice were necessary reforms..." (Ravitch, 15). Race to the Top was essentially a funding initiative. It proved to be a lucrative option for cash-strapped states, especially as the recession damaged their economies. First, Barack abolished the cap that some states had on how many charter schools could qualify for federal money from his "Race to the Top Fund".

As part of Race to the Top, if states were able to turn low performing schools around or establish high performing charter schools, they would become eligible for funding from the federal government. Public schools are funded almost entirely by the states, so federal money

acts as a much-needed bonus for schools. Across the country, charter schools received millions of Obama administration dollars (Reese, 331). Some of these charter schools were schools that used to be traditional public schools, called conversion schools. Some were new schools, called start-up schools. Both conversion and start-up charter schools are eligible to receive Race to the Top funding. As of the 2013-2014 school year, charter schools in the US are about 80% start-up schools and 20% conversion schools (EdSource).

### **Variety within Charter Schools**

Charter schools vary because across the country, charters are established for many different reasons. The students who attend charter schools also vary widely, and attend these schools for unique reasons.

One subset of charter schools are those located in urban areas. These schools are typically in poor, inner cities such as Washington D.C. and New Orleans. Parents of students who attend these schools often see them as a free way for their sons and daughters to access more “meaningful academics” (Dingerson, XIII). The people who start these types of charters usually do so in order to offer poor urban families access to a higher-quality education more like the education students in middle class suburbs have access to. Part of the appeal of charter schools is that many public schools, especially in urban districts, have undergone significant budget cuts and are strapped for funding (Parker). Programs such as art, physical and education are being cut from public schools across the US, and in many cases class sizes have also gone up. Charter schools that offer smaller classes or programs such as music and art have thus become especially appealing in light of recent budget issues. For example, this is the case with the KIPP Academy schools in New York City and Washington DC. KIPP stands for the Knowledge is

Power Program. These schools often have smaller class sizes and make promises of student success to attract more students.

Another popular reason charter schools are started is to offer choice and competition. These types of charters are usually either started, supported, or funded by corporations, millionaires, or organizations backed by corporate millionaires such as the Walton Family Foundation (the Walton family owns Walmart). These charter backers believe that as in the free market, charters provide choice and competition which results in a better education for all students. Another aspect of charter schools that people looking for choice are drawn to is the fact that charter schools are bound by fewer rules and regulations than traditional public schools. Thus, there is a perception that charters offer greater accountability (Herbert and McNergney, 190).

Another subset of charter schools are those with a particular curricular focus. For example, some charters focus specifically emphasize science technology or the arts (Boland). Parents and students choose these schools if their student is especially interested or talented in such an area, or if they believe the focus aligns with what they believe is important or will set them up for future success. Many charter schools see innovation as a core value, and this appeals to parents looking for an edge for their child ([charterschoolcenter.org](http://charterschoolcenter.org)). These “innovative” schools often use more technology than traditional public schools. The curricular focus is appealing to those who see it as the way of the future.

The option for virtual learning is another reason charter schools are sought by families and students. 15% of charter schools offer online learning ([EdSource.org](http://EdSource.org)). Some families prefer to have their child at home learning via the internet. Some students have medical, mental, or

personal circumstances that interfere with their ability to attend a traditional brick and mortar school. For these students, online charters offer a more flexible option.

Religious groups may establish charter schools instead of private religious schools. In many states, the acceptability to religious charters is a murky area, because religion is barred from the curriculum except in an informative context. An example of such a school is the Eleanor Kolitz Hebrew Language Academy in San Antonio Texas. The school is a charter school and the public school, but all the foreign language classes are in Hebrew and the students take an Israeli culture class. Texas state officials have not seen any issues with the school because it is in compliance with a state mandate that dictates a Texas public school must feature teaching about whatever country that the instructed language is spoken. The school has received backlash as a public charter, but its defenders say it encourages diversity and it did receive a \$600,000 grant from the state of Texas (Texas Tribune). Parents or students usually choose these charters when the religious or cultural affiliations of the school align with their own. Most religious private schools charge tuition, so charters, which are free may prove to be a lucrative option financially for these families.

### **Charter School Funding**

The bulk of funding for charter schools is provided by local property tax money, as is the case with traditional public schools. However, unlike most traditional public schools charter schools often receive funding corporations, wealthy individuals and entrepreneurs, think tanks, and foundations (Ravitch, 22). The term “charter sector” has become increasingly common as the influence of private sector businesses in the charter school movement has grown. This is

especially evident in the case of specific schools being sponsored by entrepreneurs as a profit-making venture (Ravitch, 13).

Charter schools are sponsored by individuals such as tennis star Andre Agassi, who “...formed a partnership with an equity investing firm to raise \$ 750 million in capital to build at least seventy-five charter schools...” (Ravitch, 17). Hedge fund billionaire Paul Tudor Jones has also donated his personal fortune to charter schools (Ravitch, 23). Other notable business leaders that have financially supported charter schools include charters include the Bezos family (Amazon.com), Reed Hastings (Netflix), and Rupert Murdoch (News Corporation) (Ravitch, 23). Corporations invest in charters, for example the specialty real estate investment trust EER properties which spent a portion of a three billion dollars investment initiative on charter schools, or the Apollo Group, an equity firm with University of Phoenix has provided funded roughly \$95,000 dollars in charter school funding (Wiggins).

In addition to private sector funding, charter across the nation may also rely on financial support from non-profit organizations. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation, and the Walton Family Foundation collectively provide millions of dollars to charter schools (Ravitch, 23). The Pisces Foundation has donated 45 million to charters in the Washington DC area. Although not as common, some charter schools are supported by money from think tanks. Washington DC based Federal City Council (FCC) founded the Public Charter School Resource Center (the PCSRC). The FCC received over \$300,000 from the Walton Family Foundation and the organization Fight for the Children which was later used towards the PCSRC (leftturn.org).

Although many charter schools receive private sector and non-profit funding, the majority of their funding still comes from local tax payers. 1995 was the first year that the US government supplied funding to charter schools. In this year alone, the US government awarded six million dollars in funding to charter schools across the country. The amount of funding US charters receive has steadily increased since then. During the 1997 State of the Union Address, Bill Clinton pledged funding towards the creation of 3,000 charter schools to be established by 2002. In 2002 President Bush allocated 200 million dollars of federal money for charter school funding (isreview.org). Charter schools are eligible through federal funds through president Obama's Race to the Top program. Although federal funds have been used towards charters since 1995, they are primarily supplementary to local funding, as is the case with traditional public schools.

Thousands of charter schools across the country that are incorporated into their local school district receive tax payer funding. For example, the New York City public school system has offered in-district charters as a means of school choice for its public school students since the passage of the 1998 New York State Charter Schools Act (NYC Charter School Center). Funding may be directed to the charter school at a fixed rate, or based on the number of students that the school enrolls. In the latter arrangement, public funding may come through a voucher program. Students can obtain a voucher funded by tax dollars to attend a charter school, the charter school is funded per student, and thus per voucher (Ravitch, 208).

## **Part II: Arizona Charter Schools**

Arizona is a state with many charter schools, some of which have been incorporated

as part of the local school districts. Charter schools began in Arizona when the Arizona State Legislature began permitting charter schools with state funding in 1994. As charter schools increased in numbers across America, the national trend was echoed in the state of Arizona. As charter schools grew more popular nationwide, "...states like Arizona, Florida, Colorado, Michigan and Texas [were] in the lead." (Fraser, 376). The number of charter schools in Arizona grew rapidly starting the late 1990s.

The first charter schools in Tucson were established in 1997. In this year, the Accelerated Learning Laboratory was created as well as AmeriSchools Academy- Country Club which was sponsored by the Charter Foundation Inc. (formerly Ideabanc. Inc). In 1997 the school BASIS Tucson was created by BASIS School Inc., and the year also saw the creation of Luz-Guerrero Early College High School and the Toltecali High School under the guidance of Calli Ollin Academy.

In 1999 The EDGE School Inc. started Edge High School in Himmel Park and TAG Elementary Inc. opened TAG Elementary. In 1999 and 2000, Academy of Tucson Inc. established three charter schools: Academy of Tucson Elementary School, Academy of Tucson Middle School, and Academy of Tucson High School. Adalberto M. Guerrero School and Desert Springs Academy was started in 1999 as well. The Highland Free School was started in 2000, as well as the Tucson Country Day School and three schools run by PPEP and Affiliates: PPEP TEC Celestino Fernandez Learning Center, PPEP TEC Colin L. Powell Learning Center, and PPEP TEC Victor Soltero Learning Center (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools).

2001 saw the creation of Children Reaching for the Sky Preparatory, Khalsa River Montessori School, Compass High School, the Rose management group's Canyon Rose

Academy, and Southern Arizona Community Academy Inc.'s Southern Arizona Community High School. Nosotros Academy began in 2002 as did the School for Integrated Academies and Technologies. And the Pima Partnership School. In 2003, the Arizona Community Development Corporation created La Paloma Academy with Central and Lakeside campuses and Leona Group LLC created Skyview High School and the Southside Community School also opened its doors. Also in 2003, Tucson International Academy Inc. opened its first school, Tucson International Academy Broadway. They would go on to open two other Tucson International Academy schools: other Tucson International Academy Midvale in 2004 and other Tucson International Academy West in 2008. City High School began in 2004. The management organization A Child's View School Inc. established A Child's View School in 2005, and Calli Ollin Academy created Hiaki High School that year as well. Also in 2005 the Paulo Freire Freedom School was begun, and the Wildcat School came on the scene in 2006 (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools).

Educational Services of America, Inc. established two schools in 2008, Ombudsman Charter Central and Ombudsman Charter Valencia and the Sky Island School was started that year. Also in 2008, the Daisy Education Corporation began Sonoran Science Academy at Davis Monthan, which was ranked by US News and World report as one of America's Best High Schools. 2009 saw the creation of Academy Del Sol and ACE Charter High School and Future Investment Middle School. In 2010, the Academy Adventures Midtown was established. In 2011 the Pima Rose Academy was started. In 2012 the Western Institute of Leadership Development opened its doors (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools).

Charter schools in Arizona continue to grow. In 2005, 8% of Arizona Public schools K-

12 students attended charter schools, and by 2011 that number rose to 11.5%. In Arizona charter schools compose 25% of Arizona's public schools. In 2013, there were 1,962 K-12 schools in the state of Arizona, with a total enrollment about 1.09 million students. 27% of Arizona schools, which totals to 532 schools are charter schools. That totals to 14% of the state's enrollment ([azcharters.org](http://azcharters.org)). As of the 2013-2014 school year, there were 143 open charter schools in the Phoenix and greater Phoenix area, and 87 charter schools in the Tucson Area ([greatschools.org](http://greatschools.org)). The state has called "the most wide-open public education market in America (Anderson).

Arizona as a state has a very high number of charter schools. In Arizona 11% of students attend charter schools compared with just 5% of students nationally. For example, in Tucson, Arizona, the largest and oldest school district in the city is the Tucson Unified School District, or TUSD. Within TUSD alone, there 59 charter schools (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools). In Pima County (where Tucson is located) alone more than 16,000 children attend charter schools (Tucson Unified School District).

One reason for the number of charter schools in Arizona is that the state laws do not mandate a cap on the maximum number that there can be, as many other states do. Another reason for the number of charter schools in the state it that state laws have made it relatively easy to start a charter school in Arizona. "There are three ways to obtain a contract to operate a charter school in Arizona, by applying to: 1) The State Board for Charter Schools, 2) The State Board of Education, and 3) the school district within whose boundaries the charter school will be physically located." ([azed.gov](http://azed.gov)) Once the application is accepted, the school may be opened.

State laws have also been made to be flexible surrounding funding for Arizona charter

schools. The 1994 Arizona law allows for-profit or non-profit companies to open a public school and receive state money. Non-profit schools can also receive federal education money. These contracted, or chartered, schools were given freedoms unheard of for district schools.”(Kossan, 2012)

Arizona charter schools are subject to less regulation than public schools, even when they are funded by taxpayers. An Arizona charter school contract is good for 15 years before it needs to be renewed (azed.gov). Arizona charter schools are not subject to all state statutes, however they are required to comply with state regulations on health and safety and civil rights. (law.arizona.edu) Under Arizona state law, the State Board for Charter Schools must review the progress charter schools are making every 5 and 10 years (azcentral.com). Other specific and important key requirements for charter schools include that the curriculum is non-sectarian, and the schools needs some method to assess and track student progress. Additionally, students must take standardized state tests (AIMS) and the school must have non-discriminatory admission policies (such as a lottery system) (law.arizona.edu).

Another reason there are so many charter schools in Arizona is the fact that financially, turning an underperforming public school into a charter school is a feasible option. For example, during the 2012-2013 school year, the Tucson Unified School District allocated an average of \$4,800 per student per year. This went for traditional schools and charter schools chartered by the district. According to TUSD, the “...state funding available for charter schools is about \$1,000 more per student than for other public schools; about a 20% increase...” which makes turning traditional public schools into district charters (conversion schools) an attractive option.

## **Arizona Charter Schools on Probation**

As of January 2012, 27 charter schools in Arizona are on probation. Being on probation means that the school has a year to increase student academic performance, otherwise, the state of Arizona will either extend the probation (lasting another year) or the school will close. -In 2005, 8% of Arizona Public schools K-12 students attended charter schools, and by 2011 that number rose to 11.5%. When a charter school in Arizona goes on probation, it must appear before the State Board of Charter Schools and make the case as to why it should remain open. Between 2010 and 2012, Arizona's state regulators reviewed 78 charter schools and put a third of them on probation. Being on probation, for a charter school in Arizona, is not a rare occurrence. As of January 2012, there were 515 charter schools open in the state of Arizona (Kossan, 2012).

When a charter school in Arizona goes on probation, it must appear before the State Board of Charter Schools and make the case as to why it should remain open (azcentral.com) Between 2010 and 2012, the Arizona board declined contract renewal of the contract for Kachina Country Day School (Paradise Valley), Scottsdale Horizons Charter School (Scottsdale), Tertulia Pre-College Community (Phoenix) and Carden Traditional School of Glendale Inc. (Glendale) (Kossan, 2012). I contend that the number of charter schools in Arizona on probation shows that something is amiss. These schools clearly are not performing to a satisfactory level. Ultimately, those who suffer are the students who attend the charter schools in this situation.

## **Part III: Research and Conclusions**

Most of the research on charter schools has been clustered in the last decade, as

the number of charter schools across the country grew steadily. While there are innumerable ways to measure charter school success, the dominant thinking has been that a charter school is a success if it produces good, or better than expected scores on standardized tests for its students. However, the vast majority of studies show that students in charter schools almost never outperform their counterparts at traditional public schools. Most perform either worse than traditional public schools or roughly the same. Examining the history of charter schools shows that on the whole, they were untested when they were established. When Minnesota "...passed the first charter law in 1991, and the first charter school opened in 1992" (Ravitch, 13) there was no solid research proving their effectiveness. Throughout the late 1990's and early 2000's while charter schools were being established across the country, "...there was no evidence that charters would succeed where the local public school had failed" (Ravitch, 13). Without prior research, it should come as no surprise that most charter schools failed to produce their promised gains.

There are charter schools that have produced better test scores than traditional public schools. The charter schools that have produced impressive academic results usually share a few common characteristics: hand-selection of students, increased student spending, more time in school, and financial support from sources outside of the public school system. These schools are outliers. Their success does not mean that charter schools can or should replace traditional public schools, because the conditions that are necessary to produce the desired results cannot be implemented on a large scale.

### **Worse Scores**

The case is often made that charter schools offer more accountability, better scores and a higher quality of education for America's most vulnerable students, those falling at the low end

in nearly every metric of success that makes up the achievement gap. These students tend to be from low-income families clustered in cities such as New York City, Washington DC, Chicago, and New Orleans. The Stanford Center for Research of Education Outcomes (CREDO) released a 26 state study on charter schools that found no overall significant academic gains for the majority of students who attended charter schools. The Stanford team was specifically interested in finding out how low-income and minority students fared in charter schools. CREDO's report found that "...37 percent of charter schools produce academic results that are worse than public schools, while only 17 percent perform significantly better" (Thomas). In Chicago, the CREDO report found that 21 percent of charter schools performed weaker than traditional schools in reading and math (Ravitch).

The National Assessment Governing Board's 2003 analysis of charter school performance in "The Nation's Report Card found that charter school students, on average, "...score lower than students in traditional public schools...charter school students who were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch scored lower than their peers in traditional public schools, and charter school students in central cities (inner-city students) scored lower than their peers in math in 4th grade." (nea.org). Charter schools have also been proven to prepare students inadequately to learn the Common Core. In 2013, charter schools in New York City underperformed in exams related to the Common Core, the new set of curricular standards being rolled out across the nation (Ravitch).

The trend of worse performance of charter schools also holds true for students across socioeconomic levels. In 2009, a study by the RAND Corporation compared Chicago charter

middle schools to traditional public middle schools in the city and found lower reading achievement at the charter schools. A 2010 study conducted by Mathematica Policy Research looking at charter middle schools found the charter schools to be about equal to traditional middle schools in three areas: student achievement (as measured by standardized test scores), student behavior, and school progress (Education Law Center). According to the *Chicago Sun Times*, the Aspira and North Lawndale Chicago-area charter schools both underperformed compared with traditional public schools and had lower student pass rates (Ravitch).

### Status Quo

Many studies have shown that students fare similarly in charter schools and traditional public schools. A 2013 study from the Boston Foundation found that attending a charter school for students in Boston had “zero...positive impacts” on state standardized test scores (Buckely, 3). The National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance’s “Evaluation of Charter School Impacts” examined 36 charter middle schools in different states and looked at compared 2,330 students. The evaluation lasted two years and yet found no notable changes in math or reading test scores for students admitted to charter middle schools after attending traditional public elementary schools (ies.ed.gov).

Researchers from the University of California San Diego and the University of Washington collaborated to create the National Charter School Research Project (NCSR). NCSR looked at math and reading scores from six elementary schools, ten middle schools, and four high schools. The study found that the schools provided a comparable education, “...neither innovating successfully nor innovating and failing, but simply replicating quite closely the standard fare in traditional public schools” (Betts et. al, 4). The “Evaluation of Charter School

Impacts: Final Report” from the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance found most charter schools “...were neither more nor less successful than traditional public schools in improving math or reading test scores, grade promotion (student not having to repeat grades), or student conduct within or outside of school” (ies.gov).

According to research data from the Center for Research on Education Outcomes at Stanford University, 56 percent of American charter schools (in 26 states and Washington DC) produced student reading scores on par with traditional public schools. Furthermore, 19 percent of the charter schools studied produced lower reading scores. The results regarding math scores were similar. 40 percent of charter school scores showed no improvement over the traditional public schools while 31 percent produced “significantly” lower scores. According to Andy Maul of the University of Colorado’s National Education Policy Center, there is “...a host of other reports that basically says there’s no difference between charter schools and traditional public schools” (Layton). Research data from Stanford University looking at 95 percent of the nation’s charter schools found that in terms of student reading gains, 75 percent of charter school students performed either on par, or below the achievement levels of students in traditional public schools (Wood).

### **Stratification**

The University of California in Los Angeles’ Civil Rights Project conducted research to test whether or not poor, minority and traditionally underserved students have access to the high-performing charter schools. Their studies found that stratification was the real result of school choice, “school choice” being the notion that charter schools offer an alternative form of schooling (Russom). White students are more likely to attend a high-quality school (whether

charter or traditional) than minority students, further highlighting the fallacy that charter schools are the solution to closing the achievement gap.

On average, charter schools serve fewer children from traditionally disadvantaged backgrounds, a fact that also skews their scores. For example, a chain of charter schools in Chicago, the Noble Network Schools “serve 35% fewer English Language Learners and 22% fewer special education students than Chicago Public Schools”. In Harlem, New York, a top-performing charter school, the Success Academy “serves 18% fewer impoverished students, 9% fewer English Language Learners, and 13% fewer team taught and self-contained special education students (at a negligible .01% of their student population) than the local public schools” (Ravitch).

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