

# TOUGH CHOICES

FACING FLORIDA'S GOVERNMENTS



**FLORIDA CHARTER SCHOOLS:**  
NOT AS GOOD, OR AS BAD, AS ADVERTISED



**FEBRUARY 2020**



# **FLORIDA CHARTER SCHOOLS: Not as Good, or as Bad, as Advertised**

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## **FLORIDA CHARTER SCHOOLS: Not as Good, or as Bad, as Advertised**

Florida, as a state, has a very active school choice environment which includes traditional public schools, public charter schools, open enrollment policies and even scholarships for students who meet certain criteria. All of this is aimed to provide parents with high-quality options that best meet the needs of their child. However, in 2017, the Collins Institute report entitled “Patterns of Resegregation in Florida’s Schools” revealed some startling trends within our public school systems across the state. There was some concern that public charter schools were exacerbating the resegregation trend. Subsequently, the Collins Institute board in 2017, as a public policy research institute, decided to take a closer look at racial diversity, accountability, innovation and transparency in Florida’s public charter schools to better understand some key questions about charter schools in Florida, and how they contribute to Florida’s school choice landscape and student outcomes. Key findings from the work include:

- Florida is home to the most enthusiastic users of charter schools in the country. Some 10 percent of Florida students are in charter schools, compared to the national average of six percent. In Miami-Dade, nearly one in five students in public schools attend charters.
- It is impossible to overstate the diversity of charter schools, to the point that conclusions such as “charter schools are better/worse than traditional schools” are meaningless.
- In the initial enabling legislation in 1996, diversity was included as a component of the contractual agreement with the sponsor.<sup>1</sup> However, there are few, if any, ways districts can hold charters to their racial/ethnic representation of the community, and the legislature has largely ignored diversity since the initial enactment.
- Florida’s charter schools are highly racially and ethnically segregated—as are its traditional schools. Charter schools outside South Florida are most likely to be white. There is evidence that charter schools throughout the state are more economically segregated than traditional schools.
- Recent years have seen a trend toward a steady centralization of the state role and a reduction in local district oversight over charter schools.
- Innovation was one of the purposes of charter schools in the 1996 law but has proven difficult to measure. Charter schools are not held accountable for innovation and there is no infrastructure to share innovative ideas.
- Transparency is important in a policy based on parent/student choice. The state and districts collect a great deal of information on charters and traditional schools, but it is not provided to parents in a way that they can easily compare charters to each other and to traditional schools.
- For-profit management companies, known as Education Management Organizations or EMOs, are active in the state (two large companies are based in Florida). Over 40 percent of Florida charter schools are managed by for-profit companies—the second highest state percentage in the country. In Miami-Dade, 77 percent of charter schools are Education Management Organizations (EMOs).

These findings flow from our examination of the history of charter schools in Florida, analysis of questions related to charter schools and segregation, and special attention to accountability, innovation and transparency. The report concludes with a set of recommendations. Given that fiscal issues surrounding charter schools are such an important issue, we plan to deal with them in a separate report.

The report draws primarily on Florida data and research conducted on Florida schools. It also reviews research conducted nationally. When comparing Florida schools and their performance to other states, it is important to bear in mind several differences:

- For the most part, charter school policy in Florida has been applied uniformly across the board to all districts. (Some states restrict charter schools to a few, usually urban, districts; some states have different charter school policies for different types of districts; and a number of states cap the number of charter schools.)
- Florida has a higher density of charter schools relative to other states. Moreover, Florida relies more heavily on for-profit schools relative to other states.
- With 67 school districts, Florida has fewer (and larger) school districts than most other states. Texas, for example, has over 1,000 public school districts.

# SCHOOL CHOICE AND FLORIDA CHARTER SCHOOLS

The rationale for school choice is competition. Scholars such as Chubb and Moe (1990) argue that the failures of public education systems can be attributed to a lack of competition in the educational marketplace. With competition, the argument goes, the overall quality of education will improve. Schools which fail to respond to market demands will go out of business. While Chubb and Moe do not explicitly address charter schools in their analysis, charter schools are a means to introduce competition into the public education system and indeed, policy and some scholars have argued that traditional schools will improve when charters compete with them.<sup>2</sup> Opponents counter that school choice reforms hinder the progress of low-performing public schools by attracting the “best” students and withholding much needed funds as students depart and enrollment numbers decline (Ozek, Carruthers, & Holden, 2018).

Florida embraced school choice early and enthusiastically. The state’s involvement is generally attributed to Governor Jeb Bush, who was an early and strong supporter of charter schools, even helping set up one of the state’s first charter schools in 1996.<sup>3</sup> Bush made education reform a key component of his 1998 gubernatorial campaign, arguing for school choice, increased accountability, and funding incentives for schools achieving desired outcomes. A few months after his election, he spearheaded the passage of the A+ Plan, which addressed all three components.

While there is not a clear-cut definition of school choice policy, we are adopting Miller’s (2015) definition that school choice policies lead to education outside of traditional schools. This includes charter schools, home schooling, virtual education and tax credit programs that fund students transferring to private schools. Magnet schools, inter-district and intra-district choice policies keep students within public schools and are not included.<sup>4</sup>

Home schooling has been an option in Florida law since 1985. More than 84,000 students are in home education programs throughout Florida (FDOE 2019a). Florida Virtual School was established in 1997 as an internet-based public high school. Today, Florida Virtual School is an accredited, statewide public school and is the largest state virtual school in the nation, and allows students to enroll full-time or part-time (FDOE 2019b).

In recent years, legislative activity in Florida (and nationally) has focused on vouchers. Florida has an array of voucher programs:

- Florida’s tax credit scholarship program offers scholarships to low-income students through one of two authorized organizations. It provides income tax, severance tax or insurance premium tax credits to corporations that contribute money to the organizations that award scholarships. It has become a model for other states and is the largest of its kind in the nation (Solochek 2018).
- The MacKay scholarship, established in 2000, is for students with disabilities who can use the scholarship to attend a private school or a different public school.<sup>5</sup>
- The Gardiner Scholarship was created in 2016 for children with certain disabilities, including autism.
- The Opportunity Scholarship is targeted for students who attend schools with a D or F grade and provides funding for transportation to another public school with a higher grade (Solochek 2018). The initial program offered the opportunity to transfer to a participating private school, but the Florida Supreme Court ruled that the private school option was unconstitutional.
- The Hope Scholarship allows students who have been subjected to bullying, harassment, or fighting at school the opportunity to transfer to another public schools or an approved private school.<sup>6</sup>

In 2019, the legislature expanded the tax credit scholarship by enacting the Family Empowerment Scholarship Program, which will be funded directly by the state (instead of indirectly through tax credits) and will be available to families with incomes up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level or \$77,250 for a family of four (Saunders 2019). According to the Florida Department of Education (FDOE), some 18,000 students will be provided “life-changing education opportunities for academic and career success through this program” (FDOE 2019c). The scholarship can be used for tuition and fees at participating private schools.

It is within this schools of choice context that the Collins Institute addressed charter schools. Clearly charter schools are only part of this movement—albeit it an important part. For example, Buckley and Schneider (2007) call charter schools, a “mainstay of education reform in the U.S.”

Florida’s first charter school law was passed in 1997. HB 539 defined how charters were to be proposed, outlined the approval process by the school district boards and the appeal process, terms of the charter, provision of an annual school report and called for funding to be laid out the same as students enrolled in other public schools. Two components were interesting: first, the law provided that sponsors shall not impose unreasonable rules or regulations that violate the intent of giving charter schools greater flexibility to meet educational goals; second, that charters address and approval of charters shall be based on (among other things) the ways in which the school will achieve a racial/ethnic balance reflective of the community it serves or within the racial/ethnic range of other public schools in the same district.

Thus, racial diversity was an important component of the first law. Since that time, however, diversity has been largely ignored. Only one other law, introduced in 2002, dealt with racial equity. It made every K-20 class available to all students without regard to race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability or marital status. As Miller (2015) concludes, since the original law, there have been no policies intended to increase the diversity of charter school populations or to monitor charter and public school populations for unintended racial or class segregation as a consequence of increased school choice.

We will examine the racial/ethnic and economic diversity of Florida charter schools and traditional schools. But first, we will address the prevalence and growth of Florida charter schools. Florida, like other states, is moving toward choice in education, especially in their support of charter schools.

Overall, Florida is viewed as a charter-friendly state— the state has about double the percentage of students in charter schools than the national average. Another way to compare Florida statutes on charter schools to other states is by using the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS) assessment of state laws (Ziebarth 2019). Essentially, the assessment rates every state on the extent to which they have implemented a model state law with 21 elements. The NAPCS, an advocacy group for charter schools, is hardly unbiased but their assessment might be viewed as the extent to which the state law is friendly to charter schools. Florida is ranked seventh nationally. The group notes that Florida has made strides in recent years to provide more equitable funding to charter schools, does not have a cap on public charter school growth, promotes a fair amount of autonomy and accountability, and provides a robust appellate process for charter school applicants. Potential areas for improvement (in the January 2019 report) include continuing to strengthen equitable funding, creating authorizer accountability requirements, and strengthening accountability for full-time virtual charter schools. Perhaps notable is that none of the 21 elements deal with racial/ethnic diversity.

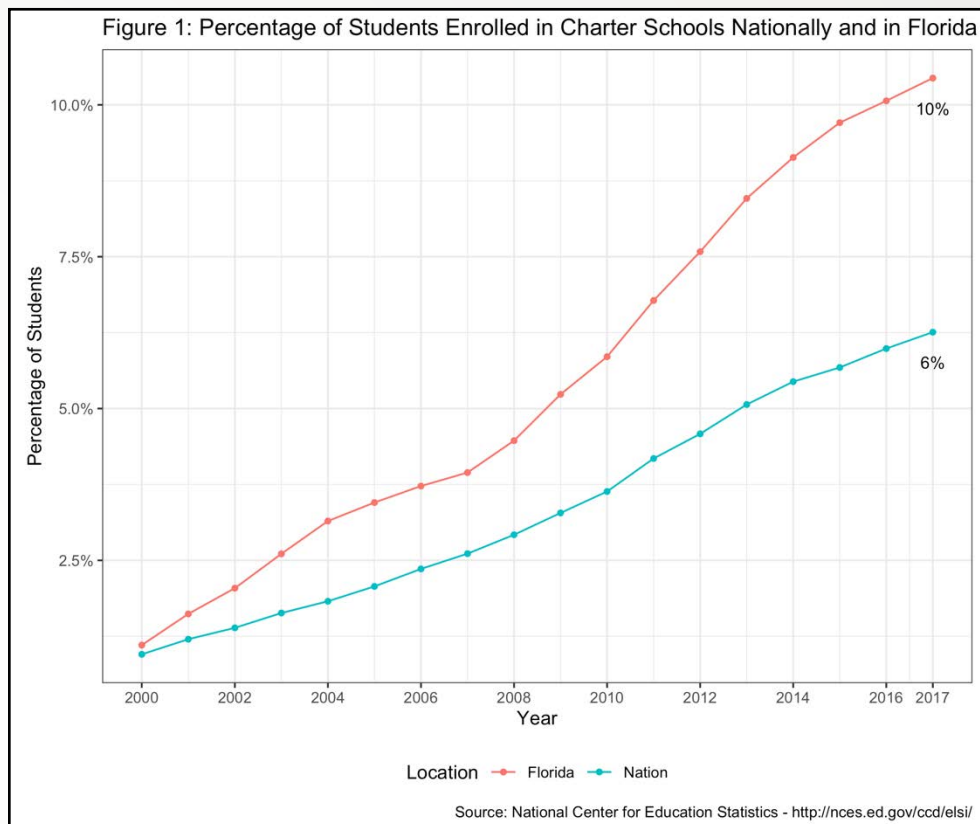
Table 1 shows the growth in number of charter schools in Florida since 2000. (Appendix Table 1 provides every year between 2000 and 2018). In 2000 there were 148 charter schools— by 2018 there were 658 charter schools in the state. The growth in the number of charter schools continued unabated until 2015 when it appears to have plateaued. It is important to note that this number reflects the number of schools in operation in a given year, adding new schools but subtracting those that close.

Table 1: Growth in Student Population by School Type

	Charter		Traditional		Total
Year	Students	Schools	Students	Schools	Students
2000	26,893	148	2,407,894	3,168	2,434,787
2008	117,640	395	2,513,380	3,372	2,631,020
2018	313,586	658	2,533,271	3,590	2,846,857
Source: (1) National Center for Education Statistics - <a href="http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/">http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/</a> (2) Florida Department of Education – <a href="http://fldoe.org">http://fldoe.org</a>					



Figure 1 illustrates the enthusiasm Florida has had for charter schools compared to the rest of the country in terms of the percentage of students enrolled in charter and traditional schools since 2000. The rate of growth of percent of students in charter schools is much steeper in Florida than the nation as a whole. Thus, while the number of schools has remained fairly stable in recent years, the number of students attending those schools has continued to grow. In 2016 approximately 10 percent percent of students enrolled in Florida charter schools, while the national average was only six percent.<sup>7</sup>



Charter schools are generally located in urban areas and Florida is no exception. Some 43 percent of all charters in Florida are in Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties. (See Figures 1-3 in the appendix for the number of charter schools, number of students in charter schools and percentage of students in charter schools by county.) In Miami-Dade, 35 percent of all public schools are charters; in Broward the market share is 30 percent. However, it is also important to remember that not all districts in Florida have charter schools and the growth in number of counties has not mirrored the growth in students and schools. In 2000, there were charter schools in 36 districts. By 2008 it expanded to 43 districts and by 2016, there were charter schools in 47 districts (see Appendix Table 3).

Over the last 20 years, approximately 900 charter schools have opened in Florida. Of these, approximately one-third have closed. (See Table 2 for the number of charter school closures each year between 1998 and 2018.)

Table 2. Florida charter school closures between 1998 and 2018

Year	Number of Closures
1998	2
1999	8
2000	2
2001	13
2002	7
2003	5
2004	7
2005	29
2006	29
2007	26
2008	22
2009	27
2010	8
2011	16
2012	23
2013	34
2014	29
2015	26
2016	32
2017	27
2018	21
SOURCE: Florida Department of Education, <a href="http://app4.fldoe.org/CSA/PostToWeb/ManageSearch.aspx">http://app4.fldoe.org/CSA/PostToWeb/ManageSearch.aspx</a>	

Is this level of “churn” disruptive? Districts have expressed frustration about not being able to plan for rising or lowering school enrollments. Parents complain when a charter school closes and last-minute arrangements have to be secured for their children. Charters may close because they fail to attract enough students or if there are financial or other problems. To date, there is no research on the effects of closures on either students, neighborhood traditional schools or on the district.

The diversity across the charter school sector is considerable. For example, some charter schools, like the School of Arts and Sciences in Tallahassee, feature a family-model in which students are placed in multi-age classes. There are charter schools serving the needs of specific populations, such as the Florida Autism School of Excellence in Tampa or schools focusing on drop-out prevention, bilingual students or students with developmental delays. Other charter schools have focused on curricula, highlighting for example the arts or STEM fields, such as River City Science Academy in Jacksonville. Some charter schools, like Bok Academy in Lake Wales, incorporate their unique surroundings in their program. Bok Academy is located at a spring-fed lake enabling them to utilize nature in the school's curriculum. With the help of grants and donations the school has purchased a 30-person pontoon boat with a microscope equipped laboratory that's used as a floating classroom.

However, one can argue that the assumption that the traditional public sector was too hide-bound to accommodate parent preferences or student diversity is less true today than 20 years ago. For one, there is much more pressure on traditional schools to improve their student learning as a result of both federal and state policies of the last two decades. Two, diversity within the traditional sector has increased dramatically. There has been considerable growth in choice within the traditional sector including curricula such as advanced placement (AP), alternative programs such as the international baccalaureate (IB) program, schools focusing on STEM or on the performing arts and virtual or cyber-schooling options. Finally, particularly in Florida, there has been an increase in other types of government-funded choice programs including district-level open enrollment, cross-district enrollment options, and voucher programs such as the Tax Credit Scholarship program and the McKay scholarship program for special need students.



# RACIAL AND ECONOMIC DIVERSITY IN CHARTER SCHOOLS

**KEY FINDING: Charter schools are NOT less racially diverse, but are less economically diverse than traditional schools.**

## » Racial Segregation in Charter and Traditional Schools

The preponderance of education research shows that charter schools have led to increased segregation by race, ethnicity, disability status and English language proficiency (Rotberg and Glazer 2018). The research highlights both increased segregation between white and black students (Renzulli and Evans, 2005; Garcia, 2008; Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley and Wang, 2010; Bifulco and Ladd 2007; Cobb and Glass 1999; Ladd, Clotfelter and Holbein 2017; Clotfelter et al. 2018) and between white and Hispanic students (Garcia, 2008; Cowen & Winters 2013).

What about Florida? Table 3 shows Florida students' racial/ethnic composition in charter and traditional schools since 2000. For both traditional and charter schools, the percentage of white students in schools has fallen substantially since 2000; from 55 percent to 39 percent in traditional schools and from 50 percent to 32 percent for charter schools. The percentage of black students in charter schools has also fallen—from 36 percent to 25 percent. The percentage of black students in traditional schools has fallen much less—around three percentage points from 30 percent to 27 percent.

Table 3: Average Racial Composition of Charter and Traditional Public Schools from 2000 – 2016

Year		White		Black		Hispanic		Other	
2000	Charter	50%		36%		13%		1%	*
	Traditional	55%		30%	#	16%	#	2%	
2008	Charter	38%	*	29%		28%	*	2%	#
	Traditional	46%		28%		23%		2%	
2016	Charter	32%	*	25%		37%	*	3%	
	Traditional	39%		27%		28%		2%	
Note: p-values are denoted 0.00 -- * -- 0.05 -- # -- 0.10 Difference of means test compares charter to traditional schools in the same year See Appendix Table 4 for all years Source: National Center for Education Statistics - <a href="http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/">http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/</a>									

It is the Hispanic growth in both traditional and charter schools that is most notable. The percentage of Hispanic students in traditional schools grew from 16 percent to 28 percent; the percent of Hispanic students in charter schools increased even more—from 13 percent to 37 percent over the same time period. It is important to note that 2000 was very early for charter schools in Florida so this might be misleading. However, the trends noted above also play out in later years when new charter schools were being added at an impressive rate in the state. Appendix Table 4 shows racial composition annually by charter and traditional school since 2000.

When we examine the racial makeup of charter and traditional schools in the three major South Florida counties, we see more pronounced trends (See Table 4). The percentage of black students in charter schools in these counties has fallen since 2000—from 45 percent in 2000 to 28 percent in 2016. In South Florida, there are higher percentages of Hispanics and substantially lower percentages of black students in charter schools than in traditional schools in those counties. Tables 5 a) and b) in the Appendix provides these percentages for every year between 2000 and 2016.

It is also noteworthy that outside South Florida, the racial makeup of charters mirror that of traditional schools with about one-fourth of students in both charter and traditional schools being Black and one-fourth being Hispanic. The bottom line: the three major South Florida counties—which have large percentages of charter school students—are not typical of the rest of the state in charter schools' racial/ethnic makeup.

Table 4: Percentage of Students by Race/Ethnicity in Charter &amp; Traditional Public Schools in Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach Counties

Year		White		Black		Hispanic		Other		Total Students
2000	Charter	27%		45%		26%		1%		10,285
	Traditional	28%		39%		34%		2%		756,683
2008	Charter	17%	*	35%		44%	#	2%	*	50,991
	Traditional	20%		37%		39%		2%		720,770
2016	Charter	14%		28%	*	54%	*	2%	*	130,514
	Traditional	15%		36%		45%		2%		692,716

Note: p-values are denoted 0.00 -- \* -- 0.05 -- # -- 0.10  
 Difference of means test compares charter to traditional schools in the same year  
 See Appendix Table 5a for all years, and 5b for all districts other than these three  
 Source: National Center for Education Statistics - <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/>

While aggregate statistics are helpful, it is important to also look at the extent of segregation within individual schools and to compare those percentages to other schools in the district. The measurement of the extent of segregation can be called “racial imbalance.” There are several ways to measure racial imbalance. We use two: 1) percentage of the students in a charter school attending a 90-100 percent nonwhite school by race/ethnicity, and 2) a school's racial composition relative to other schools in the district. Table 5 presents the first measure of racial imbalance.

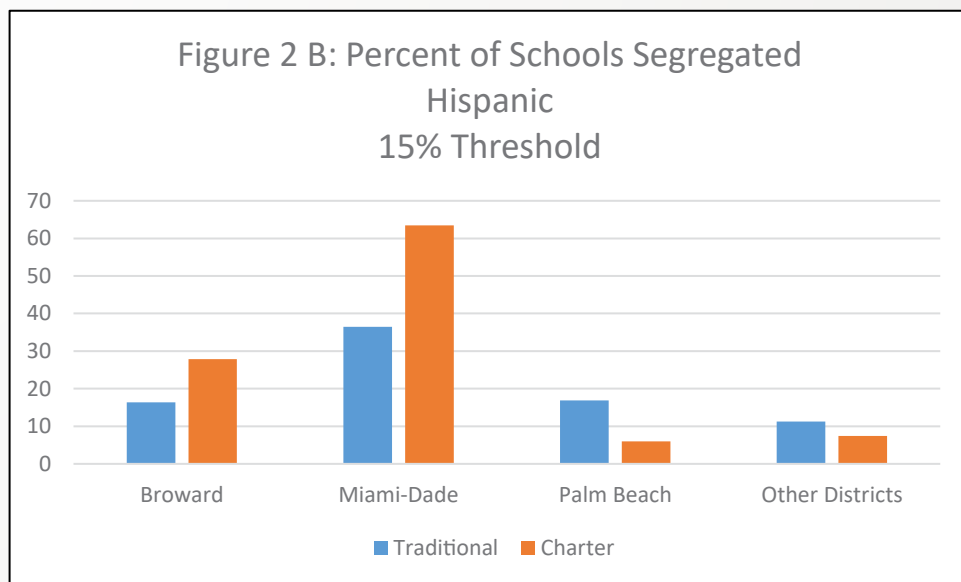
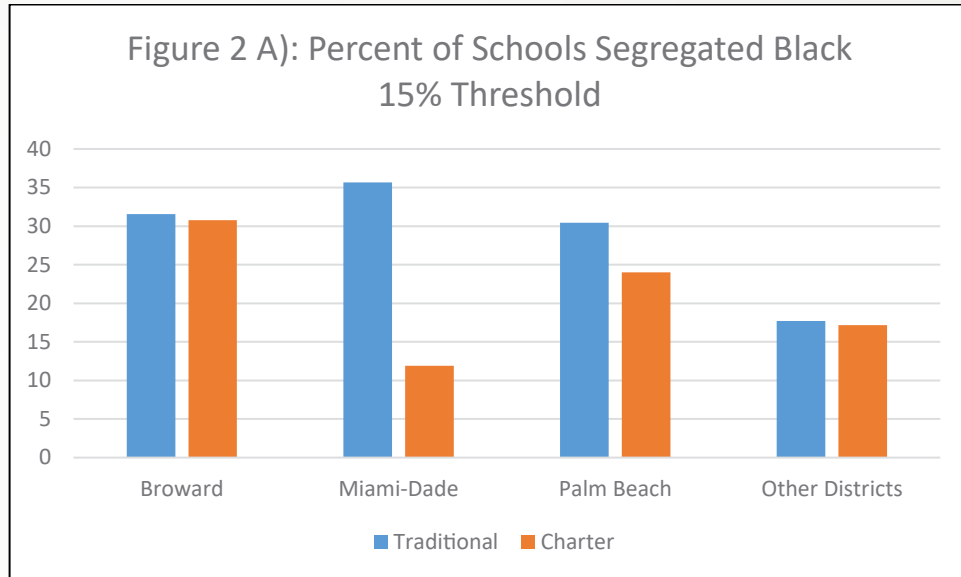
Table 5: Percentage of Schools by School Type that are Racially Segregated (90-100% nonwhite) from 2000-2016 Including the Average Racial Composition of those Schools and Total Enrollment

Year		% Segregated Schools		% Black in these schools		% Hispanic in these schools		Total Students
2000	Charter	27%	*	79%	*	17%	*	5,923
	Traditional	13%		62%		33%		340,654
2008	Charter	26%	*	53%		41%		24,171
	Traditional	17%		56%		37%		408,226
2016	Charter	32%	*	39%	*	55%	*	82,178
	Traditional	21%		49%		43%		490,634

Note: p-values are denoted 0.00 -- \* -- 0.05 -- # -- 0.10  
 Difference of means test compares charter to traditional schools in the same year  
 See Appendix Table 7 for all years  
 Source: National Center for Education Statistics - <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/>

Overall, charter school students are much more likely to be in a highly segregated school (32 percent) than traditional school students in the state (21 percent). As Table 5 notes, in 2000, 27 percent of students in Florida charter schools were in highly segregated schools (90-100 percent non-white). By 2016, that percent had risen to 32 percent. In contrast, in 2000, 13 percent of students were in traditional schools that were highly segregated, rising to 21 percent in 2016. This indicates that traditional schools became more segregated over the 17- year time period than charter schools. However, there are substantially more racially segregated charter schools than traditional schools. (**Table 6 in the Appendix provides these percentages for traditional and charter schools in every district between 2000 and 2016.**) However, as Table 5 further illustrates, the differences are largely due to Hispanic students. In 2016, students in racially segregated charter schools were, on average, 55 percent Hispanic, compared to 43 percent for traditional schools. In contrast, highly segregated charter schools were 39 percent black, while this number was 49 percent for traditional schools. Clearly charter schools are more segregated than traditional schools for Hispanics (at a much higher rate) but are LESS segregated than traditional schools for Black students. Appendix Table 7 shows the percentage of charter and traditional schools in segregated schools since 2000.

Court-ordered desegregation plans define a racially unbalanced school as one in which the percent of black students is either 15 percent higher or 15 percentage points lower than the percent black residents in the district in which the school is located. Borman et al. (2004) call this measure racial composition, and it is important because it compares the school to other schools in the district. A similar study using this measure in North Carolina found that black students were over twice as likely to be in a segregated school if they were in a charter school than in a traditional school (Bifulco and Ladd 2007). We do not find these these big differences in Florida. When we looked statewide at non-white racial balance across counties, we found little difference between charters and traditional schools in the three major South Florida counties and a slight difference in the rest of the state, although Palm Beach is much more likely to have both segregated white traditional and charter schools. When we break down the data by Hispanic or Black racial composition (Figures 2 A and B) we see that Miami-Dade is much more likely to have schools with 15 percent or greater black segregation in traditional schools than charter schools and more likely to have 15 percent or greater Hispanic segregation in charter schools than traditional schools.



Source: Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) U.S. Department of Education 2016-17 survey data.

What should we make of these findings?

First, not surprisingly, charter schools in Florida— like those in other states— locate in urban areas in neighborhoods that are highly minority (Greenblatt 2018). Charters in Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties are one-fourth of the total number of charter schools in the state and nearly one-fifth of the number of students. These schools attract a disproportionately Hispanic student population in Miami-Dade and Broward counties, and a disproportionate Black student population in Broward County.

Second, many of the charter school students in South Florida are attending segregated schools. This is especially true for Hispanic students in Miami-Dade. For the rest of the state, the percentage of Black and Hispanic segregation is nearly the same for charter and traditional schools. However, outside South Florida, charter schools are much more likely to be segregated white than traditional schools.

Finally, these findings augur for nuance in state and local policymaking. Charter schools are often racially segregated but it is the white-only segregation that is the most troubling. Some 75 percent of charter schools outside of South Florida, nearly one in four, on average, are segregated white. This can make looking at aggregated racial findings in Florida deceptive. Additionally, our earlier work on resegregation of schools in Florida found that although the percentage of white students is falling substantially, both traditional and charter schools in Florida are becoming more racially segregated (Collins Institute 2017). This analysis shows that the racial white resegregation in charter schools is outpacing these state trends outside South Florida and should be monitored.

One factor, of course, is that some charter schools specifically target black or Hispanic students in their marketing efforts. For example, the Somerset Academy of Miami-Dade offers their website in both English and Spanish, and Visible Academy of Manatee County updates its social media pages in both English and Spanish. Nearly every Miami-Dade charter school offers translation services for their websites. Similarly, some schools focus their efforts on African-American outreach, including charters in Hillsborough, Duval and Manatee Counties. It is common practice for charter schools in these counties to display pictures of primarily African-American students on their websites.

## » **Economic Segregation**

Academic research also finds that charter schools underrepresent students who enroll in free and reduced lunch (FRL) programs. In fact, many charter schools do not offer free and reduced lunch programs, leading to higher concentrations of white students (Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley & Wang, 2010). Logan and Burdick-Will (2016) found that charters increase both racial and socioeconomic isolation of students. While some national data support a trend toward over-enrollment in charters for students eligible for free or reduced priced lunches (Finnigan et al. 2004), others have found charter schools enroll, on average, fewer economically disadvantaged students (Ladd, Clotfeller and Holbein 2017).

One problem with these analyses is their use of FRL data to measure poverty. Some eligible students— particularly high school students— may not participate in the program due to concerns with stigma (Chingos 2016). A 2015 federal law set up a new measure of economically disadvantaged students, which uses a formula based on the percentage of students categorically eligible for free meals based on their families' participation in other specific means-tested programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Importantly, students do not have to apply for this program, they are included automatically based on their families' participation in federal social assistance programs. Thus this new measure, called direct certification, should provide more accurate information for analyzing economically disadvantaged schools. We use this new measure to document changes in recent years but resorted to the FRL data for longitudinal analysis.



Table 6: Percentage of Economically Disadvantaged Students and Students in Economically Segregated Schools from 2000-2016

Year	% Economically Disadvantaged			% Economically Segregated Schools		
	Charter	Traditional		Charter	Traditional	
2000	41%	47%	*	6%	6%	
2008	44%	53%	*	5%	7%	
2016	49%	62%	*	10%	13%	*
Note: p-values are denoted 0.00 -- * -- 0.05 -- # -- 0.10 Difference of means test compares charter to traditional schools in the same year See Appendix Table 8 for all years Source: National Center for Education Statistics - <a href="http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/">http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/</a>						

Table 6 shows that charter schools have significantly fewer economically disadvantaged students than traditional schools (measured by FRL) and that this gap has widened over the past 17 years. In 2016, nearly half of students in charter schools are economically disadvantaged compared to 62 percent of students in traditional schools. The table also compares charter and traditional schools by the percentages of economically segregated schools with at least 90 percent of their students on free and reduced lunches. Here the gap is smaller, although in 2016 the difference is statistically significant. (Table 8 in the appendix provides yearly percentages for economically disadvantaged students.)

## » Impact on Nearby Traditional Schools

### **KEY FINDING: Charter schools do not adversely affect the racial and economic segregation of nearby traditional schools.**

Critics of charter schools sometimes argue that they are not located in areas of need. For example, Leon County School Superintendent Rocky Hanna led the charge to deny approval of two new charter schools in his county arguing that charters in his district are not located in neighborhoods with the highest needs (Hanna 2018). Supporters and researchers argue the opposite—that charter schools do locate in neighborhoods with failing schools since this population of students will be especially eager to attend a non-failing school (Feiock 2015).

Our research shows that in Florida, in aggregate, charter schools do locate in areas of high racial and economic diversity. We have analyzed this several ways. Shown here is a comparison of the schools and the racial and economic makeup of the school's neighborhood (measured by zip code). We also overlapped census tract maps with demographic data and 692 charter schools at 1 mile, 2 mile and 5 mile boundaries. We found that as we move out from the location of charter schools at 1 mile, then 2 mile and 5 mile boundaries, each of these percentages gets smaller, meaning that the charter schools are reflecting their immediate neighborhoods and this linkage attenuates moving away from that neighborhood.

We also examined the socio-economic characteristics of charter schools over time—specifically in two-year intervals based on when the school was opened. We find no long-term trends over time between charter school placement and demographics.

When we compare the neighborhood racial/ethnic demographics with the enrollment of Black and Hispanic students in charter schools we find that overall, charters do a good job representing the racial/ethnic makeup of their surrounding neighborhoods. Black enrollment in charter schools is actually higher than the percentage of Black residents in the surrounding neighborhoods on average, while Hispanic enrollment is about the same as the surrounding neighborhoods. This is especially true in the catchment areas closer to the schools.

Finally, we wanted to look at the impact of competition from charter schools on the economically disadvantaged makeup of traditional schools. Competition is an important rationale for charter school supporters who argue that

when charter schools move into their neighborhood, traditional schools will improve (Buckley and Schneider 2007; Ayscue et al. 2018). But it is hard to improve if the best students migrate to charter schools, leaving the needier students in traditional schools. Opponents of charter schools argue that they draw white, more economically advantaged students away from traditional schools— leaving the traditional schools more heavily minority and poor.

We examined socioeconomic effects of charter schools on traditional schools. We did this by comparing the percentages of economically disadvantaged students in charter schools with traditional schools geographically located near the charter school and traditional schools that have no charter school close to their catchment area. We use the direct certification measure discussed earlier that identifies what percentage of the school's students are in a family that receives SNAP (food stamps) or TANF (welfare). If there is a difference between the two types of traditional schools, this may reflect that charters are attracting more economically advantaged students, leaving the disadvantaged students in the traditional schools. Our analysis indicates that the racial and economic effects of charter schools on traditional schools may be overstated.

As noted earlier, charter schools have fewer students designated as economically needy than traditional schools on average. As evidenced in Table 7, economically needy students represent on average 53 percent of charter school students— lower than the other two categories of traditional schools.<sup>8</sup> As expected, traditional schools with competing charter schools have substantially higher means than charter schools generally and higher than traditional schools without competition— thus providing some support for the notion that competition increases economic segregation. Additionally, the difference in means between these two traditional schools is negative and significant, meaning that they are substantively different in their economic disadvantaged student makeup when charters compete with traditional schools for students.

Table 7: School Competition and Levels of Direct Certification

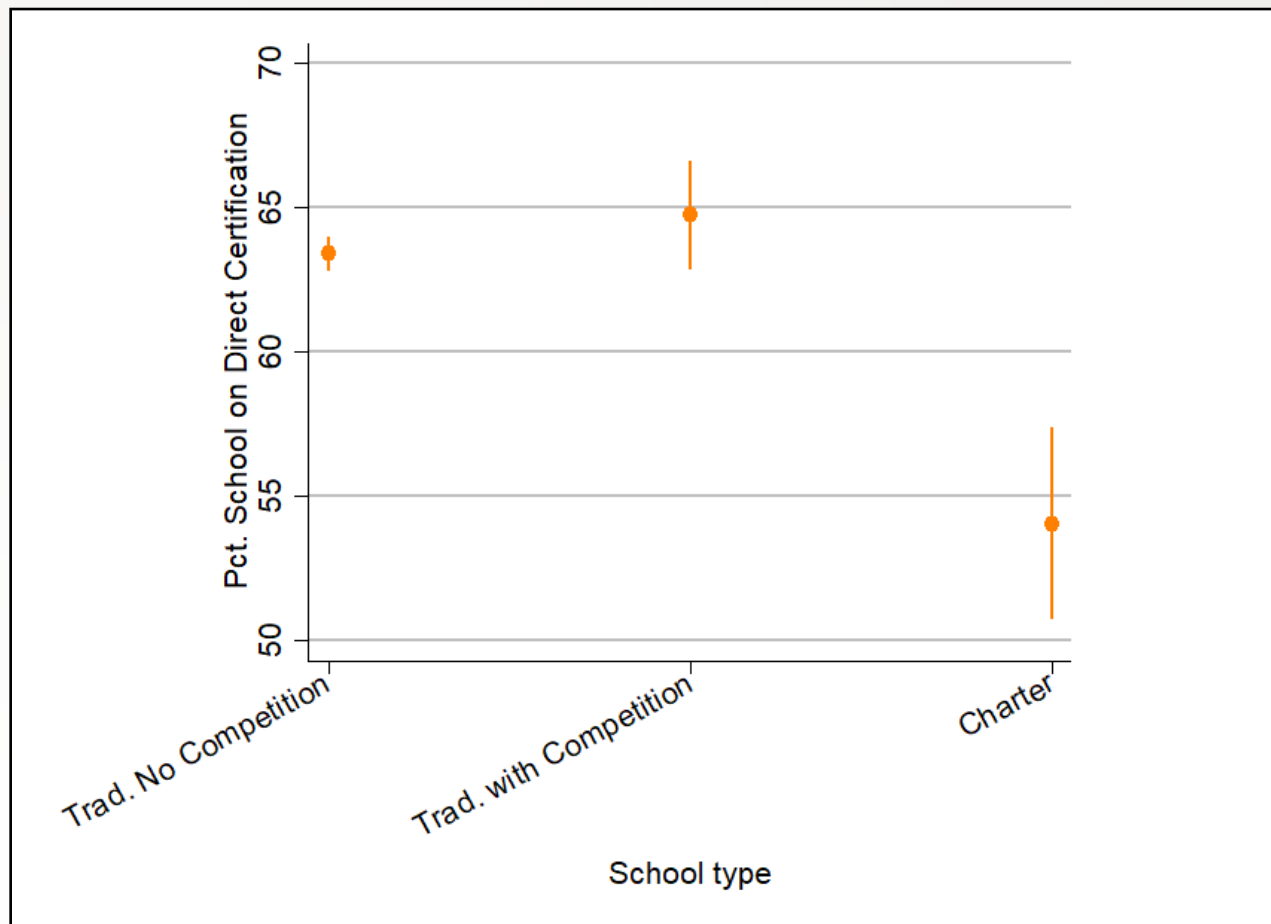
Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Traditional Schools	2489	62	21	4	100
Traditional Near Charter Schools	286	73	20	12	100
Charter Schools	131	53	23	8	93
<b>Difference of Means</b>					
<b>Comparisons</b>				t-stat	sig level
<b>No Comp. Trad. v Charter Comp Trad.</b>				-8.7628	0.000
<b>No Comp. Trad. v Charter</b>				4.3835	0.000
<b>Charter Comp. Trad. v Charter</b>				8.5775	0.000

**Table 9 in the appendix** reports a regression model with ratio of students on direct certification. This approach allows us to include in the analysis neighborhood factors that can affect the ratio of students on these programs. These include income and poverty, education, homeownership and population. This analysis also controls for districts as a way of reflecting possible idiosyncratic characteristics of the district that could affect the findings.

Once community-level factors are included, we find no substantive difference between either type of traditional school and direct certification. (The coefficient has the expected sign but is not statistically significant.) However, charter schools continue to have lower rates of direct certification than either type of traditional school. On average, a charter school has 9.3 percent fewer students qualifying for direct certification than a traditional school which lacks a nearby charter school and seven percent fewer direct certified students than a traditional school with a nearby charter.

Figure 3 provides a visualization between our variables of interest, reporting the predicted levels of direct certification across our three types of schools. Again, we find no substantive difference between levels of certification and traditional schools. **Charter schools in Florida have fewer directly certified students than either type of traditional school, but competition didn't play a role in increasing the number of economically disadvantaged students in the nearby traditional schools.**

Figure 3 : Direct Certification by Type of School



In Table 10 in the appendix, we re-estimate our previous regression model across the four school levels in our data: elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and schools with combined educational levels – for example, K-8 programs. This is important because, especially for free and reduced lunch, some research has indicated that the “stigma” associated with the program lowers student participation in higher grades and thus understates the economic disadvantage in the school (U.S. Department of Agriculture 1994). Indeed, using percent government assistance, we find that the negative association between certification levels and school type is isolated to elementary schools. At this educational level, charter schools on average have almost 15 percent less of the student body that qualifies for certification compared to traditional schools. At other educational levels, we find no significant association between a school’s type and amount of certification. In fact, at the high school level, charter schools report a higher level of certification than either type of traditional school, although this association is far from statistically significant.

In summary, we find evidence that charter schools attract fewer economically disadvantaged students but fail to find evidence that the competition from charter schools leads to more economically disadvantaged traditional schools in that community. This non-finding is an important one that undercuts the concerns of many educators that charter schools are “skimming” the students from traditional schools (in this case more economically advantaged students). While the descriptive data supports this assertion, when the community variables are included in the models, the impact becomes meaningless. We do find that charter schools attract fewer economically advantaged students, but the relationship seems to be isolated to elementary schools and the association dissipates at higher educational levels. While charter schools are likely to disrupt a district’s local education environment— our analysis seems to suggest that they only do so at specific educational levels and the effect does not, on average, unduly affect neighboring traditional schools.



In short, our findings statewide do not support Superintendent Hanna's claim that charters fail to locate in neighborhoods of highest need. Charter schools do place themselves in both diverse socioeconomic environments and diverse racial/ethnic neighborhoods. And when they do so, they do not significantly affect the racial and economic diversity of traditional schools nearby.

## » **Florida's Reliance on For-Profit Charters**

Although the originators of charter schools envisioned teacher-led, community-focused schools, today's charter schools have evolved into a mixture of these independent or free-standing schools and schools associated with for-profit or not-for-profit organizations that sponsor a number of schools, often across state lines. These organizations develop distinctive charter school models, provide a host of services to multiple charter schools and, in some cases, are contracted by the school to run the entire school (including staffing teachers and administrators and curricular services).

Charter Management Organizations (CMOs) are entities with a non-profit tax status that manage two or more charter schools. Education Management Organizations (EMOs) are management organizations with a for-profit tax status that perform similar functions as CMOs. EMOs commonly charge a management fee for their services. It is also important to note that CMOs and EMOs are different from vendors that simply provide certain services to schools. While high and low-performing schools may be found in both models, the for-profits have been the subject of the most concern.

For-profit charters (EMOs) are represented more in Florida than in the nation as a whole.<sup>9</sup> Nationally, 12 percent of charter school schools are EMOS. In Florida, it is over three times that percentage— 41 percent. With these numbers, Florida is the state with the second highest number of EMO managed charter schools in the country (Michigan is first). In contrast, only five percent of Florida charter school are CMOs, compared to 23 percent nationally (David 2019, Table 9).

The state has been active over the last few years in developing policies to reduce the number of low-performing charter schools and to encourage charter school networks that have been successful in Florida and elsewhere to expand.

Two of the largest EMOs in the country are based in Florida. Charter Schools USA manages 83 schools in six states, 64 percent (53) of these schools are in Florida. The company's webpage notes that the school often attracts students who have been "failed" by the "traditional system." The corporate offices are located in Ft. Lauderdale. Academica has contracts with 105 charter schools in Florida and operates in four other states. Its headquarters are in Miami and it has been operating for 20 years.

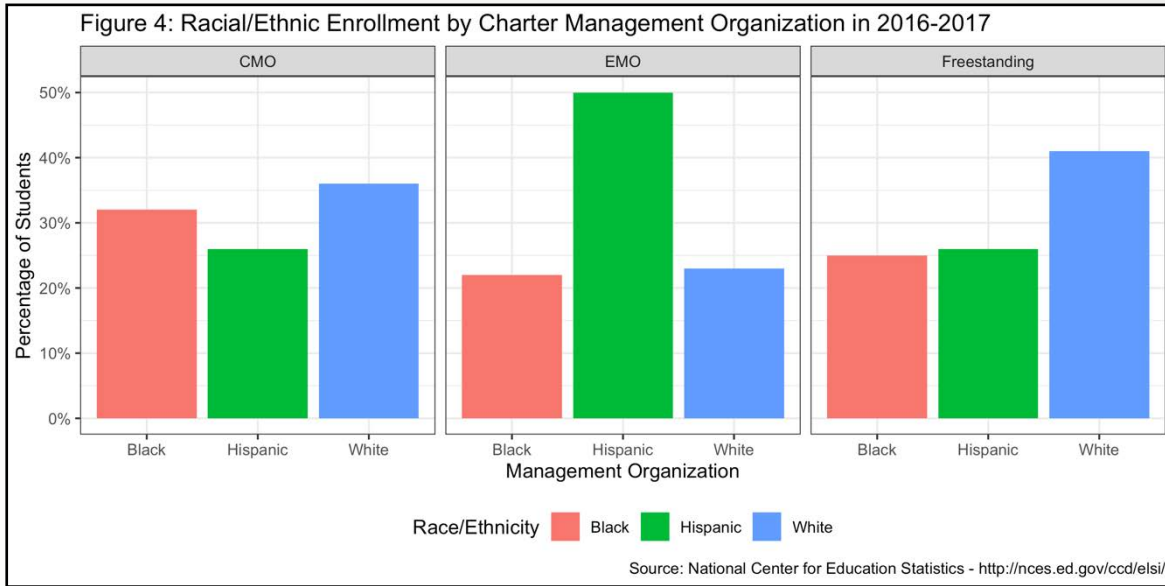
Much of the criticism around charter schools flows from EMOs. Oversight of some of these schools is lax and when they close, students reenter traditional schools, sometimes in the middle of a semester. Questions have arisen about real estate deals where state dollars go toward rent to subsidiaries of charter school operators. (*Miami Herald* 2011, U.S. Department of Education 2013, Strauss 2015, 2019a,b; Stonecipher, Ashwell and Wilcox 2018; Yi and Shipley 2014). As the National Education Policy Center put it, "A substantial share of public expenditures intended for the delivery of direct educational services for children is being extracted inadvertently or intentionally for personal or business financial gains..." (Baker and Minon 2015 p. 3). In Florida, private charter companies are paid management fees and can have associated real estate companies lease buildings to the schools. Questions have been raised about financial arrangements including schools paying eight figure rents to corporate affiliates of the companies that manage the schools (Stonecipher, Ashwell and Wilcox 2018). If the schools close, buildings belong to the landlords not the public (*Sun Sentinel* 2019). There have been a spate of newspaper stories in the *Miami Herald* and *Tampa Bay Times* on the leasing practices of EMOs (*Miami Herald*; 2011; Sokol 2019).

The financial concerns are not unique to Florida. California recently enacted a law prohibiting for-profit companies from running schools in that state. Other states have enacted laws that limit for-profit companies from running charter schools (Prothero 2018). Legislation was introduced in Florida in 2019 to shut down schools managed by EMOs and to require managers to be certified by accrediting organizations (*Sun Sentinel* Board 2019).



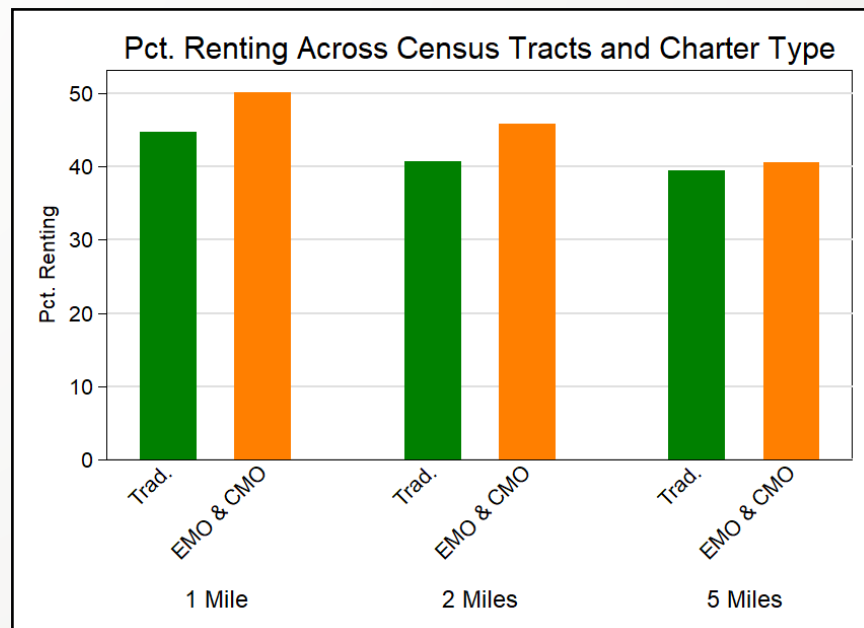
Another concern relates to politics. Integrity Florida estimated that since 1998, for-profit managers have provided \$13.6 million in political spending, most going to electioneering committees (Stonecipher, Ashwell and Wilcox 2018). Charter Schools USA was by far the biggest spender in this category with over \$2 million in spending for lobbyists. They also documented contributions to candidates, parties and committees from Charters USA and Academica and noted close personal ties to politicians.

We are not reporting on financial issues in this report. Our concern is racial/ethnic composition and in this area, Florida EMOs have higher percentages of Hispanic students than CMOs or free-standing charter schools (see Figure 4). It is important to note that a large percentage of EMOs operating in Florida are in Miami-Dade county, which explains much of the difference in Hispanic enrollment.



Finally, Figure 5 compares EMOs and free-standing charter schools in terms of their location in communities with high levels of rentals (a proxy for economic status). Interestingly, EMOs are more likely to locate in these communities than free-standing charter schools. Of course, this likely reflects their location in urban areas.

Figure 5



Florida is clearly more reliant on for-profit charter schools than the nation as a whole. But our evidence indicates that these schools are enrolling a far greater share of Hispanic students than freestanding charters and fewer white students. They are also more likely to locate in poorer areas as indicated by percent of residents who rent. These findings suggest that the for-profit schools are targeting low-income, high-minority (especially Hispanic) students, especially in South Florida.<sup>10</sup>

## » Performance Differences

**KEY FINDING: Highly segregated Black charter schools are low-performing compared to other schools in the district, but different patterns emerge for highly segregated Hispanic schools.**

Do charter schools students perform better than students in traditional public schools? Though much studied, there is little evidence that charter schools do a significantly better job than traditional public schools. Rather, the findings in studies across the country and in Florida often find mixed results, reflecting the variation across individual schools. Looking specifically at Florida, a comparison of school performance grades assigned under Florida's accountability system indicates that while charter schools in Florida received more A grades than in traditional public schools, they also received more F grades (Stonecipher, Ashwell and Wilcox 2018).

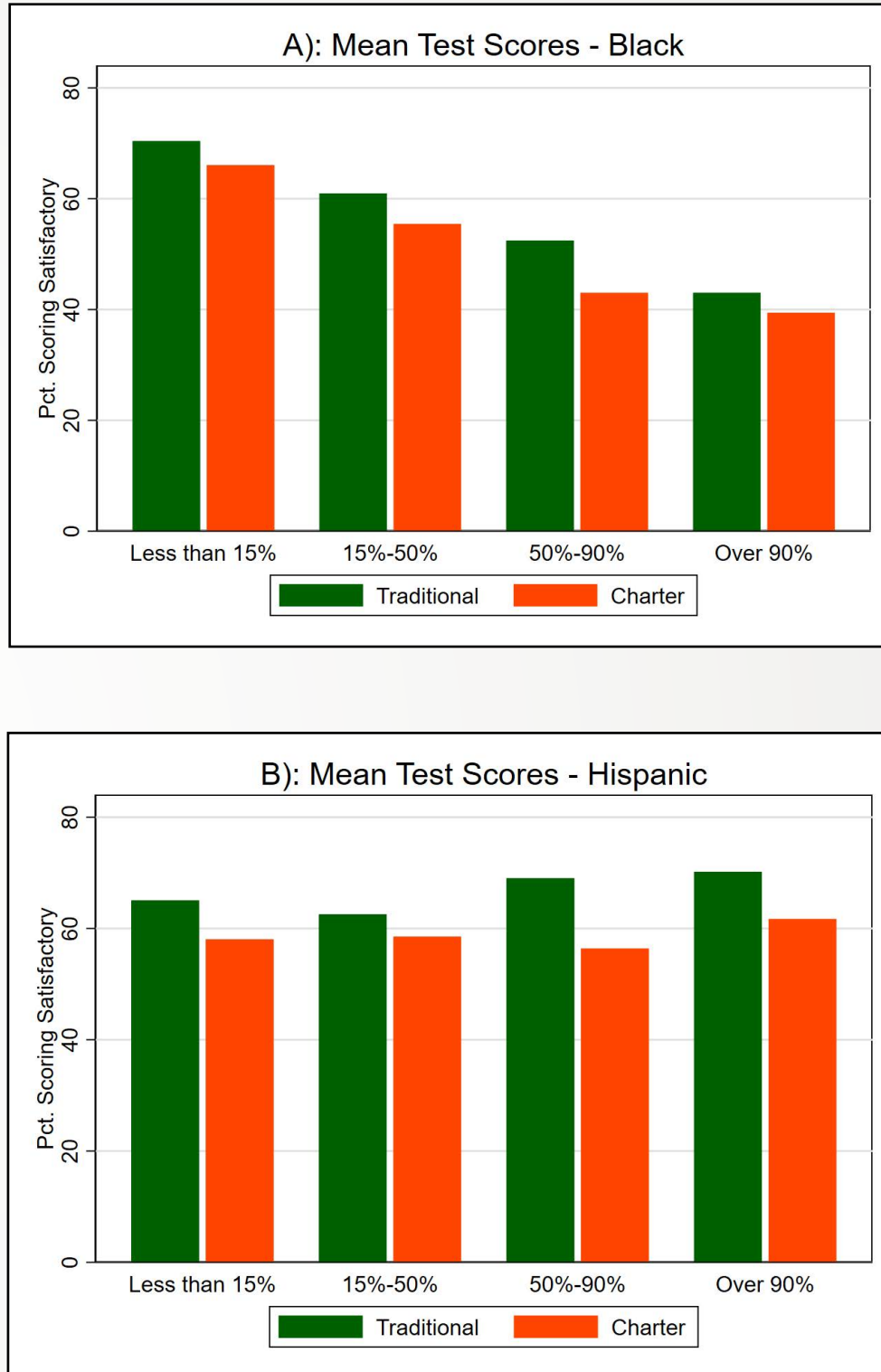
The Florida Department of Education issues annual reports comparing traditional and charter school student achievements. In its 2019 report it found that “charter schools outperformed their peers in traditional schools in nearly every category.” (Florida Department of Education 2019d). The report is a series of bar graphs reflecting test scores for all students and for African-American and Hispanic students in charters and traditional schools (Florida Department of Education 2019e). However, see Bifulco (2019) for a critical assessment of this report, including that it is purely descriptive without consideration of other variables included in this report.

We don't expect to resolve the ambiguity of the research, but we do want to look at student performance given the demography and social and economic makeup of charter and traditional schools in Florida.

We identify two variables to examine student achievement within Florida schools. First, leveraging the 2015-2016 school year CRDC data, we measure the mean percentage of students scoring satisfactory on reading and math standardized tests.<sup>11</sup> Our second measure is the Florida Department of Education's 2019 school letter grade.<sup>12</sup> The main independent variable of interest is school segregation using the Borman et al. (2004) measure of segregation. This is a four-group classification of school enrollment (less than 15 percent Black/Hispanic; 15-50 percent Black/Hispanic; 50-90 percent Black/Hispanic; 90 percent or more Black/Hispanic). We find substantively similar results across the board with both measures in our analysis.

Figure 6 illustrates the descriptive relationship between segregation and student achievement for traditional and charter schools. Panel A reports the association for Black students and panel B for Hispanic students. The y-axis reports the mean percentage of students scoring satisfactory or higher on reading and math exams. The x-axis reports level of segregation for traditional schools (green bars) and charter schools (orange bars). In panel A, we find that the average percentage of students scoring proficiently on standardized tests decreases with each increase in Black segregation. This association exists for both traditional and charter schools, although traditional schools have higher test scores than charter schools across the varying segregation levels. Turning to panel B, we find a very different relationship for Hispanic segregation. Across levels of Hispanic segregation, we observe no strong changes in proficiency test scores for either traditional or charter schools, although Hispanic students in traditional schools have consistently higher test scores than Hispanic students in charter schools. In short, students in highly segregated traditional and charter Hispanic schools score about the same on tests as those in schools where Hispanic students are in the minority. Similar results are found when the dependent variable is school grade.

Figure 6



While descriptive data provides some sense of relationships, more sophisticated analysis is useful to control for variables that may affect the simple relationships.<sup>13</sup> To investigate this relationship further, we conduct a multivariate analysis determining segregation's association with student achievement. The unit of analysis is individual schools. There could be several variables that influence school performance that are not observed through bivariate analysis. We estimate two sets of analysis in the section— one examining the determinants of student test scores and the second examining the determinants of Florida DOE letter grades. An overview of the statistical methods used in the analysis can be found in Long (1997).

Our main independent variables of interest are measures of Black and Hispanic segregation. We measure the enrollment of both racial groups as percent of students enrolled who are Black, and percentage of students enrolled who are Hispanic. We then interact each of these variables by school type— traditional public school or charter school. An overview of interaction terms— and the assumptions they imply— can be found in Berry, Golder, and Milton (2012). In addition to these variables, we also account for school level: elementary schools (the reference category), middle schools, and high schools. We control for school size measuring total student enrollment in 100s of students. We include a measure of school poverty by including a dichotomous measure indicating if a school qualifies for Title I funding. Additionally, we include a measure of school urbanity: rural schools, suburban schools and urban schools (the reference category). In addition to the suite of control variables, we also include estimation techniques to account for differences between school districts. For the math and reading scores model, we include school district fixed effects. For the school grades model we include district random intercepts.

Figure 7A reports the predicted percentage of the school scoring satisfactorily on standardized test for traditional and charter schools, across percentage of Black enrollment. The model suggests that as the percentage of Black students increases, the percentage of students performing satisfactorily on standardized tests decreases. This is true for both traditional and charter schools. However— as noted by the overlapping confidence intervals— at no value of Black enrollment do we find enough evidence to suggest that charter schools perform significantly better or worse than traditional public schools. Turning to panel 7B, we find a parallel result when examining Hispanic student enrollment and test achievement. Increased Hispanic enrollment is negatively associated with satisfactory test performance, yet the differences between traditional and charter programs are indistinguishable.

Figure 7A: Predicted School Test Scores Across Black Enrollment

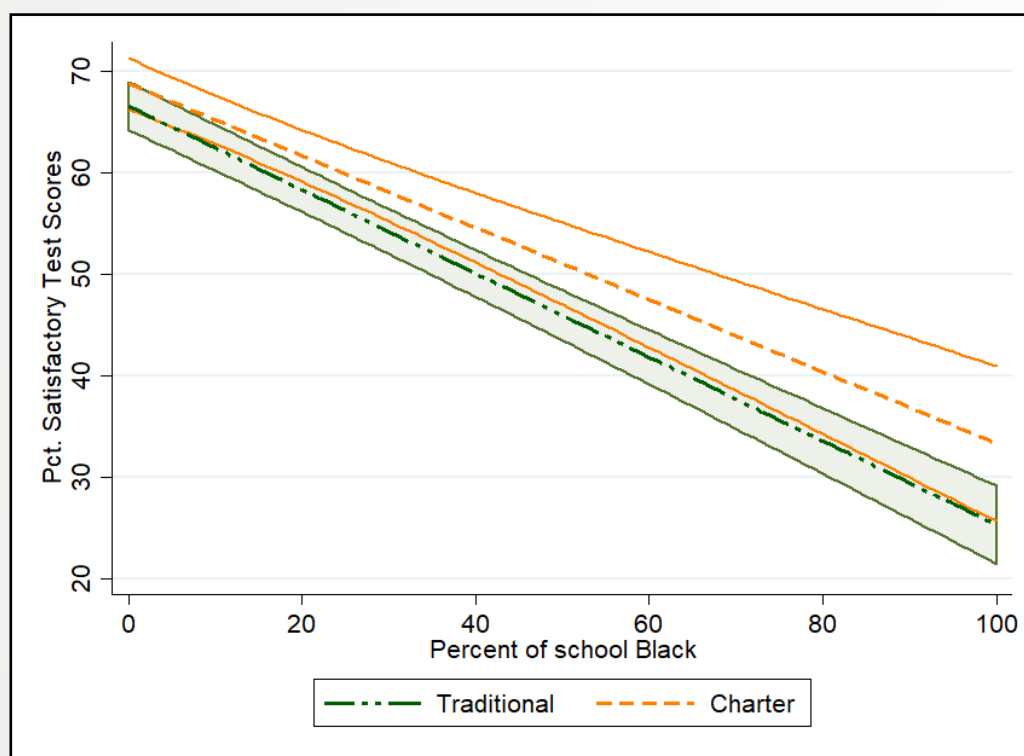




Figure 7B: Predicted School Test Scores Across Hispanic Enrollment

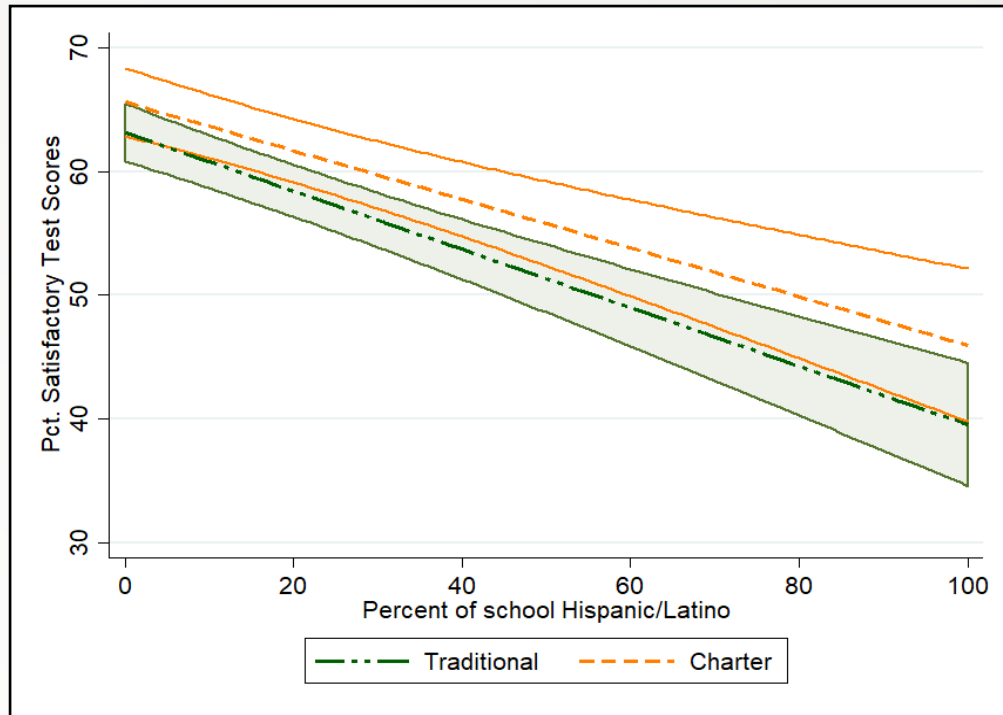


Figure 8

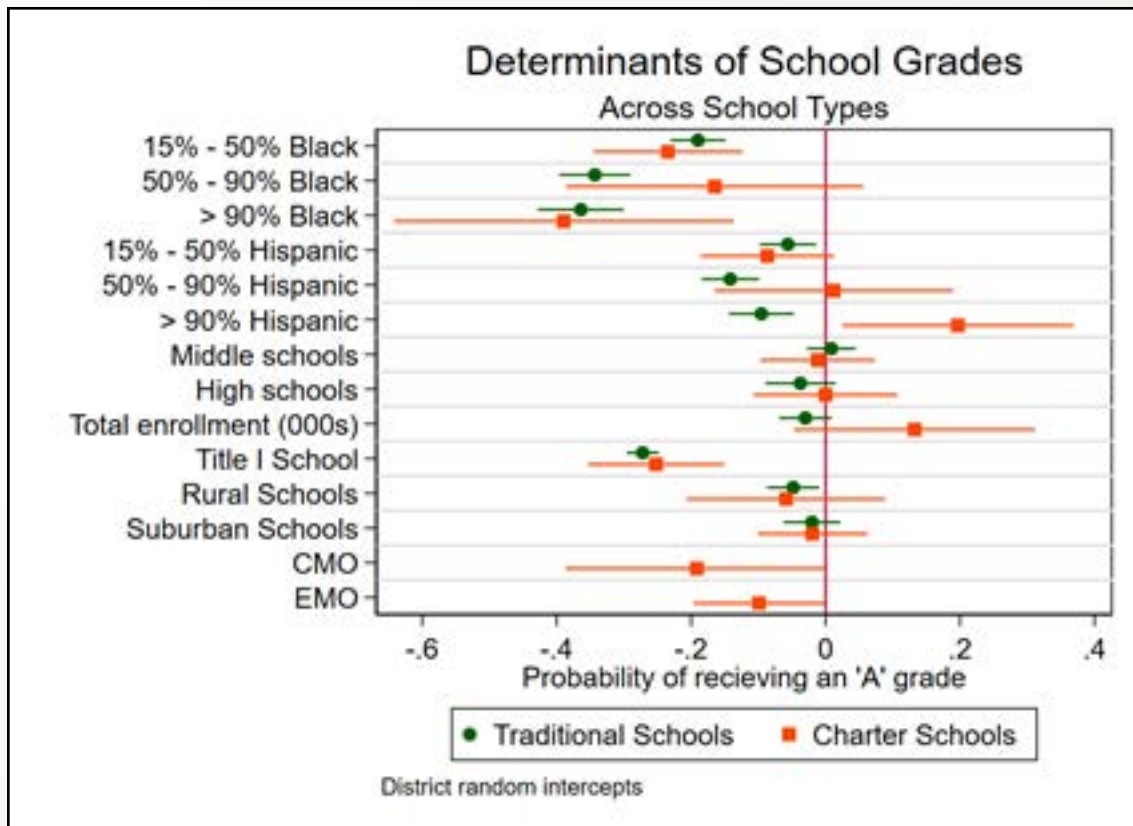


Figure 8 reports the model estimate of the determinants of the 2019 Florida school grades. Again, we observe dissimilar associations between segregation for Blacks and Hispanics in the estimated model. There is a clear negative association between Black segregation and school grades for both traditional and charter schools. Moving from a traditional school that is under 15 percent Black to a school which is over 90 percent Black is associated, on average, with a 38 percent reduction in the probability that the school was given an “A” letter grade by the state DOE. Similarly, a charter school moving across the same category is associated, on average, with a 40 percent reduction in the probability of receiving an “A” letter grade from the state. Heavily Hispanic schools fare differently. Traditional schools report a mild negative association between segregation and school grade. On average, moving from a school that is under 15 percent Hispanic to a school that is over 90 percent Hispanic is associated with a nine percent reduction in the probability of receiving an “A” letter grade. Charter schools report a slight positive association on this variable. A charter school which is over 90 percent Hispanic, on average, is 19 percent more likely to have an “A” letter grade from the state DOE compared to a charter school that is under 15 percent Hispanic.

Table 11 in the Appendix provides additional support for the lack of significance of charter school diversity and performance. When we interact the variables of charter school and percentage of Black/Hispanic students, the coefficients are not statistically significant, meaning we cannot confirm a hypothesis of difference.

Compared to freestanding charter schools, CMO and EMO charter schools report a lower probability of being given an “A” letter grade from the state. However, unlike in the previous model, we do not have enough evidence to conclude that this is a significant relationship. The suite of control variables in the model is similar to those used above in the Math and Reading scores model.

The results suggest that there are big differences in the impact of Hispanic segregation and Black segregation on student achievement. A negative association exists between Black segregation and school performance, and this association holds for both traditional and charter schools. Hispanic segregated populations are associated with mixed association between racial composition and student achievement. These results highlight the need for further research in this area. Too often, Hispanic and Black student populations are merged which clearly has a misleading effect on the findings.

One way that we can investigate what makes a successful charter program is by examining charter schools which significantly over-performed the statistical model’s predictions. The models that were estimated produced a line of best fit to assess statistical significance. By measuring each observation’s residuals – how much higher or lower an observation is from the line of best fit – we can identify significantly over and under performing schools given their demographic makeup. Table 8 reports over-achieving charter schools in the estimated model. An area for future work might be to more fully explore why these schools are more successful.

In short, when controlling for school and community variables, charter schools do not perform significantly different from traditional schools on test scores of non-white students. However, it is important to note that charter schools do fulfill one primary goal of supporters—giving parents a choice for their children’s education.

Table 8: Highly Successful Charter Schools

Charter School	District	2019 School Grade
ST. PETERSBURG COLLEGIATE HIGH SCHOOL	PINELLAS	A
ST. PETER’S ACADEMY	INDIAN RIVER	B
SOMERSET ACADEMY MIDDLE (MIRAMAR CAMPUS)	BROWARD	A
SOMERSET ACADEMY ELEMENTARY (MIRAMAR CAMPUS)	BROWARD	A
MATER PERFORMING ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT ACADEMY	DADE	A
HARTRIDGE ACADEMY	POLK	A
DORAL ACADEMY OF TECHNOLOGY	DADE	A
CROSSROAD ACADEMY	GADSDEN	A
COLLEGIATE HIGH SCHOOL AT NORTHWEST FLORIDA	OKALOOSA	A
BOK ACADEMY	POLK	A

# ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT IN CHARTER SCHOOLS

## **KEY FINDING: Florida's System of Accountability and Oversight regarding Charter Schools is Strong, but Can Be Improved.**

Accountability is key to the theory underlying charter schools. The primary rationale for charter schools has been couched in terms of a trade-off between accountability and autonomy. In exchange for relief from district management and state and local regulations and policies, schools would be extended a time-limited contract – a charter. At the end of the time period, charter school performance would be reviewed and the charter either revoked or extended. Florida, unlike many states, has had long-standing and relatively stringent accountability systems already in place, which have included testing of all students, assigning of school grades and public reporting. As the charter-sector developed, Florida required the schools in the new sector to adhere to the same accountability regime as traditional schools. Notably, charter school students are required to take the same state assessments as their counterparts in traditional public schools. Likewise, charter schools are assigned a school grade, from A to F, as are all public schools.

The state publicly reports all schools' performance on standardized tests and disaggregates the data by a number of socio-economic variables. These annual reports, called SPAR, are available for all public schools in Florida on the DOE website. In addition, charter schools are required to report publicly on management and operations including quarterly auditing reports, percent of certified teachers and a number of other variables.

Like traditional public schools, charter schools may not charge tuition, and the schools cannot discriminate by race/ethnicity or have a religious affiliation. Unlike most traditional public schools, they do not have enrollment zones and students must apply for admission. Schools must accept all students and if a school is oversubscribed, students are chosen by lottery.

Florida has restricted charter-approving authority primarily to school districts. This is an area of considerable difference across the nation. Some states allow universities, local non-profits and state boards of education, as well as school boards, to authorize charters. In Florida, charters are granted by the local school board for five years. Schools with a track-record of strong performance may receive charters for as long as 15 years before they have to apply for renewal. Charters have to undergo periodic formal reviews before their charters can be extended, and evidence of persistent low-performance (two years of "F" grades) results in mandatory closing.

With a few minor exceptions, a group wishing to start a charter school in Florida applies to the local school board that determines whether or not to approve the charter. Applicants must submit an application form that has been developed by the state in partnership with the districts and representatives of the charter school community and requires the same information from all applicants. It has 22 sections requiring detailed information on academic, operational, and financial data, including target population, facilities, transportation, governance as well as any agreements with a provider. The application does not include racial/ethnic or economic diversity in the target population. If an application is approved, the school board then executes a contract with the applicants that further details timelines, personnel policies, financial considerations and a host of planning activities and commitments. Charter school applicants are also required to participate in a training provided by the Department of Education after approval of an application before the first day of classes. The training must include instruction in accurate financial planning and good business practices.

School boards may revoke or not renew a school's charter for a number of reasons, including student academic performance. If the school grade is an "F" for two consecutive years, the state requires that the charter be revoked. (That provision was recently strengthened by law to a 'default' provision; i.e., if a local school board does not take action to revoke the charter, the charter is revoked automatically.)

A concern expressed repeatedly by charter school operators in Florida is that appointing the district as the main designee for approving charter applications results in an inherent conflict of interest. School districts risk losing students and funds that support the traditional schools when a charter is approved. This concern is commonly found in policy reports from national associations supportive of more choice and is often designated as a "weak" aspect of Florida policy.



One response to the concerns has been the establishment of an appeals process at the state level. If a charter is denied by a local school board, the applicants can appeal to a statewide charter school appeals commission with ultimate decisions made by the state board of education. Supporters of strong local control through school boards fear a steady erosion of local control as some oversight responsibilities shift to the state.

Free-standing charter schools generally have governing boards reflecting their community. For-profit schools can share a governing board with the affiliated education management organization. Each charter school has a governing board that must hold at least two public meetings per school year in the school district. Every charter school's governing board is required to appoint a representative to facilitate parental involvement, provide access to information, assist parents and others with questions and concerns, and resolve disputes. The representative must reside in the school district and may be a governing board member, employee, or individual contracted to represent the governing board.

Two recent events may affect the traditional balance of power between local school boards and state school officials. The Schools of Hope program, established in 2017, allows charter school networks that have a strong track record in Florida or other states to apply to the state board of education to be qualified as a School of Hope operator. Restricted to non-profit organizations, an operator must meet a number of qualification criteria to be eligible for the program, including a history of above-average student performance, more than 80 percent college attendance rate, and serving more than 70 percent of students eligible for a free or reduced-price lunch. If qualified, they may propose to open charter schools in the attendance zone of a persistently low-performing school or within a 5-mile radius of such school, whichever is greater. "Persistently low-performing schools" means schools that have earned three consecutive grades lower than a "C" and schools that were closed due to underperformance. The school board is required to work collaboratively with the qualifying charter school networks and to enter into an agreement within 90 days to begin the process of establishing the new schools. Four prospective Schools of Hope qualified in 2018 and are in conversations with local school boards. No schools have been approved yet.

The second event is a recently completed contract with Somerset Academy to operate all the schools in the Jefferson County school district. This action was preceded by more than a decade of low student achievement, declining enrollments and fiscal stress in the district. Under pressure from the state, the district contracted with a charter school network to run the three (now two) schools in the district thus creating an all-charter school district.

Additionally, the 2017-2018 Constitution Revision Commission proposed an amendment that was widely seen as limiting local school board authority to only the schools in the district that are operated by the school board. If adopted, the amendment was presumed to have resulted in the state, not the local school board, having authority over charter schools. The amendment summary was found misleading by the Florida Supreme Court and did not appear on the November 2018 ballot.

In these three cases, the local school board's authority over schooling in their district was (or would have been) constrained and the state's role increased.

## » **Measuring Innovation**

### **KEY FINDING: Innovation is Key but not Adequately Measured or Shared.**

Innovation has been at the heart of arguments for the charter school sector since its inception. In the 1970s and 1980s, there was a growing consensus that the U.S. public school system had settled into a homogenous model that was effective in serving students and communities that were white and middle class. However, this system was not proving responsive to many of the demographic and economic changes in society. Furthermore, changes in technologies were also challenging the old system. By the early 1990s, many felt that the public-sector overall, not just education, was overly regulated and that innovation was being driven out. Remedies that gained wide support were greater deregulation and decentralization. In education, the idea of charter schools emerged in response. Under this new model, schools would be subject to fewer constraints than traditional public schools. Selective relief from some state and local rules, regulations and policies would allow for innovation and experimentation. It was hypothesized that allowing educators more autonomy in how they ran schools would open space for innovation and experimentation and would lead to new and better programs and practices. A related benefit that was thought to result from an educational sector more open to innovation was the dissemination and adoption of successful innovative approaches by the traditional public school sector.



However, looking back over the role of innovation as the charter sector has grown over the last 20 years, innovation has proven difficult to identify, regulate and measure. Furthermore, there is a growing consensus that even when successful schooling alternatives develop, there has been little systematic testing, development, dissemination or adoption of the new practices.

Studies have substantiated that there are innovative aspects to charter schools. However, they tend to be restricted to certain areas and types of innovation. For example, rather than create completely new innovative learning models, charter schools have tended to adopt specific practices that may respond to specific student populations. Studies have also found that charter schools have filled niches in the public school market in which traditional public schools have not performed as well, such as schools serving students at risk of dropping out or using technology to create cyber or hybrid learning models. A 2012 study found that innovation has been pursued by focusing on local or school-based contexts such as innovative organization and instructional practices. Overall, they found that charter schools have not fulfilled the expectations for innovation when compared with traditional public schools, which over the same time period were also becoming more innovative (Preston et al. 2012).

The original bill establishing charter schools in Florida designated innovation as one of three primary policy objectives. Specifically, the law said charter schools should encourage the use of innovative learning methods. It also included language creating innovative measurement tools as one of the purposes that charter schools “may” fulfill (1002.33(2)b3; c1). This was true at the national level as well with more than 90 percent of state charter laws including innovation as one of the purposes behind the new law.

Florida has not defined innovation and thus it is difficult to hold charters accountable for it. Further, there are not systematic efforts to share innovative practices across the state or within districts. Policies and programs that were focused specifically on systematically identifying effective practice and policy would go far to fulfill the promise of an innovative space. Florida has one of the most sophisticated management information systems on students in the country, collecting student data on at all levels of education from Pre-K to advanced graduate education. There is an underdeveloped organized statewide capacity to learn what we can from the data that is currently being collected.

Having a robust research and development (R&D) program would help differentiate the oversight role of the state and the operationalizing role of local school districts. Massachusetts, which in general is considered to have a good state model, caps the total number of schools and approves charters only at the state level. As a part of the state's responsibility, it conducts site visits to document and review their practices. A Florida variation of this model might be to strengthen its analytical role in identifying exceptional student and school performance while still leaving to districts responsibility for determining which schools to charter. As the state allows for more innovation and discretion, it is well set to provide an R & D capacity to identify promising practices and proactively disseminate best practices.

## » Transparency and Parental Choice

### **KEY FINDING: Transparency is Key to Parental Choice yet is Poor in Both Charter and Traditional Schools.**

Quality, timely and easy-to-find information for students and their parents about schools is key to any successful charter school program. The variety and number of choices that parents face are formidable, including not just charter schools but also policies that allow students to attend schools throughout a district and across the state and through voucher programs permitting students to attend private schools with state-subsidized tuition. Parents should be able to access information they need to make good decisions for their children.

A strategy recently being tested in places with large choice programs is web-based applications that can be used by parents to access information. Often referred to as “navigators,” one of the strengths of this approach is that the type and quality of the information could be relatively consistent and therefore enabling parents to make informed comparisons. Two examples of this can be found in locales with large choice systems, including the New Orleans and Washington DC. school systems. In both cases, the navigator systems have shown promise but also have been challenging to all involved and would require ongoing work to adopt to the Florida landscape.

Currently, districts in Florida that have charter schools include information about those schools on the district websites. Schools have information on their individual school websites, and there are commercial websites that provide information for choice programs such as charter school. To work well, it is critical that the quality, amount,

accessibility and comparability of the data be sufficient for parents to make informed choices.

Florida requires charter schools to maintain a website where information about the school can be accessed including academic performance, the name of members of the governing board, the name of any educational or charter management organizations or service providers under contract, minutes of governing board meetings and the school's annual budget and annual fiscal audit. Charter schools are also required to report to the district information on student performance, financial status, facilities, personnel salary and benefits as well as to report on the proportion of instructional personnel holding professional or temporary certificates and the proportion teaching in-field or out-of-field.

We wanted to assess how transparent charter and traditional schools in the state are by analyzing their webpages. One might surmise that charter schools would be more transparent than traditional schools since they are competing for students from those schools. In fact, that is what we found.<sup>14</sup> However, we also found both types of schools' webpages far from ideally transparent.

We looked to the websites of 147 Florida charter and 147 traditional schools. The charter and traditional schools in the data were selected at random from all elementary schools throughout the state of Florida. Only elementary schools were included given that parents are most involved in their child's education during this phase. Schools were compared across five variables of accountability:

Table 9 Transparency Variables

<b>Grade</b>	=	How easy it is to access a school's grade. Coded 3 if available on school's homepage, 2 if found after one click, 1 if found after multiple clicks, and 0 if not found.
<b>SPAR</b>	=	How easy it is to access a school's School Public Accountability Report (SPAR). Such reports are required by the Department of Education (DOE), but may appear anywhere a school chooses to place them. Reports include vital information, including teacher qualifications, school grades, etc. Coded 3 if available on school's homepage, 2 if found after one click, 1 if found after multiple clicks, and 0 if unfounded.
<b>Social</b>	=	Whether the school offers links to its social media pages. Coded 1 if yes, 0 otherwise.
<b>Testimonial</b>	=	Whether a school offers parental testimonials. Coded 1 if yes, 0 otherwise.
<b>PTA</b>	=	Whether a school offers information about its Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Coded 3 if available on school's homepage, 2 if found after one click, 1 if found after multiple clicks, and 0 if unfounded.

Each of the five categories was summed to form an overall accountability score for each elementary school. The highest possible transparency score is 11; the lowest 0. We find that the three most accountable counties for charters are Broward (5.14), Miami-Dade (3.54) and Polk (5.55). The three least accountable for charters are Flagler (0), Glades (0) and Dixie (0.5). The most accountable traditional schools are in Duval (7.0), Miami-Dade (5.3) and Pasco (5.3).

The least are Bradford, Gilchrist, Hendry, Leon, Putnam, Saint Lucie, and Walton, all scoring a total of (1). On average, charter schools remain more accountable than traditional schools. Charters tout an average accountability score of 4.31 and traditional schools a 3.28. Appendix Tables 12-15 provide more information on the most and least transparent charter and traditional schools.

Most surprising is the discrepancy between charter and traditional schools' grade information as shown in Table 9. While traditional schools score a 0.84 in its reporting of grades, charter schools score a 1.74. From this we can conclude that charter schools remain far more transparent about their performance. Similarly, charter school SPAR

reports remain more accessible than that of traditional schools (0.96 and 0.64, respectively). Charter and traditional schools score similarly in their offerings of social media links (1.01 and 1.04). Nevertheless, it remains noteworthy that both charters and traditional schools are a long way from the maximum transparency, at least according to our criteria.

Table 10 Difference-In-Means, Charter and Traditional Schools

Transparency Variable	Charter School Score	Traditional School Score	Difference
<b>Grade</b>	1.74	0.84	0.90***
<b>SPAR</b>	0.96	0.65	0.31*
<b>Social</b>	0.68	0.80	-0.12
<b>Testimonial</b>	0.70	0.02	0.68
<b>PTO</b>	1.01	1.04	-0.03

Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

In sum, we can conclude that charter schools offer more information about their functionality and performance than do traditional schools. This is likely because charters are tasked with competing against long-established traditional schools—and with this task comes the responsibility of “standing out.” In order to distinguish themselves from existing traditional schools, charters must offer any and all indicators of success, such as high grades, positive testimonials and accountability reports.

## CONCLUSION

The bottom line for this study will probably please both charter advocates and critics—and similarly will frustrate both. In terms of segregation, location, and student performance, charter schools are very similar to traditional schools. They are not locating in white, affluent areas, they reflect the racial bifurcation that exists in Florida (and other states') urban areas, and their students' school grades are roughly the same as traditional schools when multivariate statistics control for variables that affect the school and community makeup.

Why is this not good news? The arguments for charters are based on the understanding that they would be better than traditional schools. Perhaps they are in other variables, but in the key ones we examine, this is not true.

Why is this good news? Proponents can't blame charter schools for resegregating Florida's schools. Both traditional and charter schools are resegregating on their own—in large part because the schools reflect their communities which are often racially divided. However, there is evidence that charter schools are not taking the same share of economically disadvantaged children.

Another important point is that charter schools are very complicated and to lump them under a single category can be very misleading. We benefited from looking at charter schools in one state where they operate in the same legal and regulatory environment (compared to a 50 state analysis). Nevertheless, we find big differences in charter schools depending on their location (especially in South Florida) and their status as a stand-alone non-profit or one run substantially by an education provider organization. Even the EMOs are very different, with some essentially running the schools, often associating with property companies that handle real estate deals with the schools and without a local school board overseeing the operation of the charters, and some purchasing services but maintaining more local administration and without real estate components. Our analysis on EMOs is suggestive that even with these differences, these charters act substantially differently than stand-alone schools in terms of performance. They are suggestive because we analyze only one year of data. Clearly, more work needs to be done in this area.



Geography matters, and charters are not avoiding communities with high concentrations of racial minorities. This finding does not apply to communities with poor families, where there does seem to be some avoidance in play.

Transparency is an area where both traditional schools and charter schools can improve. Student success as evidenced by reports submitted to the Florida Department of Education should be easily accessible to parents, but they are not. However, charter schools do a better job than traditional schools—likely because they are competing with traditional schools and need to “sell” themselves more than the “default” local school. Nevertheless, in order to make a good decision, parents need information on both types of schools in a form that is easily understandable.

One area particularly under-studied is the impact of the charter model on outcomes other than learning. The theory of choice including charter schools would suggest that greater choice might have a significant effect on other desired outcomes of schooling in addition to traditional cognitive ones. These might include emotional intelligence or acquisition of values such as tolerance or empathy. For example, socio-emotional learning is increasingly thought to be a desired outcome of schooling but one that may be only partially, if at all, captured by current student assessments and state accountability frameworks. Given the notion of “fit” as an operational factor in parent selection of schooling, we need to better understand how parents operationalize their preferences and how different schooling models effect outcomes other than the learning measured by state assessments. This is an area of considerable research among educational investigators but little has been done specifically looking at charters.

While charter schools were a dramatic new option for public school students two decades ago, today they continue to evolve under changing state law. This evolution is important, especially given the widespread use of charters and support in the political world. Transparency, accountability and focus on innovation would move the debate toward productive decisions and could improve public education for all Florida students. A recognition of growing racial segregation in both traditional and charter schools and what to do about it should also be addressed at the state level.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from the research, the LeRoy Collins Institute board recommends the following recommendations in the areas of accountability, innovation, transparency and racial and economic diversity of Florida's charter schools.

### » ACCOUNTABILITY:

1. Efforts to skirt district school board accountability through such means as allowing charter schools to be authorized by the state should be avoided.
2. State policy should revisit the purpose of charter schools and systematically analyze how the state policy evolved and how the charter sector has changed since the initial law.

### » INNOVATION:

3. Districts should facilitate innovation by setting up mechanisms by which charter and traditional school innovations can be shared systematically with other schools in the district
4. The state should take a more proactive role in identifying innovative schools and sharing successful innovative practices with both charter and traditional school districts. The state should also provide incentives for district boards that work with charter schools to share and promote innovative practices.



## » **TRANSPARENCY:**

5. The state, in partnership with districts, should ensure that all school websites provide reliable, timely, accurate, comparable and easily accessible information for parents to base their schooling decisions. The information should include easily accessed information on:
  - student achievement including test results and school grades,
  - other outcomes such as data on graduation and retention rates and disciplinary procedures,
  - data on the racial/ethnic makeup of their students
  - services such as transportation and special focuses or themes and management structure including affiliations and agreements with management organizations and networks.

The state can set up a template districts can use to make this information easily assessable to parents and students and should consider using the navigators model used in some states to provide useful and consistent information to parents in comparing schools.

## » **RACIAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES:**

6. Expected racial/ethnic makeup of students could be added to the model charter school application under the target population of the student body section.
7. Charters whose students substantially differ from the racial/ethnic and economically disadvantaged characteristics of the neighborhood should be required to work with the district to develop and implement a diversity plan.
8. The state should reaffirm its original commitment to racial diversity in charter schools and add a commitment to diversity in students with a varying economic background. It should also consider racial diversity in traditional schools in this commitment. Although we think racial diversity is key, after twenty years, it might well be time to revisit the basic language authorizing charter schools.

# APPENDIX TABLES

Table 1: Growth in Student Population by School Type

Year	Charter		Traditional		Total
	Students	Schools	Students	Schools	Students
2000	26,893	148	2,407,894	3,168	2,434,787
2001	40,468	192	2,460,010	3,227	2,500,478
2002	51,708	226	2,480,858	3,228	2,532,566
2003	67,472	257	2,520,082	3,170	2,587,554
2004	83,075	319	2,556,261	3,350	2,639,336
2005	92,335	339	2,582,689	3,268	2,675,024
2006	99,474	363	2,572,039	3,283	2,671,513
2007	105,223	364	2,561,588	3,397	2,666,811
2008	117,640	395	2,513,380	3,372	2,631,020
2009	137,887	412	2,496,635	3,484	2,634,522
2010	154,703	457	2,488,055	3,516	2,642,758
2011	180,880	517	2,487,233	3,403	2,668,113
2012	204,132	581	2,488,030	3,688	2,692,162
2013	230,173	623	2,490,566	3,672	2,720,739
2014	251,825	651	2,505,119	3,514	2,756,944
2015	270,953	653	2,520,415	3,667	2,791,368
2016	283,560	654	2,533,253	3,681	2,816,813
2017	295,814	655	2,537,301	*	2,833,115
2018	313,586	658	2,533,271	3,590	2,846,857
Source: (1) National Center for Education Statistics - <a href="http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/">http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/</a> (2) Florida Department of Education – <a href="http://fldoe.org">http://fldoe.org</a> * Data unavailable					

Table 2: (All Years) Percentage of Schools by Grade Level Category for Charter & Traditional Public Schools

Year	Elementary		Middle		Senior		Combination	
	Charter	Traditional	Charter	Traditional	Charter	Traditional	Charter	Traditional
2000	57%	52%	16%	15%	11%	13%	16%	20%
2001	60%	52%	16%	15%	11%	13%	14%	21%
2002	57%	53%	16%	15%	14%	13%	13%	19%
2003	59%	54%	17%	15%	13%	13%	11%	18%
2004	58%	52%	16%	15%	17%	12%	9%	22%
2005	56%	54%	18%	16%	18%	16%	8%	13%
2006	56%	55%	19%	16%	17%	15%	9%	14%
2007	55%	54%	19%	16%	20%	16%	6%	14%
2008	55%	55%	18%	16%	21%	16%	7%	14%
2009	54%	54%	17%	15%	22%	16%	7%	15%
2010	55%	54%	17%	15%	22%	15%	6%	16%
2011	55%	55%	17%	15%	22%	15%	7%	15%
2012	55%	54%	16%	15%	23%	15%	7%	16%
2013	54%	54%	16%	15%	21%	15%	8%	16%
2014	54%	54%	16%	15%	20%	15%	10%	16%
2015	55%	52%	15%	14%	19%	15%	11%	20%
2016	54%	52%	14%	13%	21%	14%	11%	20%

Table 3: Number of Districts With Charter Schools

Year	Districts
2000	36
2001	37
2002	37
2003	40
2004	43
2005	42
2006	42
2007	42
2008	43
2009	44
2010	44
2011	45
2012	45
2013	46
2014	48
2015	47
2016	47

Table 4: (All Years) Average Racial/Ethnic Composition of Charter and Traditional Public Schools from 2000 – 2016

Year		White		Black		Hispanic		Other	
2000	Charter	50%		36%	#	13%	#	1%	*
	Traditional	55%		30%		16%		2%	
2001	Charter	51%		34%		14%	#	1%	*
	Traditional	56%		30%		18%		2%	
2002	Charter	49%	#	35%	*	15%	#	1%	*
	Traditional	53%		29%		18%		2%	
2003	Charter	47%	*	34%	*	17%		1%	*
	Traditional	52%		29%		19%		2%	
2004	Charter	45%	*	34%		20%		1%	*
	Traditional	57%		32%		20%		2%	
2005	Charter	44%	*	33%		22%		2%	*
	Traditional	53%		31%		21%		2%	
2006	Charter	41%	*	31%		23%		2%	*
	Traditional	49%		29%		21%		2%	
2007	Charter	39%	*	31%		25%	#	2%	#
	Traditional	49%		30%		22%		2%	
2008	Charter	38%	*	29%		28%	*	2%	#
	Traditional	46%		28%		23%		2%	
2009	Charter	38%	*	28%		29%	*	2%	
	Traditional	44%		28%		23%		2%	
2010	Charter	36%	*	29%		30%	*	2%	
	Traditional	43%		27%		25%		2%	
2011	Charter	36%	*	28%		31%	*	2%	
	Traditional	43%		28%		25%		3%	
2012	Charter	36%	*	28%		33%	*	2%	
	Traditional	45%		28%		27%		3%	
2013	Charter	34%	*	27%		35%	*	2%	
	Traditional	41%		27%		26%		2%	
2014	Charter	34%	*	26%		34%	*	3%	
	Traditional	43%		28%		27%		3%	
2015	Charter	33%	*	26%		36%	*	3%	
	Traditional	42%		28%		28%		3%	
2016	Charter	32%	*	25%		37%	*	3%	
	Traditional	39%		27%		28%		2%	
Note: p-values are denoted 0.00 -- * -- 0.05 -- # -- 0.10 Difference of means test compares charter to traditional schools in the same year Source: National Center for Education Statistics - <a href="http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/els/">http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/els/</a>									



Table 5(a): (All Years) Percentage of Students by Race/Ethnicity in Charter & Traditional Public Schools in Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach Counties

Year		White		Black		Hispanic		Other		Total Students
2000	Charter	27%		45%		26%		1%		10,285
	Traditional	28%		39%		34%		2%		756,683
2001	Charter	28%		42%		28%		1%	*	16,133
	Traditional	27%		38%		34%		2%		776,407
2002	Charter	24%		47%		28%		1%	*	22,132
	Traditional	26%		38%		35%		2%		777,722
2003	Charter	23%		43%		32%		2%	*	29,667
	Traditional	25%		38%		36%		2%		778,645
2004	Charter	23%		42%		34%		1%	*	35,569
	Traditional	25%		38%		36%		2%		774,219
2005	Charter	22%		40%		37%		1%	*	40,259
	Traditional	24%		38%		37%		2%		769,218
2006	Charter	19%		38%		38%		2%		42,551
	Traditional	22%		37%		37%		2%		744,839
2007	Charter	18%		38%		40%		2%	*	46,050
	Traditional	21%		37%		38%		2%		732,391
2008	Charter	17%	*	35%		44%	#	2%	*	50,991
	Traditional	20%		37%		39%		2%		720,770
2009	Charter	16%	#	34%		46%	*	2%	*	60,295
	Traditional	19%		37%		41%		2%		712,138
2010	Charter	16%		34%		47%	*	2%	*	67,826
	Traditional	19%		37%		41%		2%		708,953
2011	Charter	16%	#	33%	#	48%	*	2%	*	82,763
	Traditional	18%		37%		41%		2%		703,208
2012	Charter	18%		31%	*	52%	*	2%	*	94,102
	Traditional	18%		37%		41%		2%		700,409
2013	Charter	15%		30%	*	53%	*	2%	*	107,254
	Traditional	17%		37%		42%		2%		693,863
2014	Charter	15%		30%	*	52%	*	2%	*	116,281
	Traditional	17%		37%		43%		2%		692,076
2015	Charter	15%		28%	*	54%	*	2%	*	124,294
	Traditional	16%		36%		44%		2%		692,449
2016	Charter	14%		28%	*	54%	*	2%	*	130,514
	Traditional	15%		36%		45%		2%		692,716

Note: p-values are denoted 0.00 -- \* -- 0.05 -- # -- 0.10

Difference of means test compares charter to traditional schools in the same year

Source: National Center for Education Statistics - <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/>

Table 5(b): (All Years) Percentage of Students by Race/Ethnicity in Charter & Traditional Public Schools  
NOT in Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach Counties

Year		White	Black	Hispanic	Other	Total Students
2000	Charter	58%	33%	9%	1%	16,608
	Traditional	63%	27%	11%	2%	1,651,211
2001	Charter	59%	31%	9%	1%	24,335
	Traditional	65%	28%	13%	2%	1,683,603
2002	Charter	59%	30%	10%	1%	29,576
	Traditional	61%	27%	12%	2%	1,703,136
2003	Charter	58%	30%	10%	1%	37,805
	Traditional	60%	26%	13%	2%	1,741,437
2004	Charter	56%	30%	13%	1%	47,506
	Traditional	67%	30%	15%	2%	1,782,042
2005	Charter	57%	28%	13%	2%	52,076
	Traditional	62%	29%	16%	2%	1,813,471
2006	Charter	55%	26%	14%	1%	56,923
	Traditional	57%	26%	16%	2%	1,827,200
2007	Charter	54%	26%	14%	2%	59,173
	Traditional	57%	27%	17%	3%	1,829,197
2008	Charter	53%	24%	16%	2%	66,649
	Traditional	54%	26%	18%	2%	1,792,610
2009	Charter	54%	24%	16%	2%	77,592
	Traditional	51%	25%	18%	3%	1,784,497
2010	Charter	50%	25%	18%	3%	86,877
	Traditional	50%	24%	20%	2%	1,779,102
2011	Charter	51%	24%	19%	3%	98,117
	Traditional	51%	25%	20%	3%	1,784,025
2012	Charter	49%	25%	19%	3%	110,030
	Traditional	54%	26%	23%	3%	1,787,621
2013	Charter	49%	24%	20%	3%	122,919
	Traditional	49%	24%	21%	2%	1,796,703
2014	Charter	48%	24%	21%	3%	135,544
	Traditional	51%	25%	22%	3%	1,813,043
2015	Charter	47%	24%	22%	3%	146,659
	Traditional	50%	25%	23%	3%	1,827,966
2016	Charter	46%	23%	24%	3%	153,046
	Traditional	47%	24%	23%	2%	1,840,537

Note: p-values are denoted 0.00 -- \* -- 0.05 -- # -- 0.10

Difference of means test compares charter to traditional schools in the same year

Source: National Center for Education Statistics - <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/>

Table 6: Number of 90% or greater segregated Schools by Type and District

District	Charter	Segregated Charter	Traditional	Segregated Traditional
ALACHUA	10	2	38	2
BAY	8	0	32	0
BREVARD	10	0	83	0
BROWARD	58	10	226	54
CITRUS	1	0	18	0
COLLIER	4	1	48	11
COLUMBIA	1	0	14	0
DADE	96	61	336	246
DUVAL	18	0	154	0
ESCAMBIA	3	0	52	1
FLAGLER	2	0	10	0
FRANKLIN	1	0	1	0
GADSDEN	1	1	12	10
GLADES	2	0	3	0
HERNANDO	3	0	23	0
HILLSBOROUGH	26	4	220	19
INDIAN RIVER	5	1	18	0
LAKE	6	0	40	0
LEE	14	0	80	4
LEON	3	0	40	5
LEVY	2	0	9	0
MADISON	1	0	5	0
MANATEE	10	1	52	2
MARION	3	0	48	0
MARTIN	1	0	20	2
MONROE	6	0	10	0
OKALOOSA	2	0	36	0
ORANGE	18	2	182	29
OSCEOLA	9	0	47	1
PALM BEACH	22	1	172	32
PASCO	6	0	76	0
PINELLAS	13	0	114	1
POLK	19	0	104	0
PUTNAM	3	0	17	0
SARASOTA	11	0	38	0
SEMINOLE	2	0	59	0
ST. JOHNS	1	0	35	1
ST. LUCIE	4	0	37	1
SUMTER	1	0	7	0
VOLUSIA	4	0	69	0
WALTON	1	0	13	0
Total	411	84	2598	41

Table 7: (All Years) Percentage of Schools by School Type that are Racially Segregated (90-100% nonwhite) from 2000-2016 Including the Average Racial Composition of those Schools and Total Enrollment

Year		% Segregated Schools		% Black in these schools		% Hispanic in these schools		Total Students
2000	Charter	27%	*	79%	*	17%	*	5,923
	Traditional	13%		62%		33%		340,654
2001	Charter	25%	*	78%	*	19%	*	8,119
	Traditional	13%		61%		33%		365,154
2002	Charter	25%	*	78%	*	19%	*	10,209
	Traditional	13%		61%		34%		353,701
2003	Charter	26%	*	76%	*	21%	*	14,264
	Traditional	14%		60%		34%		373,171
2004	Charter	25%	*	74%	*	24%	*	16,893
	Traditional	15%		60%		34%		381,426
2005	Charter	22%	*	71%	*	26%	*	16,173
	Traditional	14%		59%		35%		389,627
2006	Charter	23%	*	60%		34%		18,476
	Traditional	16%		57%		36%		398,531
2007	Charter	26%	*	58%		35%		22,492
	Traditional	17%		56%		36%		403,905
2008	Charter	26%	*	53%		41%		24,171
	Traditional	17%		56%		37%		408,226
2009	Charter	28%	*	51%		43%		33,989
	Traditional	18%		55%		38%		410,238
2010	Charter	27%	*	51%		44%		38,841
	Traditional	18%		55%		39%		406,859
2011	Charter	28%	*	47%	*	46%	*	48,628
	Traditional	18%		54%		39%		422,173
2012	Charter	30%	*	45%	*	49%	*	54,273
	Traditional	19%		53%		40%		438,187
2013	Charter	29%	*	44%	*	50%	*	61,534
	Traditional	19%		53%		40%		444,389
2014	Charter	29%	*	43%	*	51%	*	65,770
	Traditional	20%		52%		41%		458,921
2015	Charter	31%	*	41%	*	52%	*	75,903
	Traditional	20%		50%		42%		474,077
2016	Charter	32%	*	39%	*	55%	*	82,178
	Traditional	21%		49%		43%		490,634

Note: p-values are denoted 0.00 -- \* -- 0.05 -- # -- 0.10

Difference of means test compares charter to traditional schools in the same year

Source: National Center for Education Statistics - <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/>



Table 8:

Year	% Economically Disadvantaged			% Economically Segregated Schools		
	Charter	Traditional		Charter	Traditional	
<b>2000</b>	41%	47%	*	6%	6%	
<b>2001</b>	39%	47%	*	5%	6%	
<b>2002</b>	42%	48%	*	4%	6%	
<b>2003</b>	43%	49%	*	4%	7%	#
<b>2004</b>	46%	51%	*	6%	8%	
<b>2005</b>	41%	49%	*	2%	5%	*
<b>2006</b>	41%	49%	*	3%	4%	
<b>2007</b>	40%	50%	*	4%	4%	
<b>2008</b>	44%	53%	*	5%	7%	
<b>2009</b>	45%	56%	*	6%	9%	*
<b>2010</b>	48%	58%	*	5%	11%	*
<b>2011</b>	49%	60%	*	5%	12%	*
<b>2012</b>	50%	61%	*	7%	13%	*
<b>2013</b>	51%	60%	*	9%	13%	*
<b>2014</b>	45%	61%	*	8%	13%	*
<b>2015</b>	46%	61%	*	8%	14%	*
<b>2016</b>	49%	62%	*	10%	13%	*
Note: p-values are denoted 0.00 -- * -- 0.05 -- # -- 0.10 Difference of means test compares charter to traditional schools in the same year Source: National Center for Education Statistics - <a href="http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/">http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/</a>						

Table 9: Community Effects on School Direct Certification 2016

	(1)
	DV: School Ratio on SNA
No Comp. Trad.	0
	(.)
Traditional Near Charter School	1.339
	(1.011)
Charter School	-9.341**
	(1.728)
<i>Zip Code Variables</i>	
Percent Government Assistance	0.123+
	(0.067)
Median Income	-0.501**
	(0.051)
Median Years	-0.216**
	(0.067)
Percent College	-0.481**
	(0.071)
Percent Homeowner	0.086+
	(0.045)
Population (000s)	0.031
	(0.066)
District Fixed Effects	Yes
Constant	106.224**
	(4.922)
Observations	2,656
Adj. R-squared	0.551

Robust Standard Errors in parentheses

\* p &lt; 0.05, \*\* p &lt; 0.01, \*\*\* p &lt; 0.001

SOURCE: 2016 Five-Year American Community Survey.

Table 10: Community Effects By School Level

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools	Combination Schools
	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se
<i>DV: Percent of school receiving SNAP</i>				
No Comp. Trad.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Traditional Near Charter School	-0.207	0.563	2.053	3.683
	(1.180)	(2.445)	(2.884)	(5.100)
Charter School	-14.816**	-7.861	6.223	-5.141
	(3.600)	(5.315)	(3.990)	(4.622)
<i>Zip Code Variables</i>				
Percent Government Assistance	0.123	-0.266+	0.099	0.789*
	(0.076)	(0.142)	(0.146)	(0.335)
Median Income	-0.542**	-0.485**	-0.504**	-0.333
	(0.066)	(0.133)	(0.112)	(0.231)
Median Years	-0.207*	-0.111	-0.399*	-0.504+
	(0.083)	(0.175)	(0.155)	(0.273)
Percent College	-0.576**	-0.581**	-0.227	-0.064
	(0.086)	(0.176)	(0.160)	(0.356)
Percent Homeowner	0.029	0.019	0.206*	0.264
	(0.053)	(0.111)	(0.088)	(0.184)
Population	-0.000	-0.000	0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
District Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	120.509**	109.986**	86.627**	77.577**
	(5.797)	(9.418)	(9.734)	(23.090)
N. of Observations	1584	470	410	192
R squared	0.614	0.563	0.530	0.623

Table 11 School Performance Measures

	(1)	(2)
	Math & Reading % Scoring Satisfactory 2016	2019 School Grade
	b/se	b/se
Charter school	0.995	0.351
	(2.113)	(0.412)
Percent of school Black	-0.413**	-0.026**
	(0.021)	(0.007)
Charter school x Percent of school Black	0.058	0.004
	(0.043)	(0.011)
Percent of school Hispanic/Latino	-0.236**	0.003
	(0.028)	(0.009)
Charter school x Percent of school Hispanic/Latino	0.040	0.003
	(0.030)	(0.006)
Middle schools	-4.348**	0.085
	(0.464)	(0.090)
High schools	-4.483**	-0.253
	(0.928)	(0.236)
Total enrollment (000s)	1.449+	-0.093
	(0.743)	(0.211)
Title I School	-10.691**	-1.864**
	(0.961)	(0.121)
School Urban	-1.701+	-0.268+
	(1.003)	(0.158)
School Suburban	-0.263	0.009
	(0.911)	(0.168)
Constant	80.321**	
	(1.825)	
cut1		
Constant		-8.158**
		(0.491)
cut2		
Constant		-5.278**
		(0.335)
cut3		
Constant		-2.272**
		(0.265)
cut4		
Constant		-0.674**
		(0.258)
N. of cases	3,002	2,824
AIC	.	5901.394 5990.582



Table 12 Most Transparent Traditional Schools

School Name	County	Transparency Score	Link
Bartram Springs Elementary	Duval	9	<a href="https://dcps.duvalschools.org/bartramsprings">https://dcps.duvalschools.org/bartramsprings</a>
Walker Elementary School	Okaloosa	9	<a href="http://www.okaloosaschools.com/walker/main%20page">http://www.okaloosaschools.com/walker/main%20page</a>
Odessa Elementary School	Pasco	8	<a href="https://odes.pasco.k12.fl.us/">https://odes.pasco.k12.fl.us/</a>
Dr. Carlos J. Finlay Elementary	Miami-Dade	8	<a href="https://www.cjfinlay.org/">https://www.cjfinlay.org/</a>
Mandarin Oaks Elementary School	Duval	8	<a href="https://dcps.duvalschools.org/moe">https://dcps.duvalschools.org/moe</a>

Table 13 Least Transparent Traditional Schools

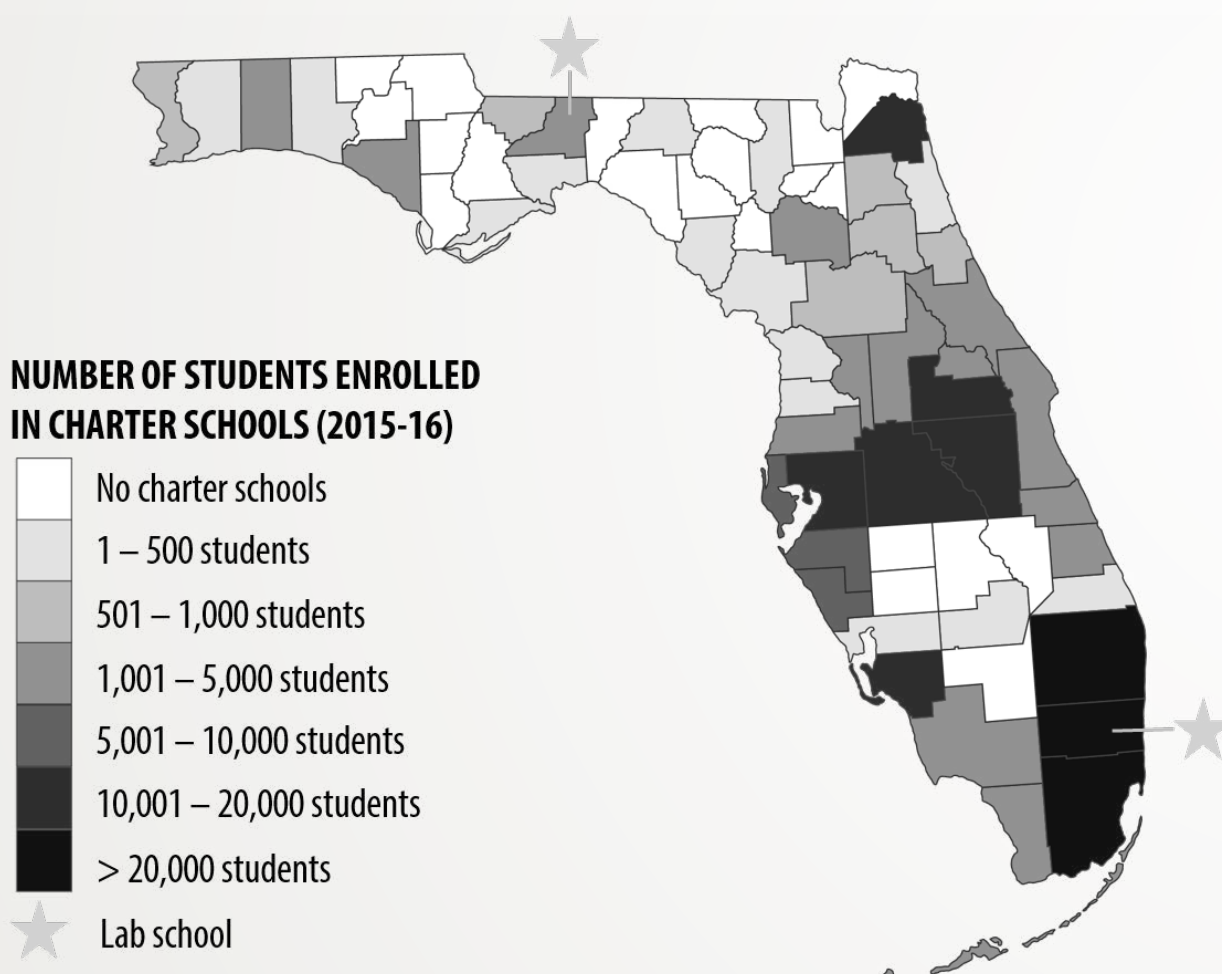
School Name	County	Transparency Score	Link
Plantation Elementary School	Broward	0	<a href="https://www.browardschools.com/plantationelem">https://www.browardschools.com/plantationelem</a>
Palm Springs North Elementary School	Miami-Dade	0	<a href="http://www.dadeschools.net/schools/schoolinformation/school_details.asp?id=4281">http://www.dadeschools.net/schools/schoolinformation/school_details.asp?id=4281</a>
UCP Early Beginnings	Broward	0	<a href="http://www.earlybeginningsacademy.org/">http://www.earlybeginningsacademy.org/</a>
Lloyd Estates Elementary School	Broward	1	<a href="https://www.browardschools.com/lloydestates">https://www.browardschools.com/lloydestates</a>
Lighthouse Elementary School	Palm Beach	1	<a href="https://ltes.palmbeachschools.org/">https://ltes.palmbeachschools.org/</a>

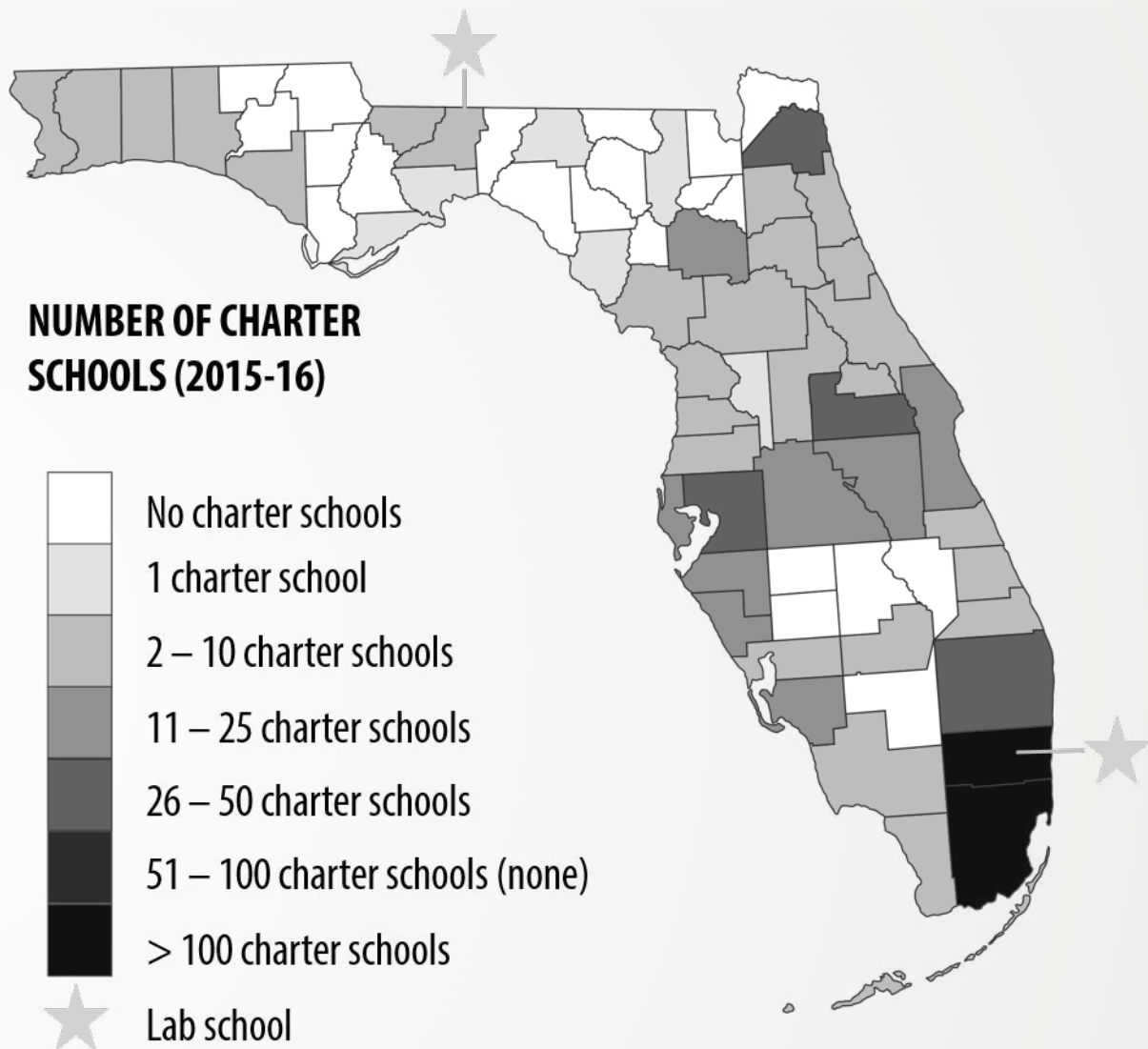
Table 14 Most Transparent Charter Schools

School Name	County	Transparency Score	Link
The Children's Reading Center	Putnam	10	<a href="http://putnamcrccs.ss7.sharpschool.com/">http://putnamcrccs.ss7.sharpschool.com/</a>
McKeel Elementary Academy	Polk	10	<a href="http://www.mckeelcentral.com/">http://www.mckeelcentral.com/</a>
Minneola Elementary Conversion Charter School	Lake	9	<a href="https://moe.lake.k12.fl.us/">https://moe.lake.k12.fl.us/</a>
Marion Charter School	Marion	8	<a href="http://marioncharter.org/">http://marioncharter.org/</a>
Tiger Academy	Duval	8	<a href="https://ymcatigeracademy.org/">https://ymcatigeracademy.org/</a>

Table 15 Least Transparent Charter Schools

School Name	County	Transparency Score	Link
Archimedean Academy	Miami-Dade	0	<a href="https://www.archimedean.org/">https://www.archimedean.org/</a>
Kipp Sunrise Academy	Miami-Dade	0	<a href="https://www.kipp.org/school/kipp-sunrise-academy/">https://www.kipp.org/school/kipp-sunrise-academy/</a>
Palm Harbor Academy	Flagler	0	<a href="http://palmharboracademy.net/">http://palmharboracademy.net/</a>
Legends Academy	Orange	0	<a href="http://legendsacademy.org/">http://legendsacademy.org/</a>
East Tampa Academy	Hillsborough	0	<a href="https://tampalearns.org/">https://tampalearns.org/</a>





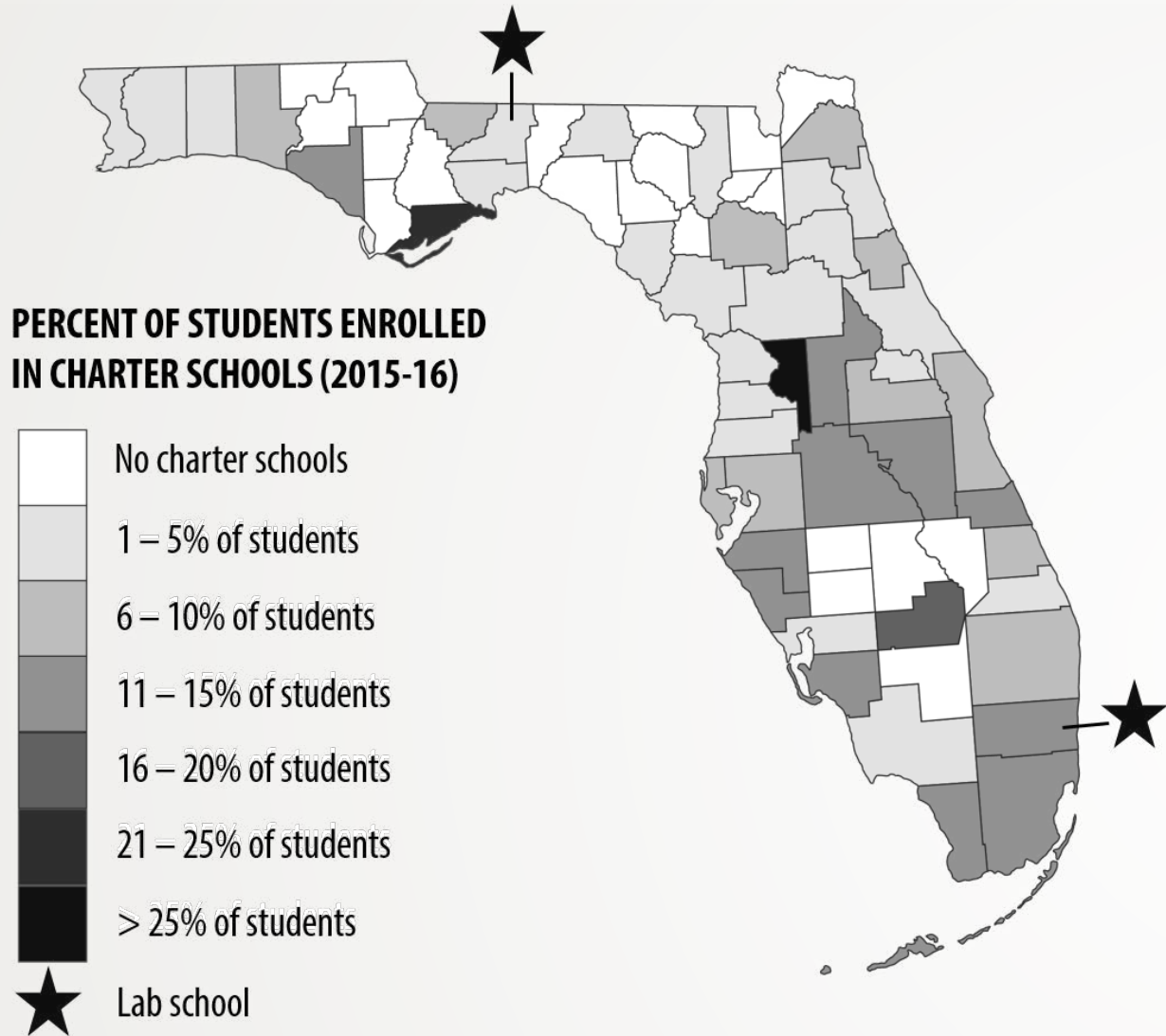




Figure 14A: Probability of a School Receiving an 'A' Grade Across Hispanic Enrollment

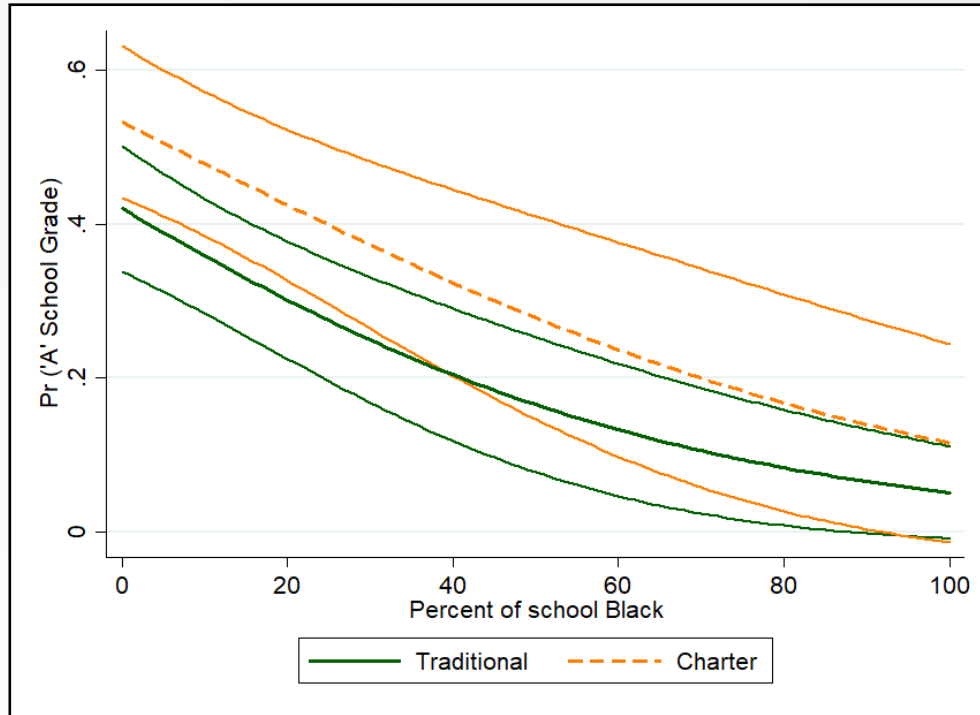


Figure 14b: Probability of a School receiving an 'A' Grade Across Hispanic Enrollment

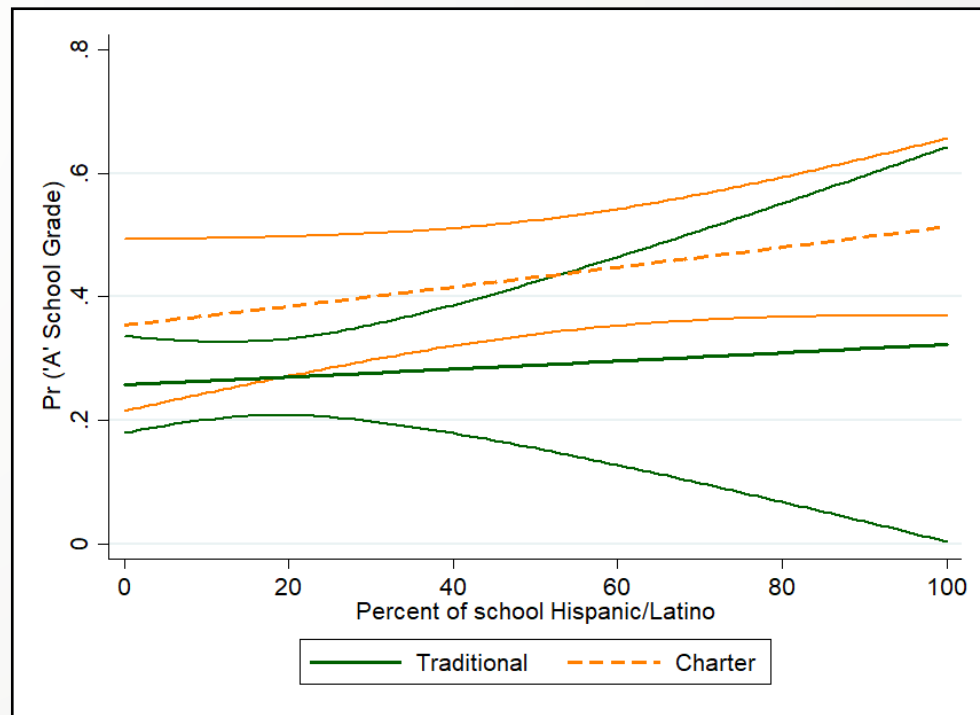


Table 10 Most Transparent Traditional Schools

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Bartram Springs Elementary	Duval	9	<a href="https://dcps.duvalschools.org/bartramsprings">https://dcps.duvalschools.org/bartramsprings</a>
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Odessa Elementary School	Pasco	8	<a href="https://odes.pasco.k12.fl.us/">https://odes.pasco.k12.fl.us/</a>
Dr. Carlos J. Finlay Elementary	Miami-Dade	8	<a href="https://www.cjfinlay.org/">https://www.cjfinlay.org/</a>
Mandarin Oaks Elementary School	Duval	8	<a href="https://dcps.duvalschools.org/moe">https://dcps.duvalschools.org/moe</a>

Table 11 Least Transparent Traditional Schools

School Name	County	Transparency Score	Link
Plantation Elementary School	Broward	0	<a href="https://www.browardschools.com/plantationelem">https://www.browardschools.com/plantationelem</a>
Palm Springs North Elementary School	Miami-Dade	0	<a href="http://www.dadeschools.net/schools/schoolinformation/school_details.asp?id=4281">http://www.dadeschools.net/schools/schoolinformation/school_details.asp?id=4281</a>
UCP Early Beginnings	Broward	0	<a href="http://www.earlybeginningsacademy.org/">http://www.earlybeginningsacademy.org/</a>
Lloyd Estates Elementary School	Broward	1	<a href="https://www.browardschools.com/lloydestates">https://www.browardschools.com/lloydestates</a>
Lighthouse Elementary School	Palm Beach	1	<a href="https://ltes.palmbeachschools.org/">https://ltes.palmbeachschools.org/</a>

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Minneola Elementary Conversion Charter School	Lake	9	<a href="https://moe.lake.k12.fl.us/">https://moe.lake.k12.fl.us/</a>
Marion Charter School	Marion	8	<a href="http://marioncharter.org/">http://marioncharter.org/</a>
Tiger Academy	Duval	8	<a href="https://ymcatigeracademy.org/">https://ymcatigeracademy.org/</a>

Table 13 Least Transparent Charter Schools

School Name	County	Transparency Score	Link
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Kipp Sunrise Academy	Miami-Dade	0	<a href="https://www.kipp.org/school/kipp-sunrise-academy/">https://www.kipp.org/school/kipp-sunrise-academy/</a>
Palm Harbor Academy	Flagler	0	<a href="http://palmharboracademy.net/">http://palmharboracademy.net/</a>
Legends Academy	Orange	0	<a href="http://legendsacademy.org/">http://legendsacademy.org/</a>
East Tampa Academy	Hillsborough	0	<a href="https://tampalearns.org/">https://tampalearns.org/</a>

Total # of applications submitted to Sponsors*					78	75	138	199	236	726	
Applications Approved					34	31	56	50	96	267	
Applications Denied					3	7	25	37	44	116	
Applications Withdrawn					41	37	57	112	96	343	
Appeals Filed With CSAC					3	2	10	9	10**	34	
Appeals Granted (recommendation)						1	0	3	3	4	11
Appeals Denied (recommendation)						0	0	4	4	3	11
Appeals Withdrawn					2	2	3	2	1	10	
SBE							0				
Appeals Granted					1	0	2	3	4	10	
Appeals Denied0					0	1	3	1	5		
Appeals withdrawn					2	2	7	3	3	17	

\*The data do not include appeals filed by high-performing charter schools who submit a high-performing replication application.

\*\*1 appeal was dismissed as untimely, and 1 dismissed due to jurisdiction, and neither were heard by the Charter School Appeal Commission.

It is important to note that the large percentage of charter schools that are denied are withdrawn and the decisions are never appealed.

Source: Florida DOE, 2019

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## » Endnotes

- 1 FL Statute 1002.33 (7)(4)(8) specifies that charters will include the ways by which the school will achieve a racial/ethnic balance reflective of the community it serves or within the racial/ethnic range of other public schools in the same school district.
- 2 Florida's charter school law endorses the role of competition by specifying that charter schools may "provide rigorous competition within the public school district to stimulate continual improvement in all public schools" (FL Statute 1002.33(2)(c)(2)).
- 3 Liberty City Charter schools served a poor, African-American population in Miami. It closed in 2008.
- 4 Florida's DOE's School Choice webpage lists magnet schools and virtual education under their options for choice. Also listed is a category for K-12 Private Schools.
- 5 In 2000 Citizens for Strong Schools filed a lawsuit to protest growing inequities in school funding, citing the McKay Program and the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship program. In January 2019, the Florida Supreme Court rejected the plaintiff's claims.
- 6 The law provides that eligible sales tax contributions from the purchase of a motor vehicle can be targeted to eligible nonprofit scholarship funding organizations to award scholarships to private schools.
- 7 In 2000, some 57% of charter schools were elementary schools, slightly more than the percentage of traditional elementary schools. By 2016, the percentages were very close—around 53%. (Appendix Table 2).
- 8 There is a slight difference in the results in Tables 6 and 7 since the former uses Free and Reduced Lunch and the latter direct certification.
- 9 Strictly speaking, charters cannot be for-profit since they are public schools in Florida and elsewhere. However, these public schools can and are managed by education management organizations or EMOs, which are for-profit businesses that seek to return a profit to the owners or stockholders who invest in them. (EMOs can also operate private schools.)
- 10 One unanswered question might be why EMOs are so prevalent in Florida. One answer might be the lack of state funding for start-up funds or building space for new charters until the recent Schools of Hope legislation. This would be a good area for future research.
- 11 School test scores were collected from the 2016 CRDC dataset. The variable was constructed by averaging -- by school -- the percentage of students who earned a satisfactory (i.e., passing) score on reading and math state-level standardized tests. We evaluated passage rates at three grade levels: third grade, seventh grade, and tenth grade. This is a common measure of performance in Florida and elsewhere (see Borman et al. 2004).
- 12 We use school letter grades as a second measure while understanding that they may not necessarily be a measure of proficiency for a school. As noted later, the results are similar using both measures.
- 13 There are potential problems with using simple performance comparisons. In other words, test scores and school grades are not problem-free measures (Bifulco 2019). Individual student data would be ideal but we do not have access to that.
- 14 The transparency analysis was conducted by Chineo Osakwe and Alexandra Artiles in the FSU Political Science Department.



## » Notes

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This report was written by Dr. Carol S. Weissert, director of the LeRoy Collins Institute, along with Dr. Matthew Uttermark, post-doctoral fellow at FSU's Political Science Department, and Alexandra Artiles and Kenneth Mackie, graduate students in FSU's political science department. Dr. Carolyn Herrington, professor of educational policy at FSU, served as consultant for the project.

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