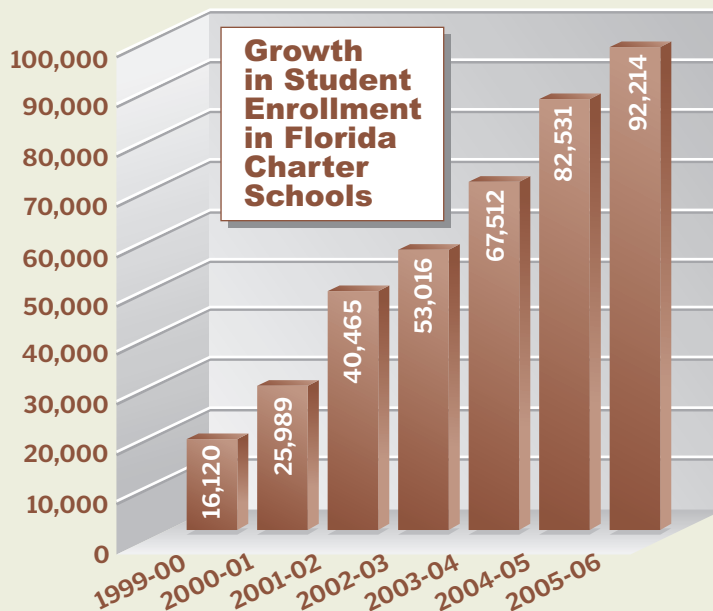




Florida's Public Charter Schools: 2006 Fact Sheet

Florida Public Charter Schools Now Serve 92,214 Students

- 334 charter schools are now operating in Florida
- 53 new charter schools opened in 2005-06
- Charter schools enroll 92,214 students, representing 3.5% of all public school students in the state
- Student enrollment in charter schools increased by 12 percent from 82,531 last year
- 41 of Florida's 67 counties now have charter schools



Florida now has 334 public charter schools, making it the third largest charter school state in the nation. With an enrollment of more than 92,000 students, Florida's charter schools have become an integral part of the state's public education system.

Parents choose charter schools over other public and private schools because they offer more opportunities for academic success.

The best national research has shown that competition from public charter schools is a highly effective way to promote greater student achievement at all public schools.¹ This is evident in Florida, where growing charter school competition has accompanied a rising tide of reading achievement for all public school students statewide.

What is a Public Charter School?

- Charter schools are PUBLIC schools that are operated by individuals or groups under contracts (charters) with public sponsors
- Charter schools are available for parents and students to choose as a public education option; no one is assigned to a charter school.
- Charter schools serve students in the public school system and receive public education funds on a per-student basis
- Charter schools are required to participate in federal and state accountability programs, such as the FCAT and No Child Left Behind
- Charter schools are held strictly accountable for academic, as well as financial, performance



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¹ Caroline M. Hoxby, *School Choice and School Productivity (or Could School Choice be a Tide that Lifts All Boats?)*, National Bureau of Economic Research, April 2002.

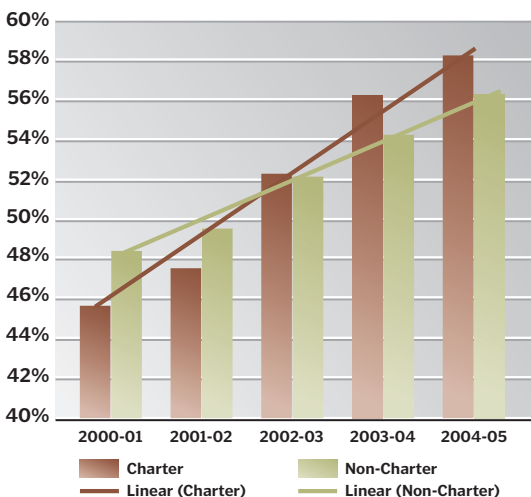
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Florida's Public Charter Schools Lead the Way to Improve Student Reading

Florida public charter schools are achieving greater success in improving their students' reading skills than non-charter schools. The percentage of charter school students who tested proficient in the FCAT reading (at Level 3 and above) has grown at a faster pace than that of non-charter public school students.

In the last two years, the percentage of Florida charter public school students who tested proficient in reading rose from 55% to 58%. The percentage among non-charter school public students rose from 54% to only 56% (see chart below).²

Statewide FCAT Reading Proficiency Charter vs Non-Charter Students



Students Do As Well or Better in Florida Public Charter Schools

New studies conducted by the Office of Program Policy Analysis & Government Accountability (OPPAGA) and the Florida Department of Education indicate that students in Florida charter schools make similar or greater academic gains than students in regular public schools – even though students who transfer to charter schools are more likely to be struggling students.

Students in charter high schools achieved an *additional year's gain* in learning in reading and math compared with students in traditional public schools.³

Parents "Vote with Their Feet" When They Go to Charter Schools

Parents choose to send their children to public charter schools because they offer more opportunities for academic success. As with all school choice options, parents drive



the success of a charter school. A charter school has little chance of surviving if it does not attract parents to enroll their children. If a charter school does not provide a satisfactory education, parents can take their children elsewhere.

Judging by the growing enrollment in charter schools across the state, more and more parents believe that charter schools offer their children something unique that they cannot find in a traditional public school. In a 2003 survey of more than 6,000 charter school parents in Florida, nearly 70% gave their children's school an "A" or "A+."^{*}

* How Florida Parents Grade Their Charter Schools: Views from the Grassroots, Lewis Solmon and Judith Wiederhorn, Human Resources Policy Corporation; Judith Rippner, Charter School Accountability Center, Florida State University; Fall, 2003.

Charter Schools Reach Students with Innovative Programs

Many of Florida's successful public charter schools offer a unique curriculum, grade level structure or innovative environment that is unavailable in the traditional public school system. Some of Florida's innovative charter schools include:

- A middle and high school for severely disabled students that is breaking high school graduation records for disabled students
- A K-8 school built in the woods with an outdoor environmental education curriculum
- Florida's first "High Performance School" that utilizes less than 25 percent of the power requirements of conventional Florida schools through an innovative facility design
- A military high school with advanced courses in science and the military arts for high-achieving boys and girls
- A high school located on a community college campus with a dual-enrollment emphasis
- A high school that offers remedial classes and daycare for at-risk teen mothers and their babies
- A K-12 school for the children of employees of a large retirement community

² FCAT Reading Data for 2001-2005, Florida K-20 Data Warehouse.

³ *Charter School Performance Comparable to Other Public Schools; Stronger Accountability Needed*, Office of Program Policy Analysis & Government Accountability, The Florida Legislature, Report No. 05-21, April 2005; and *Student Achievement in Florida's Charter Schools: A Comparison with Traditional Public Schools*, Florida Department of Education, June 2005.