Urban School Performance Report:

An Analysis of Ohio Big Eight Charter and District School Performance with a Special Analysis of E-Schools, 2008-09



Public Impact

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With the release of Ohio's state test score data each August, one of the recurring questions is how well do the state's large sector of charter schools perform relative to their counterparts in traditional districts serving children of similar demographics? The Thomas B. Fordham Institute commissioned Public Impact to conduct a brief analysis of the 2008-09 data in this report.

Using public data from the Ohio Department of Education's website, the analysts compared the performance of urban charter schools with that of non-charter public schools in the state's eight major urban districts, the Ohio 8 (Akron, Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo, and Youngstown), where most charter school students go to school. Separately, we compare the performance of charter e-schools (also called virtual schools) with that of non-charter public schools statewide.

Among the key findings:

- Last year, over a third of district and charter schools had low performance and below expected growth. This year only 12 percent of district schools and 15 percent of charter schools had low performance and below expected growth.
- Among schools that had low performance and below expected growth last year, charters improved more.
 Eighteen percent of these charters raised their Performance Index and value-added score, compared with only 11 percent of district schools.
- Still, performance in both charter and district schools remained low. Only 58 percent of students in district schools, and 58 percent of students in charter schools were proficient in reading. In math, 52 and 49 percent of students were proficient in district and charters, respectively.
- Only 19 percent of district schools and 16 percent of charter schools in the Ohio 8 were rated Excellent or Effective.
- District schools greatly improved their performance on value-added measures of growth, catching up to or exceeding charter schools in some districts. Overall, more charter schools made expected to above expected growth in reading (72 percent vs. 71 percent), but fewer did so in math (85 percent vs. 81 percent).
- Despite poor performance on state achievement tests, the state's largest e-schools fared well on valueadded measures of growth. Seventy five percent of the state's largest e-schools met or exceeded expected growth in reading, and 100 percent met or exceeded expected growth in math.

INTRODUCTION

This report compares the 2008-09 performance of Ohio's charter schools with that of comparable district schools around the state in four sections:

- Overall achievement and progress
- Performance trends over time
- Ratings on state accountability systems
- Performance and growth across districts and statewide

For 2008-09, we track the achievement of two types of charter schools in the Buckeye State. First are "e-schools" or "virtual schools," meaning they provide instruction to students primarily online. These schools serve students from districts across the state. The other type of charters are "brick and mortar" schools located primarily in Ohio's eight major urban districts (the Ohio 8); Akron, Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo, and Youngstown. By law, these schools draw their students almost entirely from the large, urban school districts in which they are physically located.

To provide a fair comparison, this report compares e-school performance to that of public schools statewide, and urban charter school performance to that of the urban school districts in which these schools are located. This approach provides us with an "apples-to-apples" comparison of student achievement based on comparable student pools from which the charter schools can draw.

OVERALL ACHIEVEMENT AND PROGRESS

URBAN ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Ohio's reporting system makes it possible to examine elementary and middle school performance on two dimensions: achievement and progress. Ideally, schools will have high proportions of their students achieving at grade level *and* their students will be making measurable progress or growth in test scores over the course of the school year.

Ohio summarizes school achievement using a "Performance Index." This score averages a school's student achievement in all tested subjects in grades 3-8, with the most weight given to students who exceed state standards. The Performance Index runs on a scale from 0 to 120, with a goal of 100.

For the second year in a row, Ohio also rated each school's "value added": a measure of how much progress students made in both reading and math over the course of one year, compared to how much the state would expect them to gain. Using this information, Ohio determines if each school made Above Expected Growth, Expected Growth or Below Expected Growth. Value-added scores are only available for elementary and middle school grades in Ohio.¹

Chart 1 compares the performance of Ohio's urban charter schools on both of these dimensions with that of district schools in the eight major urban school districts. The upper-right section of the matrix is the ideal: high achievement *and* high growth. Each square represents an urban charter or district elementary or middle school (high schools do not receive a value-added score in Ohio). The vertical placement of each square represents a

¹ For more information on Ohio's value-added system see Fordham's "Ohio Value-Added Primer: A User's Guide" available online: http://www.edexcellence.net/doc/Ohio_Value_Added_Primer_FINAL_small.pdf

school's achievement; the higher a square, the higher the achievement. The horizontal location of each square represents a school's value-added category only (that is, a square on the left side of a box does not necessarily have lower value-added than one on the right; they are both in the same value added category). For this report, the bottom performance tier includes schools with Performance Indexes below 80, the middle tier includes schools with Performance Indexes between 80 and 99.9, and the upper tier includes schools with Pls of 100 or more. Blue squares represent Ohio's urban charter schools and red squares represent Ohio 8 district schools. For an analysis of how these results varied by district, see Appendix 1.

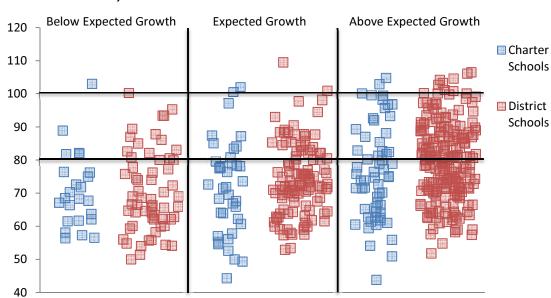


CHART 1: URBAN CHARTER SCHOOLS VS. OHIO 8 DISTRICT SCHOOLS, PERFORMANCE INDEX AND GROWTH IN READING AND MATH, 2008-09

Chart 1 makes clear that far too many urban schools, both charter and non-charter, failed to reach the highest levels of performance in 2008. Only three charters (2 percent) and eleven district schools (3 percent) had high growth *and* high achievement. In 2008, 15 percent of charters and 12 percent of district schools fell into the bottom-left cell; that is, they had low growth *and* low achievement. This represents a substantial improvement from last year, however, when 37 percent of charters and 37 percent of district schools fell into the lowest-performing cell.

In general, performance was similar in charter and district schools. Both types of schools performed better on measures of growth than on measures of achievement. Forty-nine percent of charter schools and 54 percent of district schools exhibited above expected growth in 2008.

Only 5 percent of charter schools and 4 percent of district schools fell into the highest tier of the Performance Index, whereas 71 percent of charter schools and 61 percent of district schools fell into the lowest tier of the Performance Index. Among schools in the lowest Performance Index tier, 31 percent of charters and 27 percent of district schools also exhibited above expected growth.

Table 1 belowshows the names and locations of the highest performing charter and district schools in Ohio's eight major urban districts. In 2008, these schools had both high growth *and* high achievement.

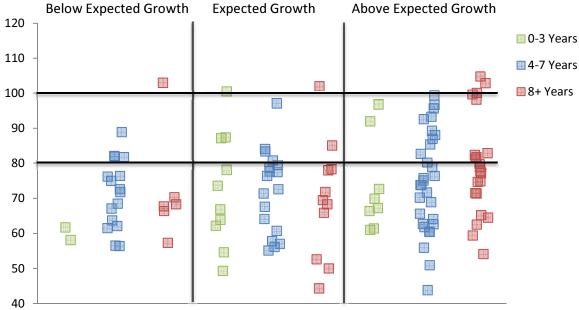
TABLE 1: HIGH-PERFORMING SCHOOLS IN OHIO 8 URBAN DISTRICTS, 2008-09

Schools with High Growth and Achievement		Key
Akron	Columbus	Charter Schoo
King Elem	Alpine Elem.	District Schoo
Miller-South Visual Perf. Arts	Clinton Elem.	<u> </u>
	Colerain Elem.	
	Indian Springs Elem.	
	Indianola Informal Alt. Sch.	
	Winterset Elem.	
Canton	Dayton	
None	None	
Cincinnati	Toledo	
TCP World Academy Kilgour Elem.	Harvard Elem	
Cleveland	Youngstown	
The Intergenerational School Citizen's Academy Whitney Young School	None	

A persistent question in Ohio and elsewhere is what happens to student performance in charter schools as the schools mature. Chart 2 illustrates how the performance and growth of Ohio's urban charter schools vary by the age of each school.

Among the youngest charter schools, those in operation for zero to three years, most were clustered in the bottom portion of the matrix. Sixty five percent of the youngest charter schools met or exceed expected growth and had a Performance Index score below 80. Middle-aged schools, those in operation from four to seven years, had the greatest percentage schools in the bottom-left cell, low achievement and low growth. Nineteen percent of middle aged schools were in the lower-left cell compared with 13 percent of the oldest schools and 10 percent of the youngest schools. All of the schools located in the top-right cell (schools with high achievement *and* high performance) had been open for eight years or longer. Among the oldest charter schools, 13 percent were in the highest tier of the Performance Index and 69 percent were in the lowest. The percentage of schools achieving above expected growth was greatest among older schools as well. Fifty-six percent of the oldest charter schools achieved above expected growth, while only 47 percent of middle-aged schools and 40 percent of the youngest schools achieved above expected growth.





In our 2006-07 report, we noted that over a third of urban charter and district schools were located in the bottom-left section of the matrix; that is, they had below expected growth and low performance. One important question to ask is what happens to these low-performing schools over time? As we noted above, between 2007-08 and 2008-09 the percent of schools located in the bottom-left section of the matrix dropped for both charters and district schools. Chart 3 examines where these low-performers were located in 2007-08. It examines only charter and district schools that had below expected growth and low performance in 2006-07.

Between 2007-08 and 2008-09, 82 percent of charter schools and 83 percent of district schools that had been in the bottom-left cell improved enough to leave this section of the matrix. In general, schools left the bottom-left cell by showing more growth. Only 18% of charter schools and 11% of district schools moved out of the bottom tier of the Performance Index. No schools were able to move into the highest tier of the Performance Index.

Compared with the lowest performing district schools, the lowest performing charters showed both more growth and greater achievement than their district counterparts. Sixteen percent of charters that had been among the worst performing last year had a Performance Index in the middle tier and showed above expected growth. Among the same group of district schools, only 10 percent had a Performance Index in the middle tier and above expected growth.

² These data represent only those schools in the lower-left section of the matrix in 2007-08 that remained open and earned a performance index and growth score in 2008-09. It is presumed that the seven charters and two district schools that fell into this category last year, but for which there was no data in 2008-09, closed. The charter and district schools that occupy the lower-left corner of the matrix this year (2008-09) include the few from last year that did not improve as well as new schools or schools that experienced lower performance or growth than last year.

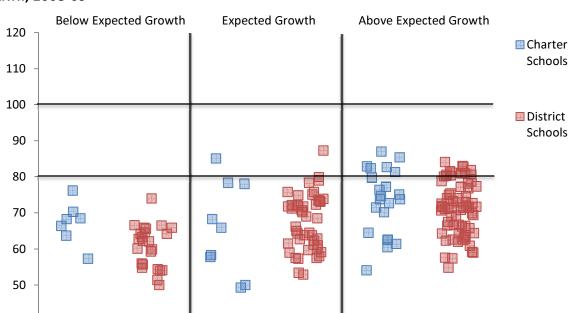


CHART 3: PREVIOUS LOW-PERFORMER'S CURRENT PERFORMANCE INDEX AND GROWTH IN READING AND MATH, 2008-09

ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE CHARTER E-SCHOOLS VS. SCHOOLS STATEWIDE

Chart 4 shows a comparison of the state's charter e-schools and non-charter public schools statewide on achievement and progress. This chart only displays information about the state's 14 e-schools serving middle and elementary students. High schools in Ohio do not receive a value-added classification. Including high schools, Ohio has 33 charter e-schools serving 27,268 students (a full 32% of the state's charter population). In Chart 4, each square represents an individual school, either one of the state's eight large charter e-schools (those with enrollment of 500 or more), one of the state's small e-schools (with enrollment lower than 500), or a traditional district school statewide.

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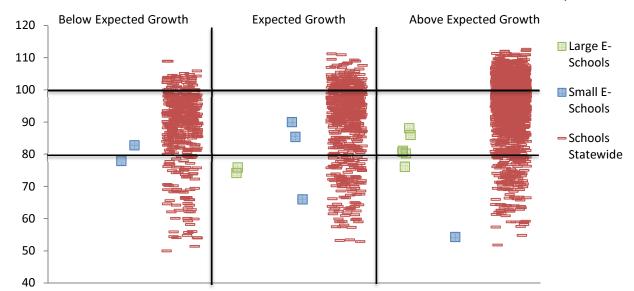


CHART 4: E-SCHOOL VS. STATEWIDE PERFORMANCE INDEX AND GROWTH IN READING AND MATH, 2008-09

Chart 4 shows that three of the six small e-schools for which there is value-added data performed in the lower Performance Index tier (below 80). Of those low-performing schools, one made expected growth and a second exceeded expected growth. Three small charter e-schools performed in the middle tier, with two making expected growth. Among the eight large e-schools, six made above-expected growth; five of those six also performed in the middle performance tier. No charter e-schools performed in the top tier compared to 22 percent of non-charter public schools statewide.

URBAN CHARTER SCHOOL VS. OHIO DISTRICT SCHOOL PERFORMANCE OVER TIME

To understand the trajectory of student achievement in Ohio's charter schools, it is important to look at long-term trends. Charts 5 and 6 examine how the performance of students in Ohio 8 charter schools and districts has changed over time. This comparison uses weighted averages that take into account the percentage of charter students in each grade and city when comparing their performance to that of district schools. For example, if 30 percent of the charter students in Dayton were in 3rd grade, 3rd graders in Dayton City School District would be counted as 30 percent of the district average as well. For a more detailed explanation, see Appendix 2.

In 2001-02, urban charter school performance lagged behind that of the surrounding districts substantially. Between 2001-02 and 2005-06, charter school performance in both reading and math rose to the point where it was very similar to that of the urban systems where the charter schools reside. Since then, performance has remained similar in the two groups of schools. Less than one percentage point now separates the reading proficiency rates of urban charter schools (57.4%) from that of their district counterparts (57.8%). In math, urban district schools outperform urban charters by slightly more than three percentage points. In 2008-09, 49.0 percent of charter school students were proficient in math, compared to 52.2 percent of students in district schools.

Analyzing only statewide performance in reading and math does little to reflect the variation that exists among charters and district schools within the same city. Later in this report, charts 11 - 15 provide city-level performance for further comparison within cities in reading, math, science, writing, and social studies.

CHART 5: URBAN CHARTER SCHOOL VS. OHIO 8 DISTRICT SCHOOL PERFORMANCE OVER TIME IN READING

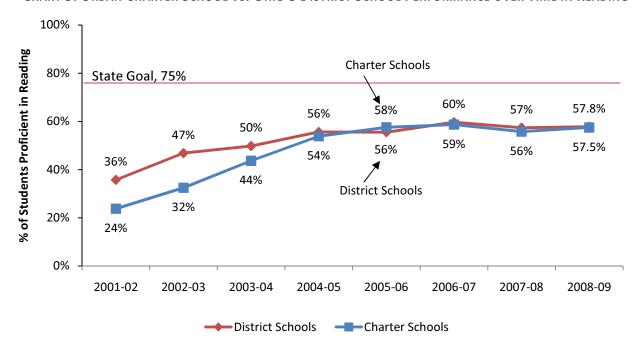
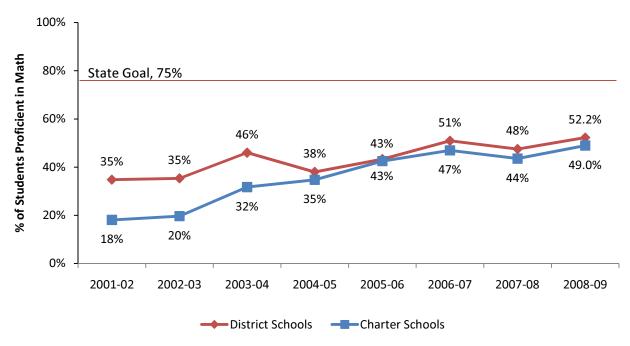


CHART 6: URBAN CHARTER SCHOOL VS. OHIO 8 DISTRICT SCHOOL PERFORMANCE OVER TIME IN MATH



URBAN CHARTER SCHOOLS VS. OHIO 8 DISTRICT SCHOOLS, PERFORMANCE IN FEDERAL AND STATE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

Another way to compare performance is to examine how schools fared in state accountability systems. Ohio's accountability system places schools into one of six categories based on a range of performance measures. From

highest to lowest, those performance categories are: Excellent with Distinction, Excellent, Effective, Continuous Improvement, Academic Watch, and Academic Emergency. Charts 7 and 8 show the percentages of Ohio 8 charter and district schools, respectively, that fell into different state categories in 2008-09. Eighteen percent of Ohio 8 district schools were rated Excellent or Effective, compared with 16 percent of urban charter schools. Among district schools, 1 percent—or four schools—received the highest designation, Excellent with Distinction. No charter schools received this designation in 2008-09. Half of Ohio 8 district schools were in the Academic Emergency or Academic Watch categories. Among charters, 54 percent of schools were in these troubled categories. For charter schools, the percentage of schools in these troubled categories fell by ten percentage points between 2007-08 and this year. Among district schools, rates remained largely unchanged.

CHART 7: PERCENT OF OHIO 8 CHARTER SCHOOLS BY PERFORMANCE DESIGNATION, 2008-09

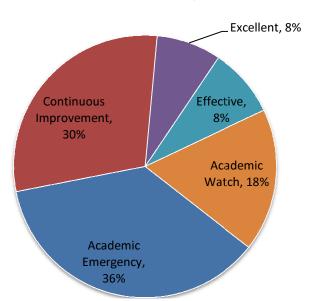
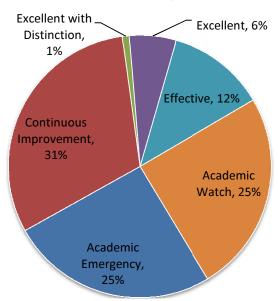


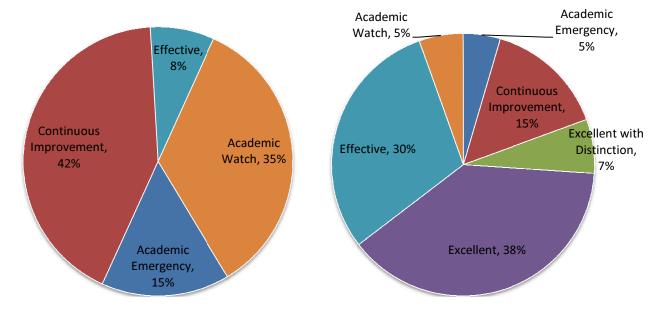
CHART 8: PERCENT OF OHIO 8 DISTRICT SCHOOLS BY PERFORMANCE DESIGNATION, 2008-09



Charts 9 and 10 show the percentage of e-schools and non-charter schools statewide in each performance designation. Among e-schools, only eight percent were rated Effective, with no e-schools in the Excellent or Excellent with Distinction category. Statewide, about one in four schools received one of these top ratings, with seven percent of schools receiving the highest rating, Excellent with Distinction. Half of the e-schools were in Academic Watch or Academic emergency, compared to ten percent of non-charter schools statewide.

CHART 9: PERCENT OF E-SCHOOLS BY PERFORMANCE DESIGNATION, 2008-09

CHART 10: PERCENT OF STATE SCHOOLS BY PERFORMANCE DESIGNATION, 2008-09



SUBJECT-BY-SUBJECT CHARTER SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH

In the following sections we compare the performance of charter schools on statewide tests in reading, math, science, writing and social studies. The first section compares performance of Ohio 8 urban charter schools to that of urban districts. The second section compares performance of e-schools to that of non-charter public schools statewide.

URBAN CHARTER SCHOOLS VS. OHIO 8 DISTRICT SCHOOLS

Charts 11 - 15 compare the average performance of charter schools located in the Ohio 8 cities to the average performance of their district counterparts on state tests in reading, math, science, writing and social studies. Like the change over time data in Charts 5 and 6, these comparisons use weighted averages that take into account the percentage of charter students in each grade and district.

In the eight cities as a group, districts outperformed charters in every subject. In reading, math, and writing, districts outperformed charters by three or fewer percentage points. In science and social studies, the districts outperformed charters by six percentage points. For both charters and districts, students performed best in writing, with 67 and 70 percent performing proficiently, respectively. Charters and districts were both weakest in social studies, with 32 and 38 percent of students performing proficiently, respectively. In science, 36 percent of charter school students performed proficiently, compared to 42 percent of their district counterparts.

In two cities, Cleveland and Dayton, charter students outperformed district students in three and four of the five tested subjects, respectively. The performance bar in these cities, however, is not as high as it is in others throughout Ohio. Cleveland and Dayton school districts are two of the three lowest performing districts among the Ohio 8.

CHART 11: URBAN CHARTER SCHOOL PERFORMANCE VS. OHIO 8 DISTRICT PERFORMANCE IN READING, 2008-09

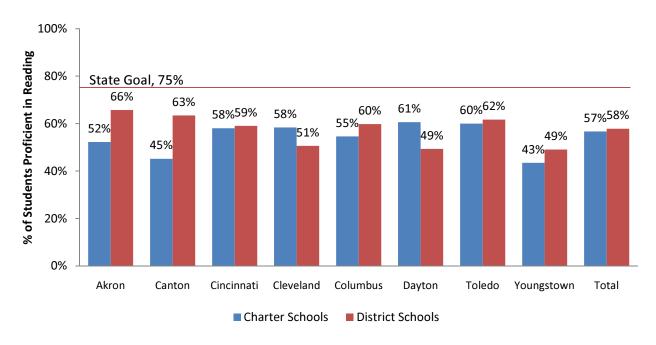


CHART 12: URBAN CHARTER SCHOOL PERFORMANCE VS. OHIO 8 DISTRICT PERFORMANCE IN MATH, 2008-09

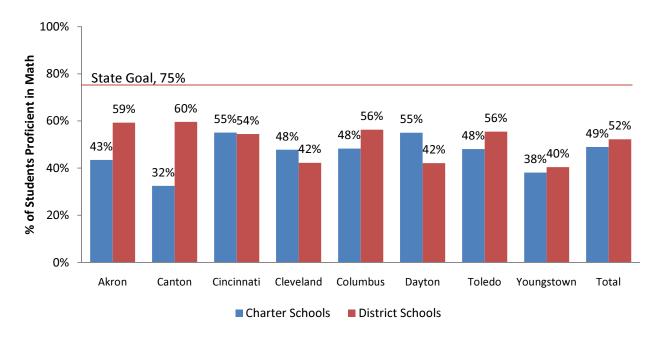


CHART 13: URBAN CHARTER SCHOOL PERFORMANCE VS. OHIO 8 DISTRICT PERFORMANCE IN SCIENCE, 2008-09

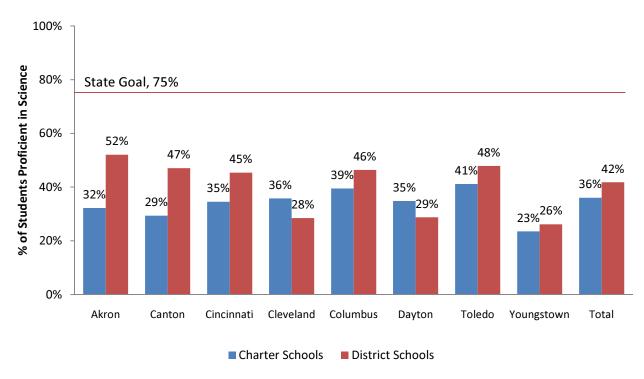
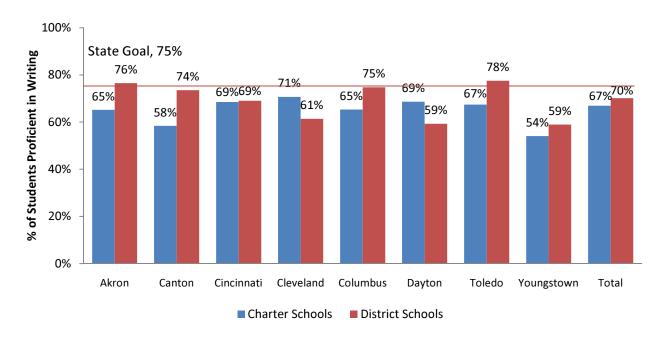
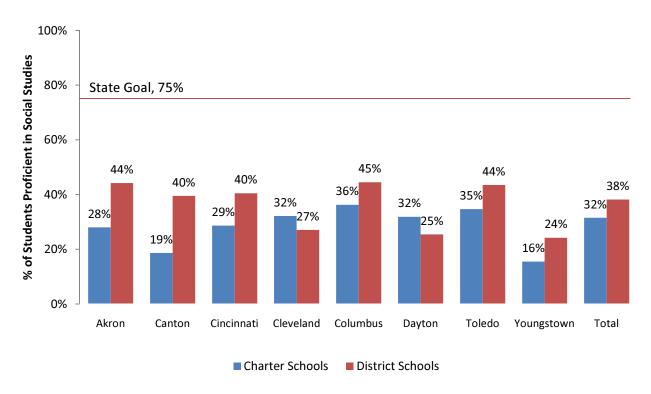


CHART 14: URBAN CHARTER SCHOOL PERFORMANCE VS. OHIO 8 DISTRICT PERFORMANCE IN WRITING, 2008-09







While achievement scores measure student proficiency, value-added scores measure how much students have grown over the course of the year. Ohio uses the value-added system to determine whether students have made above expected growth, expected growth, or below expected growth in reading and math. Charts 16 & 17 compare the percentage of charter schools making expected to above expected growth, to the percentage of district schools making expected to above expected progress in reading and math.

In reading, charter schools in Akron, Cincinnati, Dayton and Youngstown were more likely to make expected to above expected growth in reading with charters "outgrowing" districts schools in those cities by margins of 9 to 13 percentage points. In the other cities, the districts outgrew charters, but by generally more modest margins of 2 to 15 percentage points. These 2008-09 results are in stark contrast to last year, when charter schools in all eight cities were more likely to meet or exceed growth averages compared to district schools, with margins as wide as 37 percentage points. Across cities, charter schools slightly outgrew district schools with 72 versus 71 percent meeting or exceeding growth expectations in reading, respectively.

In math, the results were similarly mixed. In Akron, Cincinnati, Columbus, and Youngstown, charter schools met or exceeded growth expectations more often than district schools, by margins of one to 33 percent. In the other cities—Canton, Cleveland, Dayton and Toledo—the districts met or exceeded growth targets more often than

charters, and by larger margins.³ Across the cities, 81 percent of charter schools versus 85 percent of district schools met or exceeded expected growth measures in math.

CHART 16: URBAN CHARTER SCHOOL GROWTH VS. OHIO 8 DISTRICT GROWTH IN READING, 2008-09

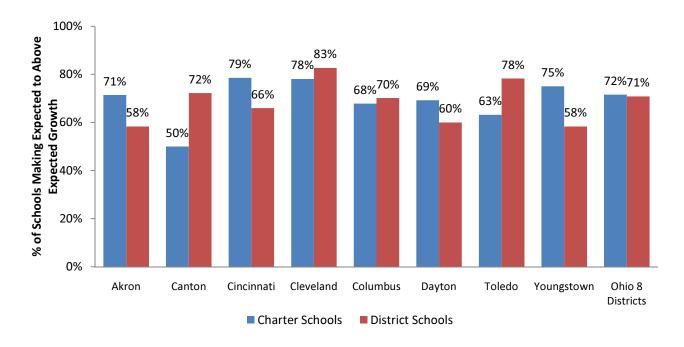
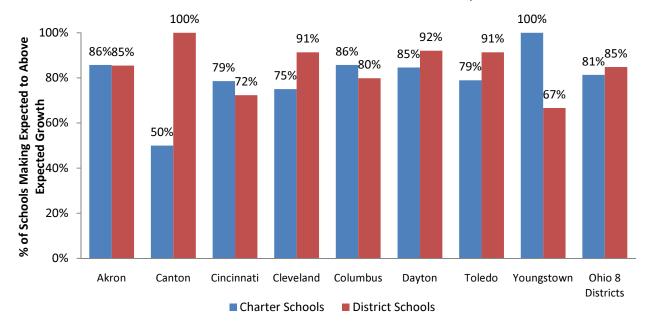


CHART 17: CHARTER SCHOOL GROWTH VS. OHIO 8 DISTRICT GROWTH IN MATH, 2008-09



³ Canton only had 2 charter schools that received value-added growth scores in 2008-09 compared to 18 district schools that did so.

E-Schools vs. Non-Charter Public Schools Statewide

Chart 18 compares the performance of students in charter e-schools to the performance of students statewide. Unlike "brick and mortar" charter schools, e-schools cannot be compared to the districts where they are located because they can enroll students throughout the state. Among the 33 charter e-schools currently operating in Ohio, only 8 serve more than 500 students. These are represented in Chart 18 by the green bars.

In 2008-09, non-charter schools statewide outperformed e-schools in all tested subjects. For both non-charter schools and e-schools, student performance was highest in reading and writing. Performance was weakest in social studies. The state's largest e-schools outperformed small e-schools in all subjects by margins ranging from 18 percentage points in reading to 8 percentage points in math. This represents an improvement for large e-schools. Last year, small e-schools outperformed large e-schools in both reading and math.

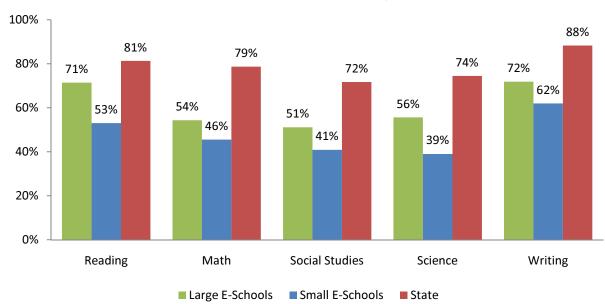
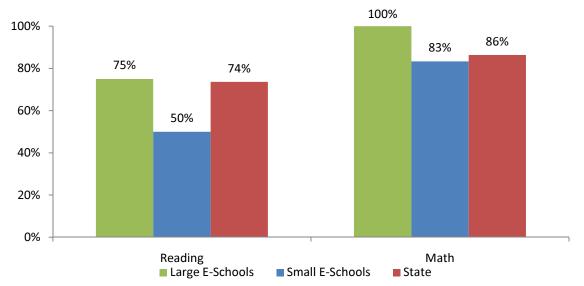


CHART 18: E-SCHOOL PERFORMANCE VS. STATEWIDE PERFORMANCE, 2008-09

Chart 19 shows the percentage of small e-schools, large e-schools and state schools that made expected to above expected value-added gains. In 2008-09, the state's largest e-schools showed more growth than both non-charter schools statewide and small e-schools. In math, all eight large e-schools met or exceeded expected growth. The state's six small e-schools that received a value-added rating did not compare as favorably. In both reading and math, fewer small e-schools met or exceeded expected growth than non-charters statewide.





APPENDIX 1: DISTRICT-BY-DISTRICT PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH

In the following section, we examine how urban charter schools and Ohio 8 district schools performed within the same city on two dimensions: performance and growth. The upper-right section of the chart is the ideal: high achievement *and* high growth. Each square represents an urban charter or district elementary or middle school in the city (high schools do not receive a value-added score in Ohio). Blue squares represent charter schools and red squares represent district schools.

CHART A1: PERFORMANCE INDEX AND GROWTH IN READING AND MATH IN AKRON, 2008-09

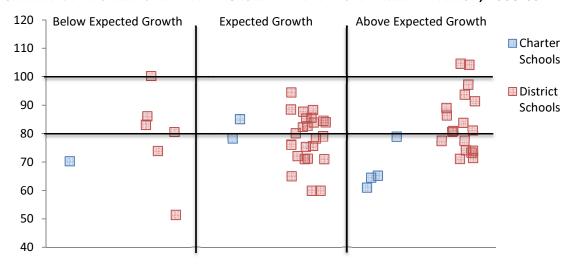


CHART A2: PERFORMANCE INDEX AND GROWTH IN READING AND MATH IN CANTON, 2008-09

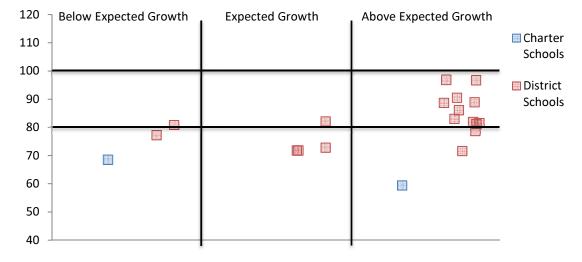


CHART A3: PERFORMANCE INDEX AND GROWTH IN READING AND MATH IN CINCINNATI, 2008-09

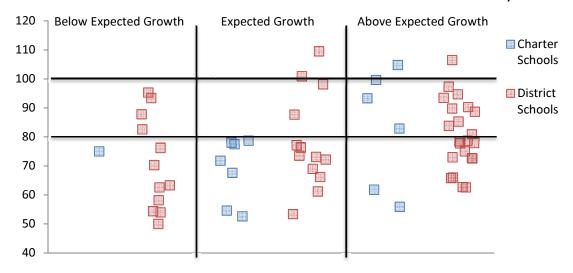


CHART A4: PERFORMANCE INDEX AND GROWTH IN READING AND MATH IN CLEVELAND, 2008-09

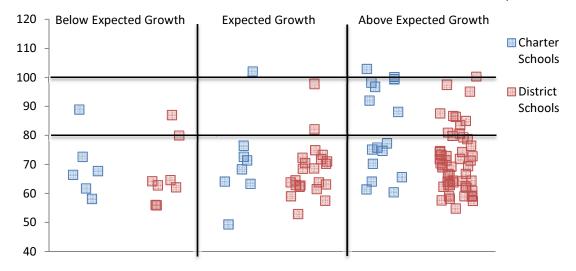


CHART A5: PERFORMANCE INDEX AND GROWTH IN READING AND MATH IN COLUMBUS, 2008-09

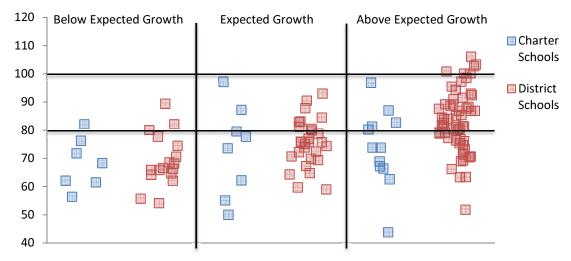


CHART A6: PERFORMANCE INDEX AND GROWTH IN READING AND MATH IN DAYTON, 2008-09

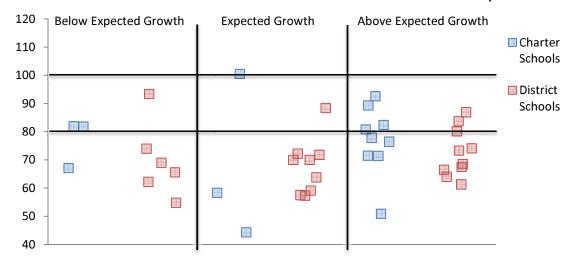


CHART A7: PERFORMANCE INDEX AND GROWTH IN READING AND MATH IN TOLEDO, 2008-09

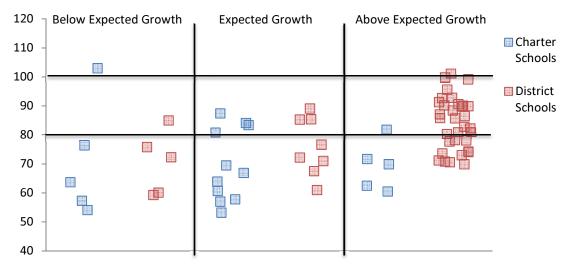
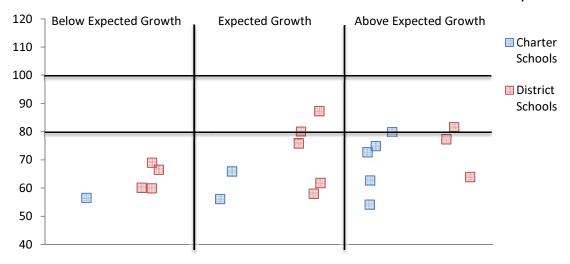


CHART A8: PERFORMANCE INDEX AND GROWTH IN READING AND MATH IN YOUNGSTOWN, 2008-09



APPENDIX 2: METHODOLOGY

CHART 1 – 4: PERFORMANCE INDEX AND GROWTH IN READING AND MATH, 2008-09

Charts 1 – 4 display how schools were distributed based on their Performance Index scores and value-added classifications. Schools located in the top-right section have Performance Index scores above 99.9, and a value-added classification of *Above Expected Growth*. Schools in the middle-center section have Performance Index scores between 80 and 99.9 and a value-added classification of *Expected Growth* and schools in the bottom-left section have Performance Index scores below 80 and a value-added classification of *Below Expected Growth*.

The vertical location of each square is determined by the Performance Index score of each school. The horizontal location of each square in square is determined by each school's value-added category. For instance, if a school received a value-added designation of *Above Expected Growth* it would be located in the right column. To help differentiate among squares, random variance was introduced into horizontal coordinates to create space between squares. While the placement of squares into columns is relevant, the horizontal location of squares within sections is irrelevant. That is, a square on the left side of a box does not necessarily have a lower value added than one on the right; they are both in the same value-added category.

The segmentation of Performance Index scores into three categories is based on Ohio's school and district ratings system. Under Ohio's school and district ratings system, schools or districts with a Performance Index score above 99.9 are able to receive a designation of *Excellent*. Schools or districts with a Performance Index score between 80 and 99.9 can receive a rating of *Effective* or *Continuous Improvement*, and schools or districts with Performance Index scores below 80 can receive a rating of *Academic Watch* or *Academic Emergency*.

CHARTS 5 & 6: URBAN CHARTER SCHOOL PERFORMANCE OVER TIME IN READING AND MATH

Charts 5 and 6 use weighted averages to compare the performance of urban charter schools to the performance of their surrounding district schools. For example, if in 2008-09 30% of charter students in were in 3rd grade, then 3rd graders in district schools would be counted as 30% of the district average. Similarly, if 30% of charter students were in Akron, then Akron city district students would be counted as 30% of the district average as well.

Charts 11 – 15 & 18: Charter School Performance vs. Non-Charter Performance, 2008-09

These charts compare the performance of charter schools to the performance of their comparable non-charter district schools. Each analysis uses weighted averages that take into account the percent of charter students in each grade and city when comparing their performance to that of district schools. For example, if 30 percent of the charter students in Dayton were in 3rd grade, 3rd graders in Dayton City School District would be counted as 30 percent of the district average as well.

Charts 16 – 17 & 19: Charter School Growth vs. Non-Charter Growth, 2008-09

Ohio measures growth using a value-added assessment: a measure of how much progress students made in reading and math over the course of one year compared to how much the state would expect them to gain. It is possible for schools to be classified as making *Above Expected Growth*, *Expected Growth*, or *Below Expected Growth*. Charts 16, 17 and 19 show the percentage of charter schools and comparable district schools that made *Above Expected Growth* and *Expected Growth*.