



## Students Make Academic Gains When Low-Performing Schools Close

*Study of urban closures across Ohio suggests shuttering bad schools benefits students*

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**Columbus, Ohio (April 28, 2015)**—The Thomas B. Fordham Institute today released a groundbreaking new report, *School Closures and Student Achievement: An Analysis of Ohio’s Urban District and Charter Schools*. The study reveals that children displaced by closure make significant academic gains on state math and reading exams after their school closes.

The study examined 198 school closures that occurred between 2006 and 2012 in the Ohio ‘Big Eight’ urban areas (Akron, Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo, and Youngstown). The research included 120 closed district-run schools and 78 closed charter schools. Taken together, these closures directly affected 22,722 students—disproportionately low-income, low-achieving, and minority students—who were in grades 3-8 at the point of closure.

Three years after closure, the research found that displaced students made the following cumulative gains:

- Students attending a closed **district** school gained 49 additional days of learning in reading and 34 additional days in math and;
- Students attending a closed **charter** school gained 46 additional days in math.

Further, the study reveals that students who attended a **higher-quality** school after closure made even greater progress. Three years after closure, displaced students who transferred to a higher-quality school made the following cumulative gains:

- Students attending a closed **district** school gained 69 additional days of learning in reading and 63 additional days in math and;
- Students attending a closed **charter** school gained 58 additional days of learning in reading and 88 additional days in math.

The estimated gains are based upon a 180-day school year and are benchmarked against the gains displaced students would have likely made, had they attended their closed school.

“The results of this study shatter popular myth that closing schools hurts kids academically,” said Aaron Churchill, Fordham’s Ohio Research Director. “Students usually make a soft landing. After closure, children typically end up in higher-quality schools, and they make strong academic progress.” Churchill concluded, “As a tool for renewing urban education, city leaders shouldn’t shy away from closing persistently low-performing schools. Every student deserves the opportunity to attend an excellent school.”

Dr. Deven Carlson of the University of Oklahoma and Dr. Stéphane Lavertu of the Ohio State University conducted the research and authored the report. They used data provided by the Ohio Department of Education and applied empirical methods to gauge the impact of closure on students’ academic achievement.

For further comment, please contact Aaron Churchill, Ohio Research Director by email at [achurchill@edexcellence.net](mailto:achurchill@edexcellence.net) or by phone at 412-719-7643 (mobile) or 614-223-1580 (office).

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