

Summary of District and Charter School Performance in the Ohio 8 2006-07

Executive Summary

Every August Ohio releases its K-12 state achievement test data to much media interest and scrutiny. One of the questions everyone wants to answer is how well the state's large sector of charter schools performed. To provide a timely analysis of these data and to compare them to similar district school results, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute commissioned [Public Impact](#) to conduct a brief analysis of charter school performance in 2006-07.

Using publicly available 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 eight largest urban districts in the state (Akron, Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo, and Youngstown). Separately, they compared the performance of charter e-schools (also known as virtual schools) with that of non-charter public schools statewide.

Among the key findings of this analysis:

- Across the eight largest urban districts, which house most charter schools, overall performance levels were similar. In reading, about 6 in 10 charter and comparable district students were proficient. In math, about half of charter and comparable district students were proficient.
- Within individual districts, only in Dayton did charter schools outperform district schools, by about eight percentage points in reading and math. In the other seven districts, district school performance was higher by between one-half and twenty percentage points.
- Charter e-school performance lagged that of schools statewide in both reading (63.6 vs. 81.7 percent) and math (45.1 vs. 75.4 percent).
- Over the last six school years, urban charter school performance has improved at a much more rapid pace than Ohio 8 district school performance. In the last year, however, district school improvement was higher.
- Relatively low percentages of both charter and district schools in the Ohio 8 fared well in state and federal accountability systems. Only 38 percent of Ohio 8 districts schools met the federal standard of Adequate Yearly Progress, for example, compared with 28 percent of urban charter schools.

Introduction

In 2006-07, there were two kinds of charter schools in Ohio. Some were “e-schools” or “virtual schools,” meaning they provide instruction to students primarily online. The others were located in the eight largest urban districts in Ohio, including Akron, Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo, and Youngstown.

These two sets of charter schools – e-schools and urban “brick-and-mortar” schools – draw from different segments of Ohio’s student population. E-schools can enroll students from across the state, while urban charter schools, by law, draw their students almost entirely from the large urban school districts in which they are physically located.

As a result of this difference, it makes sense to analyze the performance of the two groups of schools separately. Since e-schools enroll students statewide, their performance should be compared to the performance of non-charter public schools statewide. Urban charter school performance should be compared to that of the urban school districts in which these schools are located. In research parlance, this provides us with an “apples-to-apples” comparison of student achievement.

Accordingly, the following section examines two different comparisons: urban charter school vs. Ohio 8 district school performance, and charter e-school vs. statewide district school performance.

Examining average performance at a point in time is important, but it is also vital to look at how performance changes over time. Ideally, one would conduct this analysis by examining how individual children’s scores change over time. In the absence of such data, this analysis instead charts changes in average school performance over the last six years.

Average performance data also masks the significant variation in performance that exists *within* the charter and non-charter sectors. As a result, the last section of this report looks only at top performers among urban schools, charter and non-charter.

What emerges from this diverse set of analyses is a richer picture of comparative performance that can be gained from a single statewide snapshot.

Comparison to District Schools

Urban Charter School Performance vs. Ohio 8 District Performance

Charts 1 and 2 compare the performance of charter schools located in the Ohio 8 districts to the performance of their district counterparts on state reading

and math tests. These comparisons use weighted averages that take into account the percent of charter students in each grade and district 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.

Across the eight districts, charter and district performance was very similar. In reading, 58.7 percent of charter students were proficient, vs. 59.7 percent of district students. In math, 46.7 percent of charter students were proficient, compared with 50.9 percent of district students. In one district (Dayton), charter students outperformed district students in reading and math, in both subjects by about eight percentage points. In the other seven districts, district student performance was higher by margins ranging from about one-half to about 20 percentage points. The relatively large number of charter students in Dayton causes the Dayton results to be weighted more heavily in the comparison across all eight districts.

Chart 1: Urban Charter School Performance vs. Ohio 8 District Performance in Reading

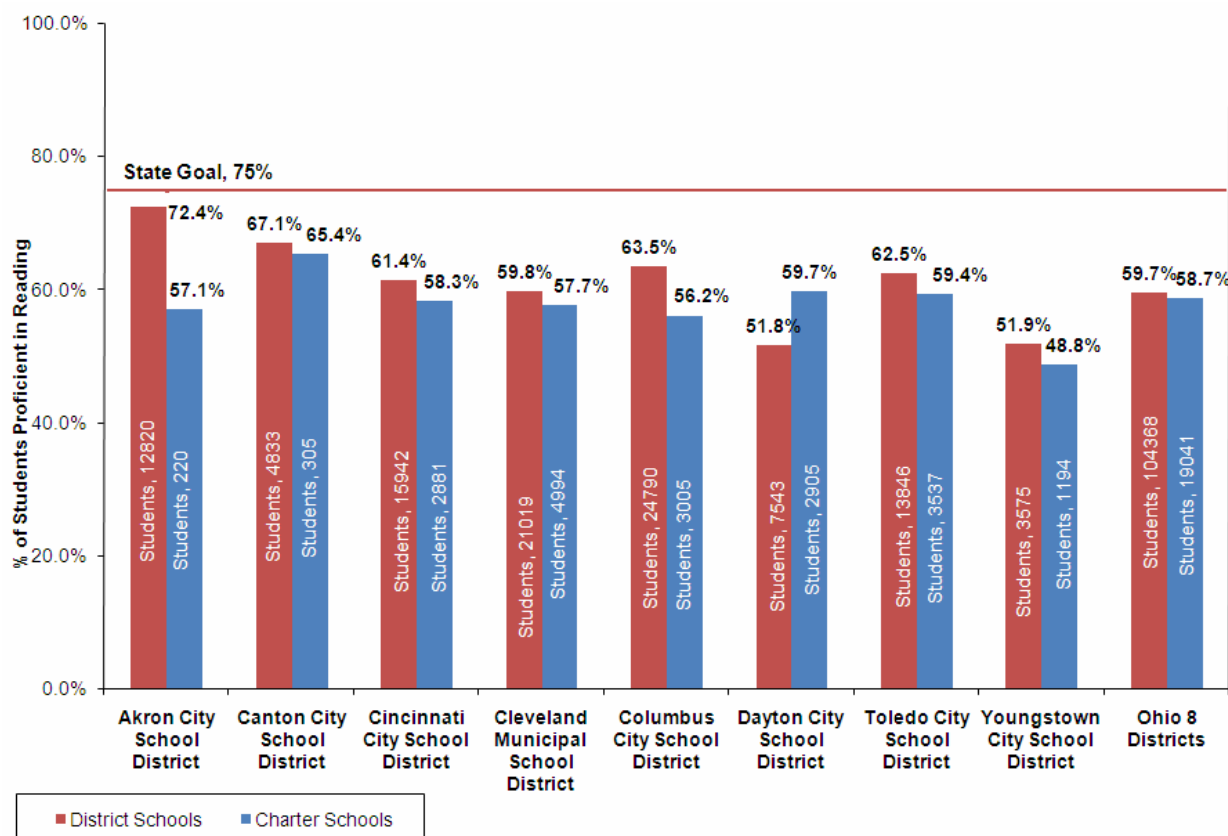
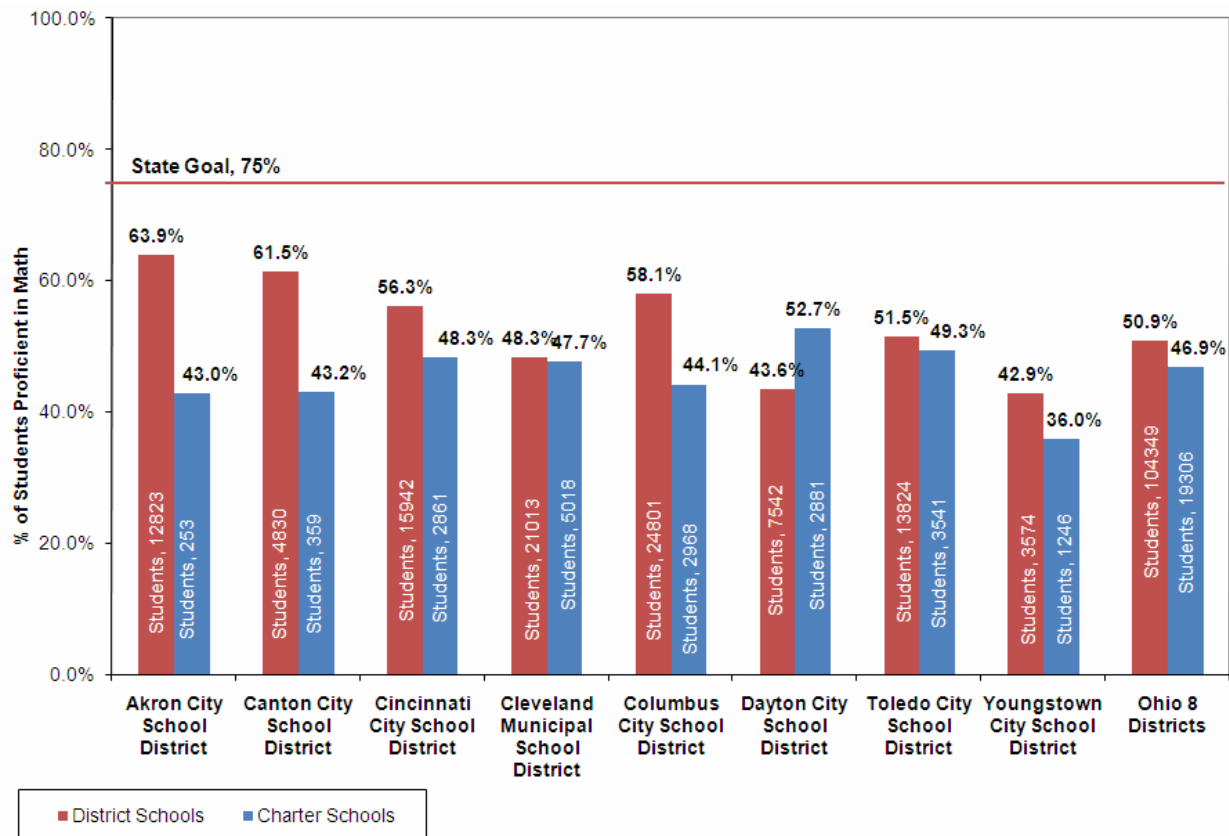


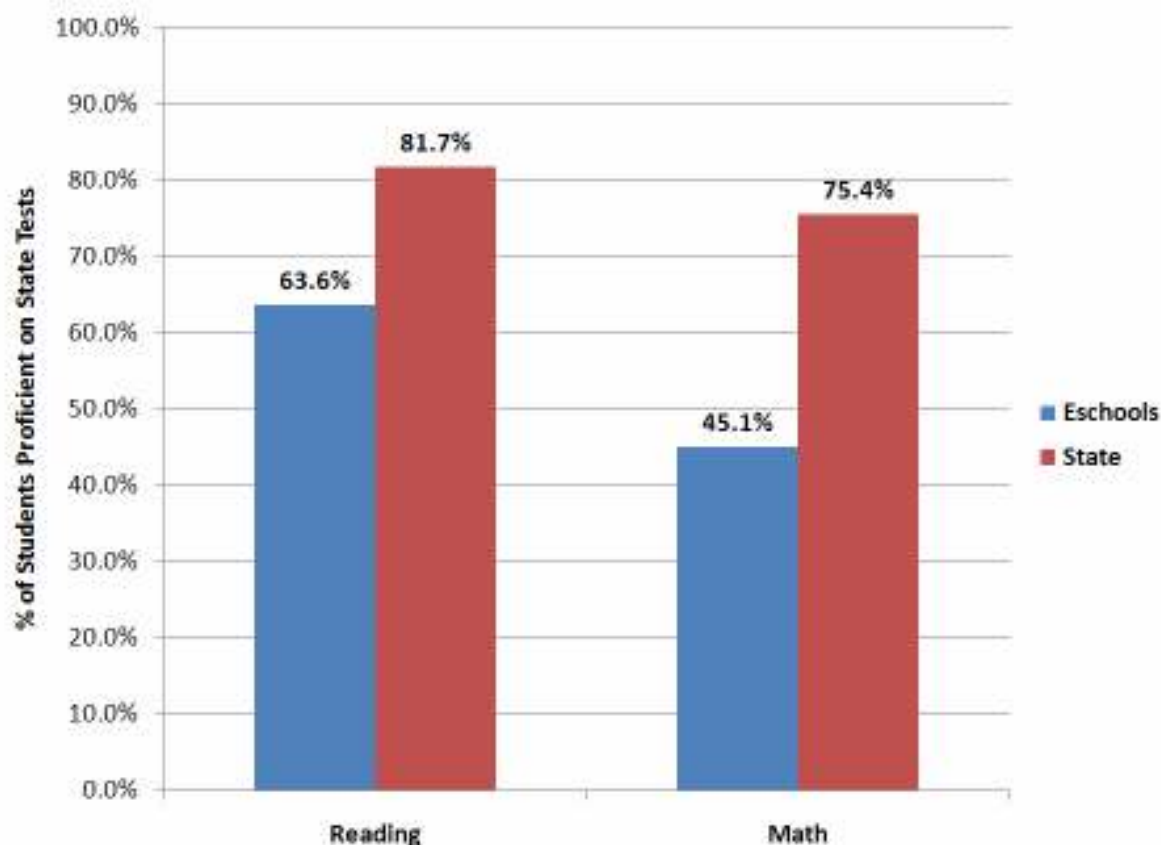
Chart 2: Urban Charter School Performance vs. Ohio 8 District Performance in Math



Charter E-school Performance vs. Statewide Performance

Chart 3 compares the performance of students in charter e-schools to the performance of students statewide. Unlike regular charter schools, e-schools cannot be compared to the districts where they are located because they have the unique opportunity to enroll students throughout the state. In 2006-07, charter e-schools has substantially lower percentages of students proficient in both reading (63.6 vs. 81.7 percent) and math (45.1 vs. 75.4 percent).

Chart 3: E-school Performance vs. Statewide Performance in Reading and Math



Urban Charter School vs. Ohio 8 District School Performance Over Time

Charts 4 and 5 examine how the performance of students in Ohio 8 charter schools and districts has changed over time. These comparisons use weighted averages that take into account the percent of charter students in each grade and district when comparing their to that of district students. For example, if 20 percent of the charter students in the Ohio 8 districts were in Dayton City, students in Dayton City School District would be counted as 20 percent of the Ohio 8 district average as well.

Between 2001-02 and 2006-07, charter school performance in both reading and math has risen at a substantially faster rate than it has risen in district schools. Charter school reading performance has risen 34.9 percentage points; district school reading performance has risen 23.9 percentage points. In the same period, charter and district school math performance has risen by 28.8 and 16.3 percentage points respectively.

In the last year, performance in Ohio 8 district schools rose more rapidly than in urban charter schools. Reading proficiency rates went up by 4.2 points in the district schools, versus 1.1 points in urban charters. Math rates rose 7.6 percentage points, versus 4.4 for charters.

Chart 4: Urban Charter School vs. Ohio 8 District School Performance Over Time in Reading

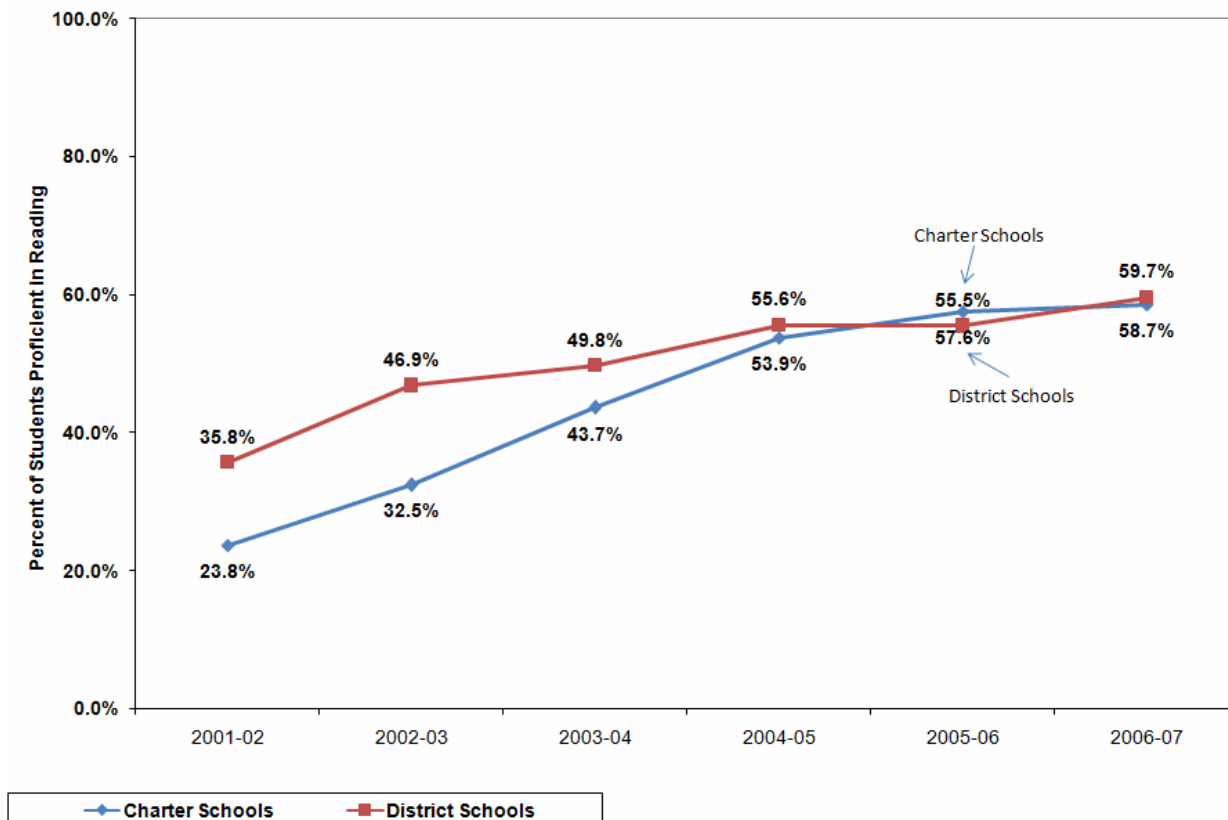
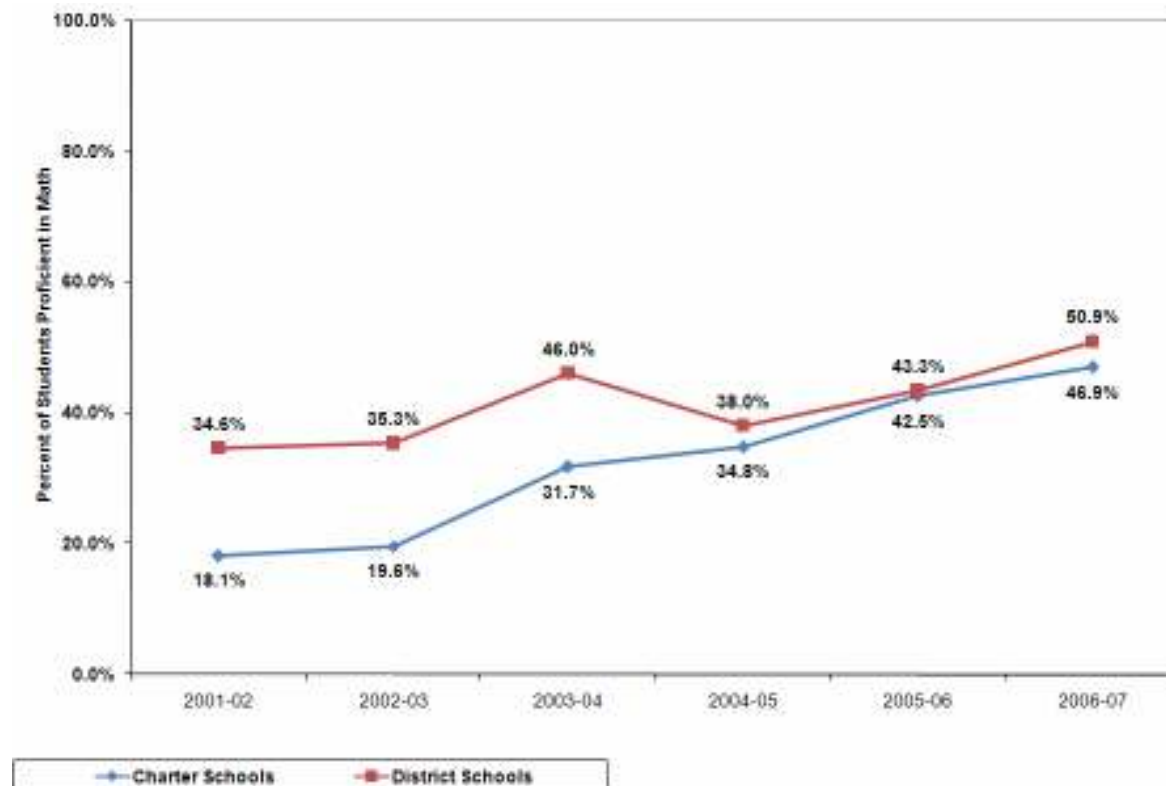


Chart 5: Urban Charter School vs. Ohio 8 District School Performance Over Time in Math



Urban Charter School vs. Ohio 8 District School Performance in Federal and State Accountability Systems

Another way to compare performance is to examine how schools fared in federal and state accountability systems. Each year, Ohio determines whether each school made Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP) according to the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Charts 6 and 7 show the percentages of Ohio 8 charter and district schools, respectively, that made AYP in 2006-07. Thirty-eight percent of Ohio 8 district schools made AYP, vs. 28 percent of urban charter schools.

Ohio's own accountability system also places schools into one of five categories based on a range of performance measures. Charts 8 and 9 show the percentages of Ohio 8 charter and district schools, respectively, that fell into different state categories in 2006-07. Fifteen percent of Ohio 8 district schools were rated Excellent or Effective, compared with 11 percent of urban charter schools. Forty-three percent of Ohio 8 district schools were in the Academic Emergency or Academic Watch categories, compared with 58 percent of urban charter schools.

Chart 6: Percent of Charter Schools in the Ohio 8 Making AYP

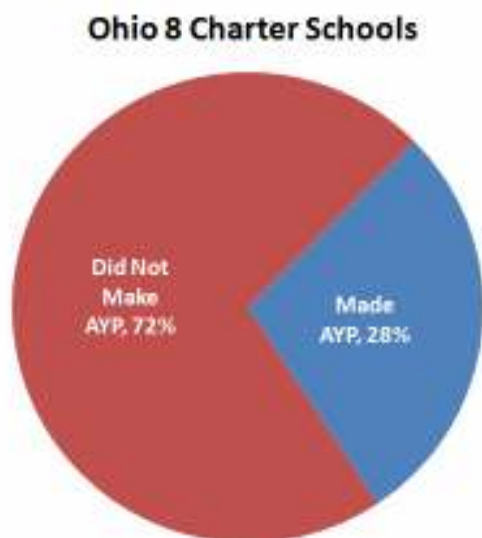


Chart 7: Percent of District Schools in the Ohio 8 Making AYP

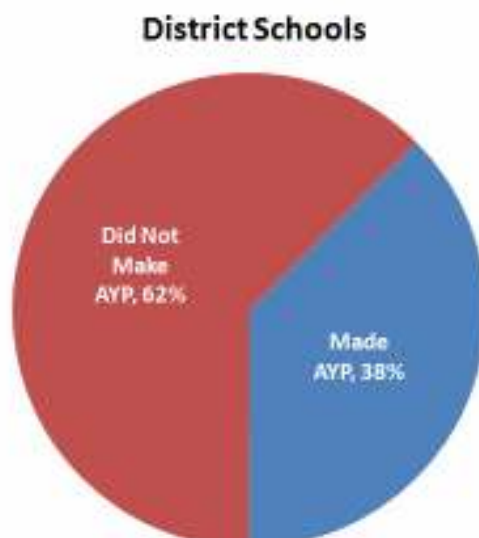


Chart 8: Percent of Charter and District Schools in the Ohio 8 with Each Performance Designation

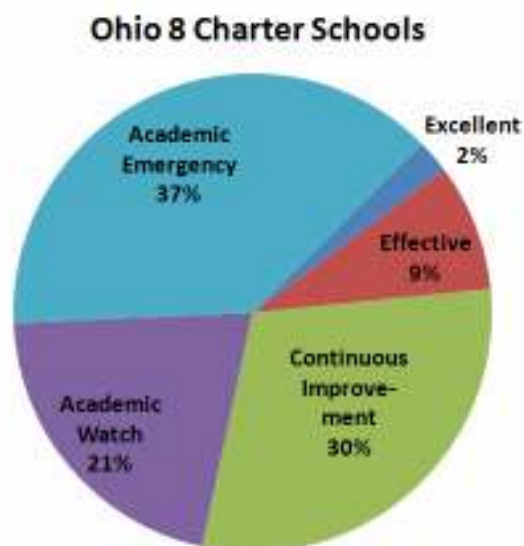
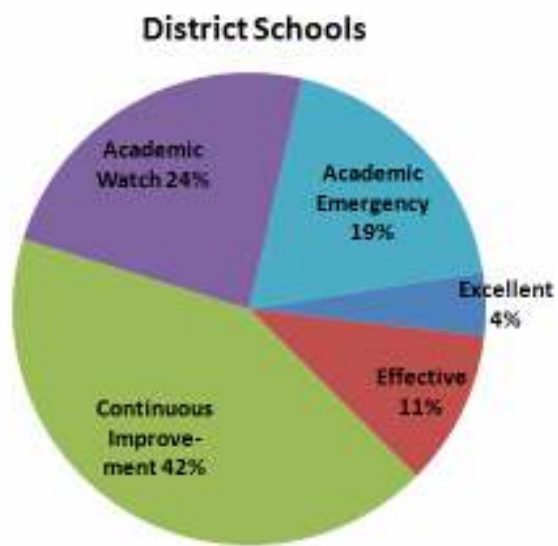


Chart 9: Percent of Charter and District Schools in the Ohio 8 with Each Performance Designation



Top Performers

Looking only at average performance masks the fact that there is a wide range of performance within the charter and district sectors. Charts 9 and 10 illustrate how well the *best* schools – charter and non-charter – performed within the Ohio 8 in 2006-07. The charts compare the percentage proficient in the top 5 charter schools in each district with the percentage proficient in the top 5 district schools. In most cases the top performing charter schools still lag somewhat behind the top performing district schools, they outperformed the district average in reading in every district, except Akron and Youngstown, and in math in every district except Youngstown. Top performing charter schools in Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus and Toledo surpassed the state goal of 75% of students meeting state standards in reading, and top performing charter schools in Cincinnati and Cleveland surpassed the state goal of 75% of students meeting standards in math.

Table 1 shows that in some of the eight districts, charter schools make up a significant portion of the highest performing public schools in the city. In Cleveland and Dayton, half of the highest performing schools in math are charter schools. Both of these districts also have a large number of charter schools among the highest performers in reading, 40% in Dayton and 30% in Cleveland.

What this information makes clear is that whatever the overall performance of charter schools in the state, a significant number of charter schools is performing very well. A challenge for state policymakers and educators is to capitalize on their success by learning from their strategies and by replicating these schools in other locations in need of school improvement.

Chart 9: Performance of the Top 5 Charter Schools and the Top 5 District Schools in Each of the Ohio 8 in Reading

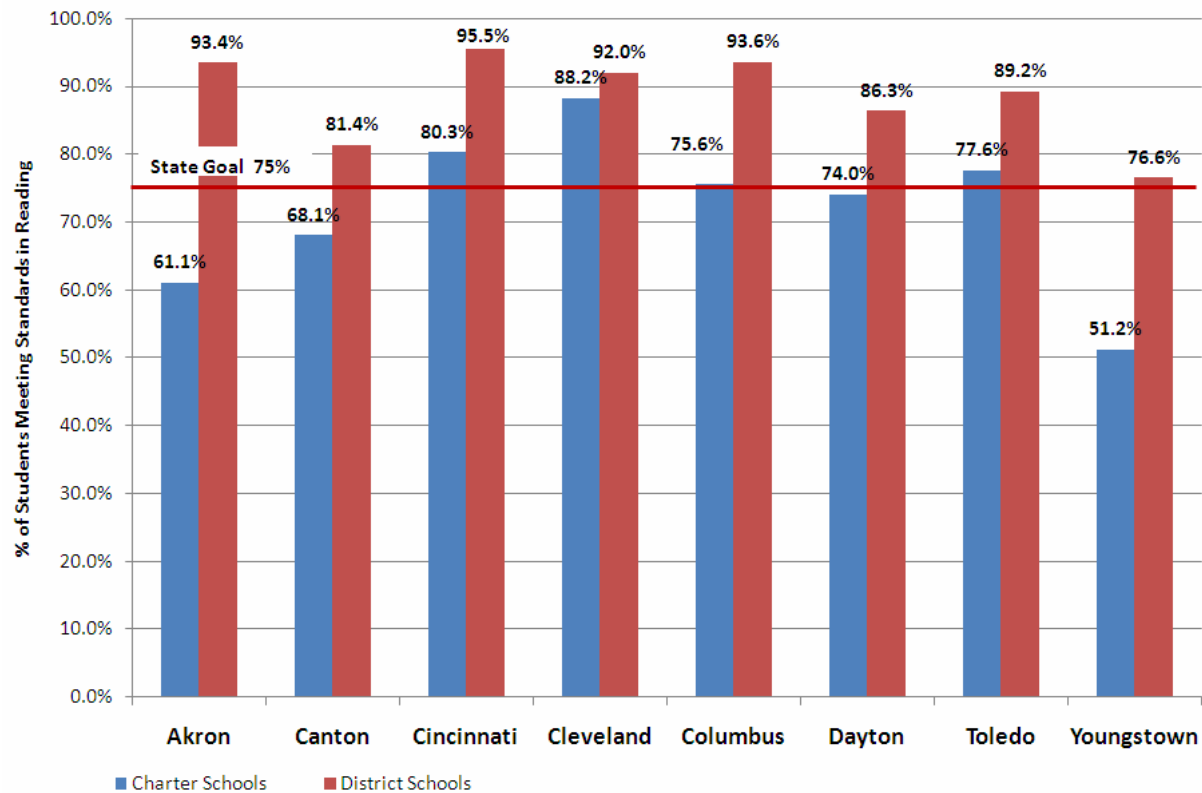


Chart 10: Performance of the Top 5 Charter Schools and the Top 5 District Schools in Each of the Ohio 8 in Math

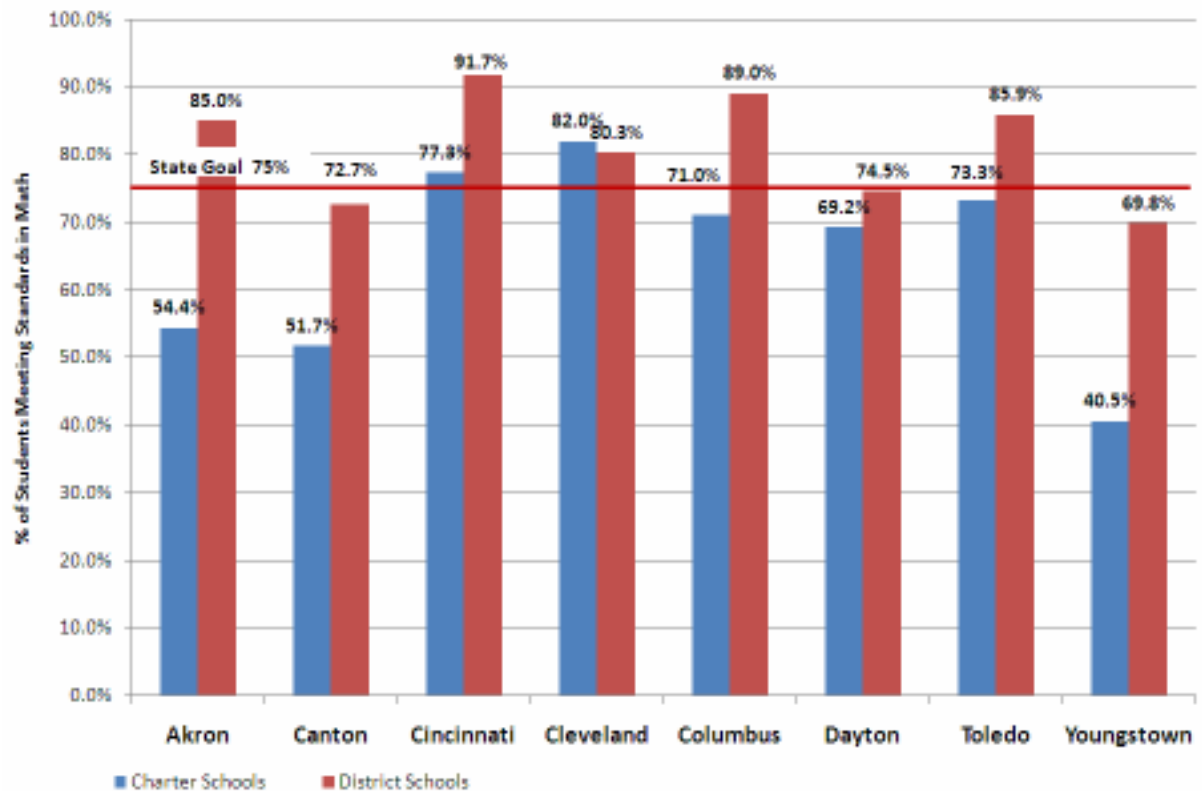


Table 1: Number of Top Ten Schools That are Charter Schools

| District | Reading | Math |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Akron City School District | 0% | 10% |
| Canton City School District | 20% | 0% |
| Cincinnati City School District | 20% | 20% |
| Cleveland Municipal School District | 30% | 50% |
| Columbus City School District | 20% | 10% |
| Dayton City School District | 40% | 50% |
| Toledo City School District | 20% | 30% |
| Youngstown City School District | 20% | 10% |

Conclusion

This analysis of charter school performance contains both good news and bad news about the charter school program in Ohio. On the positive side, charter school performance in the Ohio 8 has improved substantially over the last six years, nearly closing what was a large gap in performance between district and charter schools. At the same time, this overall parity masks the fact that relative charter school performance varies from district to district. Only in Dayton do charter schools outperform comparable district schools. And statewide, charter e-school students are much less proficient on average than all public school students.

Averages also do not do justice to the fact that some charter and district schools are outstanding. While school performance overall in the Ohio 8 for both districts and charters lags the state's 75 percent proficiency goal, the performance of top charter and district schools across many of the eight districts exceeds the goal. In addition, charter schools are disproportionately likely to be among the top performers in the area in some districts.