Charter Trends in California's High-Need Districts

Volume 3 Executive Summary February 2010

The California Charter School Association (CCSA) began providing support for the state's charter school movement seven years ago. CCSA's mission is to lead the charter public school movement in California in order to increase the number of students attending high quality charter schools. This third volume of *Charter Trends in High-Need Districts* describes current and longitudinal trends in growth and quality in California as a whole and in the districts of Los Angeles, San Diego, Oakland, Fresno, and San Bernardino City Unified. This issue also includes a focus on academic performance as one of the measures of charter quality and describes the leading-edge ways in which CCSA supports achieving and assessing student academic achievement.

Growth in the Charter School Movement from 2005 to 2010

- The number of California charters has grown approximately 10% annually over the past several years. Student enrollment increased at even faster rate at an average of 14% per year.
- Student enrollment growth in the past couple of years is due more to recently founded charters still adding capacity as they scale up enrollment and grade offerings, than to first year schools opening.
- Charters in the five high-need districts account for more of California's charters in 2010 than they did several years ago – 31% in 2010 compared to 23% in 2005.
- The number of charters and enrolled students increased over time for all five high-need districts.

Profile of the Charter School Movement in 2009

- The charter movement's school typology changed little even as steady growth occurred. In 2008-09, the majority of charters continue to be start-ups (in contrast to conversions), classroom-based, direct-funded, and either an elementary school or a high school.
- One emerging trend is a recent decrease in the percentage of charters operated by stand-alone or single-site development teams, with a corresponding increase in the percentage that is part of a Charter Management Organization (CMO).
- The demographic profile of charter students shifted over time. Charter enrollment in 2008-09 includes a higher percentage of Latino and socio-economically disadvantaged students compared to prior school years. The high-need district charters experienced similar enrollment shifts.
- Charters in the high-need districts typically enroll much larger percentages of traditionally underserved student groups than the percentages seen statewide.

Quality in the Charter School Movement in 2009

- Charters substantially improved school-wide academic performance between the two most recent school years. The median Academic Performance Index (API) score increased from 736 in 2008 to 757 in 2009.
- Mature charters continue to achieve higher median API scores than young charters. However, today's young and new charters are beginning to achieve higher levels of performance than young and new ones in prior years.
- Academic performance improved in all five high-need districts. Both Oakland and Los Angeles charters outperform non-charters in their respective districts, and Fresno charters perform on a par with their district's non-charters.
- Charter middle schools continue to perform better than non-charters. Elementary charters recently made great improvements and now perform on a par with non-charters. Charter high schools in all five high-need districts consistently outperform non-charter high schools.
- Academic performance improved for all of the traditionally underserved student sub-groups enrolled in charters, including students who are African-American, Latino, English learners, socio-economically disadvantaged or identified with a disability. For each group, charters either outperform non-charters, perform on a par or have closed the gap. Of the five high-need districts, Oakland and Los Angeles most consistently outperform or perform on a par with non-charters for student sub-groups.

Support for High-Quality Charter Development

- CCSA's *Charter Launch* program, the nation's first comprehensive charter developer support program, served 64 charter teams since it began in 2007.
- One-quarter of the developers who joined prior to 2009 successfully opened a charter school. Other developers are still in earlier phases of the program, but the bulk are experiencing authorizer delays and still in the petition approval process.
- Ten other states have looked to CCSA's *Charter Launch* model and lessons learned for guidance on starting their own developer support program.
- CCSA initiated two important and innovative advances to help the charter movement and individual charters assess and monitor quality in terms of academic achievement.
    - A new metric, the Similar Students Measure (SSM), is being designed to form the core of an improved accountability system that provides minimum academic performance standards.
    - Charters can participate in a new service, ZOOM! Data Source, which helps them to use their schools' individual-level student performance data to more easily and regularly monitor student and school-wide academic progress.

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Introduction

The California Charter Schools Association (CCSA) began providing support for the state's charter school movement seven years ago. CCSA's mission is to lead the charter public school movement in California in order to increase the number of students attending high quality charter schools. To accomplish this, CCSA addresses both the growth and quality of the movement by providing state and local advocacy, leadership on quality, and valuable resources for schools. With support from the U.S. Department of Education from 2006 to 2009, CCSA increased its efforts to address growth and quality in five specific high-need districts: Los Angeles, San Diego, Oakland, Fresno, and San Bernardino City Unified.

This third volume of *Charter Trends in High-Need Districts* describes current and longitudinal trends in growth and quality in the five districts and in California as a whole. Sections include:

Growth in the Charter School Movement

Tracks the number of charters and the number of enrolled students from 2004-05 through the start of the 2009-10 school year

Profile of the Charter School Movement

Includes information on how charters design their schools and on key student demographics, with most recent data as of the 2008-09 school year and tracked over time since 2005-06

Quality in the Charter School Movement

Focuses on academic performance as one of the key measures of charter quality and reviews trends from 2005-06 through 2008-09

Support for High-Quality Charter Development

Describes the evolution of *Charter Launch*, the nation's first comprehensive charter developer support program, and two new, leading-edge ways for individual charters and the movement to measure student academic achievement

Growth in the Charter School Movement

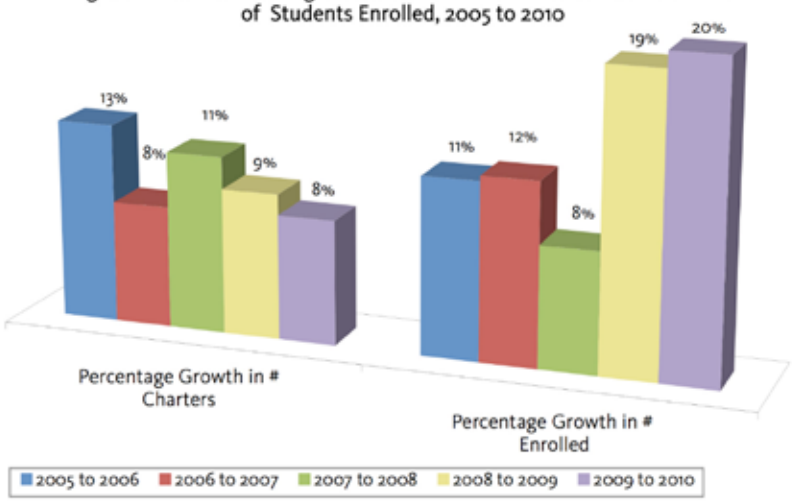
California

The number of California charters grew approximately 10% annually, and student enrollment grew even faster at an average of 14% per year.

The California charter school movement has grown steadily over the past several years. The number of open charters increased 10% on an average annual basis. As the largest charter movement in the nation, California currently includes 809 charters and an estimated 341,000 students (Fall 2010).

Changes in the number of students enrolled in charters also provide insight on the growth of the movement. Student enrollment grew by 14% on an average annual basis, higher than the 10% average increase in the number of charters. In addition, annual percentage growth rose faster for enrollment than for number of charters. Between 2005 and 2006, charters and enrollment grew by similar percentages, 13% and 11% respectively. More recently, between 2009 and 2010, charter growth continued but at a lower rate of 8% while enrollment increased by 20% (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Annual Percentage Growth in Number of Charters and Number of Students Enrolled, 2005 to 2010



Note: Percentage growth is the difference between the current year and prior year number divided by the prior year.

Student enrollment growth in the past couple of years is due more to recently founded charters still adding capacity as they scale up enrollment and grade offerings, than to first year schools opening. For example, California charter enrollment increased by more than 34,000 students between 2008 and 2009, and that increase is primarily due to charters older than one year adding new spaces. It is typical of many first year charters to add a new grade level each year they are open and to not achieve full capacity until their renewal term of five years.

Five High-Need Districts

Charters in the five high-need districts account for more of California's charters today than they did five years ago – 31% in 2010 compared to 23% in 2005.

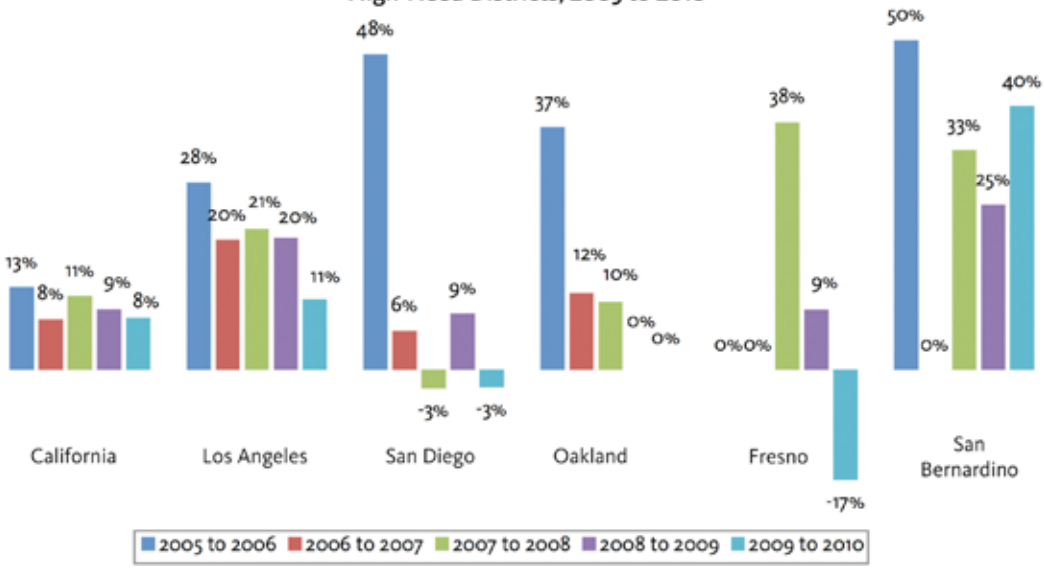
One-third of California's charter schools are located in the five high-need districts of: Los Angeles, San Diego, Oakland, Fresno, and San Bernardino. Charters in these five districts account for a higher percentage of California's charters today than they did several years ago, 31% in 2010 compared to 23% in 2005. The number of high-need district charters more than doubled in that time from 119 to 252 (Figure 2). Los Angeles itself accounts for almost one-quarter of the state's charter schools.

Figure 2. Number of California and High-Need District Charters, 2005 to 2010

	Number of Charters Open in:					
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
California	510	574	618	687	750	809
High-Need Districts	119	157	179	207	237	252
Los Angeles	67	86	103	125	150	166
San Diego	23	34	36	35	38	37
Oakland	19	26	29	32	32	32
Fresno	8	8	8	11	12	10
San Bernardino	2	3	3	4	5	7

All five districts experienced an increase in the number of charters between 2005 and 2010 (Figure 2). Dissimilarities occur in the pace of growth for each district (Figure 3). Both San Diego and Oakland experienced a significant percentage growth in charters early in the movement and then slowed from that point forward. Los Angeles maintained a steady growth trend of around 20% until this most recent year when it decreased to 11%. With the exception of one year, the number of charters in San Bernardino regularly increased. For San Bernardino, it is important to note that the number of charters is very small (7 in 2010) so a high percentage growth still only represents a change of one or two schools. Fresno did not have a consistent growth pattern. Similar to San Bernardino, Fresno's total number of charters is low (10 in 2010).

Figure 3. Annual Percentage Growth in Number of Charters in California and Five High-Need Districts, 2005 to 2010



Student enrollment also increased over time for all of the districts. Four of the five continued to expand enrollment between 2008 and 2009 even if growth in the number of charters slowed. This includes Los Angeles, Oakland, San Bernardino and Fresno (Figure 4). Of the four, Los Angeles is the only district where enrollment increased both because more charters opened that year than the year prior and because existing charters added more spaces. Increases for the other three are due to existing charters adding capacity. Unlike the others, San Diego enrollment decreased between 2008 and 2009.

Figure 4. Student Enrollment in High-Need Districts, 2008 to 2009

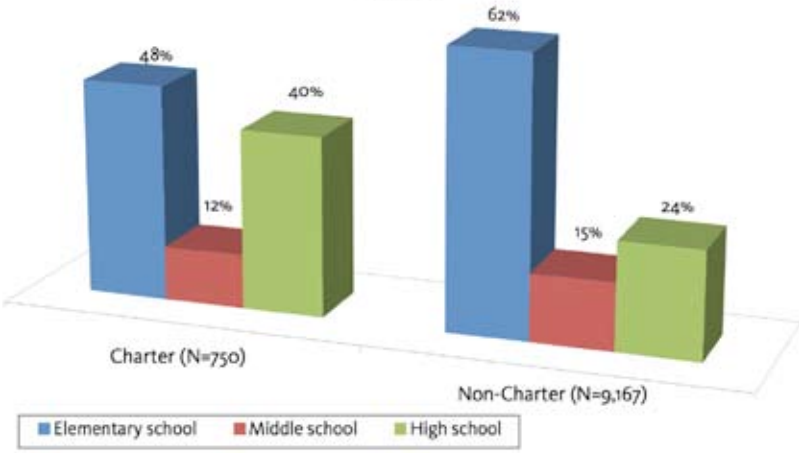
	# Enrolled in 2008	# Enrolled in 2009	Difference in Enrollment
High-Need Districts	73,318	84,925	13,906
Los Angeles	47,470	57,904	10,434
San Diego	13,891	13,800	-91
Oakland	7,552	7,861	1,025
Fresno	3,213	3,949	1,894
San Bernardino	1,192	1,411	644

Profile of the Charter School Movement

The charter movement's school typology changed little even as steady growth occurred. One emerging trend is a recent decrease in the percent of charters operated by independent groups versus management organizations.

The typology of the movement has not substantially changed even as steady growth occurred. The charter profile in 2008-09 closely resembles its profile for the past few school years. The majority of charters are start-ups (83%)[1], classroom-based (78%)[2], and direct-funded (69%)[3]. Charters also continue to more likely be elementary or high schools rather than middle schools. Another consistent trend is that the percentage of charter high schools is higher than that of non-charter high schools (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Percentage of Charter and Non-Charter Schools by Grade Span, 2008-09



Note: Grade span is identified by the California Department of Education. Schools within each category may serve more grade levels than are typical of that span.

Most of the profile trends in the high-need districts are similar to the statewide trends. For example, the majority of charters in each district are start-ups and little change in that percentage occurred over time. San Diego and Los Angeles are the districts with the highest percentage of conversion schools (22% and 14% in 2008-09, respectively). One notable difference between the state and the districts is that the districts have a higher or an increasing percentage of classroom-based charters. More than 90% of Los Angeles, San Diego and Oakland charters are classroom-based. Fresno and San Bernardino do not have as high a percentage of classroom-based charters as these three or the state as a whole, but that percentage increased quite a bit over the past four years. Fresno increased from 44% to 55% and San Bernardino from 33% to 60%.

Another feature of the charter school profile is whether a school is part of a Charter Management Organization (CMO) or managed by a stand-alone or single-site development teams (non-CMO). The statewide trend in CMO status recently changed. The majority (64%) of charters continue to be non-CMO as of 2008-09. However, this percentage represents a decrease from a couple of years ago when 72% of charters were non-CMO. With the movement now several years old, CMOs have had the time to increase their infrastructure and capacity and have become more efficient and proficient in the process of opening schools.

[1] "Start-up" refers to the opening of a brand new charter school, as compared to a "conversion" in which a failing non-charter school converts into a charter.
[2] "Classroom-based" refers to charters where teaching occurs on site, as compared to "independent study" where teaching occurs off site or online or a "combination" charter which uses both strategies.
[3] "Direct funded" charters are funded by the state and typically autonomous from the local district, as compared to "indirect funded" charters that are locally funded from their district and still dependent on the district for funding, governance, etc. (Prior issues of Charter Trends referred to direct-funded as "independent".)

Student Demographics

The demographic profile of charter students shifted over time and enrollment now includes a higher percentage of Latino and socio-economically disadvantaged students than in prior years.

The demographic profile of students enrolled in California's charter schools shifted somewhat over the past few years (Figure 6). The percentage of Latino and socio-economically disadvantaged students increased since 2005-06 and the percentage of White students and English learners decreased. While the percentage of English learners decreased over time (23% to 16%), the percentage reclassified increased (5% to 9%). That change partially explains the decreased percentage of English learners, and CCSA is conducting additional research on trends related to student language designations. The percentage of African American and Asian students and students with an identified disability remained basically the same.

This pattern of change is similar to the non-charter school pattern but is more pronounced for charter schools (Figure 6). For example, the percentage of White students decreased by 10% over the four years for charter schools compared to a 4% decrease for non-charter schools. The percentage of Latino students rose by 5% for charters compared to 2% for non-charters. The shift over time in Latino, White and socio-economically disadvantaged student enrollment in charter schools has brought the profile of charter schools closer to that of non-charter schools for those demographics. Despite these shifts over time, charter and non-charter schools continue to differ in the same ways (i.e., charters serve a higher percentage of African American and White students than non-charters and a lower percentage of all other groups).

Figure 6. Key Student Demographics for California Charter and Non-Charter Schools, 2005-06 compared to 2008-09

	Percentage of California Students that are:						
	Latino	African American	White	Asian	Identified with a disability	English learners	Socio-economically disadvantaged
Charter							
2005-06	36%	15%	46%	5%	8%	23%	42%
2008-09	41%	14%	36%	4%	7%	16%	49%
Non-charter							
2005-06	45%	9%	36%	9%	12%	26%	51%
2008-09	47%	7%	32%	7%	12%	25%	55%

Notes: Data are from CDE's 2009 API file. "Other" ethnicity is not included so the ethnicity percentages will not total 100%

The high-need district charters typically enroll much larger percentages of traditionally underserved student groups than seen statewide.

The demographic trends in the high-need districts differ from the state in that the five districts serve a much higher percentage of Latino and socio-economically disadvantaged students than charters as a whole (Figure 7). Los Angeles and Oakland serve a much higher percentage of African American students than seen among charters statewide. San Diego, Oakland and San Bernardino all serve a much higher percentage of students who are English learners.

Figure 7. Key Student Demographics for High-Need District Charters, 2008-09

	Percentage of Students in High-Need Charters that are:						
	Latino	African American	White	Asian	Identified with a disability	English learners	Socio-economically disadvantaged
California	41%	14%	36%	4%	7%	16%	49%
Los Angeles	59%	25%	11%	2%	7%	22%	70%
San Diego	51%	19%	22%	4%	9%	30%	61%
Oakland	52%	31%	5%	9%	3%	32%	75%
Fresno	56%	13%	20%	7%	4%	15%	76%
San Bernardino	63%	16%	16%	1%	2%	30%	65%

Notes: Data are from CDE's 2009 API file. "Other" ethnicity is not included so the ethnicity percentages will not total 100%.

Quality in the Charter School Movement

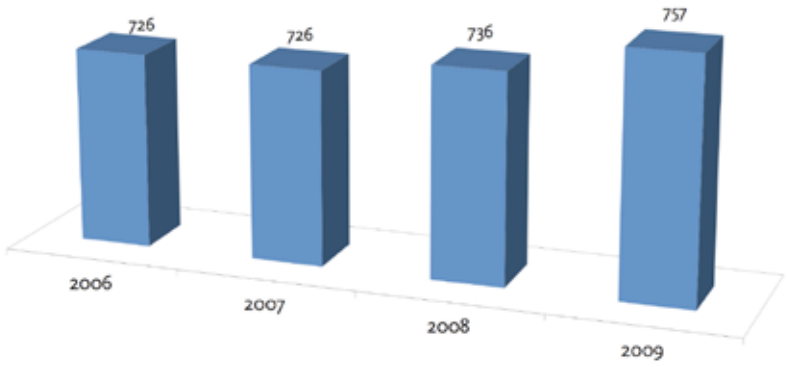
This issue of *Charter Trends* focuses on academic achievement as it is the most important measure of the charter movement's overall effectiveness and mission, and individual school's performance. The focus is also on one measure of charter schools' academic performance – the state's Academic Performance Index (API). The API is integral to an understanding of a school's performance because it is both a composite of other performance measures (e.g., student standardized tests) and the base for others (e.g., status meeting state and federal benchmarks).[4] *Charter Trends* presents median API[5] scores to depict the academic profile of the charter movement. CCSA currently has two other efforts that will probe more deeply into appropriate ways of assessing how well charters meet academic performance benchmarks (see next section).

California

Academic performance improved for charters over the past few years, with the most substantial improvement between 2008 and 2009.

The 2009 median API for California charters is 757, an improvement over the median in prior years. The most substantial increase in the median API occurred between 2008 and 2009 (Figure 8). This improvement over time occurred even as charter expansion continued and charter enrollment of low-income and Latino students increased. Non-charter schools have shown a similar type of progress. As a result, the statewide charter school median API remains lower than that of non-charter schools: 757 for charters and 779 for non-charters in 2009.

Figure 8. California Charter School Median Academic Performance Index (API), 2006 to 2009



The charter movement in California is still relatively new; as a result, a majority of charters are in early stages of development. Of 673 charter schools with a 2009 API, 65% have been open five years or less. Examining "mature" charters (open 6 or more years) that have had a chance to solidify their educational program reveals higher API performance. In 2009, the median API for mature charters was 770, similar to that of non-charter schools and much higher than the median of 752 for young charters.

Progress can be seen with young charters. The median API for young charters has risen each year for the past four years, from 709 in 2006 to 752 in 2009. This same trend is seen when looking even more closely at just one-year old charters in a given year. For example, 2009 one-year old charters had a median API of 758 compared to 735 for the one-year old charters in 2008.

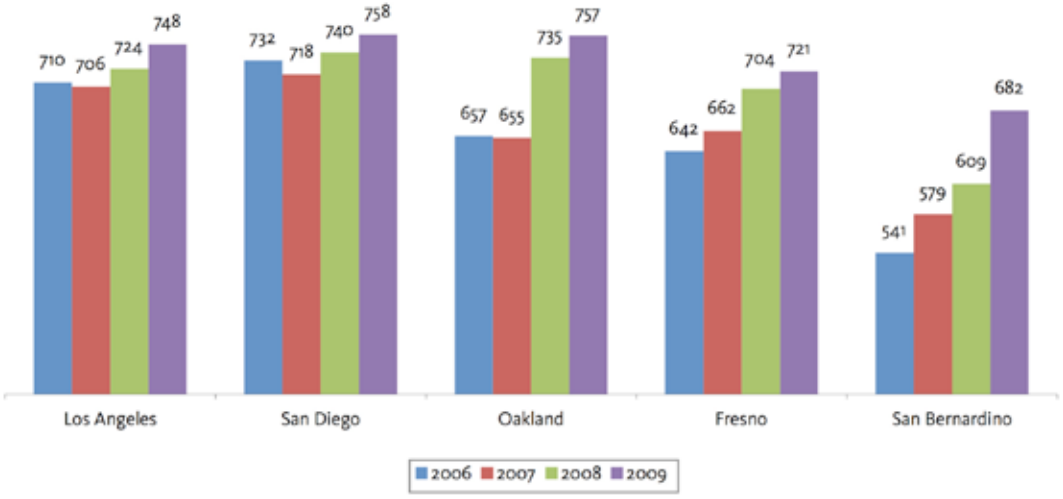
[4] See Methodology Appendix for information on the API and CCSA's analysis approach.
[5] See earlier issues of Charter Trends for information on other quality standards and on other measures of academic performance (such as percentage meeting state and federal benchmarks).

Five High-Need Districts

Academic performance improved in all five high-need districts. Both Oakland and Los Angeles charters outperform non-charters in their respective districts and Fresno charters perform on a par.

Charter academic performance also improved in all five high-need districts (Figure 9). Median API for both San Bernardino and Fresno charter schools steadily improved for the past four years. The other three districts each experienced a decrease between 2006 and 2007 but showed steady improvement since 2007.

Figure 9. Median API for High-Need District Charters, 2006 to 2009



Charters in two of the districts outperform non-charter schools. Oakland charters continue to outperform non-charter schools in their district (by 64 points in 2009). This trend has been consistent over the years, even with charters serving a higher risk population of students.[6] Los Angeles charters also now outperform its district's non-charter schools (by 6 points). Los Angeles charters outperformed non-charter schools in 2009 even as the percentage of low-income charter students increased from 58% in 2006 to 70% in 2009. LA charters continue to enroll a lower percentage of high-risk sub-groups (African American students excepted), however, they outperform or perform on a par with non-charter schools with each of the five high-risk student sub-groups (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Los Angeles Charter and Non-Charter Performance For Traditionally Underserved Student Sub-Groups, 2009 Median API

	2009 Median API for LA student sub-groups including students who are:				
	African American	Latino	English learners	Identified with a disability	Socio-economically disadvantaged
LA Charters	709	730	713	594	733
LA Non-charters	662	731	693	469	733

Fresno charters have a median API on a par with non-charter schools and San Bernardino and San Diego charters have a lower one than non-charters. However, the pace of improvement for San Bernardino schools is much higher for charters than non-charters, with the median API improving by 141 points for charters and 60 for non-charters over the past four years. While San Diego's median API is the highest of the five districts, it is the one district where non-charter schools outperform charter schools by more than 20 points.

[6] See *Charter Trends* December 2008 for detailed information on Oakland charter school performance.

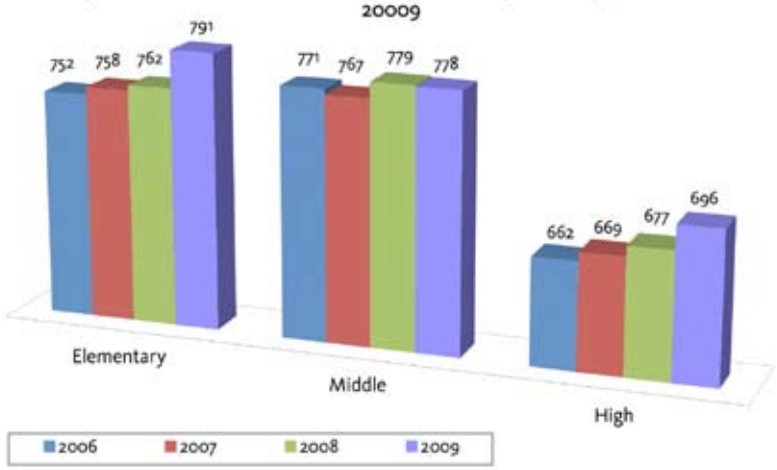
Quality by School Type

Charter middle schools continue to perform better than non-charters, and elementary charters recently made great improvements and now perform on a par with non-charters.

Academic performance is highly related to a school's grade span (i.e., elementary, middle or high school). For charters, middle schools have typically been the highest performing of the three types, which is unlike the pattern typical of non-charter schools where elementary schools are highest performing. Charter middle schools continue to outperform non-charters and for the first time, elementary charters perform on a par with non-charter elementary schools.

- Elementary charter schools experienced small, incremental changes in median API from 2006 to 2008, and then a substantial change in the past year (Figure 11). Elementary charter schools' 2009 median API is 791, close to reaching the state's goal of a minimum of 800 and for the first time on a par with the non-charter elementary school median API (794).
- Charter middle schools have consistently performed well (Figure 11) and better than non-charter middle schools, and these trends continued this year. The median 2009 API for charters is 778 compared to 762 for non-charters. Of note, the pace of improvement for charter middle schools has changed little over time while the pace for non-charter middle schools increased each year. This trend needs further exploration but may be a potential indication that the charter movement's long-standing success at the middle school level helped the movement to achieve its goal of introducing competition and helping to propel non-charter transformation efforts.
- The trend for charter high schools has remained consistent over the years. Charter high schools have a lower median API than the other charter school types but it has slowly increased each year (Figure 11). Unlike elementary and middle school charters that perform on a par or better than non-charter schools, median API for charter high schools is lower than that for non-charter schools (696 compared to 724 in 2009).

Figure 11. California Charter School Median API by School Type*, 2006 to 20009



* School type as defined by the California Department of Education. Schools within each category may serve more grade levels than are typical of that school type.

Charter high schools in all five high-need districts consistently outperform non-charter high schools.

Of the high-need districts, Oakland and Los Angeles are the two where elementary charters outperform non-charter schools (Figure 12). While there is a gap for the other three districts, these gaps are smaller in 2009 than in 2007 (2008 for Fresno since the district did not have elementary charters in 2007). Four of the five districts have middle school charters and all four consistently outperform non-charter schools across the years (Figure 12). While statewide

charter high schools do not outperform non-charter high schools, the reverse is true in the five high-need districts. In all five, charter high schools outperform non-charter high schools (Figure 12). This has been the case for years for Los Angeles, San Diego, Oakland and Fresno and is a new trend for San Bernardino since 2008.

Figure 12. 2009 Median API in High-Need Districts, Charter and Non-Charter Schools by School Grade Span

	2009 Median API for:		
	Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools
Los Angeles			
Charter	804	742	694
Non-charter	757	657	639
San Diego			
Charter	756	782	757
Non-charter	804	761	686
Oakland			
Charter	763	861	692
Non-charter	739	644	556
Fresno			
Charter	721	825	784
Non-charter	727	660	683
San Bernardino			
Charter	682	Not applicable	658
Non-charter	711	664	647

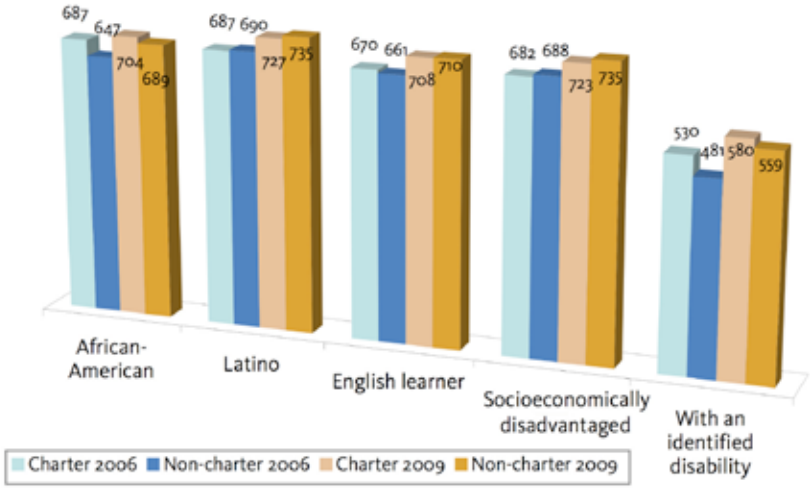
Note: Because Fresno and San Bernardino each have a low number of overall charters, the median API for each school grade span represents data for only a few charters.

Quality by Key Demographic Sub-Groups

Charter academic performance improved for all of the traditionally underserved student sub-groups. Oakland and Los Angeles most consistently outperform or are on a par with non-charters for the traditionally underserved groups.

When looking at median API growth scores for student sub-groups that are traditionally underserved, improvement over the past four years occurred for all of them (Figure 13). The groups include students who are African American, Latino, English learners, socio-economically disadvantaged and identified with a disability. For African American students and students with a disability, charters continue to outperform non-charter schools. Charter schools now perform on a par with non-charters with students who are English learners and have closed the gap for Latino and socio-economically disadvantaged students.

Figure 13. Median API for Traditionally Underserved Student Sub-Groups in Charter and Non-Charter Schools, 2006 compared to 2009



Below are some of the key trends by high-need district in student sub-group performance.

- In Oakland and Los Angeles, charter schools consistently outperform non-charter schools with the African American student group. Charter and non-charter performance was similar in San Diego until this past year, with charters now having a lower median API for African American students than non-charter schools. (Fresno and San Bernardino schools do not have a significant number of African American students so a median API score for the sub-group is not calculated.)
- For Latino students, Oakland charters consistently outperform non-charter schools and Los Angeles has closed the gap over the years (LA median API for the Latino student group is 730 for charters and 731 for non-charters). Similarly, San Bernardino charters closed the gap with non-charters although non-charters continue to outperform charters. In San Diego and Fresno, performance between charters and non-charters is somewhat similar with 7 and 8-point differences respectively.
- Charters in 3 of the 5 districts now outperform non-charter schools with the English learner student sub-group, including Oakland, Los Angeles and Fresno.
- Los Angeles and San Diego are the only two districts that have a significant number of students with a disability. Los Angeles charters consistently outperform non-charters by more than 100 points in median API each of the four most recent years. San Diego charters consistently under-perform non-charter schools.
- For socio-economically disadvantaged students, Oakland charters outperform non-charter schools and LA charters have similar performance.

Support for High-Quality Charter Development

CCSA engages in several types of efforts to stimulate high-quality charter development, including providing training and advocacy support for charter developers, offering a multitude of resources for operating charters, and identifying performance benchmarks and measures by which charters can assess quality. This issue of *Charter Trends* provides an update on *Charter Launch*, the nation's first comprehensive charter developer support program. It also introduces two of CCSA's innovative advancements in helping the charter movement and individual charters to assess and monitor quality in terms of academic achievement.

Charter Launch

Sixty-four charter developer teams enrolled in Charter Launch between 2007 and 2009. One-quarter of the developers who joined prior to 2009 successfully opened a charter school and still others are in the authorization process.

CCSA started *Charter Launch* in January 2007 as a comprehensive support program to help new charters reach their goal of becoming quality educational choices earlier in their development process. It is designed as an individualized, guided program to help charter school developers through the planning and petition approval process more efficiently and effectively and toward more successful school operations. For the past three years, *Charter Launch* has been offered in eight specific regions across California, with a U.S. Department of Education (US DOE) grant providing part of the funding for it in the five high-need districts.

Sixty-four teams of charter developers enrolled in *Charter Launch* since its inception. Of the 45 charter developers that joined prior to 2009, 11 (24%) are open as of 2009-10. All 11 are located in one of the five high-need districts.

- 8 of the 11 are located in Los Angeles, 2 in San Diego, and 1 in Fresno.
- 3 opened in 2007-08, 2 in 2008-09, and 6 in 2009-10.
- 5 of the schools are high schools (grades 9-12), 2 are elementary schools (K-5 or K-6), 2 are expanded middle schools (grades 4-8 or 5-8), and one spans elementary and middle (K-8).[7]

Other developers are still in earlier phases of the program, but the bulk are experiencing authorizer delays and still in the petition approval process.

[7] There is not a sufficient number of open Charter Launch charter schools for this publication to include academic performance results.

Ten other states have looked to CCSA's Charter Launch model and lessons learned for guidance on starting their own developer support program.

Earlier volumes of *Charter Trends* included feedback from *Charter Launch* participants on their experiences with the program and lessons learned about the charter development process. In this past year, which is also the final year of US DOE support, CCSA participated in several efforts to assess the project's effectiveness and ways in which to sustain and improve it.[8] In addition, the *National Alliance for Public Charter Schools* invited CCSA to a Master Class where participating charter support organizations exchanged key lessons about developing support efforts appropriate to their state's policy landscape and growth capacity. *Charter Launch* staff shared the model and lessons learned with at least 10 other states' charter support organizations during this class

CCSA has also used the lessons learned to refine *Charter Launch* moving forward. Many of these refinements help the program to reach two primary goals for this next phase: expand the program to all regions in the state and make it financially sustainable for CCSA and participants. Following is a brief description of *Charter Launch* as it will be offered for new participants starting in 2010.

- Provide a two-year training program now more targeted to high capacity and well-developed teams (teams in earlier phases can enroll in newly differentiated, less-intensive membership support services).
- Continue to offer expert-led instruction through a combination of one-to-one and group situations that address the four areas of: Assessment, Development, Approval and Implementation.
- Continue to facilitate the developer teams' work by providing content knowledge and advocacy (compared to doing the work for the team).
- Move the Assessment and Development support phases from a mostly in-person experience that relies on Association regional staff to an online / distance learning experience.
- Enhance the online learning experience by delivering it in conjunction with UCLA Extension.
- Formalize the learning experience by CCSA with UCLA Extension – California is the first in the nation this year to provide developer participants with 18 hours of transferable graduate credits and a university *Certificate of Charter Development* upon completion.
- Continue to use regional advocates who are local experts to support developers during the Approval process to navigate the specific local authorizing conditions and challenges.
- Fund strictly through fee-for-service and keep the fee manageable for participants.

To help other states initiate their own support programs, the *National Alliance for Public Charter Schools* invited *Charter Launch* staff to participate in the Master Class described above and commissioned a case study of the program that is publicly available (see footnote 8).

[8] This includes CCSA's data team conducting in-depth surveys with charter developers and administrators in 2007 and 2008, the Charter Launch team conducting an internal evaluation in 2009, and an external consulting group, FSG Social Impact Advisors, conducting a case study commissioned by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools in 2009. The case study is available at http://www.fsg-impact.org/ideas/section/500

Quality Initiatives

CCSA initiated two important and innovative advances to help the charter movement and individual charters assess and monitor quality in terms of academic achievement.

In addition to continuing to provide training and support to help ensure quality, CCSA has devoted much effort in these past two years to exploring how to better achieve and measure charter quality in terms of academic performance. Efforts are simultaneously aimed at identifying both appropriate standards and measures and at supporting schools to use individual student data to track how well their educational program is helping students. Both types of work represent important and innovative advances in charter quality assessment.

Similar Students Measure

A new metric, the Similar Students Measure (SSM), is being designed to form the core of an improved accountability system that provides minimum academic performance standards for charters.

In 2008, CCSA began intensive work to improve accountability for charter schools by establishing a rigorous minimum academic performance standard for charters at their time of renewal using a new, innovative measure called the Similar Students Measure (SSM). Spearheaded by CCSA's Member Council, consisting of charter school leaders from across California, this initiative represents an innovative effort undertaken by a charter movement to increase the overall quality of the charter schools movement.

Currently, charter schools are held accountable to the minimum academic performance renewal standards contained within Assembly Bill (AB) 1137, which passed into law in 2003 but has proven ineffective in closing schools that consistently underperform. As part its accountability plan, CCSA and its Member Council are calling for the implementation of the SSM which would raise the current academic performance standards for charters while taking into account the demographic backgrounds of the students served. Just as important, the plan calls for improved enforcement mechanisms which would eliminate deficiencies in the current law that make it difficult to shut down underperforming schools.

The SSM builds upon the state's Academic Performance Index (API) system by setting rigorous expectations that take into account the starting point of enrolled students' life backgrounds in order to establish a minimum performance expectation for a charter school. Then it assesses whether or not a charter school is surpassing its predicted performance. A charter school that is 10 percent or more below its predicted performance for three years in a row will be identified as under-performing, leading to further review of that charter's student academic performance.

The SSM will provide authorizers with improved information and expectations to address low-performers with the goal of having uniform standards consistently implemented statewide. CCSA will play a critical role in supporting charter schools to meet these minimum standards and will work with charter authorizers, the California Department of Education and the State Board of Education, who will be responsible for enforcing them.

The comprehensive plan calls for CCSA to have ongoing involvement in statewide charter school accountability efforts. In addition to providing early warning systems for charter schools at risk of missing these criteria, CCSA will leverage its unique position in the charter school landscape to connect charter schools to providers able to offer support in areas critical to meeting ongoing minimum academic requirements. Additionally, CCSA will continue to provide direct supports to schools, such as the highly-popular ZOOM! Data Source program (See next section)

The Similar Students Measure is still in the development process and is undergoing significant testing and review. Please see future publications from CCSA for more detailed information on the measure as it moves closer to its final version and to implementation.

ZOOM! Data Source

Charters can participate in a new system, ZOOM! Data Source, that helps them to use their schools' individual-level student performance data to more easily and regularly monitor student and school-wide academic progress.

The California Charter Schools Association has always advocated for schools to use their students' academic data to identify individual student and educational program improvements. Regular and ongoing use of performance data helps ensure schools continue to improve and stay on track for meeting academic goals that ensure they are renewed. In 2008, CCSA began offering a new service to charter members to help them do this type of data assessment more easily.

With key support from the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, CCSA implemented ZOOM! Data Source, the first program of its kind in the nation. The service provides schools affordable access to an on-line data management tool, DataDirectorTM. This tool allows them to more accurately and efficiently collect, manage and use multiple types of individual student data. The program includes customized in-person and web-based technical support, training, coaching and peer collaboration to ensure that charter school educators develop sophisticated data-driven decision-making skills.

There are two pressing purposes for offering ZOOM!. First, schools with strong cultures of data-driven decision-making typically have higher student achievement. Second, it is widely acknowledged that assessment of school performance is more accurate when it relies on individual-level data than on aggregate data such as a school performance score. As CCSA continues to move forward in developing tools to help the charter movement increase quality, the use of individual-level data will become increasingly more critical. A service like ZOOM! helps both an individual school to increase its data practices and can help the entire charter movement improve how academic performance is assessed. Currently 250 charter schools participate in ZOOM!, and the goal is to continue to substantially grow the number of schools using this valuable program.

As the California public charter school movement continues to grow, the California Charter Schools Association seeks to continually adapt to an ever-developing movement to help it reach its full potential. Please visit www.myschool.org to learn more about those efforts.

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About the California Charter Schools Association

The California Charter Schools Association is the membership and professional organization serving over 800 charter public schools that educate more than 341,000 charter school students in the state of California. The mission of the California Charter Schools Association is to lead the charter public school movement in California in order to increase the number of students attending high-quality charter schools. CCSA advances the charter school movement through state and local advocacy efforts, leadership on quality and extensive resources. For more information, please visit www.myschool.org

If you would like information about CCSA's programs or research efforts, please visit the Website or email us at: info@charterassociation.org

APPENDIX METHODOLOGY

Annual Analysis

The California Charter Schools Association annually analyzes state achievement data describing charter public school and non-charter public school performance. In this process, the August release of the state's Accountability Progress Report achievement data is downloaded from the California Department of Education's (CDE) website, cleaned, and analyzed. The state's Academic Performance Index (API) and federal Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) data files are merged to gather an accurate population of school data and to cross-reference it to identify missing schools or misclassified schools.

Before any analyses are conducted, CCSA engages in a rigorous data cleaning process, comparing the state's API and AYP data files to our internal charter database to ensure that all charter schools are correctly classified. After merging the state files with our internal database, any identified discrepancies are resolved by working with CCSA's knowledgeable regional charter school managers who have a close relationship with their regional charter schools as well as by checking schools' status and available data via Dataquest and Quickquest on the CDE website.

Additionally, CCSA works in partnership with the Administrator of the Academic Accountability Unit at the CDE to clarify questions and permanently correct issues identified during the data cleaning process. Inactive or closed charter schools and alternative & special education (ASAM) schools are then removed from the analysis to ensure an appropriate comparison of school performance. These exclusions are in-line with those used by the CDE and most other researchers. CDE, however, also excludes small schools and direct funded charter schools; CCSA does not, but rather analyzes a more complete sample of the California charter population.

For this volume, annual API Growth scores were analyzed to assess trends over time and in the current year. Each year's API summarizes a school's standardized test scores from the prior year into a single number. This number ranges from 200 to 1000; higher numbers indicate better performance on the tests. The statewide API goal is a minimum of 800 for all schools. Descriptive analyses are used, with median API scores calculated in accordance with the CDE's methodology given skewed distributions. Since the purpose of this publication is descriptive, inferential statistics indicating significance levels are not used.

For demographic profiles of the charter movement, all schools open in a given school year are included. For API related discussions, only schools that are not identified as Alternative Schools Accountability Model (ASAM) and that have an API are included. (There are several reasons why some schools do not have an API, such as the school did not test at least 85% of eligible students or the school tested fewer than 11 students.)

Data and Information Sources

DataQuest: http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/
API Home: http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ap/
AYP Home: http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ay/
Accountability Progress Reporting (APR): http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ar/index.asp

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