2013

PORTRAIT OF THE MOVEMENT
- CALIFORNIA GROWTH -

Charter School Performance in 2011-2012
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California Growth

California charter schools are growing at a fast pace. In an era of challenging economic times, when a funding crisis has disproportionately affected charter schools and when school funding levels have plummeted, California charter schools have still been able to generate remarkable growth, increasing the number of new schools opening each year. In the fall of 2012, 110 new charter schools opened, marking one of the top years for growth and raising the total number of charter schools in California to 1066.¹ Over the last 20 years, the number of charter schools has doubled about every five years. Currently, California charters represent over 10% of all public schools in the state.

California charter schools also serve a growing and diverse cross section of California’s student population. The 110 new schools opened in the 2012-13 school year provided nearly 37,000 additional seats in charter schools.² New school growth, plus existing schools’ expansions, raised the total California charter student population to 470,639 students. If growth trajectories continue, California’s charter movement will be the equivalent of the largest school district in the state, second largest in the nation, in the next two years. Currently, charter students represent 7.6% of public school students in the state. If student concentrations are compared on a national level, 20% of all the U.S. charter students are in California.³ By the 25th anniversary, the California charter movement could grow to become more than one million students strong.

¹ 1066 includes 3 schools that opened under countywide benefit charters that have shared CDS codes. For the purposes of student programs and operations, these schools operate as independent schools.
² Seats added in 2012-13 are based on CBEDS data from the California Department of Education.
³ Based on 2012-13 data estimated by the National Alliance of Public Charter Schools http://www.publiccharters.org/publication/?id=929.
The majority of California charter schools are located within large urban districts, with significant concentration in four areas: Los Angeles Unified, San Diego Unified, Oakland Unified, and the city of San Jose. These areas host about 35% of all charters in the state. Over the last three years, these areas have also proven to be the centers of growth with the highest concentration of new schools in 2010, 2011, and 2012. In the last three years, Los Angeles has added 89 new schools. Accounting for school closures, this is 43% net growth. During the same time range, San Jose city’s charter population grew by 15 schools, a 63% net increase in the total charter population. Since 2009, San Diego saw a 30% increase with 14 new schools and Oakland saw an 18% increase with nine new schools.

There are other noteworthy areas of increased charter school expansion. While school numbers are still building, four additional promising areas are revealed by examining three-year growth trends. Since 2009, 11 new schools have opened in Stockton Unified, a 113% net increase. In addition, San Bernardino Unified emerged as a charter growth area by adding six new schools and increasing the number of charter schools in the district by 63%. In addition to school district growth, there is also clear expansion at the county level: Riverside and Fresno counties represent strong growth geographies with 73% (12 schools) and 28% (9 schools) net increases in these two counties, respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic Area</th>
<th>2009-2010 Base (active schools)</th>
<th>2012-2013 Total (active schools)</th>
<th>Total New Schools Over 3 Years</th>
<th>Net Growth (accounts for closed schools)</th>
<th>Percent Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Largest Concentrations</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles Unified</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>43.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Jose City</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Diego Unified</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakland Unified</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emerging Growth Areas: Districts</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockton Unified</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>112.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Bernardino Unified</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emerging Growth Areas: Counties</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverside County</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresno County</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 The San Jose geographic analyses contained in this report focus on charter schools located within the city of San Jose, which includes portions of 19 different school districts.
Not surprisingly, the largest concentrations of charter students align to the geographic areas with the largest number of schools. In 2012-13, charter schools located within Los Angeles Unified serve 124,756 students, or 26% of California’s total charter students (19% of all public school students in LAUSD). Charter schools in the city of San Jose and in San Diego Unified school district educate about 4% each of California’s total charter school population and Oakland Unified serves an additional 3%. These four areas represent 37% of all California charter students.

The table below details the percent of all California charter school students and percent of each district’s students served in these areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th># Charter Students</th>
<th>% Of Total California Charter Population</th>
<th>% Of All Public School Students Enrolled In Charters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LAUSD</td>
<td>124,756</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of San Jose</td>
<td>18,362</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDUSD</td>
<td>18,126</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUSD</td>
<td>12,292</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Charter School Growth by School District, 2010-2012**

- **2012 Charter Enrollment**
  - 500 Students and Below
  - 501–1,000
  - 1001–5,000
  - 5001–15,000
  - 15,001 and Above

- **Three Year Charter Growth (2010)**
  - 1000 and Below
  - 1001–5,000
  - 5001–10,000
  - 10,001 and Above
Students Served

In terms of the student demographic subgroup populations served by charter schools, while there are some differences in regional trends, statewide averages hover near traditional district counterparts for percent of population served. In some cases, charter schools serve a higher percent of specific student demographic subgroup populations, and for others, a lower percent when compared to traditional public schools. Longitudinal data suggests that for student populations traditionally underrepresented in charters, the gap is decreasing over time.

Student Populations in Charter and Traditional Public Schools

Note: FRL and ELL data are from 2011-12 and African-American and Latino data are from 2012-2013 (most recent data available at time of publication).

Based on 2011-12 data (the most recent year available for FRL data at the time of publication), 55% of students in the traditional system qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL). This compares to 52% of charter students, a 3% gap. However, this gap is not consistent. The percent of students served has varied in both charters and non-charters over the last few years, creating a fluctuating gap. In recent years, both groups have served similar percentages, in others, there have been slight differences.

5 Latino and African American student enrollment in this section data are 2012-13 numbers from CBEDS. The FRL data is 2011-12 data reported in the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS), and it provides a count of the total percentage of students in the school that are eligible for the Free and Reduced-Price Meal program (which provides free lunches to students falling below 130% of the federal poverty line and reduced price lunches to students below 185% of the federal poverty line). ELL data are 2011-12 numbers from the State Accountability API file, and are limited to students in grades 2-11.
Student Populations in Charter and Traditional Public Schools

In contrast, charters serve a higher percentage of African American students. According to 2012-13 data, African American students make up approximately 6% of all students in California but 10% of California charter schools students. Stated another way, a full 11.5% of all African American students in California are enrolled in charter schools.

Despite growth over the last several years, statewide averages show that charters still serve somewhat fewer Latino students than traditional public schools. In 2012-13, 53% of students enrolled in traditional public schools were Latino compared to 46% in charter schools, a statewide difference of 7%. However, it should be noted that while both types of schools are increasing the number of Latino students served, charters are increasing at a faster rate.

Between 2005-06 and 2011-12, California charters served a smaller proportion of Latinos than traditional schools, but the gap between charters and traditional schools narrowed by approximately 25%. Also noteworthy is that the gap in Latino enrollment between charters and traditional public schools has narrowed at the secondary level, but widened somewhat in elementary schools according to CBEDS data. (Note: contradictory findings emerge when other forms of analyses are used. For example, when charter schools are compared to their three closest, most similar traditional public school counterparts, we actually see that elementary charter schools actually tend to serve an equal or slightly greater proportion of Latinos than nearby traditional schools. They are also located in areas with a lower average proportion of Latinos than traditional schools.)
Latino enrollment by grade level: the gap has narrowed at the secondary level, but widened in elementary school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006-07</th>
<th>5 years</th>
<th>2011-12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Schools</td>
<td>49.1%</td>
<td>45.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter % Latino</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>51.1%</td>
<td>54.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41.8%</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td>49.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional % Latino</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is also interesting to look at regional differences. For example, schools in the Greater Bay Area actually serve a higher percentage of Latino students than their regional counterparts. In Los Angeles Unified, charters serve fewer Latino students numerically, but new charter schools have a higher proportion of Latino students than the traditional school LAUSD average.

In terms of English Learners, the 8% difference in ELL enrollment between charter schools and traditional public schools will be explored more thoroughly in an upcoming CCSA publication. But at a high level, school typology, such as being classroom-based or having a high level of autonomy, seems to have a relationship with EL enrollments at charter schools, especially once we control for urbanicity. When the focus is narrowed to autonomous, classroom-based charter schools we see they have nearly closed the gap in EL enrollments in urban and suburban areas. When we compare urban, autonomous, classroom-based charter schools to urban traditional public schools we see a 1.7% gap in EL enrollments (38.7% ELs in the selected urban charters compared to 40.4% ELs at urban traditional schools). Suburban autonomous classroom-based charters also showed a 1.7% gap in ELs compared to suburban traditional schools (34.8% ELs in the selected suburban charters compared to 33.1% ELs in the suburban traditional schools). Together these autonomous, classroom-based charter schools (urban and suburban) where there is little-to-no gap between charters and traditional public schools represent 40% of California’s charter schools.

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6 We included areas designated at towns in our “suburban” category. These categories of urbanicity are based on data from the U.S. Census and are available through the CDE in the Public Schools Database at http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/si/ds/pubchls.asp.

7 We did not have comprehensive data on classroom-based and non-classroom-based traditional schools and also do not consider traditional schools to have varying degrees of autonomy according to CCSA’s definition of autonomy. Therefore, all traditional schools included here have been categorized as classroom-based and comparable to charter schools across various levels of autonomy.
Growth and Typology: Management Structure

Aside from trends in student demographics, there are other clear patterns in the types of new charter schools that are opening, in terms of their management model, levels of autonomy, status as classroom or nonclassroom-based, and startups or conversions. First, in terms of management model, “freestanding” charter schools (single-site schools unaffiliated with a network or charter management organization) represent roughly 60% of all California charter schools. While the percent of new charter schools that are freestanding has been consistent in the past, in 2012 there was a slight increase in the percent of new schools that were freestanding (67%). However, this increase is due primarily to an influx in the number of non-autonomous conversions which constituted 45% of the growth in freestanding charters in 2012 (discussed below). If these district-led and operated schools are removed from the comparison, there is actually a dip in the percent of freestanding schools in the 2012 new school growth profile.
The other 41% of all active charters are affiliated with at least one other charter, either through a
Charter Management Organization (CMO), or a Charter Network. CCSA defines a “CMO” as network
of three or more schools, linked by a common philosophy and centralized governance or operations.
“Networked” schools are defined as schools linked by a common philosophy but not centralized
governance or operations; or a CMO with less than three schools. Currently 28% of all active charters
are part of a CMO, and 13% operate as a networked school.

For the last three years, CMO and networked charters combined have consistently represented 41%
of all charters. However, as mentioned above, 2012 was an atypical year and CMO’s and networked
schools only represented 33% of new school growth that year (24% and 9% respectively). As noted
above, this is likely the result of the atypical volume of non-autonomous conversions that inflated the
percent of freestanding schools.

Growth and Typology: Autonomy

When viewed through the lens of autonomy rather than management model, we see that two-
thirds (68%) of all California charter schools are fully autonomous. The California Charter Schools
Association defines fully autonomous charter schools as those that have an independent board of
directors, do not operate under the local school district’s collective bargaining agreement, are directly
funded by the state (as opposed to indirectly funded through the local school district) and are likely
to be incorporated as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. While still subject to authorizer oversight, the
organization established to lead the school maintains full control over their operations and leadership.

Less than a third (28%) of all charters are non-autonomous. These schools are characterized by
a governing board in which the authorizer appoints majority of the members; or the school is not
operated by an 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, is locally funded by the school district, and operates
under the local collective bargaining agreement. These charters typically function as one of the
schools of the district.

A very small proportion of charter schools (4%) fall somewhere in the middle of the autonomy
spectrum and are defined by CCSA as “semi-autonomous.” These schools may be locally funded, but
are operated by an independent 501(c)3 nonprofit organization and they are not part of the collective
bargaining agreement. Or, if these schools do participate in the local collective bargaining agreement,
they are direct funded and operated by an independent 501c3 nonprofit organization. To be classified
as semi-autonomous, schools have to maintain control of the majority of their operations, but may be
integrated in local systems in one way or another.
When we compare the autonomy classifications among all charter schools in California to the proportions among new schools, we see that many more new schools are non-autonomous (41% of 2012 new schools compared to 28% of all California charters). The percent of autonomous new schools in California dropped in 2012 (only 56% of new schools vs. 68% of all California charter schools).

When viewed over three years, we see that the percentage of autonomous charter schools has declined somewhat (down 3%) and the percentage of non-autonomous charter schools is increasing slowly (up 2%). The percentage of semi-autonomous schools has also increased slightly (by less than 1%).
Growth and Typology: Nonclassroom-based vs. Classroom Based

In addition to management model and autonomy, other key characteristics of charter schools by which to assess charter growth are classroom structure and mode of start-up. In terms of classroom structure, the California Department of Education categorizes charters as either classroom or nonclassroom-based depending on the percent of student instruction that happens on site. While more than three-fourths of California charters are classroom-based, currently 22% of charters are classified as nonclassroom based. As new schools have opened in the past three years, this overall percentage has remained steady.

It is important to note that a subset of these nonclassroom-based schools included programs that also have a site-based portion of the academic program. As of 2012, an estimated 27% of the nonclassroom-based programs had some component of site-based instruction or support. These are often referred to as “hybrid” or “combination” schools.

One interesting trend to note is the emerging growth of online, or virtual charter schools among new nonclassroom-based schools. In 2012, 13 of the 14 (87%) nonclassroom-based programs that opened had an emphasis on online instruction. This is a significant increase in the total number of virtual schools in California, which jumped from 31 to 44 schools statewide (a 42% one-year increase).

Growth and Typology: Conversion vs. Start-up

Another means of classifying the growth of California charter schools is by mode of start-up. There are two means by which a charter can open in California. The first is through the conversion of an existing district school to charter status. The second is a start-up through the creation of a new entity. Currently 18% (191) of all California charters are conversion schools, while 82% (875) were formed as new entities. For the schools that opened in 2012, there were more conversions than typical (36% of new charters in 2012 are conversions vs. 18% of all California charters). Of the 110 schools that opened last fall, 40 schools (36%) were conversions. This represents 36% of the total growth for that year. In comparison, conversions represented only about 13% of new school growth in 2010 and 2011, respectively. There were almost three times the number of conversions in 2012 than as compared to the two previous years.

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8 A nonclassroom-based school provides more than 20 percent of instructional time in a location different from the primary school site.
9 CCSA defined “virtual schools” as those that were be classified as virtual in the California Department of Education Charter Schools Directory, or clearly identified as “virtual” or “online” in the school name or non-profit incorporation name.
2012 was clearly an atypical year in terms of the volume of conversion schools. The influx in volume in 2012 included increases of both autonomous and non-autonomous conversions. Of the 40 new conversions in 2012, 33 of them were non-autonomous (operate as part of the authorizing district), while seven were autonomous (operate by CMOs or freestanding organizations). This large number of conversions was one of the highest in California charter school history for a given year.
ASAM Schools

One final lens through which to assess charter school growth is by looking at schools serving high risk student populations. California’s Alternative School Accountability Model (ASAM) designation identifies alternative schools serving highly mobile and at-risk students. Only a small percentage of charter schools participate in ASAM. In 2011-12, 5% of charter schools were ASAM compared to 11% of traditional public schools. These percentages have stayed relatively even for the past three years.

However, perhaps the more interesting story is the number of charters that report they serve “ASAM-like” populations, but do not participate in the alternative state framework. Based on school responses from the CCSA’s Fall Data Campaign,10 of the 409 non-ASAM schools (40% of all 2012-13 CA charter schools) that responded, 114 reported that at least 10% percent of their total population fell into at least one “ASAM-like” category, with 38 of these schools reporting a student concentration of 50% or more these kind of students. Based on a smaller number of responses (n=115), foster youth, credit deficient, medical needs, and migrant student population concentrations were the most frequently cited. While this is self-reported and not complete data, it does suggest that charters serve populations that are traditionally underserved.

10 The Fall Data Campaign is a CCSA led survey of all active charters schools in California. For the 2012-13 schools year, 583 charter schools responded between August and October 2012, resulting in a 55% response rate.
The 409 non-ASAM schools (40% of all 2012-13 CA charter schools) that responded reported the percent of their total populations that fell into at least one of the following "high risk" categories:

- Expelled from other schools
- Suspended from other schools more than 10 days in a school year
- Wards of the court or dependents of the court
- Pregnant and / or parenting
- Recovered dropouts
- Habitually truant or habitually insubordinate and disorderly
- Retained more than once in grades K-8
- Credit deficient
- Foster youth
- Migrant families
- Adjudicated youth
- Medical needs
- Homeless

115 schools responded that one or more of these high risk groups constituted greater than 10% of its student population.

- Foster Youth: 65
- Credit Deficient: 62
- Medical Needs: 59
- Migrant Families: 57
- Retained more than once in K-8: 55
- Homeless: 47
- Wards/dependents of the court: 46
- Expelled from other schools: 34
- Pregnant and / or parenting: 32
- Habitually truant / habitually insubordinate: 30
- Suspended from other schools more than...: 27
- Recovered Dropouts: 26
- Adjudicated Youth: 13
In sum, the growth in California charter schools is strong and increasing annually, doubling in size about every five years. Charters have a particularly robust presence in Los Angeles Unified, San Diego Unified, Oakland Unified, and the city of San Jose. Student demographics in charter schools are similar to traditional public schools for the most part; where there are differences we see them narrowing somewhat over time.

2012 was a somewhat anomalous year, in that there were triple the number of conversion charter schools as in typical years, many of them non-autonomous, freestanding schools. Charter management organizations and networks contributed a combined third of new charter school growth (down somewhat from previous years) but the proportion of classroom based vs. nonclassroom-based charter schools (78%/22%) has remained consistent. One interesting trend among nonclassroom-based charters is the growing number of online/virtual schools.

Lastly, charter schools serve a wide diversity of high-risk populations; even though only 5% of charter schools are designated as participating in the state’s Alternative School Accountability Model system, a much higher proportion of California’s charter schools report serving substantial numbers of high-risk students.