CREDO Report 2023 Summary

The 2023 CREDO Report is a national study evaluating students' academic progress in charter schools in the United States. The report looks at data from 2015–2019 to answer the following questions:

1. How do charter school students' academic progress compare to peers in traditional public schools?
2. How do *specific groups* of charter school students' academic progress compare to peers in traditional public schools?
3. What are the effects of different charter school settings on student performance?
4. What are the effects of Charter Management Organizations (CMOs or networks) on student progress?

Using student and school-level data, CREDO matched each charter school student with a "virtual twin" to complete analyses. The "virtual twin" represents students who attend traditional public schools, have identical traits (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, English proficiency, poverty status, special education status, and grade level) and exact or similar test scores. Therefore, any differences in performance could be attributed to the charter school.

Unfortunately, Georgia data were not included in the report. Thus, exact national comparisons are not available. However, SCSC staff analyzed the academic progress of state charter schools in Georgia for the same subgroups (when possible) across the same five-year period.

Findings

1. CREDO Finding: The typical charter school student **grew more in reading and math** than matched peers in traditional public schools they'd otherwise attend. These average effects are across all students and schools for all time periods.
   - SCSC Finding: The percentage of SCSC schools with higher growth scores than traditional public schools from which their students would otherwise attend increased from 2015 to 2019.
   - In 2021-2022, 51 percent of SCSC schools achieved higher growth than their traditional public school comparisons.
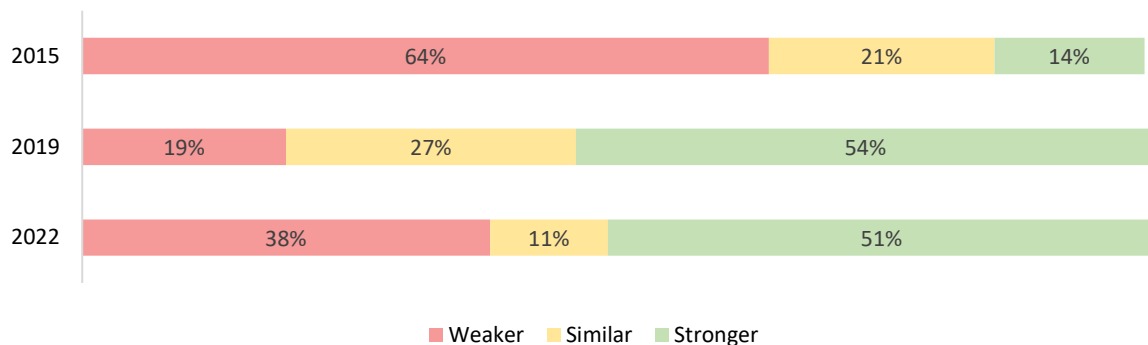

Figure 1- SCSC Schools' Performance on Growth Measures Relative to Traditional Public School Comparison

2. CREDO Finding: The academic performance of Black and Hispanic students attending charters grew by large margins relative to their peers attending traditional public schools. Charter students in poverty had stronger growth than their peers attending traditional public schools. Students with IEPs had significantly weaker growth than those in traditional public schools.
   - SCSC Finding: Between 2015 and 2019 the share of majority-minority schools outperforming their traditional public school comparisons on growth measures increased from 17 percent to 60 percent. In the same period, the share of schools with a substantial percentage of students living in poverty outperforming their traditional public school comparison increased from 9 percent to 47 percent.
3. CREDO Finding: The academic performance of students enrolled in virtual charter schools compared poorly to that of students enrolled in traditional public schools as well as those enrolled in brick-and-mortar charter schools.
   - SCSC Finding: SCSC virtual charters have improved their performance along growth measures relative to their traditional public school comparisons. Both SCSC virtual charters moved from weaker to similar performance between 2015 and 2019.
4. CREDO Finding: On average, stand-alone charter schools and CMO-affiliated charter schools outperform a matched comparison group of typical public schools. CMO-affiliated charter schools show statistically better outcomes for elementary and middle school students when compared to stand-alone charter schools and have similar levels of growth at the high school level.
   - SCSC Finding: CMO-affiliated schools within the SCSC portfolio improved academic performance relative to their traditional public school comparisons between 2015 and 2019. 88 percent of CMO-affiliated SCSC schools performed similarly or stronger than traditional public school comparisons in 2019, whereas 75 percent produced weaker growth in 2015. Of the six SCSC schools that partnered with CMOs, five serve students across multiple grade bands.

Table 1. CREDO Academic Growth Relative to Traditional Public Schools by School Type or Setting

School Type or Setting	Reading Growth	Math Growth
Elementary	more	more
Middle	more	more
High	more	more
Multilevel (e.g., K-8, K-12, 6-12)	as well as	less
Virtual	less	less
Brick-and-mortar	more	more
Urban	more	more
Suburban	more	as well as
Town	as well as	as well as
Rural	as well as	less

Table 2. CREDO Academic Growth Relative to Traditional Public Schools by Student Subgroup

Group of Students	Reading Growth	Math Growth
White	as well as	less
Black	more	more
Hispanic	more	more
Asian/Pacific Islander	as well as	as well as
Native American	as well as	less
Multiracial	as well as	less
Students in Poverty	more	more
English-language Learners	more	more
Students with IEPs	less	less

Table 3. SCSC School Performance Relative to Traditional Public Schools by School Type, Setting and Demographics

School by Type, Setting and Demographic Makeup	2015			2019		
	Stronger	Similar	Weaker	Stronger	Similar	Weaker
Elementary	--	--	--	75% (n=4)	--	25% (n=4)
Middle	100% (n=1)	--	--	100% (n=1)	--	--
High	--	--	100% (n=1)	--	--	--
Multilevel (e.g., K-8, K-12, 6-12)	8% (n=12)	8% (n=12)	83% (n=12)	48% (n=21)	33% (n=21)	4 (n=21)
Virtual	--	--	100% (n=3)	--	100% (n=2)	--
Brick-and-mortar	17% (n=12)	8% (n=12)	75% (n=12)	52% (n=27)	19% (n=27)	30% (n=27)
CMO-affiliated	0% (n=4)	25% (n=4)	75% (n=4)	33% (n=6)	50% (n=6)	17% (n=6)
Urban	--	--	100% (n=4)	57% (n=7)	14% (n=7)	29% (n=7)
Suburban	20% (n=5)	20% (n=5)	60% (n=5)	62% (n=13)	23% (n=13)	15% (n=13)
Town	--	--	100% (n=1)	100% (n=1)	--	--
Rural	100% (n=1)	--	--	67% (n=3)	--	33% (n=3)
Majority-minority	17% (n=6)	33% (n=6)	50% (n=6)	60% (n=15)	20% (n=15)	20% (n=15)
Economically-Disadvantaged (>40%)	9% (n=11)	18% (n=11)	73% (n=11)	47% (n=17)	24% (n=17)	29% (n=17)