



A Summary of the Charter Authorizer Accountability Report 2012-13

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June 2015

What We Studied

In Senate Bill (SB) 2 (83rd Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2013), the Texas Legislature added Texas Education Code (TEC) § 12.1013 (a)-(d). This legislation required that charter school performance to be compared to comparable traditional public schools. The Bill mandated that information be presented to the public. Senate Bill (SB) 2 further stated that comparisons should be made for each charter authorizer type, e.g., charter schools authorized by district school boards (campus charter schools), charter schools authorized by the State Board of Education (open-enrollment charter schools) and charter schools authorized by the commissioner of the state education agency¹ (open-enrollment charter schools). This report responds to that mandate, using Texas' P-20/Workforce Repository data for the 2012–13 school year. In particular, the following summary reviews descriptive results comparing charter school types to matched traditional public schools on four Performance Indices and student mobility then specifically highlights Alternative Education Accountability charter schools.

During 2012–13, there were 620 charter school campuses in Texas.² Of these, 552 (89%) were open-enrollment charter school campuses and 68 (11%) were campus charter schools. These schools included campuses that operated under standard accountability procedures as well as schools that operated under Alternative Education Accountability (AEA) procedures. Many of the AEA campuses, also referred to as Alternate Education Campuses (AECs), focus on dropout prevention and recovery. While 7% of Texas schools overall were charter schools, 39% of the state's AEA campuses (154 schools) were chartered. Forty-one AEA charter school campuses were residential treatment facilities. Just over 4% of Texas public school students (212,711 students), attended charter school campuses. Of these, 179,120 (84%) attended open-enrollment charter campuses. When compared to other public school students in Texas, open-enrollment charter school students were more often African American and economically disadvantaged. Students who attended campus charter schools (33,591 students; 16% of charter school students) were more often Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, and in middle school.

How We Analyzed the Data

A propensity score matching process was used to find 40 traditional similar campuses for each of the 579 charter

¹ Prior to SB 2, the two charter authorizers were the SBOE for open-enrollment charters and school districts for campus charter schools. The passage of SB 2 changed the open-enrollment charter authorizer to the commissioner of the state education agency instead of the SBOE, although the SBOE still has the ability to vote (by majority) not to approve the commissioner's selections. There were no data available for this type of charter school for 2012–13. The first year during which commissioner-authorized charter schools can operate is 2014–15.

² Source: Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) data from TEA 2012–13 downloaded from the TEA website: 2013 Accountability System data file titled "Accountability Index Scores and Rating" (variables: Campus 2013 Flag – Alternative Education Campus of Choice and/or Residential Treatment Facility under AEA Procedures, Campus 2013 Flag - Charter School, Campus 2013 Flag – DAEP, Campus 2013 Flag – JJAEP). ERC PEIMS data file: p.campus13 charter school designation (variable: CAMP_CHARTTYPE).

campus included in the analysis.³ Based on each campus' values for the demographic characteristics⁴, a score was given to each campus. Campuses with the closest scores to the charter campuses were chosen for the traditional comparison group, referred to as matched traditional schools. Due to the matching process, the percentages between charter school campuses and the respective matched traditional school campuses are similar. Yet, it is important to note that variation across the variables does exist even after the matching process. In most cases variation is minor, but these differences could result in differences seen in the descriptive outcome analyses.

One of the measures of student achievement consists of the Performance Index of TEA's Accountability Rating System for Public Schools and Districts in Texas. The Performance Indices were first introduced in 2013 and include:

- **Index 1 - Student Achievement**
 - As measured by the STAAR passing rates.
- **Index 2 - Student Progress**
 - As measured by the improvement from prior STAAR testing.
- **Index 3 - Closing Performance Gaps**
 - As measured by the improvement from prior STAAR testing by students identified as economically disadvantaged and students in a school's two lowest performing ethnic groups.
- **Index 4 - Postsecondary Readiness**
 - As measured by a combination of high school graduation rates with the degree programs which graduates fulfilled (Recommended High School Program/ Distinguished Achievement Program or Minimum High School Program). This index is reported for high schools only.

Each of the four indexes yields a score of 0 to 100, representing campus performance as a percentage of the maximum possible points for that campus. Campus scores for each index are a part of the annual school accountability summary created by TEA; campus and district accountability summaries can be accessed through the TEA's Performance Reporting Division's home page on the worldwide web.

Beyond the indices as outcome measures, campus mobility was also used as an outcome to investigate student movement. The mobility rate is calculated at the campus level and TEA defines a student as "mobile" if s/he has been in membership at the school for less than 83% of the school year (i.e., has missed six or more weeks at a particular school).

What We Discovered

Comparing all Charter Schools with matched Traditional Schools

Looking at all charter schools (including AEA campuses), overall descriptive results indicated that when both open-enrollment charter school campuses and campus charter schools are compared to schools that serve similar student populations in traditional public school campuses, the students in the open-enrollment and campus charter schools attain student achievement, dropout, graduation and student attrition outcomes that are approximately equal to those of traditional public schools.

³ Residential treatment facilities (41 charter AEA campuses), Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEP), and JJAEP (Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Programs) were excluded from the analysis due to their scope and unique purposes.

⁴ Demographic variables used for matching included: campus type, campus size, racial composition, gender ratio, ELL ratio, economically disadvantaged ratio, gifted and talented ratio, special education ratio, at-risk ratio, and location (urban, suburban, or rural). It is important to note that the percent of students who are mobile could not be used as a matching variable, as it was an outcome measure in this report.

Open-Enrollment Charter Schools Results

Students in open-enrollment charter schools were more often:

- African American (21.8% versus 12.4% for students in other Texas public schools); and
- Economically disadvantaged (70.1% versus 59.8% for students in other Texas public schools)

Students in open-enrollment charter schools were less often:

- White (16.1%, versus 30.6% for students in other Texas public schools); and
- In Career & Technical Education programs (8.9%, versus 22.5% for students in other Texas public schools)

Campus Charter School Results

Students in campus charter schools were more often:

- Hispanic (66.2% versus 51.1% for students in other Texas public schools);
- Economically disadvantaged (77.9% versus 59.8% for students in other Texas public schools); and
- In middle school (33.6% versus 22.0% for students in other Texas public schools)

Students in campus charter schools were less often:

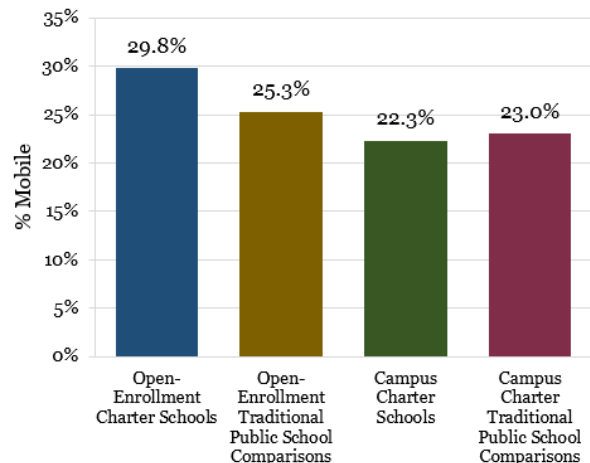
- White (11.8%, versus 30.6% for students in other Texas public schools);
- In CTE programs (8.6% versus 22.5% for students in other Texas public schools); and
- In elementary school (39.9% versus 50.5% for students in other Texas public schools)

Figure 1 illustrates student mobility percentages by authorizer type for charter school campuses and their matched traditional comparison schools. As Figure 1 shows, open-enrollment charter school campuses have an average mobility rate of 29.8%, while the rate for their matched traditional comparison group is 25.3%. Rates of mobility for campus charter schools; however, are nearly identical to mobility rates for their traditional comparison schools.

Scores on each index for charter school campuses by authorizer type and for their traditional school comparisons are presented in Figure 2. Numbers in the figure are the average score on each index. Both types of charter schools attained scores on each index which are highly similar to the scores of their matched comparisons. The largest difference occurs for campus charter schools on Index 2 (Student Progress), where campus charter schools' scores are 5 points higher than those of their matched traditional schools comparisons. Index 2 is based on previous year and is intended to provide a measure of growth rather than an overall level of achievement.

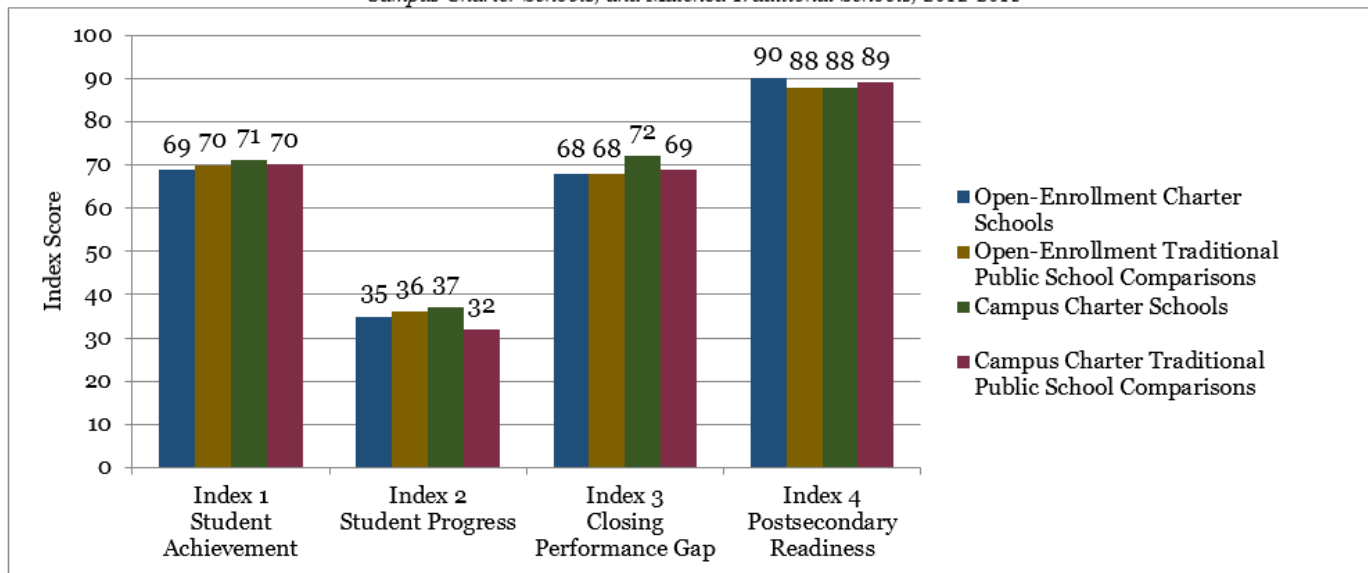
The analysis of the 579 charter schools found that these schools are performing at a comparable level as that of similar traditional schools. Percentages and scores for student mobility, graduation rates, dropout rates and academic assessments show only small differences. When comparisons that include all school levels are considered, the largest difference found between open-enrollment charter school campuses and their matched comparisons was a 4.5% difference in student mobility rates (29.8% versus 25.3%, respectively). The largest difference for campus charter schools and their matched comparisons occurred for TEA's Performance Index 2 (Student Progress). Campus charter schools attained an average score of 37; their matched comparisons attained an average score of 32. It is important to note that the results presented are descriptive. Further statistical analysis is necessary to state whether the described differences are empirically supported.

Figure 1 Student Mobility Rates for Open-Enrollment Charter School Campuses, Campus Charter Schools, and Matched Traditional Schools, 2012–13



Data Source: TEA Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR) 2012–2013

Figure 2 TEA Performance Index Scores for Open-Enrollment Charter Schools, Campus Charter Schools, and Matched Traditional Schools, 2012-2013

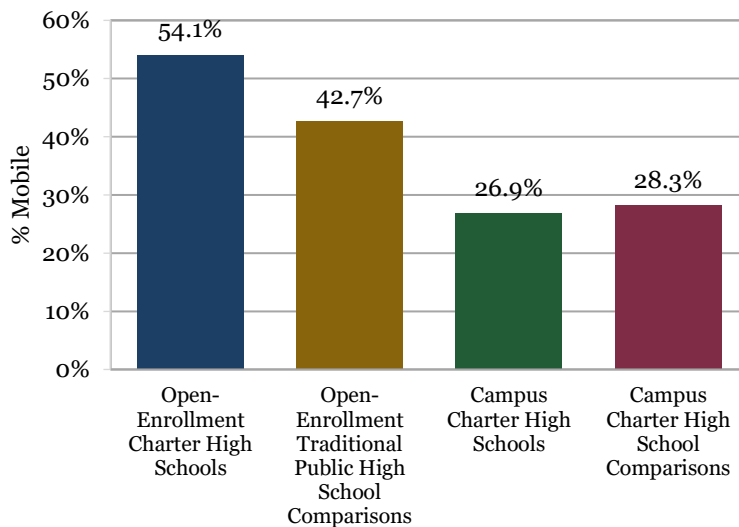


Data Source: TEA Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR) 2012-13, 2013 Accountability System data file titled "Accountability Index Scores and Rating"
 Note 1: Each index yields a score of 0 to 100 which represents campus performance as a percentage of the maximum possible points for that campus.
 Note 2: Index 4, Postsecondary Readiness, includes only high schools.

Results – Comparing all Charter Schools with MATCHED Traditional Schools split by campus level (elementary, middle, high school)

To obtain the descriptive results presented in this section, students from both charter schools with matched traditional public schools as before, but were further broken down by school level, (elementary, middle or high school) and by charter authorizer type to create 12 different groups. Mobility rates are higher for high schools than for elementary and middle schools. However, as figure 3 illustrates, mobility rates for campus charter high schools and their traditional high school comparisons remain similar (26.9% and 28.3% respectively). Greater differences are found between open-enrollment charter high school campuses and their traditional public school comparisons; mobility rates are also highest for this set of schools (54.1% for charters; 42.7% for traditional schools). It should be noted that many of the open-enrollment charter high school campuses served populations that are prone to mobility challenges, as they include campuses for “dropout recovery” and for at-risk students.

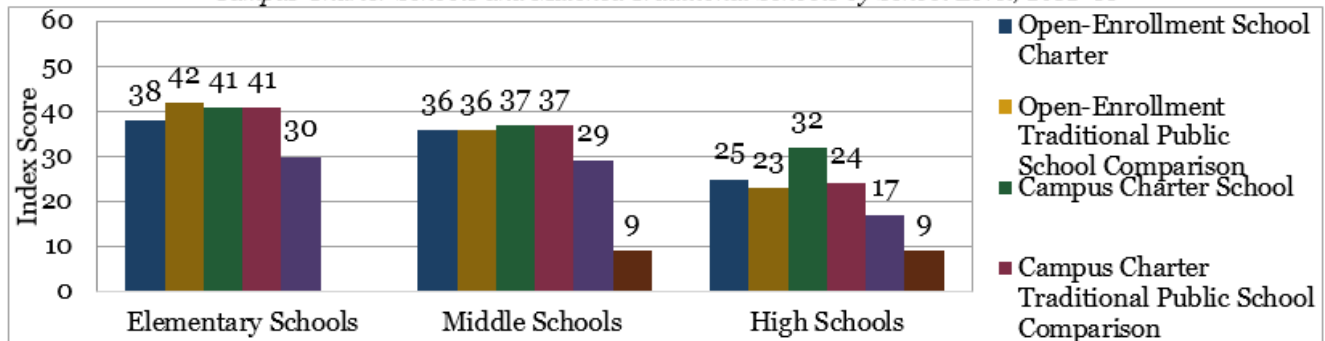
Figure 3 Mobility Rates for Open-Enrollment Charter High School Campuses, Campus Charter High School, and Matched Traditional High Schools, 2012-2013



Data Source: TEA Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR) 2012-2013

Figure 4 depicts elementary, middle, and high schools as if all students enrolled in open-enrollment, campus charter schools, or matched traditional public schools were considered to be enrolled in one large school within the school type and at each level (elementary, middle and high). Schools in Texas are rated using either standard or AEA accountability procedures. As such, both the standard and the AEA accountability targets for 2012-13 are listed to represent schools that use both types of accountability ratings.

Figure 4: TEA Performance Index 2 Scores for Open-Enrollment Charter School Campuses, Campus Charter Schools and Matched Traditional Schools by School Level, 2012–13



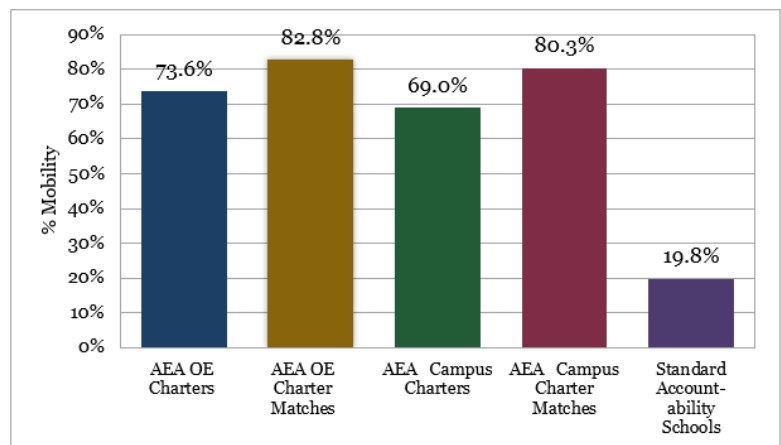
Data Source: TEA 2013 Accountability System data file titled “Accountability Index Scores and Rating”; TEA 2013 Accountability Manual.
 Note1: Performance Index 2 yields a score of 0 to 100 which represents campus performance as a percentage of the maximum possible points for that campus. Note 2: Only middle and high schools are eligible to apply to be evaluated under the Alternative Education Accountability (AEA) procedures; therefore no target is set for elementary schools.

The data presented above suggested that there is little variability in student mobility or scores on student assessment measures between charter schools and their matched traditional comparison schools at the elementary and middle school levels. All school types had mobility rates between 16.9% and 21.6% and achieved their lowest Performance Index Score on Index 2 (Student Progress).

No school type (open-enrollment charter school, campus charter school, or respective traditional school comparisons) presented a profile on performance that markedly stood out from other school types. Yet, outcomes for high schools showed greater variability. Although differences were generally small, open-enrollment high school campuses tended to have outcomes that are equal to or less desirable than those of their traditional comparison schools. They have the highest rate of mobility (54.1%) among the four schools types.

In contrast, campus charter high schools tend to have outcomes that are higher/more desirable than those of their traditional comparison schools, although as before, differences are generally small. Among the four sets of schools, student mobility rates are lowest for campus charter high schools (26.9%) and these schools also have the highest graduation rate (97.1%) and the highest scores on TEA Performance Indices 1 (Student Achievement), 2 (Student Performance), and 3 (Closing Achievement Gaps).

Figure 5 Mobility Rates for AEA Open-Enrollment Charter School Campuses, AEA Campus Charter Schools, Matched AEA Charter School Campuses, and Standard Accountability Schools, 2012-2013



Data Source: TEA Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR) 2012-2013
 Note: Alternative Education Accountability (AEA), Open-enrollment (OE)

Results – Comparing AEA Charter Schools with AEA MATCHED Traditional Schools

AEA campuses, including AEA charter school campuses, must serve students “at risk of dropping out of school” as defined in TEC, Chapter 29, Subchapter § 29.081(d) and provide accelerated instructional services to these students. These schools and residential treatment facilities provide non-traditional learning environments that are responsive to the unique needs of students, offer options to enhance student achievement, and ensure that at-risk students demonstrate satisfactory performance on the state assessments and meet graduation requirements. The AEA procedures include the same indicators as are used in the standard accountability system, but the standards (targets) differ for AEA campuses.

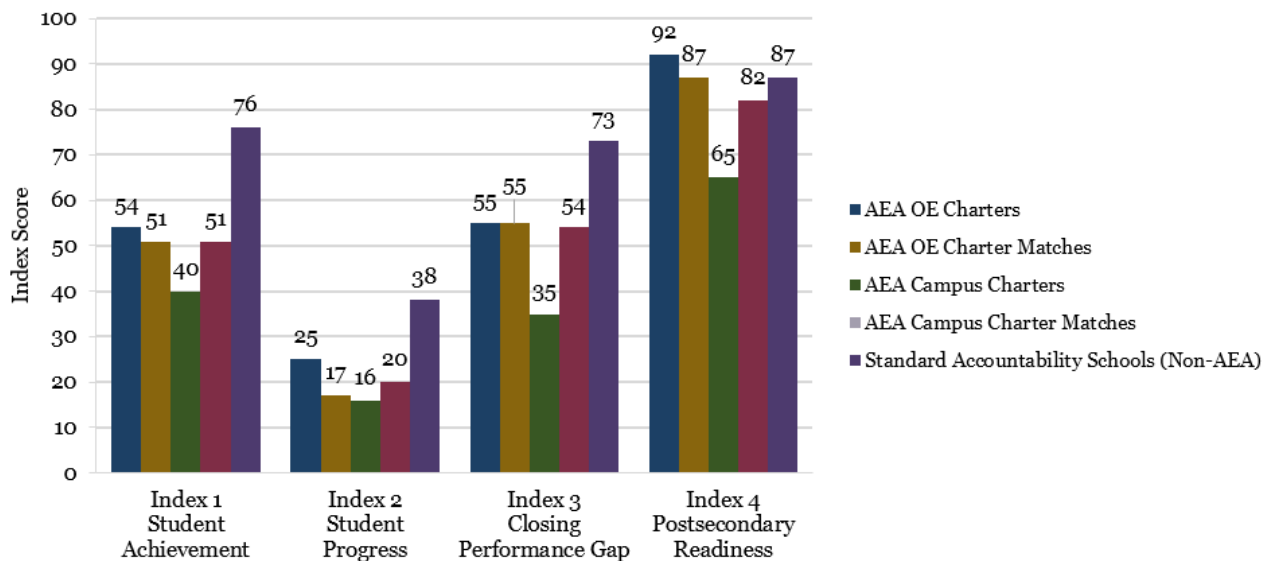
Outcomes presented in this section are based on a new data set that contains different matches than were used previously. The initial data base for the new data set included the 154 AEA charter school campuses described above. The matching procedure followed the same propensity score matching process described earlier in the text. Even though the matches for each AEA charter school campus could contain repeated matches (i.e., an AEA campus which was not a charter school campus could be matched to more than one AEA charter school campus), 10 acceptable matches could not be found for all 154 AEA charter school campuses. Matches were found for 131 (85%) of the AEA charter school campuses. The AEA charter school campuses for which 10 matches were found served mainly students who were of high-school age.

Figure 5 shows mobility rates for each type of AEA charter school campus, for their AEA campus comparison school groups, and for schools that used standard accountability procedures. As might be expected, mobility rates are far lower for standard accountability schools than for AEA campuses. In each AEA campus comparison, however, mobility rates are lower for AEA charter school campuses than for their matched AEA comparison schools. The difference is slightly greater for AEA campus charter schools (11.3% lower) than for AEA open-enrollment charter school campuses (9.2% lower). Many of the AEA campuses serve populations that are highly likely to be mobile, since one of the TEA requirements is that each AEC must have at least 75 percent at-risk student enrollment.

The four Performance Indices described earlier for both types of AEA charter school campuses and their respective comparisons are shown in Figure 6. It is important to note that dropout rates for campuses rated under the AEA system are used differently from the way in which they are used in the standard accountability rating system. The annual dropout rate conversion is modified to give AEA campuses and districts points in Index 4 for annual dropout rates lower than 20%.

Scores on Index 4 (Postsecondary Readiness) achieved by AEA open-enrollment charter school campuses exceed scores for both standard accountability schools and scores for their matched comparison AEA schools. This is noteworthy, as it is the only instance in which the AEA schools have scores that are higher than or equal to those of standard accountability schools. Scores for the other three indices, and for Index 4 for AEA campus charter schools and their matched comparison AEA schools fall below the scores for standard accountability schools.

Figure 6 TEA Performance Index Scores for AEA Open-Enrollment Charter School Campuses, AEA Campus Charter Schools, Matched AEA Charter School Campuses, and Standard Accountability Schools, 2012-2013



Data Source: Data from TEA 2013 Accountability System data file titled "Accountability Index Scores and Rating".
 Note 1: Each index yields a score of 0 to 100 that represents campus performance as a percentage of the maximum possible points for that campus. Note 2: Alternative Education Accountability (AEA), open-enrollment (OE)

Although differences are small, scores for AEA open-enrollment charter school campuses exceed those of their matched comparison AEA schools for three of the four Performance Indices (Student Achievement, Student Progress, and Postsecondary Readiness). Scores for the two groups are equal for Index 3 (Closing the Performance Gap). Scores for AEA campus charter schools are lower than those of all comparison groups for all four indices.

In examining comparisons between AEA open-enrollment charter school campuses and AEA campus charter schools and their matched AEA comparison schools, it is important to keep in mind that the number of schools which could be used to create the samples for analyses was limited. It was only possible to find 10 suitable comparison AEA campuses for 131 of the 154 AEA charter school campuses, and only 7 of these were campus charter AEA schools. Therefore, only tentative conclusions can be drawn.

Students in AEA open-enrollment charter school campuses were more often:

- Economically disadvantaged (76% versus 63% for students in schools which used standard accountability procedures);
- At-risk (90% versus 45% for students in schools which used standard accountability procedures), and
- Enrolled in CTE programs (36% versus 16% for students in schools which used standard accountability procedures).

Students in AEA campus charter schools were less often:

- White (11%, versus 33% for students in schools which used standard accountability procedures).

Students in AEA campus charter schools were more often:

- African American (41% versus 13% for in schools which used standard accountability procedures), and
- At-risk (78% versus 45% for students in in schools which used standard accountability procedures).

Overall, when compared to schools in Texas rated using standard accountability procedures, AEA charter school campuses have lower scores/passing rates for most of the outcomes addressed. Most educators would predict this, given the challenging characteristics of the students that AEA campuses serve. By definition, an AEA campus must have a student enrollment of which at least 75% are classified as at-risk. Nonetheless, outcomes for the 124 open-enrollment charter school AEA campuses compared favorably to outcomes for their matched AEA campus comparisons. While mobility rates are lower (10.4% versus 12.7% for dropouts; 73.6% versus 82.8% for mobility rates), their scores are equal to or higher than those of their comparison AEA schools for all four TEA Performance Indices, although the largest difference is 8 points (on a 100 point scale). This difference occurred for Index 2 (Student Progress).

Policy Recommendations/Conclusions

The full report (found at http://tea.texas.gov/index2.aspx?id=2147485609&menu_id=949) responds to SB2 of the 83rd Texas Legislature, Regular Session (2013) request for an annual report concerning the performance of open-enrollment charter schools by authorizer compared to campus charter schools and matched traditional campuses, (TEC § 12.1013(a)). This brief only addresses a part of the full report.

The 620 charter schools that were in operation in Texas during the review period were a collection of diverse educational entities that included traditional campuses, schools that focused on dropout prevention and recovery, and a variety of residential treatment facilities. These schools frequently serve students of color, students who are at risk of dropping out and students who are economically disadvantaged. The charter schools serve these special subgroups in greater proportions than do many other schools in Texas. The majority of these schools operated under open-enrollment charters (89%); the rest operated under campus charters (11%).

Each open-enrollment charter school campus and campus charter school was matched to a group of 40 traditional public schools. A variety of demographic characteristics were used as matching variables. The use of multiple matching variables was important to assure that outcome comparisons were made using traditional schools that had student populations similar to those of the charter schools.

The analysis of the 579 charter schools found that these charter schools are performing at a comparable level to that of similar traditional schools. Percentages and scores for student mobility, graduation rates, dropout rates, and academic assessments show only small differences. No school type (open-enrollment charter school, campus charter school or the traditional school comparisons for each) presented a profile that markedly stood out from other school types. In addition, the data presented above suggested that there is little variability in student mobility or scores on student assessment measures between charter schools and their matched traditional comparison schools at the elementary and middle school levels.

Outcomes for high schools show greater variability, although differences are generally small. Open-enrollment high school campuses tend to have outcomes which are equal to or less desirable than those of their traditional comparison schools. In contrast, campus charter high schools tend to have outcomes which are higher/more desirable than those of their traditional comparison schools, although as before, differences are generally small.

Finally, outcomes for the 124 open-enrollment charter school AEA campuses compare favorably to outcomes for their matched AEA campus comparisons. Open-enrollment AEA charter school campus student performance scores are equal to or higher than those of their comparison AEA schools for all four TEA Performance Indices. The largest difference is 8 points (on a 100 point scale). This difference was found for Index 2 (Student Progress). In the vast majority of cases, comparisons suggested that charter schools in 2012–13 were no more, or no less, successful with the student population that they served than were traditional public schools.

The University of Texas at Austin ERC is a research center and P-20/Workforce Repository site which provides access to longitudinal, student-level data for scientific inquiry and policymaking purposes. Since its inception in 2008, the Texas ERC's goal is to bridge the gap between theory and policy by providing a cooperative research environment for study by both scholars and policy makers. As part of its mission, the ERC works with researchers, practitioners, state and federal agencies, and other policymakers to help inform upon critical issues relating to education today.

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