

# Credo 2015 Report Summary

## Highlights of the Report

This report presents an investigation conducted by CREDO over the past two years. We examined charter school performance in urban areas, driven by our ongoing effort to identify successful models for educating America's students, particularly students of color and students living in poverty.

We sought to determine whether urban charter schools have different performance than other schools in their communities. In addition, we asked if urban charter schools present results that differ from the charter school landscape as a whole, as estimated in the 2013 National Charter School Study. Finally, if differences were identified in urban charter schools, could we provide any insight into which elements of the urban charter sectors might correlate with differences in results?

Using student level data obtained via data sharing agreements with our state education agency partners, we studied 41 urban areas in 22 states covering the school years 2006-07 through 2011-12. The outcome of interest was the academic advancement in one year's time of a typical student in a charter school compared to the same measure for a virtual peer from local traditional public schools in the same location as the charter school.

Highlights of the findings are presented below. Please see the full report for greater detail on each of these findings.

- 1. Our findings show urban charter schools in the aggregate provide significantly higher levels of annual growth in both math and reading compared to their TPS peers.**  
Specifically, students enrolled in urban charter schools experience 0.055 standard deviations (s.d.'s) greater growth in math and 0.039 s.d.'s greater growth in reading per year than their matched peers in TPS. These results translate to urban charter students receiving the equivalent of roughly 40 days of additional learning per year in math and 28 additional days of learning per year in reading.
- 2. When learning gains for urban charter students are presented for individual urban regions, regions with larger learning gains in charter schools outnumber those with smaller learning gains two-to-one.** In math, 26 urban regions post learning gains for charter school students that outpace their TPS counterparts. Charter schools in 11 urban areas have smaller math gains, and four regions have equivalent learning gains in math. In reading, charter school students in 23 of the 41 regions demonstrate larger learning gains than their TPS peers, while 10 regions have smaller gains. Charter schools in eight regions have similar student learning gains in reading compared to TPS peers.
- 3. Learning gains for charter school students are larger by significant amounts for Black, Hispanic, low-income, and special education students in both math and reading.** Students who are both low-income and Black or Hispanic, or who are both Hispanic and English

Language Learners, especially benefit from charter schools, Gains for these subpopulations amount to months of additional learning per year.

4. **Positive results for charter school students increased on average over the period of the study.** In the 2008-09 school year, charter attendance on average produced 29 additional days of learning for students in math and 24 additional days of learning in reading. By the 2011-12 school year, charter students received 58 additional learning days in math and 41 additional days in reading relative to their TPS peers.
5. **Compared to the charter school landscape as a whole, (see CREDO's National Charter School Study 2013), the 41 urban charter regions have improved results at both ends of the quality spectrum: they have larger shares of schools that are better than TPS alternatives and smaller shares of under-performing schools.** Specifically, 43 percent of urban charter schools deliver larger learning gains in math than the local TPS alternative, with 33 percent showing equivalent results and 24 percent posting smaller learning gains. In reading, 38 percent of urban charter schools outpace their TPS peers, 46 percent fare the same, and only 16 percent of urban charter schools have smaller gains each year.
6. **Despite the overall positive learning impacts, there are urban communities in which the majority of the charter schools lag the learning gains of their TPS counterparts, some to distressingly large degrees.** In some urban areas, cities have no schools that post better gains than their TPS alternatives and more than half the schools are significantly worse.

The results reported in this study continue to build a record of many charter schools operating in challenging environments that repeatedly demonstrate the ability to educate all students to high levels. While some urban charter sectors continue to struggle, successful charter schools are growing in number and expand the evidence base that schools and communities can organize and operate public schools that deliver the academic progress their students need to be successful in school, work, and life.