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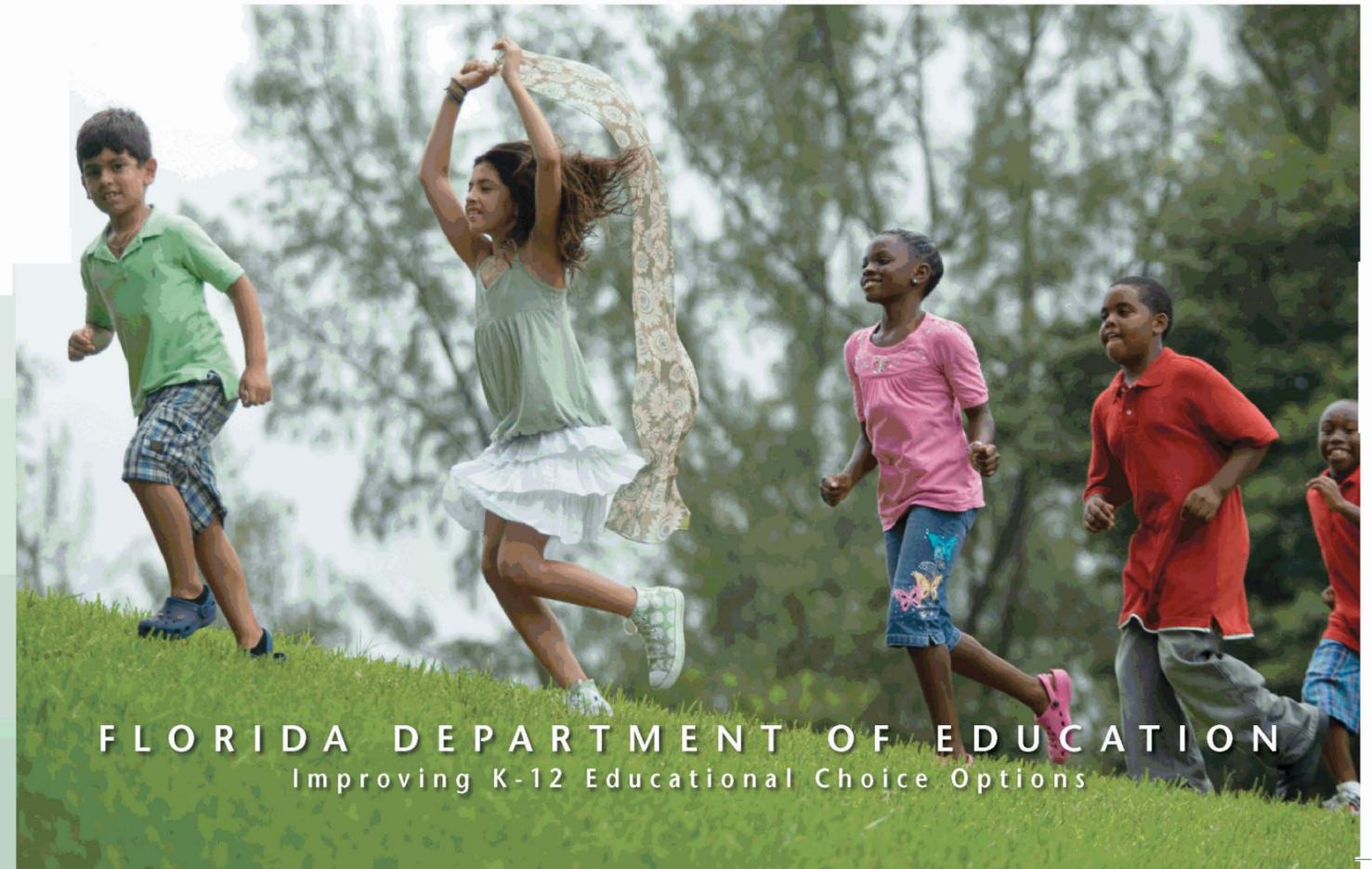
Student Achievement in Florida's Charter Schools:

A Comparison with Achievement in Traditional Public Schools

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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Improving K-12 Educational Choice Options

About This Report

Section 1002.33(23), Florida Statutes, requires the Florida Department of Education to prepare an annual statewide analysis of student achievement in charter schools versus the achievement of comparable students in traditional public schools. This report of charter school student performance fulfills the statutory requirement for the 2007-08 school year. The analysis examines the average performance of charter school students and traditional public school students using seven years of Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test® (FCAT) reading and math test scores, as well as the FCAT science test scores that were added to the school grading calculation in 2007-08. Only students who were enrolled in a charter school or a traditional public school for an entire school year are included in the analysis. Limiting the analysis to include only full-year students is consistent with the state's school accountability system for awarding school grades under the A+ Plan. In addition, the report compares charter and traditional public schools in terms of achievement gaps and student learning gains.

The analysis and production of this report was a coordinated effort between the Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice and the Bureau of Evaluation and Reporting in the Division of Accountability, Research, and Measurement. Additional information about charter schools and other school choice options is available on the Department's Web site at: www.floridaschoolchoice.org.

Section 1002.33(23), Florida Statutes (23) ANALYSIS OF CHARTER SCHOOL PERFORMANCE.--Upon receipt of the annual report required by paragraph (9)(l), the Department of Education shall provide to the State Board of Education, the Commissioner of Education, the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives an analysis and comparison of the overall performance of charter school students, to include all students whose scores are counted as part of the statewide assessment program, versus comparable public school students in the district as determined by the statewide assessment program currently administered in the school district, and other assessments administered pursuant to s. 1008.22(3).



Key Achievement Findings

The ultimate proof of success for any charter school is the achievement of its students. If students are not learning at or above the levels at which they were learning when they enrolled in a charter school, then the primary mission of the charter school has not been accomplished. The analysis of 2007-08 student achievement data demonstrates that charter schools offer parents and policy makers a viable option for improving education in the state. Over the last seven years, charter school student performance has come to more closely resemble traditional public school student performance on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test® (FCAT). While past performance indicated that, on average, student performance in charter schools in a given year has lagged behind traditional public school student performance; current performance indicates that is no longer the case. The analysis of 2007-08 student achievement scores revealed a greater percentage of charter elementary, middle, and high school students in tested grades are now proficient in reading compared to their traditional public school counterparts. In addition, a greater percentage of charter middle and high school students are proficient in math compared to traditional public middle and high school students. Furthermore, a greater percentage of charter elementary and middle school students are proficient in science than traditional public elementary and middle school students. The achievement gap between white and African-American students and white and Hispanic students at charter schools is smaller across all school types in charter schools compared to traditional schools. However, traditional public school students, on average, out-gain their charter school counterparts in the earlier grades.



Reading Learning Gains

Year	School Type	Grade 3 to 4	Grade 4 to 5	Grade 5 to 6	Grade 6 to 7	Grade 7 to 8	Grade 8 to 9	Grade 9 to 10
2001-02	Traditional	227	53	117	83	136	-9	105
	Charter	201	64	113	81	135	0	120
2002-03	Traditional	236	70	118	100	148	3	111
	Charter	220	75	126	107	152	16	98
2003-04	Traditional	218	58	98	90	108	0	76
	Charter	196	44	103	85	108	9	77
2004-05	Traditional	214	52	85	77	107	50	54
	Charter	200	43	86	82	106	43	50
2005-06	Traditional	172	44	105	125	115	70	28
	Charter	161	39	123	140	116	78	32
2006-07	Traditional	156	102	71	79	77	69	23
	Charter	137	100	75	73	69	61	17
2007-08	Traditional	187	60	66	112	93	77	40
	Charter	173	57	76	111	85	82	41

Math Learning Gains

Year	School Type	Grade 3 to 4	Grade 4 to 5	Grade 5 to 6	Grade 6 to 7	Grade 7 to 8	Grade 8 to 9	Grade 9 to 10
2001-02	Traditional	167	206	48	140	105	32	65
	Charter	154	171	38	139	108	26	63
2002-03	Traditional	135	178	48	121	115	57	69
	Charter	132	164	46	128	116	53	60
2003-04	Traditional	131	168	34	117	108	54	59
	Charter	119	152	25	113	107	52	62
2004-05	Traditional	132	145	41	137	102	62	49
	Charter	114	128	38	142	103	57	49
2005-06	Traditional	127	140	47	134	90	56	47
	Charter	128	132	53	138	90	57	47
2006-07	Traditional	114	129	25	126	91	52	40
	Charter	105	115	33	118	93	51	41
2007-08	Traditional	110	130	34	151	93	59	55
	Charter	107	119	45	145	95	60	59



Student Achievement in Florida's Charter Schools: A Comparison with Achievement in Traditional Public Schools

Charter schools are independent public schools created on the basis of an agreement between a group of school organizers and a sponsoring body. Florida's charter schools have been growing by near record numbers since the first five charter schools were opened in 1996. During the 2007-08 school year, 358 charter schools operated throughout the state in 42 school districts and at one state university.

While each charter school is unique in its educational approach, charter schools are generally classified as start-up schools, schools managed by educational management organizations, conversion public schools, community partnerships, or university charter schools. Each charter school has its own governing board that is responsible for setting policies and procedures. Charter schools have flexibility in providing expanded learning experiences to meet students' individual educational needs by using innovative learning methods. In return, they are held accountable for achieving results.

Although providing more freedom than traditional public schools, charter schools are held accountable on multiple levels. The charter contract delineates expectations of the governing board and the sponsor regarding the school's academic and financial performance. As part of their contract, charter schools are held accountable for academic and financial results, embodied in the following three guiding principles:

- Meet high standards of student achievement while providing parents flexibility to choose among diverse educational opportunities within the state's public school system;
- Promote enhanced academic success and financial efficiency by aligning responsibility with accountability; and
- Provide parents with sufficient information on whether or not the child gains at least a year's worth of learning for every year spent in the charter school.

The Percentage of Charter Schools Graded "A" or "B" Has Increased Over the Past Six Years

Students Served by Florida Charter Schools

Charter schools provide parents with additional choices for selecting the most effective educational programs for their children and offer creative solutions for improving student achievement in Florida. The charter school movement in Florida began as an avenue to improve student learning, increase parental choice, influence the traditional public school system, and foster innovative instructional practices. Charter school enrollment has grown steadily over the last decade. As shown below, charter schools served 105,318 students in the 2007-08 school year, which translates to more than 4% of Florida's total public school population. Of these students, males and females each made up 50% of the population. Approximately 60% of charter school students were minorities compared to 54% of traditional public school students. Charter schools had a lower percentage of students who qualified for free and reduced price lunch. In addition, charter schools served a smaller proportion of students with disabilities than traditional public schools.

2007-08 Charter School and Traditional School Student Populations

	Charter	Traditional
Student Membership	105,318	2,571,583
Gender		
Male	50%	52%
Female	50%	48%
Race		
White	40%	46%
African American	23%	23%
Hispanic	31%	24%
Asian	2%	2%
American Indian	0.4%	0.3%
Multi-Racial	4%	4%
Free and Reduced Lunch Eligible	35%	46%
Exceptional Student Education	11%	15%
English Language Learners	10%	12%

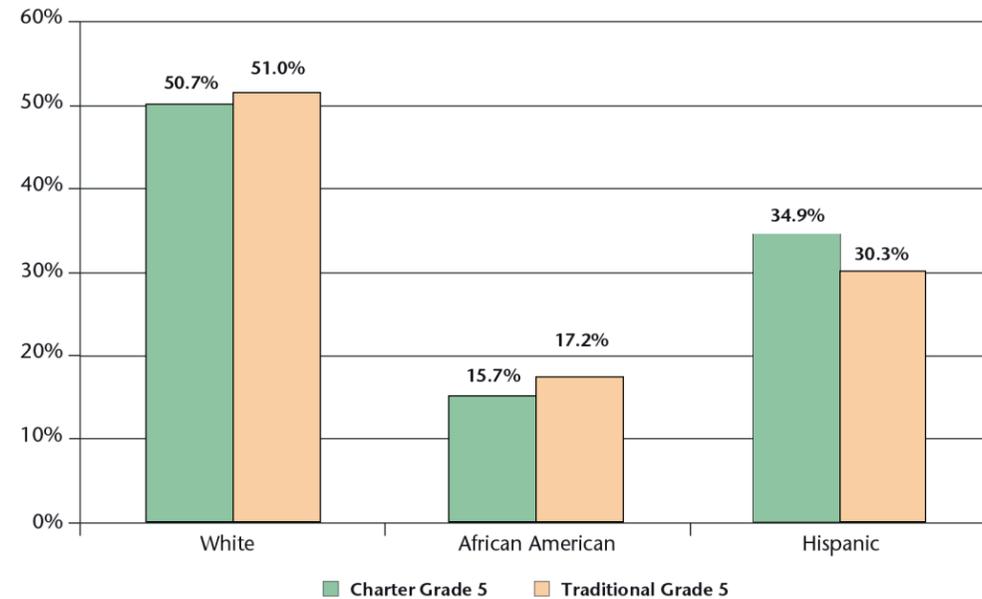
Grading Charter Schools

Like traditional public schools, charter schools are assigned a performance grade if they meet the eligibility criteria and are not an alternative school. Changes to the school grade calculations in 2002-03 resulted in an increased number of charter schools receiving performance grades. The percentage of charter schools receiving an "A" has increased from 42% in 2002-03 to 52% in 2007-08. Conversely, the percentage of "F" charter schools has decreased to 5% in 2007-08 from 16% in 2002-03.

YEAR	A	B	C	D	F
2002-03	42%	11%	18%	13%	16%
2003-04	38%	11%	24%	13%	14%
2004-05	36%	15%	22%	14%	12%
2005-06	50%	20%	21%	6%	3%
2006-07	48%	21%	19%	8%	5%
2007-08	52%	20%	19%	4%	5%



Charter and Traditional Public Schools FCAT Science Achievement Level 3 and Above Grade 11 by Race/Ethnicity



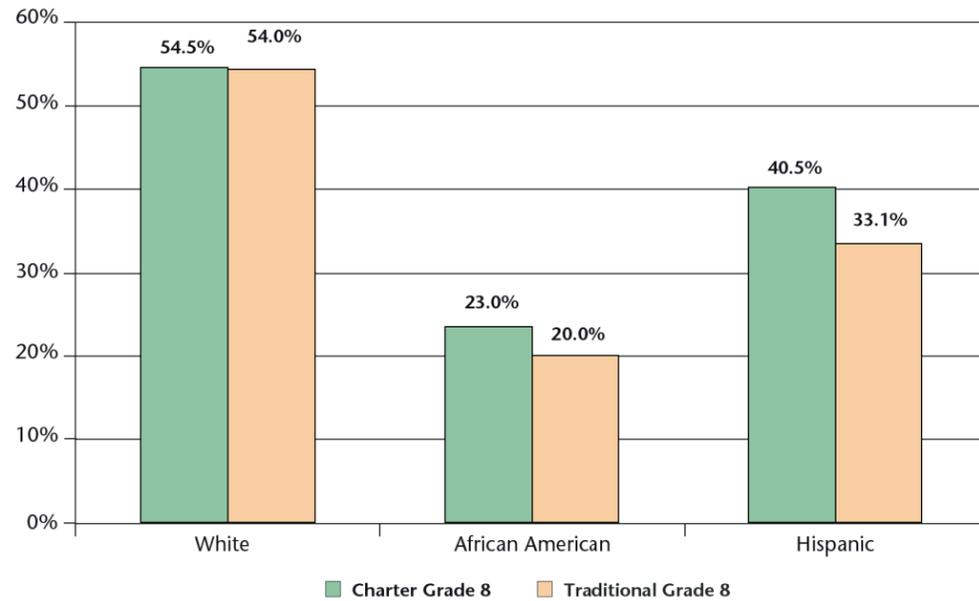
Student Learning Gains in Reading and Math

Traditional public school students, on average, had greater gains on FCAT Developmental Scale Scores (DSS) than charter school students in School Year 2007-08. The table below shows the average DSS change in reading, by grade level, for charter school students and traditional public school students from 2001-02 to 2007-08. The table shows that the average learning gains of traditional school students in elementary grade levels were greater than those of charter school students in elementary grade levels. Prior to School Year 2007-08, there was no consistent learning gain pattern. However, traditional public school students in earlier grades tended to experience larger average learning gains than charter school students. Charter school students in the middle grades, on average, showed larger learning gains in reading than their traditional public school counterparts.

As shown in the following table, students in traditional public schools had higher average math learning gains in the earlier grades than their charter school counterparts in 2007-08. Similar to reading learning gains in years prior to 2007-08, middle grade charter school students tended to outgain traditional public school students. Overall, the gap between the average gain of traditional public school students and charter school students narrowed.



**Charter and Traditional Public Schools
FCAT Science Achievement Level 3 and Above
Grade 8 by Race/Ethnicity**



HIGH SCHOOLS

There was a 35% gap between white and African-American grade 11 students in charter schools and a 34% gap between white and African-American students in traditional public schools. The data indicated that like the white student population, the African-American student population in traditional high schools appears to be slightly more proficient in science, on average, than at charter high schools. There was an 16% gap between white and Hispanic students in charter schools and a 21% gap between white and Hispanic students in traditional public schools. The data showed that unlike the white and African-American student populations, the Hispanic student population in charter high schools appears to be slightly more proficient in science, on average, than the Hispanic student population at traditional high schools.

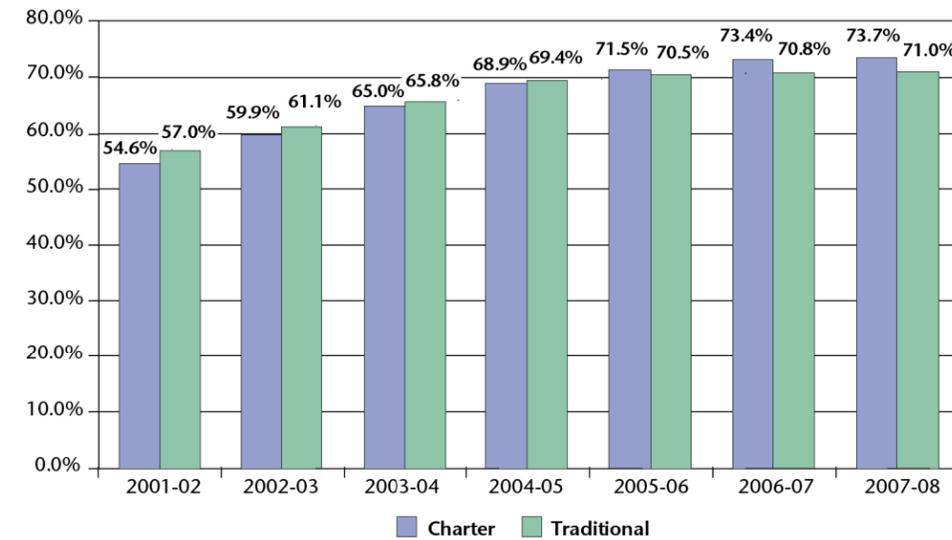


Accountability for Student Achievement

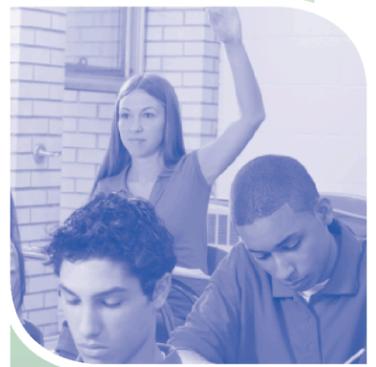
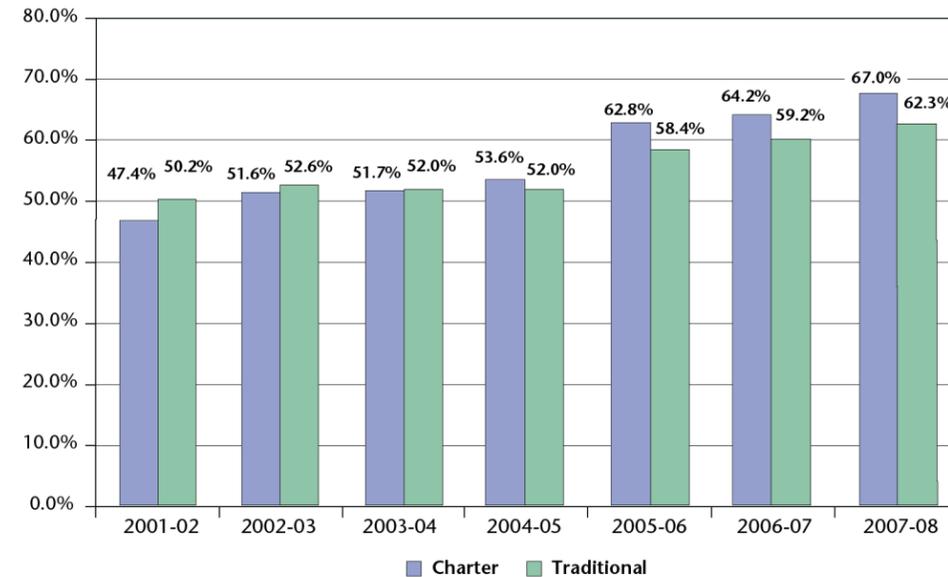
READING

Over the last three school years, a higher percentage of charter elementary and middle school students were proficient in reading than their traditional public school counterparts. Proficiency is defined as scoring at Achievement Level 3 or above on the FCAT. Charter high school students no longer lag behind traditional public high school students. The high school reading proficiency gap has narrowed over the last four years, and for the first time since 2001-02, a greater percentage of charter high school students were proficient than their traditional public school counterparts for the 2007-08 school year.

**Percent of Students Scoring at Level 3 or Above on FCAT Reading
Elementary School Grades 3, 4, and 5
Charter Schools vs. Traditional Public Schools, 2002 to 2008**

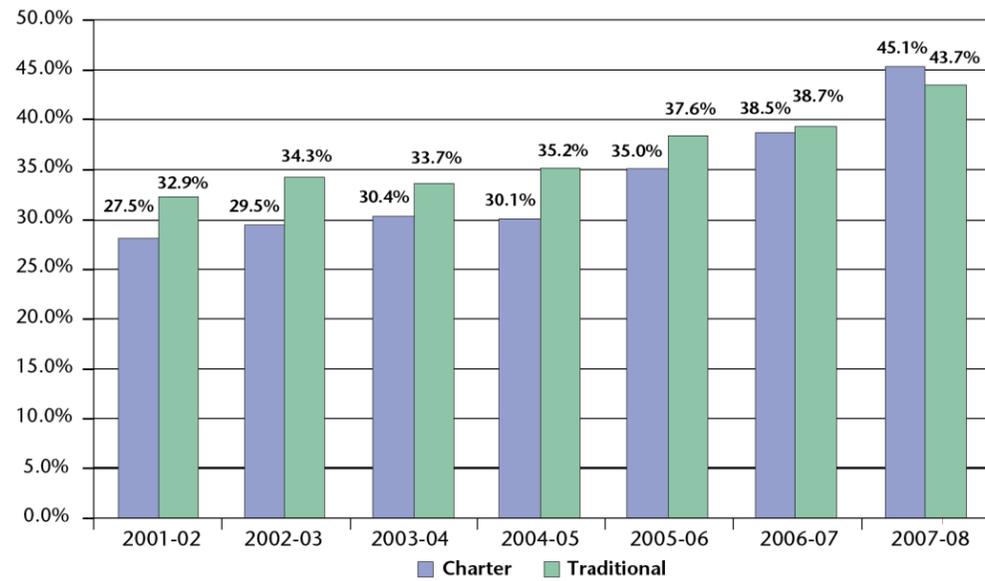


**Percent of Students Scoring at Level 3 or Above on FCAT Reading
Middle School Grades 6, 7, and 8
Charter Schools vs. Traditional Public Schools, 2002 to 2008**



A Greater Percentage of Charter Elementary, Middle, and High School Students are Proficient in Reading than Similar Traditional Public School Students

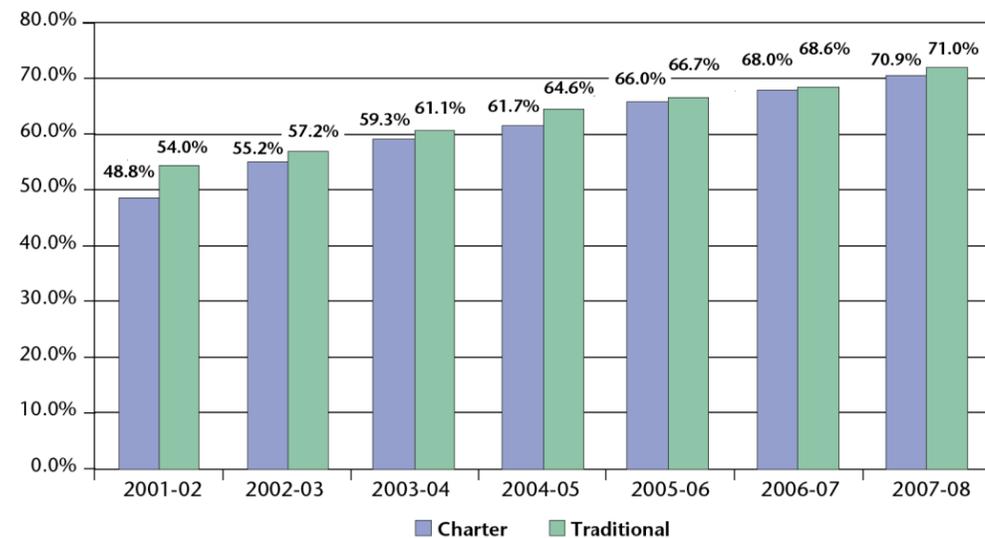
Percent of Students Scoring at Level 3 or Above on FCAT Reading High School Grades 9 and 10 Charter Schools vs. Traditional Public Schools, 2002 to 2008



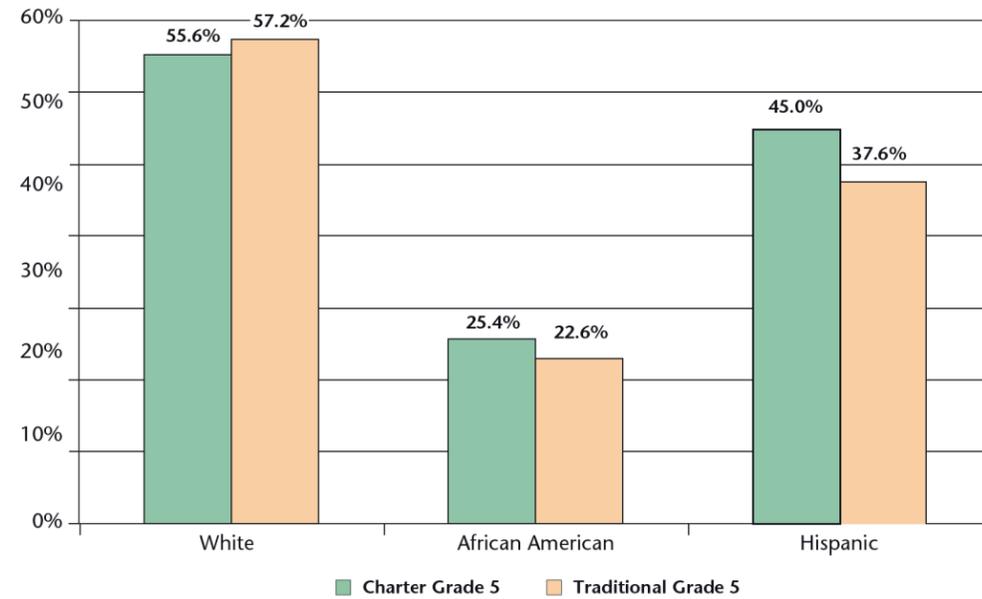
MATHEMATICS

For the last two years, a greater percentage of charter middle and high school students were proficient in math than their traditional public school counterparts. Charter elementary students have eliminated the proficiency gap between their traditional public school equivalents. Since 2006-07, charter middle and high school students have widened their percentage lead over traditional public middle and high school students in proficiency.

Percent of Students Scoring at Level 3 or Above on FCAT Math Elementary School Grades 3, 4, and 5 Charter Schools vs. Traditional Public Schools, 2002 to 2008



Charter and Traditional Public School FCAT Science Achievement Level 3 and Above Grade 5 by Race/Ethnicity



MIDDLE SCHOOLS

There was a 32% gap between white and African-American grade 8 students in charter schools and a 34% gap between white and African-American students in traditional public schools. The data demonstrate that the African-American student population in charter middle schools appears to be more proficient in science, on average, than its counterpart in traditional middle schools. There was also a 14% gap between white and Hispanic grade 8 students in charter schools and a 21% gap between white and Hispanic students in traditional public schools. The data demonstrated that like the African-American student population, the Hispanic charter middle school population appears to be more proficient in science, on average, than the Hispanic student population at traditional middle schools.



Large Science Achievement Gaps Exist Between White Students and African-American and Hispanic Students in Charter and Traditional Public Schools Across Grade Levels

Summary Table – Math Achievement Gap 2002 to 2008, Traditional and Charter Schools

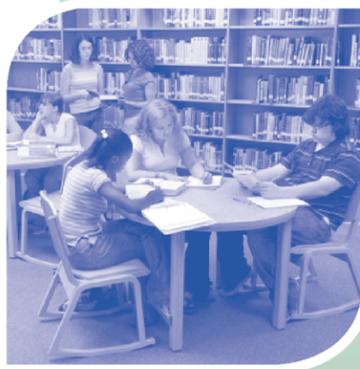
	Traditional Public Schools		Charter Schools	
	Math Achievement Gap in 2008	Change from 2002 to 2008	Math Achievement Gap in 2008	Change from 2002 to 2008
White – African American Achievement Gap				
Elementary	27%	-7%	27%	-4%
Middle	31%	-5%	24%	-12%
High	32%	-9%	28%	-2%
White – Hispanic Achievement Gap				
Elementary	12%	-6%	7%	1%
Middle	16%	-6%	8%	-1%
High	17%	-8%	6%	0%

Closing the Achievement Gap in Science

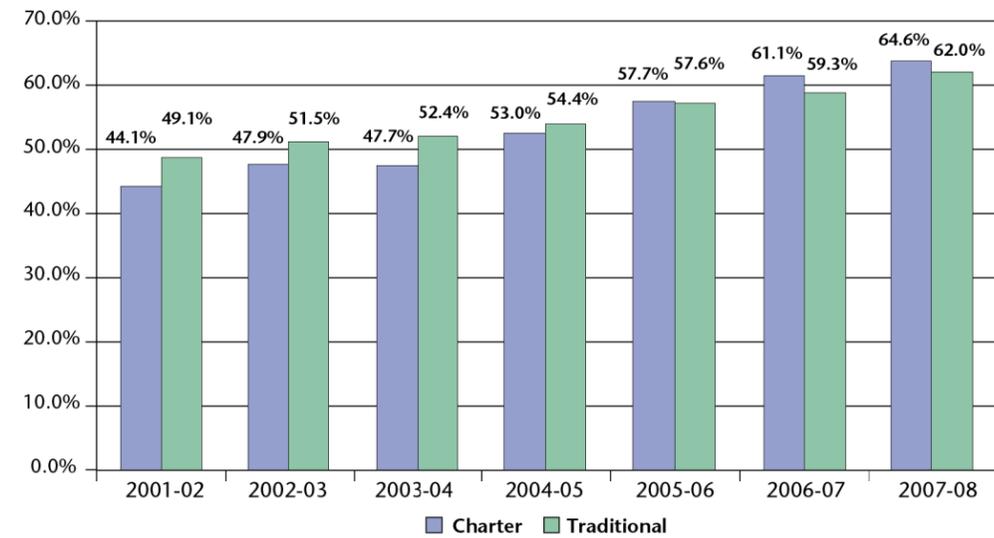
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

As shown in the graph below, in 2007-08 there was a 30% gap between white and African-American grade 5 students in charter schools and a 35% gap between white and African-American students in traditional public schools in science achievement. The data indicate that the African-American student population in charter elementary schools appears to be more proficient in science, on average, than in traditional elementary schools.

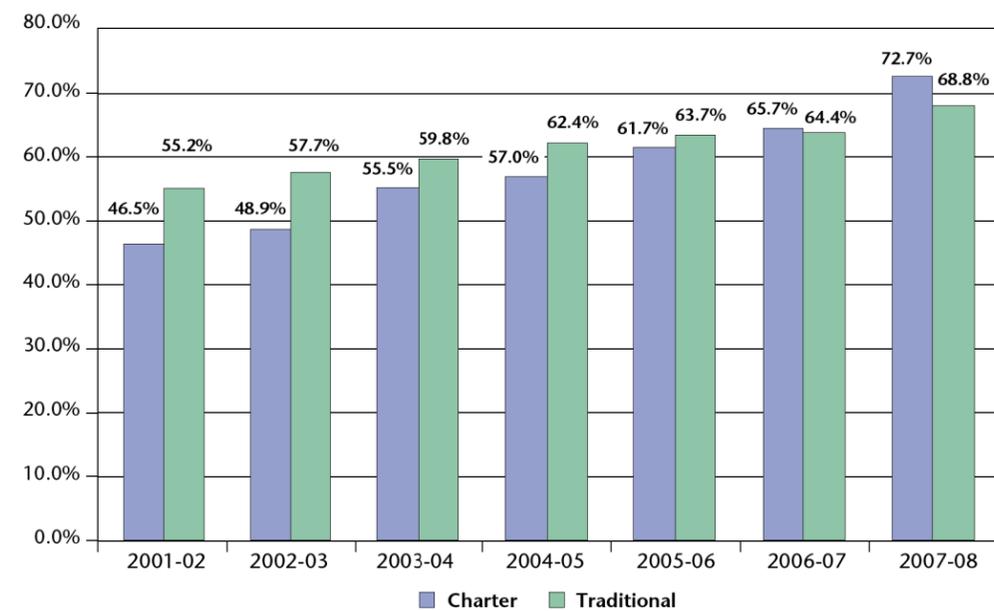
In 2007-08, there was a 11% gap between white and Hispanic grade 5 students in charter schools and a 20% gap between white and Hispanic students in traditional public schools. The Hispanic student population in charter elementary schools appears to be more proficient in science, on average, than the Hispanic student population in traditional elementary schools.



Percent of Students Scoring at Level 3 or Above on FCAT Math Middle School Grades 6, 7, and 8 Charter Schools vs. Traditional Public Schools, 2002 to 2008



Percent of Students Scoring at Level 3 or Above on FCAT Math High School Grades 9 and 10 Charter Schools vs. Traditional Public Schools, 2002 to 2008



A Greater Percentage of Charter Middle and High School Students are Proficient in Math than Similar Traditional Public School Students

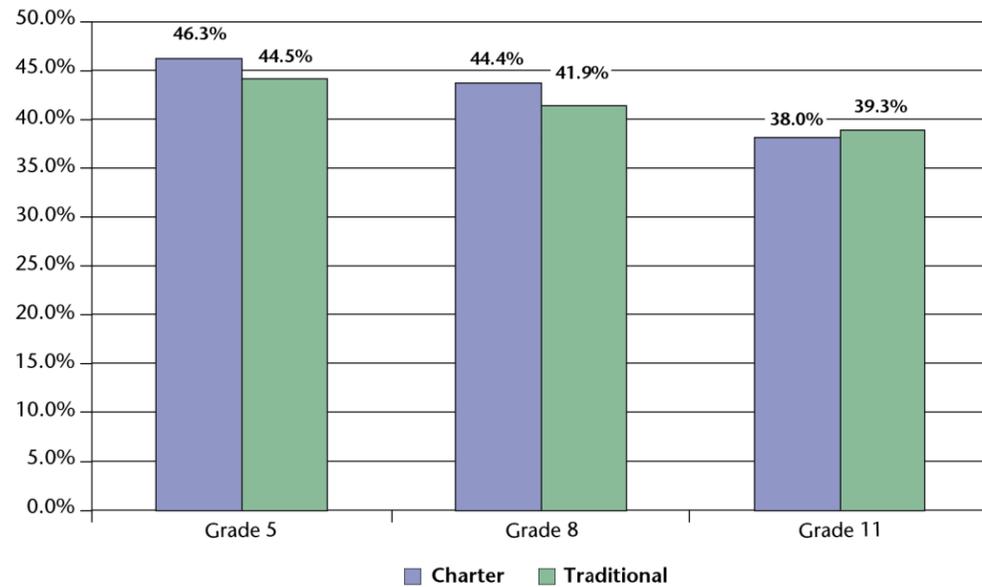


A Greater Percentage of Charter School Fifth and Eighth Grade Students are Proficient in Science, but Charter School Eleventh Grade Student Proficiency Lags Behind That of Traditional Public High School Students

SCIENCE

The following graph shows the percentage of students proficient in science in the fifth, eighth, and eleventh grades, the only grades in which FCAT Science is administered. Approximately two percentage points more charter school fifth and eighth grade students were proficient in science than those in traditional public schools. In contrast, a greater percentage of traditional public school eleventh grade students were proficient in science than those attending charter schools.

Charter and Traditional Public Schools
FCAT Science Achievement Level 3 and Above
Grades 5, 8, and 11



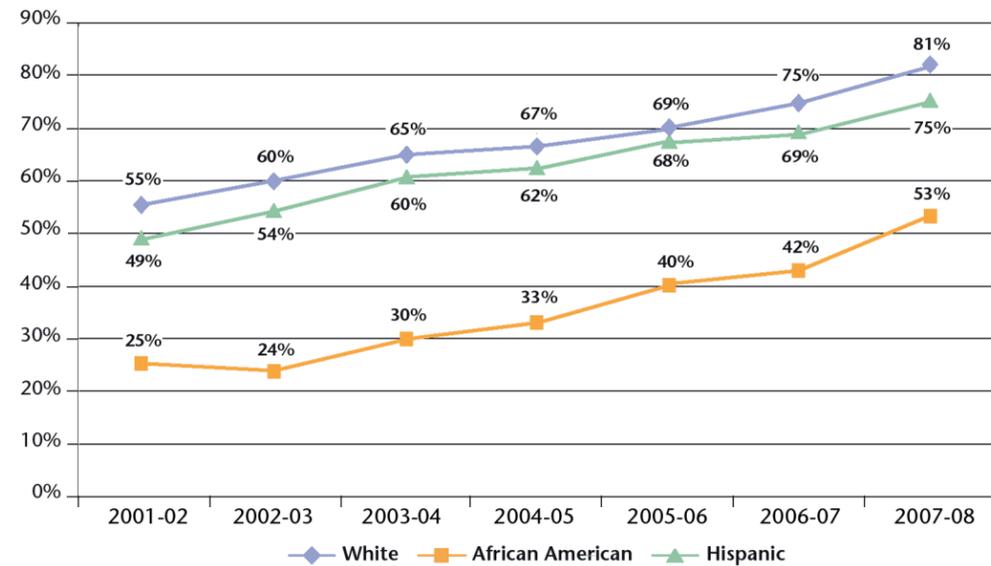
Closing the Achievement Gap in Reading

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

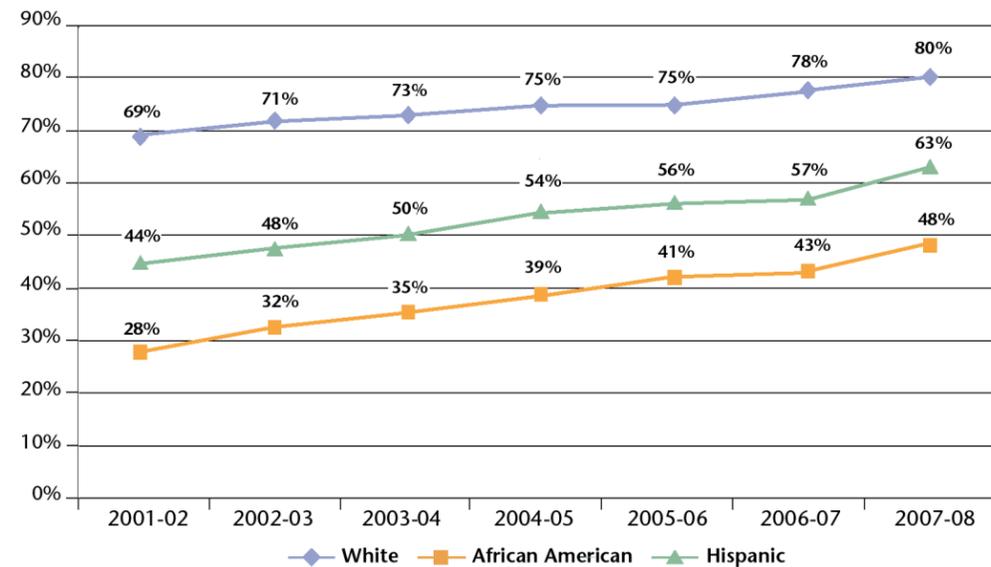
The following graphs show the degree to which charter and traditional public elementary, middle, and high schools have narrowed the proficiency gap on FCAT Reading between white students and African-American and Hispanic students. Both charter and traditional public elementary schools have witnessed a similar closing of the achievement gap between white and African-American students and white and Hispanic students in reading over the last seven years. From 2002 to 2008, the gap between white and African-American students decreased by 4 percentage points (from 30% to 26%) in charter elementary schools and 5 percentage points (from 32% to 27%) in traditional public elementary schools. The data show that the African-American student population in charter elementary schools appears to be more proficient, on average, than the African-American student population in traditional elementary schools. Traditional public elementary schools experienced a narrowing achievement gap between white and Hispanic students, while charter elementary schools experienced no change in achievement gaps. The gap narrowed by 6 percentage points (from 21% to 15%) in traditional elementary schools, compared to no change in percentage points (10%) in charter elementary schools. Though the gap did not experience change in charter schools, the data demonstrated that the Hispanic student population in charter elementary schools appears to be more proficient, on average, than the Hispanic student population in traditional elementary schools.



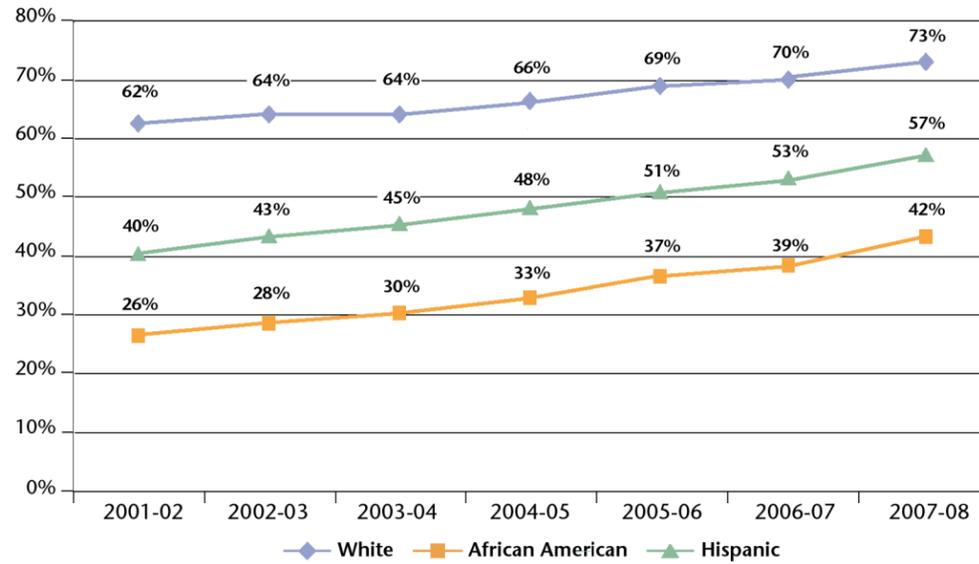
Charter High Schools
FCAT Math Achievement Level 3 and Above
Grades 9 and 10 by Race/Ethnicity



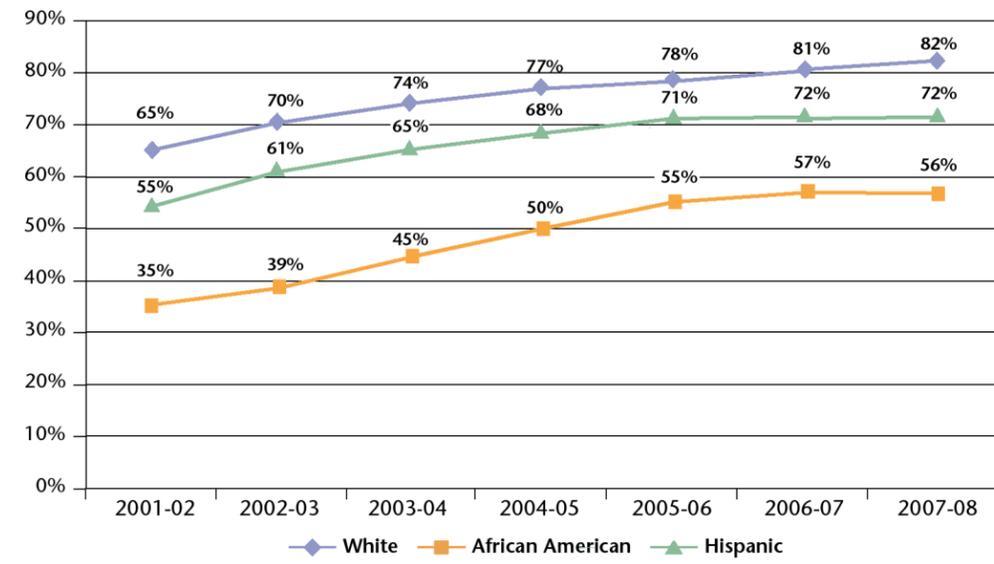
Traditional Public High Schools
FCAT Math Achievement Level 3 and Above
Grades 9 and 10 by Race/Ethnicity



Traditional Public Middle Schools
FCAT Math Achievement Level 3 and Above
Grades 6, 7, and 8 by Race/Ethnicity



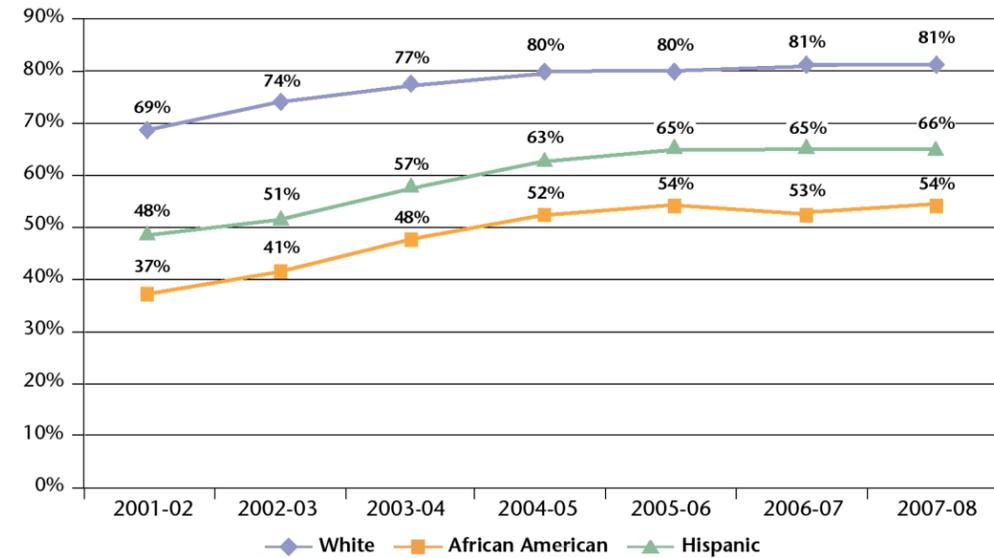
Charter Elementary Schools
FCAT Reading Achievement Level 3 and Above
Grades 3, 4, and 5 by Race/Ethnicity



HIGH SCHOOLS

As with the elementary and middle school levels, charter high schools experienced a narrowing math achievement gap between white and African-American students over the last seven years. The gap between white and African-American students in math decreased by 2 percentage points (from 30% to 28%) in charter high schools and by 9 percentage points (from 41% to 32%) in traditional public high schools. Both charter and traditional public schools experienced a narrowing of the achievement gap between white and Hispanic students in math. In 2008, the math achievement gap between white and Hispanic students in charter high schools experienced minimal change, while traditional public high schools experienced a narrowing gap. The gap decreased by 8 percentage points (from 25% to 17%) in traditional public high schools between 2002 and 2008. As with charter elementary and middle schools, the data showed that the Hispanic student population in charter high schools appears to be more proficient, on average, than the Hispanic student population in traditional high schools.

Traditional Public Elementary Schools
FCAT Reading Achievement Level 3 and Above
Grades 3, 4, and 5 by Race/Ethnicity

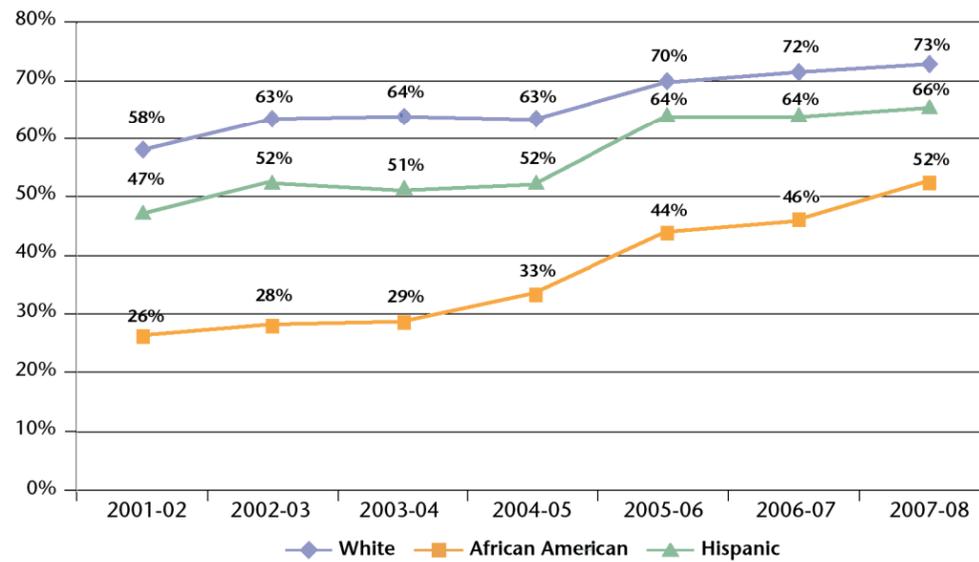


The Reading Achievement Gap between White and African-American Students and White and Hispanic Students Has Decreased at the Elementary and Middle School Levels over the Last Seven Years

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Charter and traditional public middle schools experienced similar achievement gap narrowing between white and African-American students and white and Hispanic students in reading over the last seven years. As shown in the following graphs, the gap between white and African-American students decreased by 11 percentage points in charter middle schools (from 32% to 21%) and 7 percentage points in traditional public middle schools (from 34% to 27%) between 2002 and 2008. The data demonstrated that the African-American student population in charter middle schools appears to be more proficient, on average, than the African-American student population in traditional middle schools. Both charter and traditional public middle schools also experienced achievement gap narrowing between white and Hispanic students. The achievement gap between white and Hispanic students in charter middle schools has narrowed by 4 percentage points (from 11% to 7%) between 2002 and 2008, compared to 7 percentage points (from 23% to 16%) in traditional public middle schools. Further, the data demonstrated that the Hispanic student population in charter middle schools appears to be more proficient, on average, than the Hispanic student population in traditional middle schools.

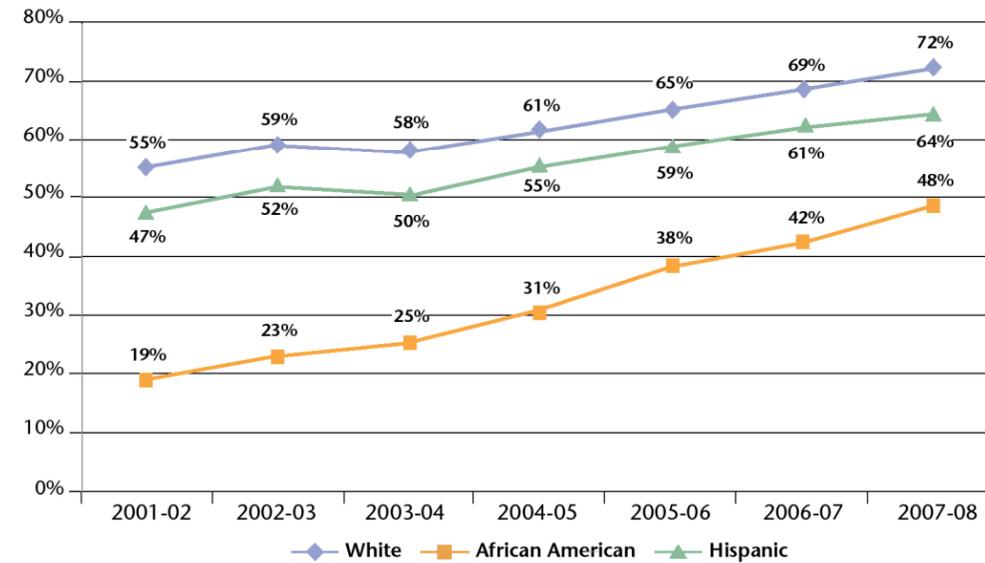
Charter Middle Schools
FCAT Reading Achievement Level 3 and Above
Grades 6, 7, and 8 by Race/Ethnicity



MIDDLE SCHOOLS

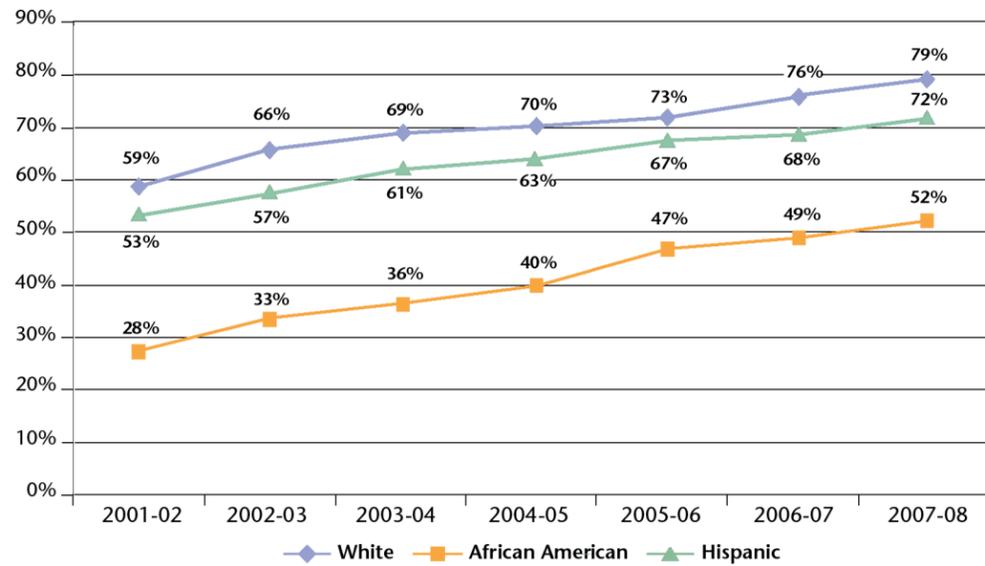
The math achievement gap between white and African-American students experienced a narrowing in both charter middle schools and traditional public middle schools from 2002 to 2008. The gap between white and African-American students decreased by 12 percentage points (from 36% to 24%) in charter middle schools and by 5 percentage points (from 36% to 31%) in traditional public middle schools. The data showed that the African-American student population in charter middle schools appears to be slightly more proficient, on average, than the African-American student population in traditional middle schools. Both charter and traditional public middle schools experienced an achievement gap decrease between white and Hispanic students. The gap between white and Hispanic students narrowed by less than 1 percentage point (from 9% to 8%) in charter middle schools and by 6 percentage points (from 22% to 16%) in traditional public middle schools. The data indicated that the Hispanic student population in charter middle schools appears to be more proficient in math, on average, than the Hispanic student population in traditional middle schools.

Charter Middle Schools
FCAT Math Achievement Level 3 and Above
Grades 6, 7, and 8 by Race/Ethnicity

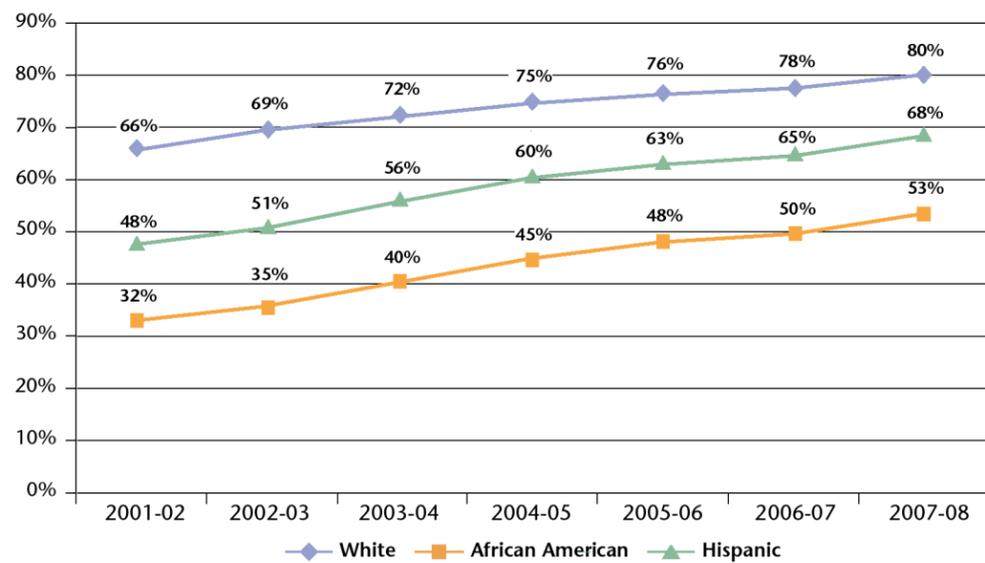


The Math Achievement Gap Between White and African-American Students Has Decreased over the Last Seven Years in Charter Elementary, Middle, and High Schools

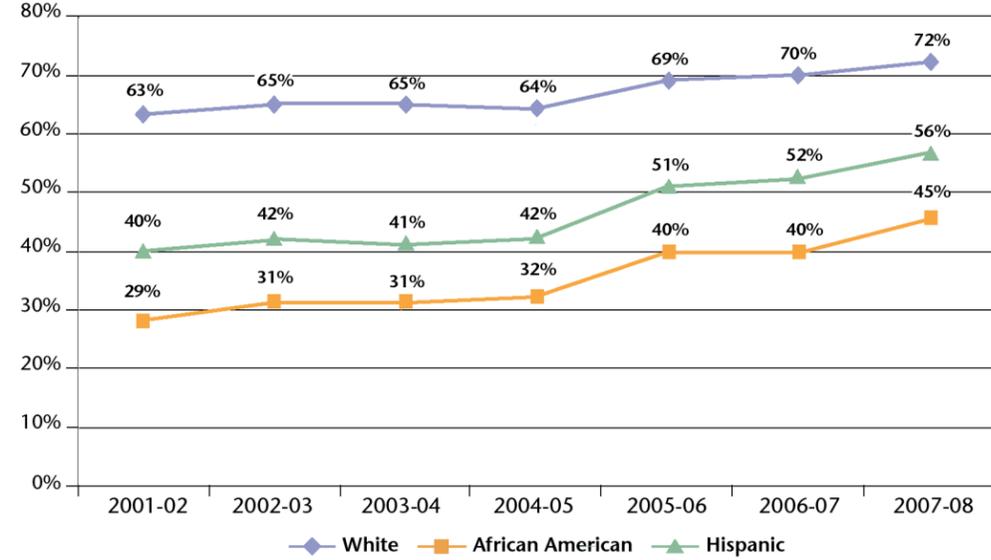
Charter Elementary Schools
FCAT Math Achievement Level 3 and Above
Grades 3, 4, and 5 by Race/Ethnicity



Traditional Public Elementary Schools
FCAT Math Achievement Level 3 and Above
Grades 3, 4, and 5 by Race/Ethnicity

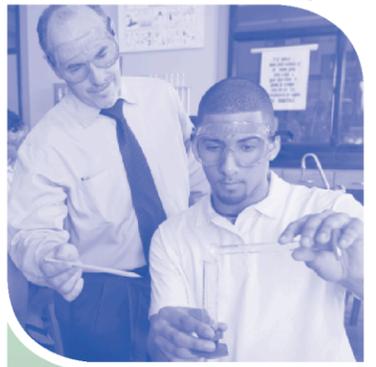


Traditional Public Middle Schools
FCAT Reading Achievement Level 3 and Above
Grades 6, 7, and 8 by Race/Ethnicity

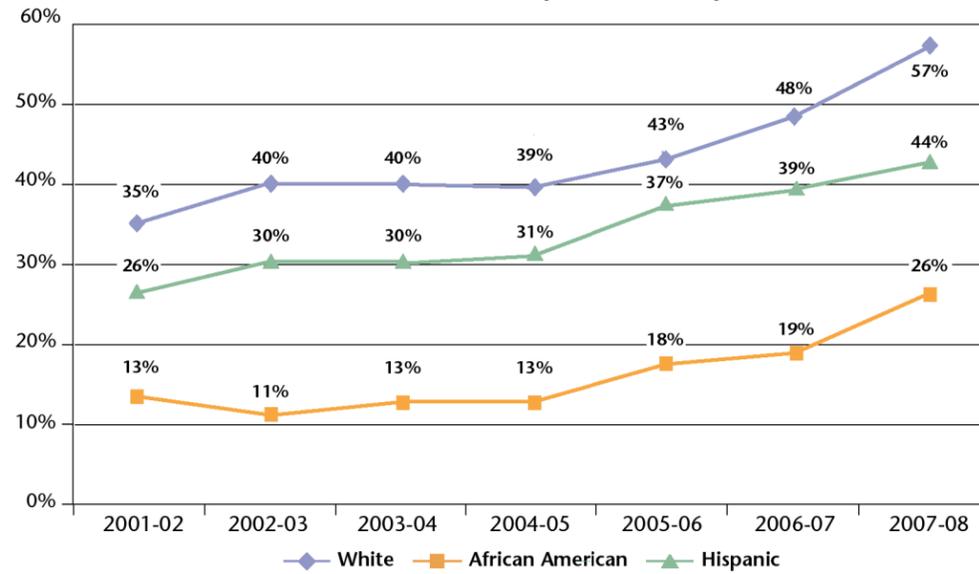


HIGH SCHOOLS

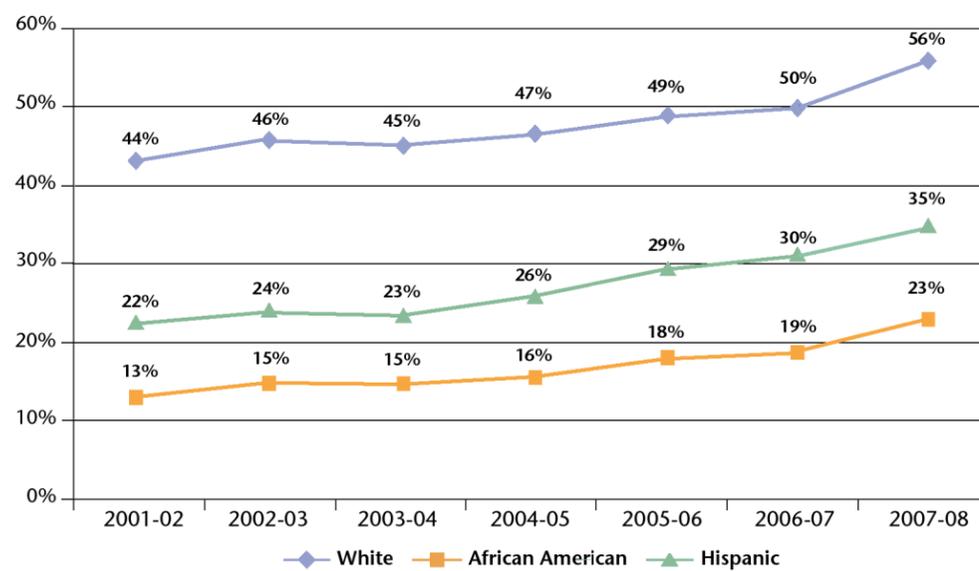
As shown in the following graphs, the achievement gap between white and African-American high school students in reading has increased over the last seven years by 9 percentage points (from 22% to 31%) at charter schools and 2 percentage points (from 31% to 33%) in traditional public schools. However, the data demonstrated that the African-American student population in charter high schools appears to be more proficient on average than the same population in traditional public high schools. Charter schools have experienced achievement gap widening between white and Hispanic students in reading by 4 percentage points (from 9% to 13%) since 2002, but traditional public high schools experienced a minimal decrease of 1 percentage point (from 22% to 21%). As with charter elementary and middle schools, the data indicated that the Hispanic student population in charter high schools appears to be more proficient, on average, than the Hispanic student population in traditional public high schools.



**Charter High Schools
FCAT Reading Achievement Level 3 and Above
Grades 9 and 10 by Race/Ethnicity**



**Traditional Public High Schools
FCAT Reading Achievement Level 3 and Above
Grades 9 and 10 by Race/Ethnicity**



**Summary Table – Reading Achievement Gap
2002 to 2008, Traditional and Charter Schools**

	Traditional Public Schools		Charter Schools	
	Reading Achievement Gap in 2008	Change from 2002 to 2008	Reading Achievement Gap in 2008	Change from 2002 to 2008
White – African American Achievement Gap				
Elementary	27%	-5%	26%	-4%
Middle	27%	-7%	21%	-11%
High	33%	2%	31%	9%
White – Hispanic Achievement Gap				
Elementary	15%	-6%	10%	0%
Middle	16%	-7%	7%	-4%
High	21%	-1%	13%	4%

Closing the Achievement Gap in Mathematics

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

As with reading, in both charter and traditional public elementary schools the math achievement gap between white and African-American students has narrowed over the last seven years. From 2002-2008, the gap between white and African-American students decreased by 4 percentage points (from 31% to 27%) in charter schools and 7 percentage points (from 34% to 27%) in traditional public elementary schools (as shown on the following page). Traditional public elementary schools experienced an achievement gap decrease between white and Hispanic students, with the gap narrowing by 6 percentage points (from 18% to 12%), while in charter schools the gap increased by 1 percentage point from 6% in 2002 to 7% in 2008. Though the gap increased in charter schools, the data demonstrated that, unlike the white and African-American student populations, the Hispanic student population in charter elementary schools appears to be more proficient in math, on average, than the Hispanic student population at traditional elementary schools.

