



National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

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CHARTER SCHOOLS CLOSING ACHIEVEMENT GAP IN FOURTH GRADE READING AND MATH

--Big Gains for African-American, Low-Income, and Latino Student Populations--

WASHINGTON, Oct. 13, 2005 – Fourth graders attending public charter schools across the country are making notable strides in reading and math, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), otherwise known as the “The Nation’s Report Card,” released today. Gains were particularly strong in reading, with charter students gaining at a faster rate than students in traditional public schools, whose scores were unchanged since 2003.

African-American, Latino, and low-income charter students also registered larger reading gains than their fourth-grade peers in non-public charter schools. Gains among Hispanic charter fourth graders were so strong that they have opened a 10-point gap with non-charter students.

“Charter students and educators can be proud of these results,” said Nelson Smith, president of the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. “The findings confirm those of national and state-level studies showing strong gains in achievement among public charter schools – with especially good results for minority and low-income children.”

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“Reading and math open doors,” said Smith. “Charter schools are providing underserved fourth-graders with the tools they need to succeed in an increasingly global economy.”

“Yet our work is far from over,” explained Smith. “We need to do more to ensure that charter schools remain focused on quality and accountability so that more children have the opportunity to achieve.”

While the Report Card provides generally good news, it also found less-robust performance at the 8th grade level. There, charter students trail other public school students in math and reading. According to Smith: “We know that many charter middle schools—KIPP, Roxbury Prep, Amistad Academy--produce exemplary achievement in these grades. We need to do a better job of making sure that these schools flourish and grow, and that others learn by their example.”

He added: “Recent research has also helped us to understand how charter achievement is often affected by the age of the school and the prior academic performance of students who enter – factors not taken into account in the NAEP sample. We’re looking forward to examining these effects in more detail in the weeks to come.”

“That said,” he concluded, “today’s Report Card shows real progress for charter schools. In its 14-year history, the charter school movement has demonstrated that innovation, freedom from red tape, and partnership between parents and educators is giving new hope to disadvantaged and minority families--and the Report Card reinforces that message.

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The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (www.publiccharters.org) is the national nonprofit organization committed to advancing the charter school movement. Its ultimate goal is to increase the number of high-performing charter schools available to all families, particularly low-income and minority families who currently don't have access to quality public schools. The Alliance provides assistance to state charter school associations and resource centers, develops and advocates for improved public policies, and serves as the united voice for this large and diverse movement.