

## SED Charter School Report

The State Education Department (SED) has issued the *2004-05 Annual Report on the Status of Charter Schools in New York State*. This report is required by the Charter School law and provides information on student enrollment, student performance, and finances for the 61 charter schools in operation during the 2004-05 school year. In addition, the report makes recommendations for changes to the charter school law.

### Student Enrollment —

Enrollment in charter schools reached 18,408 students in 2004-05. In a study of the fiscal impact of charter schools conducted by NYSUT's Research and Educational Services Department, charter school enrollment is projected to reach 24,036 students in 2005-06 and 43,633 students in 2011-12 based on the student enrollment levels authorized in the charters. These estimates do not include any schools that may be created if the legislature lifts the cap of 100 schools.

The following table compares the student demographics in charter schools and the student demographics in the home school districts of the charter school.

<u>PERCENT</u>	<u>STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS</u>	
	<u>CHARTER SCHOOL</u>	<u>HOME SCHOOL DISTRICT</u>
African American	69%	36%
Latino	17%	35%
Caucasian	13%	17%
Special Education	8%	14%
English Language Learners	2%	12%
Free and Reduced Price Lunch	63%	80%

The differences in the makeup of the enrollment of the charter schools versus the home school district indicate the charter schools are not serving as many students living in poverty, students needing special education, or English Language learners. These are the students that research shows cost more to educate and are more likely to have difficulty with state tests. This disparity should indicate charter school performance should exceed their home school districts on state tests. As the student performance data discussed below shows, this is not the case.

## **Student Performance —**

Student performance, as measured by the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade tests, improved in some charter schools while performance in others continued to linger far behind their home school districts. It should be noted that 18 charter schools do not have a 4<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade and, thus, do not have scores to report. According to the report, the top performers were Harlem Day Charter School (NYC), Carl C. Icahn Charter School (NYC), Roosevelt Children's Academy Charter School (Roosevelt), and Renaissance Charter School (NYC). Five charter schools have been identified as furthest from State Standards: Ark Community Charter School (Troy), Enterprise Charter School (Buffalo), John V. Lindsay Wildcat Academy Charter School (NYC), Pinnacle Charter School (Buffalo), and Stepping Stone Academy Charter School (Buffalo).

On the 4<sup>th</sup> grade ELA test, 19 charter schools had better scores than their home school district (up from 13 in 2003-04) and 15 charter schools had lower scores than their home school district (down from 17 in 2003-04). On the 4<sup>th</sup> grade math test, 24 charter schools had better scores than their home school district (up from 15 in 2003-04), and 10 charter schools had lower scores (down from 15 in 2003-04).

On the 8<sup>th</sup> grade ELA test, nine charter schools had better scores than their home school district (up from four in 2003-04) and five charter schools had lower scores than their home school district (which is the same number as 2003-04). On the 8<sup>th</sup> grade math test, nine charter schools had better scores than their home school district (up from three in 2003-04) and four charter schools had lower scores (down from seven in 2003-04).

Although charter school performance on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade tests are improving, overall performance is not significantly better than their home school district when you take into account the difference in the makeup of the student enrollment.

## **Finances —**

The fiscal data contained in the report shows the impact of the charter schools on the home school districts. School districts with the greatest fiscal impact as measured by the percent of budget paid to the charter schools were Albany (10.15%), Lackawanna (8.25%), Buffalo (7.77%), Roosevelt (4.52%), and Rochester (4.06%). The figures in the report may vary from the actual payments made by the district because the payments do not reflect the final reconciliations done by each district.

## **SED Recommendations —**

The SED report includes several recommendations for changes in the charter school legislation. The recommended changes in the application process would provide the department with additional time to review the applications. In addition, the department recommends charter renewals be extended for 10 years, charter schools be given access to the dormitory authority to finance construction projects, and the per pupil payments to charter schools be reviewed to determine if differential funding by grade level would be more appropriate. NYSUT will be reviewing these recommendations.