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Tennessee's Charter Schools Show Solid Growth

NASHVILLE, Tn. – Roughly two-thirds of the charter schools in the state are improving student performance in reading or math at a faster rate than competing traditional schools, according to an analysis by Stanford University researchers. Another 9 of the 27 charter schools included in the analysis performed no better or lagged behind their traditional peers.

The data offers a picture of how the charter schools in Tennessee are faring. The study shows that 67% of Tennessee's charter schools have positive overall growth scores, while 52% of the 27 schools in the study have positive growth in math and 78% of the schools have positive growth in reading. The charter schools with positive overall growth from the 2008-2011 testing periods are:

PROMISE ACADEMY, Memphis
KIPP DIAMOND ACADEMY, Memphis
FREEDOM PREPARATORY ACADEMY, Memphis
VERITAS COLLEGE PREPARATORY CHARTER SCHOOL, Memphis
POWER CENTER ACADEMY, Memphis
CITY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS, Memphis
STAR ACADEMY, Memphis
MEMPHIS ACADEMY OF HEALTH SCIENCES MS, Memphis
SOULSVILLE CHARTER SCHOOL, Memphis
MEMPHIS ACADEMY OF HEALTH SCIENCES HIGH SCHOOL, Memphis
LEAD ACADEMY, Nashville
K I P P: ACADEMY NASHVILLE, Nashville
SMITHSON CRAIGHEAD ACADEMY, Nashville
OMNI PREP ACADEMY -NORTH POINTE MIDDLE SCHOOL, Memphis
MEMPHIS BUSINESS ACADEMY, Memphis
CIRCLES OF SUCCESS LEARNING ACADEMY, Memphis
NEW CONSORTIUM OF LAW & BUSINESS, Memphis
MEMPHIS SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE, Memphis

Of the 18 schools with positive effect scores, Veritas College Prep had the highest reading growth, while Promise Academy had the highest math growth.

These findings are similar to the growth scores of charter schools in New Orleans, a city known for its robust charter market, and outperform national findings. "Effect size is another useful measure of school quality, focused on the progress individual students make in a particular learning environment," said Rich Haglund, Director of Charter Schools for the Tennessee Department of Education. "With effect size included with TCAP and end of course data, parents can make more informed school choices for their children, school operators get more complete pictures of their performance, and local boards of education have more information for making decisions about opening, renewing or revoking charters."

The figures come from Stanford's Center for Research on Educational Outcomes (CREDO), which was drafted by the nonprofit New Schools for New Orleans to help decide which charter schools should receive federal Investing in Innovation (i3) grants. Eligibility to apply for the awards is determined by this assessment prepared by CREDO, which analyzes a charter school's ability to impact student learning over a three-year period by calculating its "effect size." The Achievement School District, in partnership with New Schools for New Orleans, will use the i3 Effect Size scores and other stringent criteria to grant Tennessee's first i3 awards on November 15, 2011.

To apply for an i3 award in this round, applicants must have already received a charter from the district or must have submitted a charter application for the 2012-2013 school year, and meet the i3 Effect Size criteria. The 2012 i3 application is available on the ASD website and is due on October 7, 2011.

Investing in Innovation (i3) Award

In October 2010, New Schools for New Orleans and the Recovery School District, in partnership with the Achievement School District, were awarded a \$28 million validation grant by the U.S. Department of Education through the Investing in Innovation competition, and secured the required \$5.6 million in matching funds. The award will fund a five-year project called "Scaling the New Orleans Charter Restart Model." The goal is to expand New Orleans' innovative charter model citywide, and then apply the model to other struggling urban school districts. The heart of the i3 Project involves creating the infrastructure to turn around the bottom five percent of academically unacceptable schools using high-performing charter management organizations. The project began in the 2011-2012 school year in New Orleans and is being replicated in Memphis and Nashville, Tennessee starting 2012-2013.

Achievement School District

In the spring of 2011, the Tennessee legislature enacted, and Governor Bill Haslam signed into law, a bold initiative to provide public school children and families stronger educational opportunities. As a key school turnaround component of First to the Top, Tennessee's Achievement School District (ASD) is charged with drastically improving the schools with the lowest academic performance in the state. For this 2011-2012 school year, there are 13 ASD-eligible schools statewide:

- Memphis: Hamilton HS, Frayser HS, Raleigh-Egypt MS, Northside HS, Trezevant HS, Kingsbury HS, Manassas HS, and Sheffield HS
- Chattanooga: Howard School of Academic Technology
- Nashville: Cameron MS, Glencliff HS
- Knoxville: Austin-East HS

- Jackson: Jackson-Central Merry

Five of these schools are currently co-managed by the ASD.

New Schools for New Orleans

New Schools for New Orleans (NSNO) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting and developing the people, resources and environment necessary to achieve excellent public schools for every child in New Orleans. Founded in April 2006, NSNO is committed to making strategic investments of time, expertise, and funding to support the growth of New Orleans' high-performing system of charter schools. NSNO's work to support continued student achievement gains citywide is focused on three objectives: serving the city as a strategic leader to maintain focus on academic excellence in a reform-friendly environment; supporting the expansion of high-performing charter schools to serve additional students in collaboration with the community; and, partnering with sustainable support organizations to ensure that the academic needs of schools are met as they continue to advance student learning.

Recovery School District

The Recovery School District (RSD) is a special school district administered by the Louisiana Department of Education. Created by legislation passed in 2003, the RSD's mission is to provide the supports and interventions necessary to put academically struggling schools on a path toward success. Currently, the RSD includes 16 traditional schools and 50 public charters in New Orleans.