



Georgia Department of Education

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Annual Charter School Report **2000-01 School Year**

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Executive Summary

Georgia state law requires that charter schools that have been in operation for at least one year submit an annual report to the Georgia Department of Education (GDOE). This year, 38 charter schools submitted reports that have been summarized here. This report is the fourth charter school report, and it provides information on charter school demographics, goals, parental involvement, school governance, and academic achievement. It is descriptive in nature. It is not an evaluation of charter schools in Georgia. The Charter School Evaluation Report will be available at the end of October, 2001.

The year 2001-02 will find the addition of 14 new charter schools. Six existing charter schools elected not to renew their charters for 2001-02, so the total number of charter schools in Georgia will increase from 38 to 46 in 2001-02.

Analysis of charter school demographics from 1997-98 to 2000-01 indicated that charter schools served a smaller proportion of minority students and socio-economically disadvantaged students than did the state. Over the same time period, the charter school English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and gifted program participation rate increased slightly and was slightly higher in both categories than the state's. The percent of students in special education in charter schools was slightly lower than the state's in 2000-01, but it has varied relative to the state's over the past four years.

Analysis of the goals set by charter schools revealed several common goals. These common goals included: increasing academic achievement, involving parents and staff in the educational process, attending to children's social and emotional growth, providing teachers with staff development opportunities, assuring that the school environment is safe and productive, improving student attendance, integrating curricula across subjects, and using a variety of instructional methods (including technology) to support the instructional program. High schools included goals related to increasing student graduation rates and reducing dropout. They also included goals related to transition from middle to high school and from high school to post-secondary jobs or education.

Achievement results across schools, grade levels, and tests are mixed.

- The percentage of grade 4 elementary students who met or exceeded the standard in reading on the Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) at Charter Schools generally increased in 2000-01 over 1999-00 percentages, whereas the percentage of grade 4 students who met or exceeded the standard in mathematics generally decreased.
- The percentage of grades 6 and 8 students who met or exceeded the standard in reading and in mathematics on the CRCT also increased over the 1999-00 percentages.
- For norm-referenced tests (ITBS/SAT 9) half or more elementary schools showed increasing trends in their scores in reading, but less than half the schools demonstrated increasing trends in mathematics. This trend is consistent with the state as a whole.
- Trends were mixed for Middle-grade students (grade 8) on the ITBS/SAT 9.
- Trends on the Writing Assessment for grade 3 students were mixed with less than half demonstrating upward trends in the top three areas, experimenting, engaging, and

extending. However, the percent of grade five students who scored in the top three categories (experimenting, engaging, and extending) increased for most charter schools for the 2000-01 school year.

- Eighty percent of eighth-grade students in charter schools met or exceeded the target on the Writing Assessment for 2000-01.

The majority (79 percent) of charter schools provided information in their annual reports about parental involvement at their school. For the most part, this information was descriptive. For example, schools described the activities that parents had been involved in at the school, provided the number of parents who had participated in school activities, and provided information from their parent surveys. A minority (47.4 percent) of schools also provided information about school governance. As with the parent involvement data, most of the schools provided descriptive information, (e.g., they described the governing organizations' meeting schedules and activities.)

Overall, the thirty-eight charter schools whose reports were examined for this report appear to be serving a more diverse population of students than in the past, but in some areas their population is not as diverse as that of the state. Furthermore, it appears that some charter schools are successful in meeting their achievement goals and some are not. Some have data that indicate that parents are involved in their schools and that they have established strong governing organizations. Others did not provide information in those areas. Thus, there does not appear to be one over-all descriptive statement that would cover all charter schools in Georgia. Charter School differences appear to exceed their similarities.

Overview

Georgia state law requires that charter schools that have been in operation for at least one year submit an annual report to the Georgia Department of Education (GDOE). In this annual report, charter schools are asked to provide a two-page summary that describes their progress towards their goals and objectives and highlights major accomplishments during the past year of charter school operation, emphasizing progress in student achievement, school governance, and parental involvement and satisfaction. Schools are also asked to include copies of school-level results of tests administered during the academic year.

The Charter Schools Report, the fourth of its kind, summarizes the 38 individual Charter School Annual Reports that were submitted to the GDOE for the 2000-01 school year. The data are presented in six sections. In the first section, a brief history of charter schools in Georgia is provided. In the second section, demographic information on charter school students is presented. In section 3, information is provided about charter school goals. Section 4 provides information about charter school students' academic achievement on several tests included in Georgia's statewide testing program is summarized. Achievement data from 16 charter schools were provided in their school reports. Other achievement data come from the Georgia Department of Education database. Sections five and six summarize information about parental involvement and school governance. The report includes five appendices. Appendix A provides information in table form about the achievement of elementary students at charter schools (grades 1-5) on the Criterion-Referenced Test (CRCT), the norm-referenced test (ITBS/SAT 9), and the Georgia Writing Tests. Appendix B provides information about the achievement of middle-grade students in charter schools (grades 6-8) on the CRCT, the ITBS/SAT 9, and the eighth-grade writing test. Appendix C provides information about the achievement of high school students (grades 9-12) on the High School Graduation Tests (HSGT) and the Scholastic Assessment Tests (SAT). Appendix D provides a listing of charter schools and information about the source of data used in this report. Appendix E provides achievement data in the form of charts.

Charter Schools in Georgia

Georgia's original charter school law became effective April 19, 1993. This law provided a means through which existing local schools could choose to substitute a binding academic or vocational performance-based contract for state and local rules, regulations, policies and procedures. Thus, these schools were free from many provisions of Georgia state law and any state or local rule, regulation, policy, or procedure relating to schools.¹ In exchange for this flexibility, charter schools were held accountable for meeting the academic or vocational performance-based objectives specified in the charter.

This law was modified in 1998. The modification specified that private individuals, private organizations, or state and local public entities, in addition to already existing local schools, could establish a local school that was subject to a performance-based contract as opposed to state and local rules and regulations.

¹ Charter schools are subject to all federal, state, and local rules, regulations, and statutes related to civil rights, insurance, physical health and safety, conflicting interest transactions, and unlawful conduct.

Thus, there are now two types of charter schools in Georgia: conversions, which are public schools that converted to charter school status and start-up schools. Start-up schools may be characterized as: (1) Start-ups by private groups/individuals (home owner's associations, YMCAs, Parent-Teacher Organizations, etc.) state or local public entities (chambers of commerce, city government agencies, etc.), (2) Start-ups by local education agencies (spearheaded by central office staff or local board of education), and (3) state-chartered schools.

Table 1 provides a current list of charter schools in Georgia, along with grade levels served and type of charter school, listed by charter year. This table, along with Figure 1, indicates that the number of charter schools in Georgia has increased from three in 1995-96 to 46 in 2001-02. It is important to note that, in 2001-02, 14 new schools were chartered, but six conversion charter schools did not renew their charters. This has resulted in a new gain of eight charter schools.

Table 1. Charter Schools in Georgia

System	School	Grades Served	Type
Schools Chartered in 1995-96			
Chatham	Charles Ellis Montessori Academy	K-5	Conversion
Cobb	Addison Elementary	K-5	Conversion
Forsyth	Midway Elementary	K-5	Conversion
Schools Chartered in 1996-97			
Bartow	Cloverleaf Elementary (Jan. 1997)	K-5	Conversion
Cartersville	Cartersville Elementary*	3-5	Conversion
Cartersville	Cartersville High*	9-12	Conversion
Cartersville	Cartersville Middle*	6-8	Conversion
Cartersville	Cartersville Primary*	PK-2	Conversion
Cobb	Bryant Elementary*	K-5	Conversion
Cobb	Eastvalley Elementary*	K-5	Conversion
Cobb	Sedalia Park Elementary	K-5	Conversion
Spalding	Third Ward/Futral Road Elementary**	K-5	Conversion
Schools Chartered in 1997-98			
Bartow	Adairsville Elementary	K-5	Conversion
Bartow	Kingston Elementary	K-5	Conversion
Bartow	Mission Road Elementary	K-5	Conversion
Bartow	Pine Log Elementary	K-5	Conversion
Bartow	Taylorville Elementary	K-5	Conversion
Bartow	White Elementary	K-5	Conversion
Cobb	Green Acres Elementary	K-5	Conversion
Cobb	Mt. Bethel Elementary	K-5	Conversion
DeKalb	Druid Hills High School	9-12	Conversion
Schools Chartered in 1998-99			
Bartow	Emerson Elementary	K-5	Conversion
Chatham	Mercer Middle School	6-8	Conversion
Chatham	Savannah Arts Academy	9-12	Local Education Agency

Table 1. Charter Schools in Georgia (Continued)

System	School	Grades Served	Type
Schools Chartered in 1998-99 (Continued)			
Cobb	Walton High School	9-12	Conversion
DeKalb	Kingsley Elementary	PK-5	Conversion
DeKalb	Rainbow Elementary	PK-6	Conversion
Talbot	Talbot County Alternative Academy	9-12	Start-up (Private/State or Local)
Trion City	Trion Middle School	6-8	Conversion
Schools Chartered in 1999-00			
Chatham	Oglethorpe Academy	6-8	Start-up (Private/State or Local)
DeKalb	Stone Mountain Charter School	5-8	Start-up (Private/State or Local)
Spalding	Opportunity Academy	8	Local Education Agency
Thomas	School at Bishop Hall	6-12	Local Education Agency
Schools Chartered in 2000-01			
Atlanta Public Schools	Drew Charter School	K-8	Start-up (Private/State or Local)
Clinch	Fargo Elementary	K-5	Local Education Agency
Coweta	Central Educational Center	10-12	Local Education Agency
DeKalb	Chestnut Elementary	PK-5	Conversion
Fulton	Victory Charter School	K-5	Start-up (Private/State or Local)
Mitchell	Baconton Community Charter School	PK-5	Start-up (Private/State or Local)
Schools Chartered in 2001-02			
Atlanta Public Schools	Adair Park Charter School	K-5	Start-up (Private/State or Local)
Atlanta Public Schools	MARDS Charter School	K-5	Start-up (Private/State or Local)
Atlanta Public Schools	Neighborhood Charter School	K-5	Start-up (Private/State or Local)
Bulloch	Charter Conservatory for Liberal Arts and Technology	3-12	Start-up (state charter)
Coweta	Odyssey Charter School	K-8	Start-up (state charter)
DeKalb	Academy of Lithonia	K-6	Start-up (Private/State or Local)
DeKalb	Chamblee High School	9-12	Conversion
DeKalb	International Community School	K-8	Start-up (Private/State or Local)
DeKalb	Peachtree Middle School	6-8	Conversion
Fulton	Fulton County Charter High School for Mathematics and Science	9-12	Start-up (Private/State or Local)
Fulton	Fulton Science Academy	6-8	Start-up
Fulton	Woodland Elementary	PK-5	Conversion
Oglethorpe	Technical Career Academy	10-12	Local Education Agency
Taliaferro	Taliaferro County Charter School	K-12	Local Education Agency

* These schools did not renew their charters in 2001.

**Third Ward Elementary was chartered in 1996-97; however, in 1998-99, Third Ward was closed, students from Third Ward and other schools were assigned to Futral Road Elementary, and the Third Ward charter was transferred to Futral Road.

***Midway did not renew its charter in 1998.

Figure 1. Number of Charter Schools in Georgia from 1995-96 to 2001-02

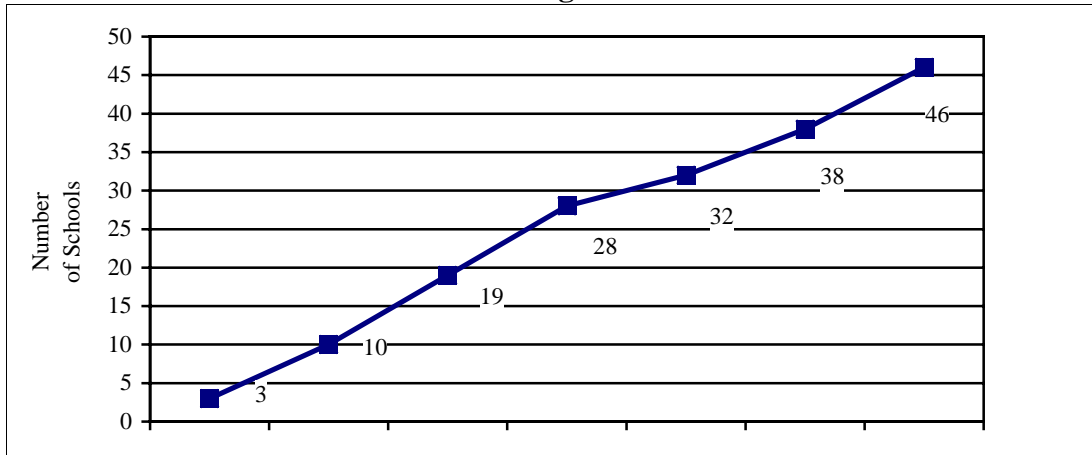


Figure 2 depicts the proportion of charter schools that are conversion, start-up, LEA, and state charter schools, and Figure 3 depicts the growth in these types of charter schools over time. As can be seen, the majority of charter schools are conversion schools. Given that the law allowed only conversion charter schools until 1998, these results are to be expected. However, the number of start-up and LEA charter schools has increased from two in 1998-99, the first school year the law allowed them, to 21 in 2001-02. Additionally, the number of LEA and start-up schools almost doubled from 2000-01 to 2001-02, and 2001-02 was the first year in which schools were chartered by the state of Georgia.

Figure 2. Proportion of Conversion, Start-up, and LEA Charter Schools in Georgia, 2001-02

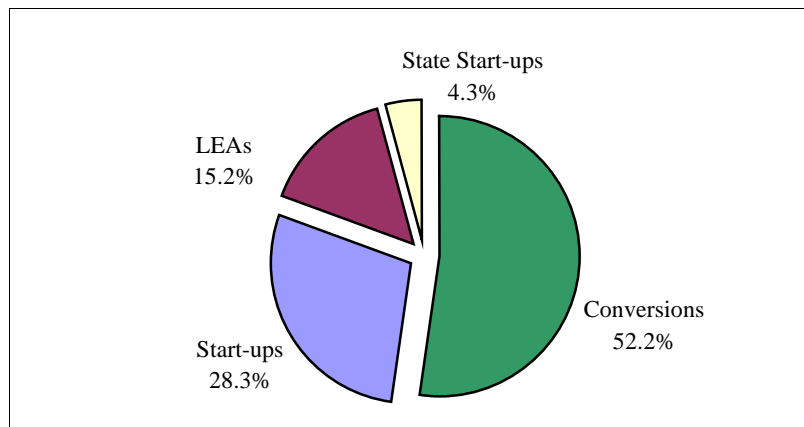
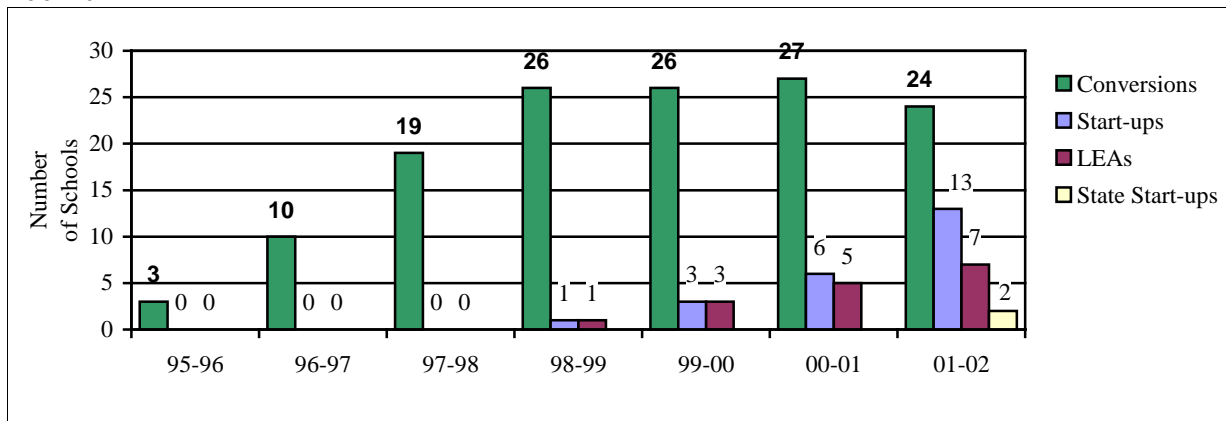
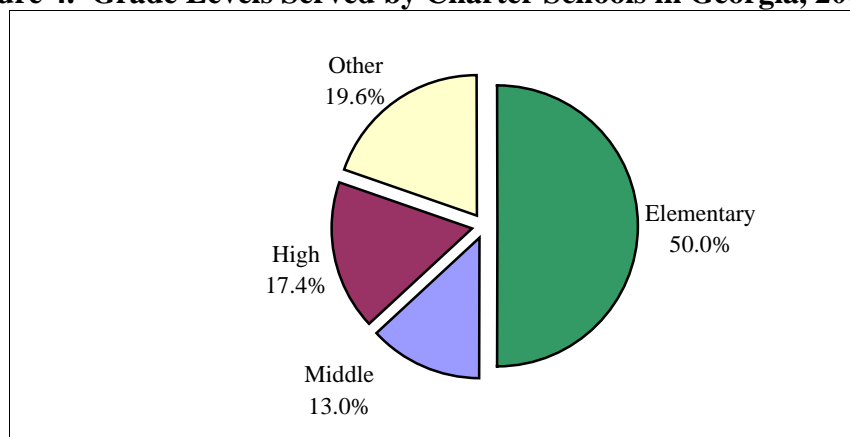


Figure 3. Number of Conversion, Start-up and LEA Charter Schools from 1995-96 to 2001-02



The majority of charter schools in Georgia serve the elementary grades. As can be seen in Figure 4, 50.0 percent of all charter schools in Georgia serve some combination of elementary grades (e.g., K-5). Seventeen percent (17.4 percent) of charter schools serve only high school grades, and thirteen (13.0 percent) serve only middle grades. Almost 20 percent (19.6 percent) of schools serve a combination of elementary, middle, or high school grades; for example, one school serves grade 6 through 12, while another serves kindergarten through grade 8.

Figure 4. Grade Levels Served by Charter Schools in Georgia, 2001-02



Demographics

To examine charter school student demographics, information on students attending charter schools in Georgia in 1997-98 through 2000-01 was obtained from the state databases. The data presented here describe students by race, socio-economic status (as measured by receipt of free or reduced price lunch), participation in programs for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and participation in Special Education programs and programs for gifted students. Information on retention and dropout rates is also included.

The comparisons of racial composition and free/reduced lunch rate between charter schools and the state of Georgia are presented in Figures 5 and 6. As can be seen in Figure 5, Georgia's charter schools served a larger proportion of White students than did the state. However, the percentage of White students served in charter schools decreased at a larger rate from 1999-00 to 2000-01 than did the proportion served by the state, such that the discrepancy in the percentage of White students served by charter schools and the state was somewhat reduced. **Additionally, as can be seen in Figure 6, students from lower socio-economic families (i.e., students who receive free or reduced price lunch) were disproportionately underrepresented in the state's charter schools over the past four years. However, the magnitude of this disparity steadily declined until 1999-00, suggesting that the population served by charter schools statewide was becoming somewhat more diverse, at least by this measure. The disparity slightly increased in 2000-01.**

Figure 5. Racial Composition in Charter Schools and in the State

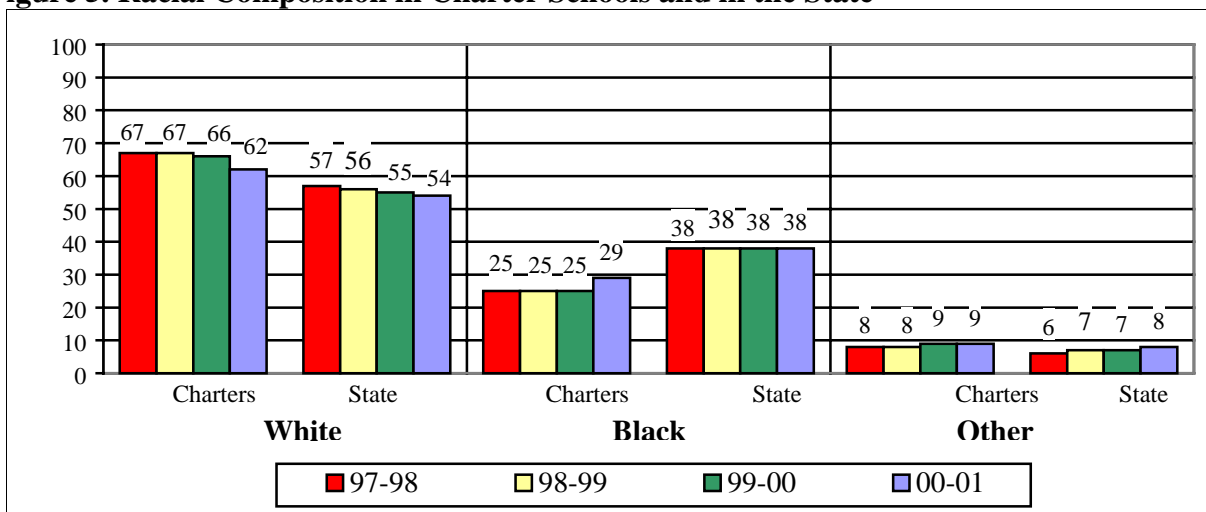
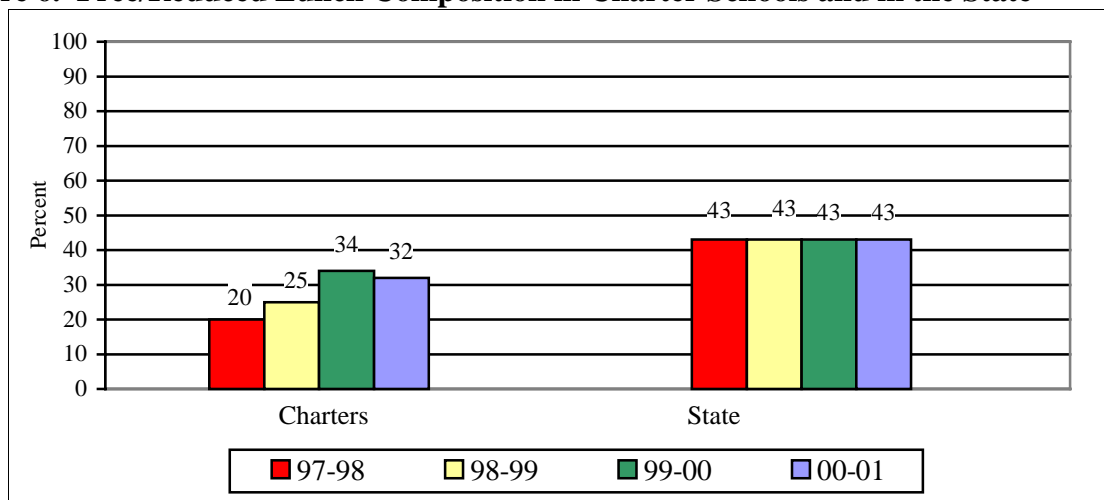


Figure 6. Free/Reduced Lunch Composition in Charter Schools and in the State



The comparisons of special education, ESOL, and gifted program enrollment rates between charter schools and the state are presented in Figures 7-9. As can be seen, the charter school

special education participation rate was similar to the state's through 1999-00, but decreased in 2000-01, so that it was slightly lower than the state's participation rate for that year. The charter school ESOL participation rate was similar to the state's in 1997-98 and 1998-99; however, in 1999-00 and 2000-01, the charter school rate increased at a faster rate than did the state's. Thus, in 2000-01, the proportion of ESOL students being served in charter schools was larger than the proportion being served statewide. Similarly, the charter school gifted program participation rate was similar to the state's in 1997-98; however, in 1998-99 and 1999-00, the charter school rate increased at a faster rate than did the state's. Thus, gifted students were more often served in charter schools than they were statewide during those years. Gifted data from the current year (2000-01) were not available at the time this report was written.

Figure 7. Special Education Participation Rates in Charter Schools and the State

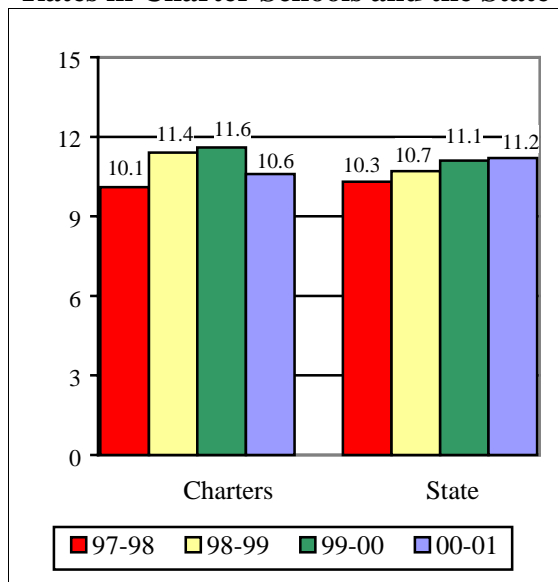
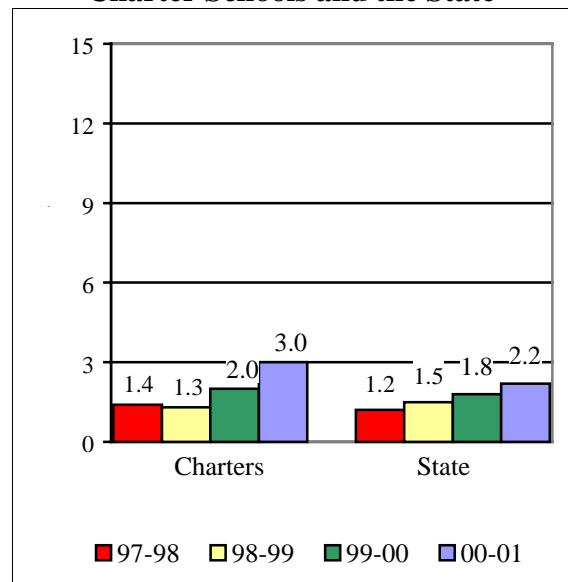
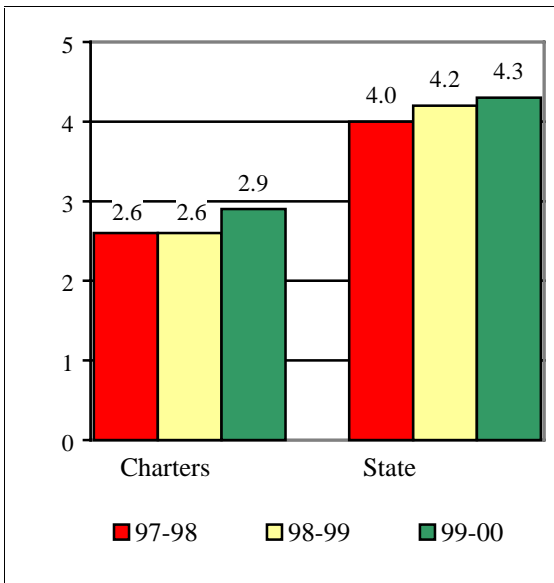


Figure 8. ESOL Participation Rates in Charter Schools and the State



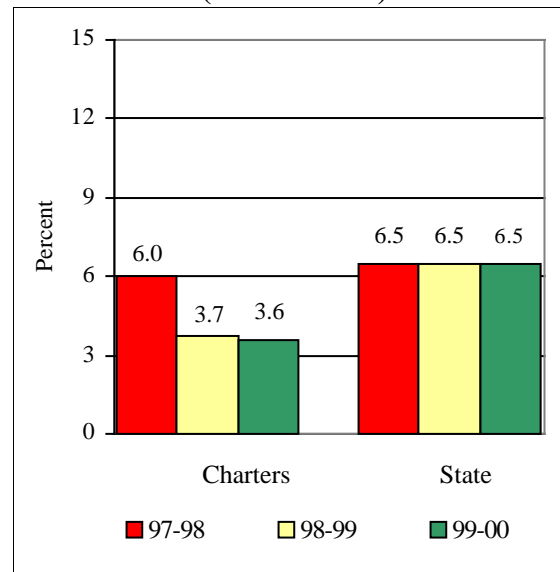
The comparisons of retention and dropout rates between charter schools and the state are presented in Figures 10 and 11. As can be seen in Figure 10, the retention rate (the percent of students retained in grade) in charter schools remained stable from 1997-98 to 1998-99, and increased slightly from 1998-99 to 1999-00, but continued to be lower than the overall state retention rates. As can be seen in Figure 11, dropout rates in charter schools decreased from 1997-98 to 1999-2000, while state dropout rates remained stable. Thus, while the charter school dropout rate was similar to the state's dropout rate in 1997-98, it was substantially lower than the state's dropout rate in 1998-99 and 1999-2000.

Figure 10. Retention Rates in Charter Schools and the State



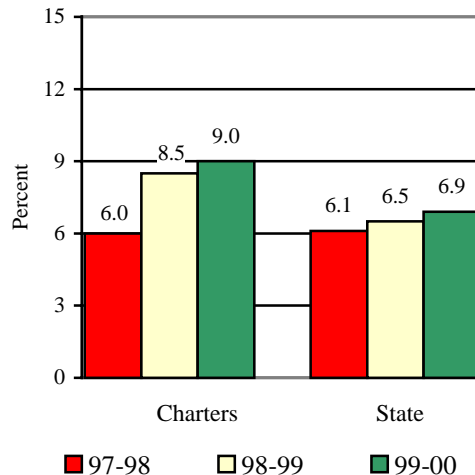
Note: 2000-01 retention rates were not yet available at the time of the report's release.

Figure 11. Dropout Rates in Charter Schools and the State (Grades 9-12)



Note: 2000-01 dropout rates were not yet available at the time of the report's release.

Figure 9. Gifted Program Participation Rates in Charter Schools and the State



Goals

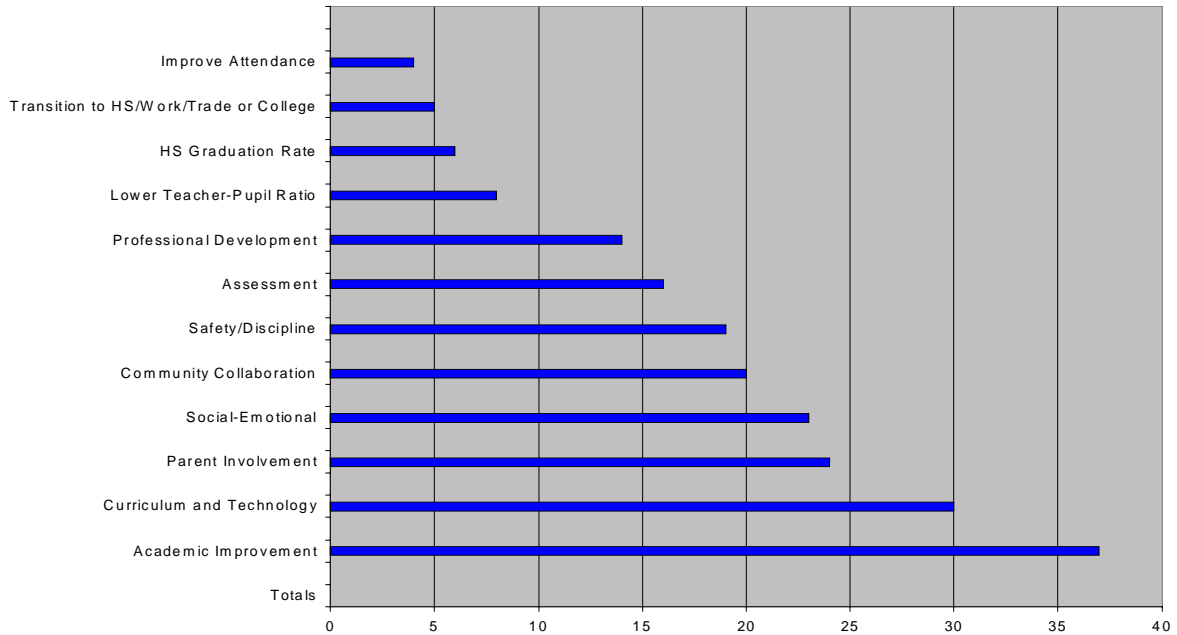
The thirty-eight 2000-01 annual charter school reports submitted by the schools included information on the charter schools' goals and their progress toward meeting them. All the schools reported making some progress toward their goals and objectives.

A total of 12 broad categories of goals that the schools hoped to achieve were identified in the annual reports. As can be seen in Figure 12, some of these goals were identified by a majority of schools. For example, thirty-seven (97.4 percent) reporting schools stated in some form that they were working to increase student academic achievement. Thirty (79 percent) schools' goals involved curriculum and instruction—for example, schools said they wished to use a variety of instructional schedules and methods, including technology, to support the instructional program. Schools also said they were going to align their curriculum with the Quality Core Curriculum (QCC), integrate technology into their curriculum, and provide an interdisciplinary, challenging, or a fine arts curriculum. Twenty-four schools (63.2 percent) also reported that involving parents and staff in the educational process was a goal. Twenty-three (60.5 percent) schools wished to help their students with social-emotional growth. For example, schools said they wished to promote the social and personal development of their students, improve their students' social skills, and promote character development. Twenty schools (52.6 percent) reported goals related to either involvement in their community (e.g. community service to be performed by their students) or increasing community involvement in the school. One school, Drew Elementary, stated that a major focus of its program was to become a "true neighborhood school," and to that end, Drew conducted intensive recruitment effort to enroll children from its neighboring community in the school. Nineteen schools (50 percent) stated that one of their goals was to provide a safe environment for their students.

Sixteen (42.1 percent) schools' goals involved assessment—several simply said they were going to assess student achievement using a variety of instruments, while others were more specific and said they were going to assess students with alternative assessments, such as portfolios and the Multiple Intelligences Profile. Fourteen schools (36.8 percent) mentioned professional development as a goal. Some of these schools simply stated that they would provide professional development, while others were more specific; for example, one school stated that it was going to provide teachers with training on teaching effective reading and writing. Eight schools (21 percent) wanted to lower the teacher-pupil ratio for classes in their schools.

While goals related to improved attendance, high school graduation, and transition to post secondary work or training were not a major focus of the majority of schools, they were important to charter schools that included the high school grades, and therefore the incidences for those goals are reported in Figure 12.

Figure 12. Most Frequently Identified Charter School Goals in 2000-2001



Student Achievement

The charter school annual reports included data on several measures of student achievement. Sixteen schools serving elementary and middle grades provided reading and math national percentile rank scores on either the Stanford 9 Achievement Test (SAT 9) or the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS), and many provided Georgia Writing Assessment (GWA) scores and scores from the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Test (CRCT). Schools serving high school grades provided Georgia High School Graduation Tests (GHSGT) scores, and some provided Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores. These data are presented and discussed in this section of the report, and are presented in table form in Appendices A, B, and C. SAT 9 scores are converted to ITBS equivalent scores for comparison purposes. Data were gathered from a variety of sources--some charter schools presented achievement data within their annual report and some simply included the score reports from testing companies. In cases in which the school did not provide data, they were obtained from the state database. Appendix D lists the sources of achievement data for each school. Appendix E presents ITBS/SAT 9 and Writing Tests scores in Chart form.

As it is too early in implementation to determine achievement trends for schools that have only operated as charter schools for one or two years, their achievement data will not be discussed here. However, their data are presented and will continue to be tracked and reported in future Annual Charter School Reports.

Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT)

Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) scores obtained from the state database are presented in Appendices A (elementary) and B (middle) for all charter schools that administered this test in 2000 and 2001. The Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) was administered throughout the state in the spring of years 2000 and 2001 to grades 4, 6 and 8 students in the fields of Reading, Mathematics, and English/Language Arts. In the spring of 2002, the CRCT will be administered to students in grades one through eight and will cover reading, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Test items on the CRCT are designed to cover the content standards outlined in the Quality Core Curriculum (QCC), and therefore cover what should actually be taught in Georgia classrooms. Data from 1999-00 and 2000-01 will be summarized in the areas of reading and mathematics in the report.

Data in reading and mathematics from the 2000 and 2001 administration of the CRCT are summarized in Appendices A (elementary grades) and B (middle grades). Since the data represent only two years' administration of the test, trends could not be established. However, a comparison of this year's CRCT with last year's will be provided for the 19 schools for which scores are available. Compared to last year:

- The percentage of grade 4 students who met or exceeded the standard in reading increased in 16 charter schools (84.2 percent).
- The percentage of grade 4 students who met or exceeded the standard in reading decreased in three charter schools (15.8 percent)
- The percentage of grade 4 students who met or exceeded the standard in mathematics increased at 6 charter schools (31.6 percent).
- The percentage of grade 4 students who met or exceeded the standard in mathematics decreased at 12 charter schools (63.2 percent).
- The percentage of grade 4 students who met or exceeded the standard in mathematics at one charter school remained the same.

Of the four middle schools that reported scores:

- Two charter schools (50 percent) reported increases in the percentage of students in grade 6 who met or exceeded the standard in reading.
- One charter school (25 percent) reported a decrease in the percentage of students in grade 6 who met or exceeded the standard in reading.
- One charter school (25 percent) reported that the percentage of students who met or exceeded the standard in reading for grade 6 remained the same.
- The percentage of grade 6 students who met or exceeded the standard in mathematics increased at 4 charter schools (100 percent).
- The percentage of grade 8 students who met or exceeded the standard in reading increased in 4 charter schools (100 percent).
- The percentage of grade 8 students who met or exceeded the standard in mathematics increased at 3 charter schools (75 percent).

- The percentage of grade 8 students who met or exceeded the standard remained the same in mathematics at one charter school (25 percent).

Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS)/Stanford 9 (SAT 9)

In the spring of 2001, Georgia's third, fifth, and eighth-grade students were given the Stanford 9 Achievement Tests for the first time. Prior to that, the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills was the norm-referenced test used throughout the state. A table listing ITBS and SAT 9 scores for the past four years may be found in Appendices A (elementary) and B (middle). In order to compare SAT 9 scores to ITBS scores, SAT 9 scores were converted to ITBS equivalents. Trends could be established for schools which have been in existence for three or more years. Some schools received exemptions. For instance, Rainbow Elementary continued to give the ITBS for the 2000-01 school year. Another school, Kingsley Elementary, gave the ITBS and the SAT 9. Scores reported for Kingsley Elementary are based upon equated SAT 9 scores. The following summary is based upon 22 of the 26 schools that have been in existence for three or more years:

- Third-grade students in eleven schools (50 percent) increased their scores in reading.
- Third-grade students in five schools (23 percent) increased their scores in mathematics.
- Fifth-grade students in twelve schools (54.5 percent) increased their scores in reading.
- Fifth-grade students in nine schools (41 percent) increased their scores in mathematics.
- Eighth-grade students in two middle schools (50 percent) increased their scores in reading.
- Eighth-grade students in two middle schools (50 percent) increased their scores in mathematics.

Writing Assessment

Appendix A, Table 3, reports the percentage of students at elementary charter schools who scored in each of the six writing assessment categories on the Georgia Writing Assessment for the previous three years (1998-99 to 2000-01). Using the total percent of students scoring in the last three categories (experimenting, engaging, and extending). The following summary is based upon 15 schools:

- Upward trends were demonstrated by third-grade students at four charter schools (26.7 percent) and fifth-grade students in ten charter schools (66.7 percent).
- Downward trends were demonstrated by third-grade students in one charter school (6.7 percent).
- The percentage of third-grade students who scored in the upper categories for all other schools showed no particular trend.
- The percent of fifth-grade students in the top three categories either increased or remained the same.

Appendix B, Table 3, presents the percent of students at charter middle schools scoring below target, on target, and above target on the Georgia Middle Grades Writing Assessment, taken by grade 8 students. As the performance levels changed from 1998-99 to 1999-00, making comparisons across years difficult, these data are only presented for the 1999-00 and 2000-01 school years:

- All three charter middle schools that have been in operation for at least three years and had writing scores to report showed increases from 1999-00 to 2000-01 in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the target.
- Eighty percent of eighth-grade students in charter schools that serve that population met or exceeded the target in 2000-01.

Georgia High School Graduation Tests (GHSGT)

Appendix C, Table 1, provides the percent of grade 11 first-time regular program test-takers at charter high schools that passed the Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, and Writing sections of the GHSGT from 1997-98 to 2000-01. The following is based upon reports from 5 schools. As can be seen from the table:

- Relative to 1999-00, passing rates in language arts at three charter high schools (60 percent) were down, rates for one high school (20 percent) were up and one (20 percent) remained the same in 2000-01.
- Passing rates in Mathematics were down for four high schools (80 percent) and up in one (20 percent) in 2000-01.
- Passing rates in Science were down for four high schools (80 percent) and up in one (20 percent) in 2000-01.
- Passing rates in Social Studies were up in two (40 percent) and down in three charter high schools (60 percent) in 2000-01.
- Passing rates in writing were up in two high schools (40 percent), down in one high school (20 percent) and the same in two high schools (forty percent) in 2000-01.

Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT)

Finally, Appendix C, Table 2, contains the average verbal and math SAT scores for charter high schools. As can be seen, from 1997-98 to 1999-00, verbal and math SAT scores increased at Cartersville High (chartered in 1996-97) and at Druid Hills High (chartered in 1997-98) but declined in 2000-01. The summary is based upon information from four charter schools. Compared to the 1999-00 school year, scores for 2000-01 are:

- Down for two schools (50 percent) in both the verbal and mathematics areas.
- Up in one school (25 percent) in verbal and mathematics.
- Down in verbal but up in mathematics in one school (25 percent).

Parental Involvement

The charter schools were asked to provide information in their annual reports about parental involvement at their school, and a majority of the schools (30, 79 percent) did so. For the most part, this information was descriptive. Often, schools simply described the activities that parents had been involved in at the school (e.g., attending PTA and Charter Committee meetings, serving as Media Center aides, and volunteering at school events, such as choral and band recitals). Other schools provided the number of parents that had met their required volunteer hours or the number of parents who had participated in parent-teacher conferences. Several schools provided information from their parent surveys. For example, one school reported that results from its survey revealed that parents felt welcome at the school, that the school provided sufficient opportunities for parent involvement, and that the school actively promoted parent-teacher communication.

A few schools provided information about increases and decreases in parent involvement. For example, one school reported that the number of hours logged by parent volunteers increased from 3,268 in 1997-98 to 4,624 in 1999-00 and decreased to 3,285 in 2000-01, while another reported that the number of parents involved in the Parent-Teacher Association had increased from 500 to 900 from 1999-00 to 2000-01.

School Governance

The charter schools were also asked to provide information about school governance, and 17 (47.7 percent) responded, a decrease from last year in which 22 schools provided governance information. As with the parent involvement data, most of the schools provided descriptive information. For instance, schools stated that governance organizations had been established and described the organizations' meeting schedules and activities. For example, one school indicated that its school governance team met bi-weekly throughout the year and had developed an amendment to the charter in order to comply with current legislation. Another school described the composition of its governing board and the activities in which it was involved, which included developing the school's budget, increasing safety at the school, publishing a newsletter three times a year, planning school events, and providing guidance on technology, curriculum, and assessment.

Summary

An analysis of student demographics revealed that in 1997-98 to 2000-01, charter schools served a larger percentage of white students and a smaller percentage of socio-economically disadvantaged students than did the state, although the percentage of socio-economically disadvantaged students served by charter schools increased from 1997-98 to 2000-01. Over the same time period, the ESOL rate for charter schools remained similar to that of the states'.

The percentage of charter school students participating in gifted programs increased from 1997-98 to 1999-00. As a consequence, in 1999-00, the charter school gifted participation rate was 1.3 times that of the states'. The retention rate in charter schools was lower than the overall state retention rates from 1997-98 to 1999-00. Dropout rates in charter schools decreased from 1997-98 to 1999-00, while state dropout rates remained stable. Thus, while the charter school dropout rate was similar to the state dropout rate in 1997-98, it was substantially lower than the state dropout rate in 1999-00.

An examination of the goals set by charter schools revealed several common goals. These common goals included: increasing academic achievement, involving parents and staff in the educational process, attending to children's social and emotional growth, providing teachers with staff development opportunities, assuring that the school environment is safe and productive, improving student attendance, integrating curricula across subjects, and using a variety of instructional methods (including technology) to support the instructional program. High schools included goals related to increasing student graduation rates and reducing drop-out. They also included goals related to transition from middle to high school and from high school to post-secondary jobs or education.

An examination of the CRCT indicated that the majority of charter schools increased the percentage of grade 4 students who met or exceeded the standard in reading but not in mathematics. The four charter middle schools for which comparison data were available increased the percentage of their grade 6 students who met or exceeded the standard in mathematics, but only half increased the percentage of students who met or exceeded the standard in reading. The four charter schools for which comparison data were available for students in grade 8 increased the percentage of their students who met or exceeded the standard in reading, and three of the four schools increased the percentage of their students who met or exceeded the standard in mathematics.

Analysis of ITBS/SAT-9 test scores from 1998-99 to 2000-01 indicates that academic performance at the 22 schools that have been operating as charter schools for at least three years and had test scores to report is varied. Only a few schools' scores demonstrated three-year trends with approximately 30 percent of the schools having scores that increased in reading, mathematics or both over that period and approximately twenty percent of the schools having scores that decreased over the same period.

The statewide writing assessment results indicated that the percentage of fifth-grade students in charter schools scoring in the highest three categories (experimenting, engaging, and extending) did increase for most charter schools. Third-grade results were more varied. Additionally, the percentage of middle school students who scored "on target" increased for all schools for which comparison data were available. The percentage of middle school students who "exceeded target" varied over that same period of time.

High School Graduation Test passing rates for charter high schools varied relative to last year's scores, but generally more schools had passing rates that were lower than last year.

The majority (79 percent) of charter schools provided information in their annual reports about parental involvement at their school. For the most part, this information was descriptive. For example, schools described the activities that parents had been involved in at the school, provided the number of parents that had met their required volunteer hours or the number of parents who had participated in parent-teacher conferences, and provided information from their parent surveys. A few schools provided information about increases in parent involvement over time.

Forty-eight percent of the schools also provided information about school governance. As with the parent involvement data, most of the schools provided descriptive information, that is, they described the governing organizations' meeting schedules and activities.

Overall, the thirty-eight charter schools whose reports were examined for this report appear to be serving a more diverse population of students than in the past, but in some areas their population is not as diverse as that of the state. Furthermore, it appears that some charter schools are successful in meeting their achievement goals and some are not. Some have data that indicate that parents are involved in their schools and that they have established strong governing organizations. Others did not provide information in those areas. Thus, there does not appear to be one over-all descriptive statement that would cover all charter schools in Georgia. Charter School differences appear to exceed their similarities.