Maryland's Public Charter School Program

Providing High-Quality Choices in Public Education

Charter School Annual Report | **2011**

Maryland Charter School Final Report

Introduction

In fall 2008, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) contracted with ICF Macro, an international research and evaluation firm, to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Maryland Charter School Program. This mixed-method evaluation employs quantitative and qualitative data to provide MSDE with information regarding progress made in implementing the Charter School Program and the impact of charter school attendance on student performance.

More specifically, the charter school evaluation is designed to answer seven research questions related to program implementation and charter school effectiveness. The research questions that frame the evaluation are as follows.

Research Questions

1. To what extent did MSDE implement its proposed activities?
2. To what extent did MSDE fulfill federal requirements to meet program objectives?
3. To what extent were the intermediate results used in a formative manner to improve final grant outcomes?
4. How did the choice to attend a charter school affect student performance in core academic subjects (reading/language arts and mathematics) for all student subgroups?
5. How do Maryland charter schools' characteristics and academic performance compare with traditional state public schools in terms of: demographic composition, academic performance, student attendance, parent satisfaction, and other factors?
6. What are the instructional and managerial practices in charter schools?
7. To what extent does the implementation of instructional and managerial practices account for student achievement?

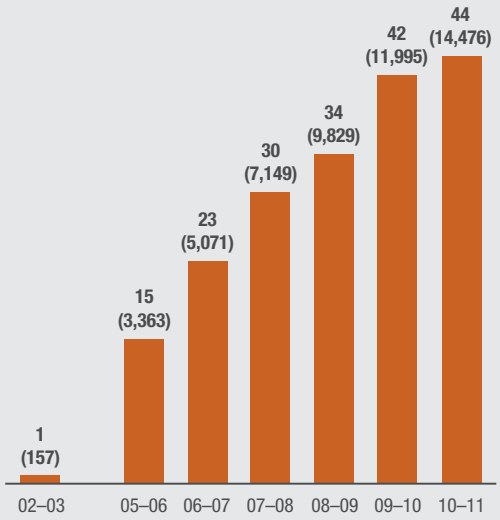
As it is a summative evaluation report, the focus of this final report is on the last four research questions. Earlier reports produced by ICF Macro and submitted to MSDE have included an implementation assessment to address the first three research questions.

The Maryland Charter School Program

The Maryland Charter School Law was passed in 2003. Under this law all of Maryland's 24 school districts have the power to authorize public charter schools located within their geographic boundaries. Charter schools have to adhere to fewer school district policies and guidelines, and consequently have more freedom to innovate in ways that promote student achievement.

One form of innovation is creating schools with grade ranges not typical of regular public schools. In Maryland, this currently includes elementary/middle school and middle/high school combinations. In addition, each charter school establishes its own mission, and typically schools have a published mission statement that succinctly describes the guiding philosophy underlying the school's program. The missions of current charter schools vary widely and include programs that focus on: health promotion; language immersion; science, technology, engineering, and math; arts integration; college preparation; leadership development; and serving students who have experienced failure in other settings.

Figure 1: Number of Charter Schools in Maryland
(Enrollment)



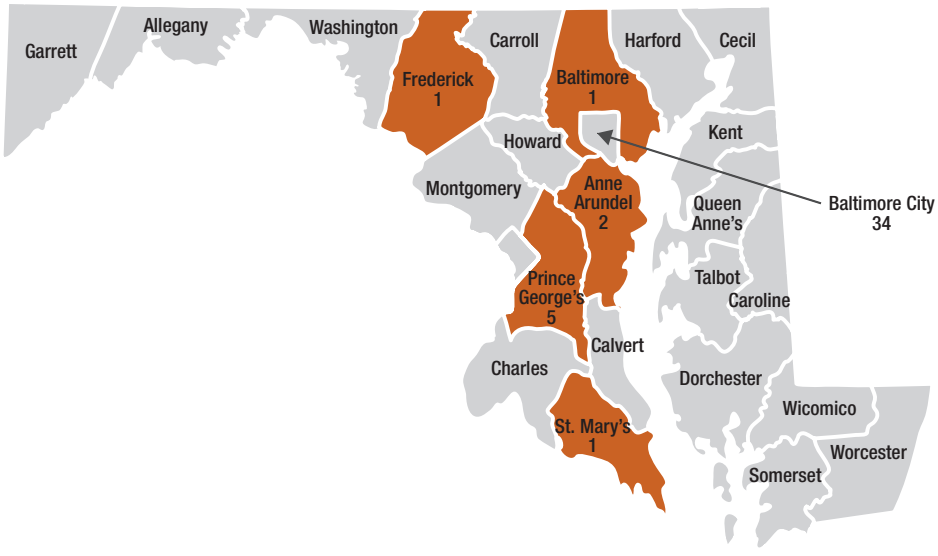
Continuation of a school's charter is based upon its performance, particularly the academic performance of students. While most charters are renewed, over the years five charter schools have been closed by their authorizing school districts.

As shown in Figure 1, since passage of the Maryland Charter School Law, the number of charter schools in the State has increased steadily—on average by about six schools per year.

The 44 schools that operated during the 2010-2011 school year were located in six school districts around the State and served approximately 14,476 students. Seven additional schools opened their doors for the 2011-2012 school year, and three more are slated to open in fall 2012.

As the map (Figure 2) shows, 34 of the 44 charter schools open in 2010-2011 were located in Baltimore City. However, five other districts were also home to charter schools. Though most of these districts had just one or two charter schools, five charter schools operated in Prince George's County during the 2010-2011 school year.

Figure 2: Number of Charter Schools in Maryland in 2010–2011



Composition of Maryland Charter Schools

In 2010-2011 four fifths of Maryland charter school students (81%) were African American, while 12 percent of students were White and 5 percent Hispanic. As shown in Table 1, the percentages of students in the various racial and ethnic groups has changed very little since 2009.

On the other hand, the percentage of students receiving special services has increased considerably. While 45 percent of students received FARMs in 2009, 66 percent of students attending charter schools in 2010-2011 were eligible for the subsidy. In addition, the percentage of students receiving special education services has doubled since 2009, increasing from 6 percent to 12 percent of all Maryland charter school students.

Table 1: Demographic Change in Maryland Charter Schools

Student Group	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	Net Change*
All Students	**9,829**	**11,995**	**14,476**	**4,647**
Students Receiving Special Services				
FARMs-eligible Students	45%	70%	66%	20%
English Language Learners	3%	3%	3%	0%
Students Receiving Special Education Services	6%	11%	12%	5%
Student Race/Ethnicity				
African-American	81%	82%	81%	0%
White	13%	12%	12%	-1%
Hispanic	5%	4%	5%	0%

*Throughout this report, to make tables more readable, numbers are rounded. In some cases, as in this table, this rounding results in net change that differs from what would be obtained by subtracting the rounded 2008-2009 figure from the rounded 2010-2011 figure.

More than three quarters (77%) of charter school students attend a school located in Baltimore City. As a result, the student demographics are similar to those shown previously for charter school students statewide. However, somewhat higher percentages of Baltimore City charter school students are African American (85% vs. 81%), receive special education services (14% vs. 12%), or are eligible for FARMs (78% vs. 66%).

The percentage of African American charter school students is much higher than the statewide figure of 81 percent in both Prince George's County (92%) and Baltimore County (95%). However, the percentage of students in these two districts who receive FARMs or special education services is much lower than the statewide figures for charter schools.

Of the remaining districts, each of which has just one or two charter schools, Anne Arundel is the most diverse in race and ethnicity, with about half of students being White (49%), about one third African American (33%), and 8 percent Hispanic. The majority of students in both Frederick County and Saint Mary's County (78% in both districts) are White.

Across all districts, there are relatively few Hispanic charter school students (5% statewide), with district percentages ranging up to 8 percent. The highest percentages are in three schools in Baltimore City, where the percentage of Hispanic students ranges from 19 percent to 65 percent. Statewide, the percentage of ELL students is very low, with substantial percentages (ranging from 13% to 54%) found only in the three Baltimore City schools that have large Hispanic populations.

In Baltimore City, charter school student demographics closely mirror the demographics of the district as a whole. In other districts that have fewer charter schools, there is more deviation from the district-wide demographics. In particular, the student populations of most charter schools outside of Baltimore City include lower percentages of students receiving FARMs and special education services than the district average.

Table 2: Characteristics of Maryland's Charter Schools (2010-2011)

School	Current Grades	Enrollment	% FARMs*	% ELL*	% SPED*	% African American	% White	% Hispanic
Anne Arundel County: All Schools		**75,481**	**34%**	**6%**	**10%**	**21%**	**62%**	**9%**
Anne Arundel County: Charter Schools		**693**	**19%**	**≤ 5%**	**6%**	**33%**	**49%**	**8%**
Monarch Academy Public Charter School	K-2, 5-6	363	21%	≤ 5%	11%	37%	47%	8%
Chesapeake Science Point	6-9	330	17%			28%	52%	8%
Baltimore City: All Schools		**83,800**	**84%**	**≤ 5%**	**14%**	**87%**	**8%**	**4%**
Baltimore City: Charter Schools		**10,685**	**78%**	**3%**	**14%**	**85%**	**8%**	**5%**
Afya Public Charter School	6-8	325	83%		19%	97%	2%	1%
Baltimore Antioch Diploma Plus High School	9-11	343	73%		18%	98%	2%	
Baltimore Community High School	7-11	290	76%		15%	94%	2%	3%
Baltimore Freedom Academy	6-12	503	75%		17%	99%		
Baltimore International Academy	K-8	378	51%	≤ 5%	≤ 5%	89%	6%	1%
Baltimore Leadership School For Young Women	6-7	214	73%			95%	4%	
Baltimore Liberation Diploma Plus	9-11	308	78%		22%	99%		
Baltimore Montessori Public Charter School	PK-6	267	30%		15%	33%	52%	6%
Bluford Drew Jemison MST Academy	6-8	358	80%		13%	99%	1%	
Bluford Drew Jemison STEM Academy West	6-7, 9	355	88%		23%	99%	1%	
City Neighbors Charter School	K-8	204	40%		18%	55%	41%	1%
City Neighbors Hamilton	K-4	110	50%		21%	60%	35%	
City Neighbors High	9	89	64%		14%	69%	29%	
City Springs Elementary	PK-8	604	≥ 95.0%		14%	99%		
Collington Square Elementary	PK-8	571	≥ 95.0%		16%	99%		
ConneXions Community Leadership Academy	6-12	327	82%		19%	99%	1%	
Coppin Academy	9-12	342	78%		12%	100%		
Empowerment Academy	PK-8	238	74%			100%		
Hampstead Hill Academy	PK-8	613	80%	21%	9%	21%	38%	36%
Independence School Local I	9-12	121	76%		29%	60%	33%	4%
Inner Harbor East Academy	PK-7	322	88%		7%	100%		
KIPP Harmony	K-1	250	88%		8%	99%		1%
KIPP Ujima Village Academy	5-8	381	82%		12%	100%		
MD Academy of Technology and Health Sciences	6-12	464	76%		14%	98%		1%
Midtown Academy	K-8	180	59%		6%	76%	18%	2%
Northwood Appold Community Academy II	6-7	137	73%		20%	100%		
Northwood Community Academy	K-5	244	80%		8%	100%		
Patterson Park Public Charter School	K-8	588	80%	13%	13%	68%	10%	19%
Rosemont Elementary	PK-8	444	92%		14%	99%	1%	
Southwest Baltimore Charter School	K-8	422	83%		20%	87%	11%	
The Crossroads School	6-8	160	81%		13%	90%	2%	6%
The Green School	K-5	150	42%		17%	47%	45%	1%
Tunbridge Public Charter School	PK-3	199	52%		9%	76%	17%	1%
Wolfe Street Academy	PK-5	184	95%	54%	16%	16%	15%	65%
Baltimore County: All Schools		**104,160**	**48%**	**6%**	**13%**	**39%**	**46%**	**6%**
Baltimore County: Charter Schools		**601**	**46%**		**6%**	**95%**	**1%**	
Imagine Discovery Charter School	K-6	601	46%		6%	95%	1%	
Frederick County: All Schools		**40,188**	**29%**	**8%**	**10%**	**11%**	**68%**	**11%**
Frederick County: Charter Schools		**299**	**7%**		**14%**	**6%**	**78%**	**6%**
Monocacy Valley Montessori School	PK-8	299	7%		14%	6%	78%	6%
Prince George's County: All Schools		**126,671**	**64%**	**18%**	**10%**	**69%**	**5%**	**21%**
Prince George's County: Charter Schools		**1,904**	**39%**	**2%**	**5%**	**92%**	**1%**	**4%**
EXCEL Academy Public Charter School	K-7	303	49%	≤ 5%	≤ 5%	83%	2%	8%
Imagine Foundation Charter	K-6	337	23%		≤ 5%	95%	1%	1%
Lincoln Charter School	K-7	379	53%		5%	96%		2%
Possibility STEM Prep Academy	6-8	419	19%		5%	94%		2%
Turning Point Academy	K-7	466	49%	≤ 5%	6%	91%		6%
Saint Mary's County: All Schools		**17,271**	**38%**	**≤ 5%**	**11%**	**20%**	**70%**	**4%**
Saint Mary's County: Charter Schools		**294**	**14%**		**5%**	**15%**	**78%**	**3%**
Chesapeake Charter School	K-8	294	14%		5%	15%	78%	3%
Total/Average for All Charter Schools		**14,476**	**66%**	**3%**	**12%**	**81%**	**12%**	**5%**

* The numbers shown for "All Schools" for percentage of students receiving FARMs, English language learner services, and special education services are for the elementary level only.

Support Received by Charter Schools

The Office of School Innovations (OSI) at MSDE provides on-going consultation and technical assistance to potential charter school founders, parents interested in learning more about charter schools, and leaders in operating charter schools. OSI staff also provide training and support to charter school liaisons and other key staff in school districts. In providing this assistance, OSI staff have worked closely with the Maryland Charter School Network (MCSN), a nonprofit statewide organization whose mission is to promote and serve the Maryland charter school movement.

During the 2010-2011 school year, the following charter school-related training and technical assistance (TA) activities were conducted. The Office of School Innovations:

- **Maintained a Web presence to share information and resources**. OSI shares important information about Maryland charter schools through its Web page on MSDE's MarylandPublicSchools.org website. This Web page is updated regularly as new information and resources become available. During 2010-2011, the MSDE charter schools Web page had a total of 105,929 visits.
- **Provided just-in-time personalized support to stakeholders.** Since tracking of TA requests began in 2008, MSDE OSI has responded to more than 1,300 requests for technical assistance. During 2010-2011, MSDE OSI responded to 475 such requests. All of these requests came to OSI through telephone (53%) or email (47%). In providing this TA, OSI staff responded to questions, provided guidance, and engaged in problem solving discussions with the requestors. OSI staff provided general information about charter schools, as well as information and assistance related to the availability of and enrollment in charter schools, the charter school grant program, charter school staffing, and waivers and appeals. Nearly half of the requestors were parents, most of whom were interested in learning about the availability of and enrollment in charter schools. In addition to the just-in-time TA provided by OSI staff, during 2010-2011 MCSN responded to about 375 requests for assistance, primarily from charter school founders, potential founders, and operators.
- **Delivered pre-proposal training to assist potential and current founders and charter school operators.** An important part of OSI's support to stakeholders has been provision of training on how to submit a successful proposal that would be funded through Maryland Charter School Program. During 2010-2011, OSI offered two training sessions, in September and December 2010.
- **Provided training to governing board members.** On an annual basis, OSI has provided training for members of charter school governing boards. The purpose of this training is to help board members better understand their roles and responsibilities. During 2010-2011, this training was conducted in May 2011.
- **Met with charter school liaisons to share information and engage in problem solving.** An ongoing TA activity has been bringing together the designated charter school liaisons from Maryland school districts, both those with and without operating charter schools. The purpose of these meetings is to provide opportunities for authorizer training, networking, sharing of best authorizing practices, problem-solving, and joint planning. Two meetings for LEA charter school liaison were held during 2010-2011, in October 2010 and April 2011.

- **Began development of the Maryland Charter School Quality Standards.** An important ongoing activity of OSI has been the development of foundational documents to communicate important information about charter schools in Maryland and to support various stakeholders in fulfilling their roles. Among the documents created in previous years are a model charter school performance contract, a guide for authorizers on charter school closure, and a State charter school policy. A major undertaking in 2010-2011 was the development of a set of Maryland Charter School Quality Standards that can be used in school monitoring, dissemination activities, and providing guidance to charter schools. Though the Quality Standards were not finalized during the year, OSI staff sought to share information about the standards with stakeholders and obtain feedback on a draft version.
- **Co-sponsored and presented at the Annual Maryland Charter Schools Conference.** One opportunity for sharing information about the Quality Standards was in sessions at the Annual Maryland Charter Schools Conference held in April 2011. These sessions brought together a diverse group of charter school stakeholders who had an opportunity to examine the Quality Standards and provide feedback on them.
- **Offered a charter school Authorizers' Summit.** In April 2011, OSI offered a new technical assistance event, the Authorizers' Summit. The purpose of the summit was to provide local school district staff with a better understanding of their role in the authorizing process, afford an opportunity for them to learn more about national authorizing standards, and engage in discussion about charter school growth and authorizing in Maryland.
- **Conducted site visits to charter schools involved in the State school improvement process.** An ongoing activity of OSI is monitoring charter schools for compliance and quality. Especially important is the provision of face-to-face technical assistance to charter schools involved in the school improvement process. During 2010-2011, OSI staff visited 10 struggling schools to learn about their improvement efforts and strategize about additional changes and supports that may be needed to ensure that schools make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

As shown in Table 3, the overall level of satisfaction with the quality and effectiveness of the training provided by OSI is very high.

Table 3: Participant Satisfaction with Charter School-Related Training and Technical Assistance Events

Event	% of Participants Strongly Agreeing or Agreeing			% of Participants
	The information provided will support my position/role related to charter schools.	The training made me want to refine my practices within the scope of my current charter school role.	The training will enable me to effectively communicate what I learned today to others in my organization.	Who Rated the Training Overall Excellent or Very Good
Pre-Proposal Training	100%	81%	100%	97%
Training for Governing Board Members	100%	88%	100%	88%
Meetings of Charter School Liaisons	100%	100%	100%	100%
Presentations at the Maryland Charter Schools Conference	100%	92%	100%	88%
Authorizers' Summit	100%	81%	94%	94%

Instructional and Management Practices in Maryland Charter Schools

During spring of 2009 and of 2011, the ICF Macro evaluators collected data from administrators in Maryland charter schools through a survey of all schools. Information concerning instructional and management practices was obtained in 2009 from 34 charter schools and in 2011 from 35 schools. An important project that shaped this task was the Evaluation of the Effect of Increased State Aid to Local School Systems through the Bridge to Excellence Act. This evaluation, conducted between 2005 and 2008, identified best educational practices that appear to consistently contribute to increased student achievement.

The 25 practices are associated with three important aspects of curriculum and school organization that impact the quality of instruction.

- Aligned, individualized, and inclusive instructional processes
- Planning and support systems
- Supportive and positive school environment and effective school leadership

Although MSDE's Office of School Innovations is now developing a set of Maryland Charter School Quality Standards, when the current evaluation began in 2008 the practices identified in the Bridge to Excellence evaluation were selected as a framework for the evaluation because they were well documented and accepted in Maryland.

Use of Best Instructional Practices in 2010-2011

In completing the survey questionnaire, school leaders were asked to respond to questions concerning their use of instructional practices. For some schools, not all practices are relevant. Specifically, not all charter schools have English language learners (ELLs), and so the practice of including ELLs with support is not applicable. Also, the use of individualized learning plans is only applicable to schools that include secondary grades. As a result, the number of practices that applies to any one school ranges from 23 to 25. The appropriate number for each school was used in making the calculations for Table 4.

As shown in Table 4, 21 of the 25 practices are utilized by more than two-thirds of the Maryland public charter schools to which they apply.

Table 4: Instructional Practices in Use during the 2010-2011 School Year

Instructional Practice	Percentage of Charter Schools Employing the Practice
Use of a curriculum aligned with the Maryland State Curriculum in tested core subject areas	100%
Inclusion of special education students with special education support	100%
Discussions of instructional challenges and practices during team meetings	100%
Teacher team planning meetings by grade or subject level using student assessment data to develop specific goals and action steps	97%
Data-based differentiation of instruction in the classroom	97%
School-level strategic planning team	97%
Professional development on topics determined from the student testing/assessment data	94%
Professional development on topics unrelated to the testing/assessment data of students	94%
Behavior management program or strategies	94%
Use of student-level test data to plan instruction	94%
Inclusion of English Language Learners with support*	92%
Use of technology in instruction (for example, computers and interactive boards)	91%
Use of an Internet-accessed electronic data warehouse to obtain student-level test data	91%
School-based teacher mentoring program	88%
Extended instruction in core areas (math and reading)–for example, block scheduling	83%
Intervention/enrichment class period/block for all students	77%
Individualized intervention plans for struggling students	74%
Before-school, after-school, or lunch time academic intervention program(s)	74%
Home/family liaison program or staff	74%
School Improvement Plan that includes a plan for each grade or subject	71%
Reading specialist who works with students	69%
Math specialist who works with students	57%
Individual learning plans for all students**	54%
LEA-based new teacher coaching program	46%
Academic acceleration programs included in the general school schedule—for example, gifted and talented or advanced placement classes	44%

* Includes only schools with at least one ELL student
** Includes only secondary schools

In 2009, the ICF Macro evaluators established a cut point of 70 percent of practices in order for a school to be considered as making a deliberate effort to employ best practices. The same cut point is used for this final report. As shown in Table 5, 30 of the 35 reporting charter schools (86%) are using at least 70 percent of the relevant practices, with the schools using an average of 81 percent of the practices. Among Baltimore City charter schools, 24 of 26 schools (92%) are using at least 70 percent of the relevant practices, with these schools employing an average of 82 percent of the practices.

Table 5: Percentage of Practices Employed by Maryland Charter Schools in 2010-2011

Schools	Number of Schools Reporting	Average Percentage of Practices Used	Range	Number of Schools Using More Than 70% of Practices	Percentage of Schools Using More than 70% of Practices
All Charter Schools	35	81%	48%-100%	30	86%
Baltimore City Schools	26	82%	54%-100%	24	92%

Change in the Use of Best Instructional Practices: 2008-2009 to 2010-2011

Since 2009, there has been considerable change in the percentage of schools using the various instructional practices. As mentioned, during 2010-2011, 21 of the identified instructional practices were used by more than two thirds of Maryland charter schools. This compares with just 17 practices being utilized by two thirds of charter schools in 2008-2009.

As shown in Table 6, for 7 of the 21 practices, there was no change between 2009 and 2011 in the percentage of schools employing the practice. For four practices, there was a slight decrease in the percentage of schools. For 10 practices there was an increase in the percentage of schools using the practice.

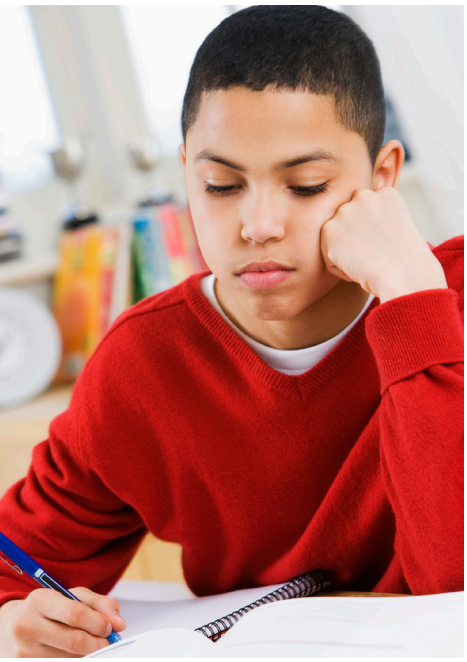
Of particular note is the increase by 10 or more points in the percentage of schools that: use a school-based teacher mentoring program, have an intervention/enrichment period for all students, include a plan for each grade or subject in the School Improvement Plan, employ a reading specialist who works with students, or include English language learners with support. It should be noted, however, that the number of schools to which support of ELL students applies is quite small in both years. Therefore, the use of the practice by just one or two additional schools can cause a substantial change in the percentage of schools reporting support for ELL students.

Table 6: Change in Percentage of Maryland Charter Schools Using Instructional Practices Between 2008-2009 and 2010-2011

Practices in Use	2008-2009 Percentage of Schools	2010-2011 Percentage of Schools	Change
Inclusion of special education students with special education support	100%	100%	=
Discussions of instructional challenges and practices during team meetings	100%	100%	=
Use of a curriculum aligned with the Maryland State Curriculum in tested core subject areas	91%	100%	↑
Teacher team planning meetings by grade or subject level using student assessment data to develop specific goals and action steps	97%	97%	=
School-level strategic planning team	97%	97%	=
Data-based differentiation of instruction in the classroom	97%	97%	=
Use of student-level test data to plan instruction	100%	94%	↓
Professional development on topics determined from the student testing/assessment data	88%	94%	↑
Professional development on topics unrelated to the testing/assessment data of students	97%	94%	↓
Behavior management program or strategies	94%	94%	=
Inclusion of English Language Learners with support	80%	92%	↑↑
Use of technology in instruction (for example, computers and interactive boards)	91%	91%	=
Use of Internet-accessed electronic data warehouse to obtain student level test data	88%	91%	↑
School-based teacher mentoring program	68%	88%	↑↑
Extended instruction in core areas (math and reading)–for example, block scheduling	79%	83%	↑
Intervention/enrichment class period/block for all students	62%	77%	↑↑
Individualized intervention plans for struggling students	71%	74%	↑
Home/family liaison program/staff	79%	74%	↓
Before-school, after-school, or lunch time academic intervention program(s)	79%	74%	↓
School Improvement Plan that includes plan for each grade or subject	61%	71%	↑↑
Reading specialist who works with students	52%	69%	↑↑

= Percentage of schools unchanged ↑ Percentage of schools increased by less than 10 ↑↑ Percentage of schools increased by 10 or more ↓ Percentage of schools decreased by less than 10

The pattern of change for Baltimore City charter schools is quite similar to the pattern for Maryland charter schools overall. For seven of the practices, there was no change in the percentage of schools employing the practice between 2009 and 2011. For two practices, there was a decline in the percentage of schools. For 12 practices there was an increase in the percentage of schools using the practice. Of particular note in Baltimore City is the increase by 10 or more points in the percentage of schools that use a curriculum aligned with the Maryland State Curriculum, have a school-based teacher mentoring program, or employ a reading specialist who works with students.



Management Practices in Charter Schools

In addition to gathering information about the instructional practices being used in Maryland charter schools, the evaluators sought to gain an understanding of their management practices. In particular, information was gathered on school leadership configurations, administrator professional development, school staffing, administrators' interactions with school governing boards and operators, and sources of operational services.

School Leadership Teams. There appear to be a variety of leadership configurations in charter schools. In about 62 percent of schools there are two or three people on the administrative leadership team, though the number of people on the team ranges from one to ten across all charter schools. Administrative teams include individuals with the titles of principal, education director, co-director, and business manager.

Interactions with the School Governing Board. Each Maryland charter school is required to have a governing board made up of stakeholders. In about three quarters of schools, formal meetings of the governing board occur monthly. On average, there are about 10 members on the school's governing board, and in about 63 percent of schools, administrators serve on the governing board. Even in schools where administrators do not serve on the governing board, they tend to have fairly frequent interactions with governing board members, with over half (51%) reporting weekly or daily interactions. Most administrators (89%) are completely or substantially satisfied with the relationship that exists between the school's administrative team and governing board.

Interactions with School Operator Representatives. In some charter schools, the governing board is essentially the school's operator. However, nearly two thirds of the responding administrators work in schools where a separate and distinct "operator" oversees two or more charter schools. Most administrators working in these schools reported either daily or weekly interactions with an operator representative. More than three quarters indicated that they are completely or substantially satisfied with the relationship between administrative team members and operator representatives.

School Staffing. Most administrators reported being completely or substantially satisfied with their school's staff. On average, charter schools hired about 6 new teachers during the 2010-2011 academic year and had an average of about 19 full-time certificated positions. Most schools had no vacancies at mid-year, though five schools had two or more vacant positions.

Administrator Professional Development. Charter school leaders participate actively in professional development that they view as appropriate for their positions. On average, about 90 percent of administrators on charter school leadership teams received professional development during the 2010-2011 academic year. Training was provided by district, school, operator, and MSDE staff, as well as by outside consultants.

Charter School Operational Services. Charter school administrators reported on the sources of the services they use to support school operations, including budgeting, accounting, technology procurement, facilities management and planning, security, transportation, food and nutrition, hiring, and payroll. Sources from which these services are obtained include school staff, the authorizing school district, the governing board, the school's operator, and outside firms. Many administrators indicated that two or more entities are involved in a single function. In particular, up to five entities are involved in accounting and facilities planning; up to four in budgeting, facilities management, school security, hiring, and payroll; and up to three in information technology, procurement, transportation, and food and nutrition. Most of the administrators (82%) are completely or substantially satisfied with their school operations overall.

The evaluators examined the relationship between the use of specific instructional and management practices and student performance on the reading and math MSAs. The analysis is described later in this report.

Academic Performance of Charter School Students

The Maryland School Assessment is the State's standardized assessment that meets the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind legislation. The MSA is used to assess student achievement in reading, mathematics, and science. The reading and math assessments are administered annually to students in grades 3 through 8, while the science assessment is administered only to students in grades 5 through 8. Because the reading and math assessments are used to measure overall school progress, only MSA results on these two assessments are included in the tables to the right and the remainder of this report.

MSA results are tracked not only for the overall student population, but also for various student subgroups, including students receiving special services and students in various racial and ethnic groups. Tables 7 and 8 show the percentages of students proficient or advanced on the reading and math MSAs from 2009 to 2011, along with the net change across the two years.

As shown, the overall percentage of students proficient or advanced has declined slightly over the two years (from 77% to 74% on the reading MSA and from 68% to 66% on the math MSA.). The only subgroup posting an increase on both assessments is English language learners (with a net gain of 5% in reading and 15% in math). For Hispanic students, there was no change in the proficiency rate on the reading MSA, but a 4 percent increase on the math assessment. For other student subgroups (i.e., students receiving special education services, African American students, and White students) the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced decreased between 2009 and 2011. In most cases, the net change ranges from -1 percent to -4 percent, although for White students on the math MSA the net change is -7 percentage points.

Table 7: Performance on the Reading MSA Percentage of Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced

Student Group	2009	2010	2011	Net Change
All Students	**77%**	**76%**	**74%**	**-2%**
Students Receiving Special Services				
FARMs-eligible Students	73%	74%	70%	-3%
English Language Learners	63%	77%	68%	5%
Students Receiving Special Education Services	57%	60%	52%	-4%
Student Race/Ethnicity				
African-American	74%	74%	72%	-2%
White	93%	89%	90%	-4%
Hispanic	78%	83%	78%	0%

Table 8: Performance on the Math MSA Percentage of Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced

Student Group	2009	2010	2011	Net Change
All Students	**68%**	**71%**	**66%**	**-2%**
Students Receiving Special Services				
FARMs-eligible Students	63%	67%	62%	-1%
English Language Learners	66%	83%	81%	15%
Students Receiving Special Education Services	46%	55%	43%	-3%
Student Race/Ethnicity				
African-American	64%	67%	63%	-1%
White	88%	86%	81%	-7%
Hispanic	78%	86%	83%	4%

School-by-School Reporting on Student Performance

Tables 9 and 10 include data on the charter schools open in 2010-2011 for which reading and math assessment data are available. In addition to the MSA used in grades 3 through 8, High School Assessment (HSA) results on the English and Algebra assessments are included for charter high schools.

For schools that had data available from the spring 2009, 2010, and 2011 testing administrations, change in student performance over time is included. For the remaining schools, the far right column that reports net change in the percentage of students proficient or advanced contains a dash (—). Because of a change in the way that the percentage of students proficient or advanced was reported for 2010-2011, precise results for the reading MSA are not available for one particularly high achieving charter school, Chesapeake Science Point.

Charter School Student Performance in Reading and English

The total number of schools with reading/English MSA/HSA data available for all three years is 30. Of those, 16 schools (53%) demonstrated an increase in the percentage of students proficient or advanced, though just two schools had increases of more than 10 percentage points. Conversely, 14 schools posted decreases in the reading/English proficiency rate. Schools that included both elementary and middle grades were most likely to achieve gains, with 11 of 17 (65%) elementary/middle schools having an increase in the reading proficiency rate.

Table 9: Achievement in Reading/English Percentage of Students Proficient or Advanced

School	2009	2010	2011	Change ('09 to'11)
Elementary Schools				
Baltimore Montessori Public Charter School	92%	84%	85%	↓
City Neighbors Hamilton		79%	74%	—
KIPP Harmony			N/A	—
Imagine Discovery Charter School	75%	79%	79%	↑
Northwood Community Academy	83%	82%	89%	↑
Southwest Baltimore Charter School	81%	81%	63%	↓↓
The Green School	87%	91%	88%	↑
Tunbridge Public Charter School			87%	—
Wolfe Street Academy	85%	89%	79%	↓
Elementary/Middle Schools				
Baltimore International Academy	73%	65%	78%	↑
Chesapeake Charter School	93%	91%	93%	↓
City Neighbors Charter School	88%	85%	88%	↑
City Springs Elementary	70%	68%	67%	↓
Collington Square Elementary	69%	57%	52%	↓↓
Empowerment Academy	89%	89%	95%	↑
EXCEL Academy Public Charter School	78%	78%	78%	↑
Hampstead Hill Academy	86%	82%	79%	↓
Imagine Foundation Charter	86%	88%	89%	↑
Inner Harbor East Academy	77%	78%	78%	↑
KIPP Ujima Village Academy	83%	85%	88%	↑
Lincoln Charter School	59%	62%	65%	↑
Midtown Academy	86%	91%	93%	↑
Monarch Academy Public Charter School		83%	90%	—
Monocacy Valley Montessori School	95%	93%	95%	↓
Patterson Park Public Charter School	65%	83%	80%	↑↑
Rosemont Elementary	96%	96%	71%	↓↓
Turning Point Academy	72%	77%	79%	↑
Middle Schools				
Afya Public Charter School	88%	80%	75%	↓↓
Baltimore Leadership School For Young Women		88%	89%	—
Bluford Drew Jemison MST Academy	68%	68%	57%	↓↓
Bluford Drew Jemison Stem Academy West		75%	52%	—
Chesapeake Science Point	97%	96%	≥ 95%	—
Possibility STEM Prep Academy			77%	—
The Crossroads School	81%	82%	76%	↓
Middle/High Schools				
Baltimore Antioch Diploma Plus High School			68%	—
Baltimore Community High School		41%	39%	—
Baltimore Freedom Academy	50%	59%	41%	↓
Baltimore Liberation Diploma Plus			38%	—
ConneXions Community Leadership Academy	64%	67%	67%	↑
High Schools				
City Neighbors High			N/A	—
Coppin Academy	81%	73%	79%	↓
Independence School Local I		62%	86%	—
MD Academy of Technology and Health Sciences	60%	72%	73%	↑↑
NACA Freedom And Democracy Academy II		85%	71%	—

↓ Less than 10 percentage point decrease ↑ Less than 10 percentage point increase

↓↓ More than 10 percentage point decrease ↑↑ More than 10 percentage point increase

Table 10: Achievement in Math/Algebra Percentage of Students Proficient or Advanced

School	2009	2010	2011	Change ('09 to'11)
Elementary Schools				
Baltimore Montessori Public Charter School	66%	75%	56%	↓↓
City Neighbors Hamilton		68%	62%	—
KIPP Harmony			N/A	—
Imagine Discovery Charter School	76%	75%	63%	↓↓
Northwood Community Academy	94%	79%	87%	↓
Southwest Baltimore Charter School	81%	73%	32%	↓↓
The Green School	69%	81%	79%	↑
Tunbridge Public Charter School			81%	—
Wolfe Street Academy	93%	92%	79%	↓↓
Elementary/Middle Schools				
Baltimore International Academy	67%	81%	74%	↑
Chesapeake Charter School	80%	84%	84%	↑
City Neighbors Charter School	67%	71%	68%	↑
City Springs Elementary	44%	64%	74%	↑↑
Collington Square Elementary	58%	53%	48%	↓
Empowerment Academy	91%	93%	90%	↓
EXCEL Academy Public Charter School	59%	71%	60%	↑
Hampstead Hill Academy	87%	86%	82%	↓
Imagine Foundation Charter	79%	85%	85%	↑
Inner Harbor East Academy	65%	62%	62%	↓
KIPP Ujima Village Academy	78%	82%	87%	↑
Lincoln Charter School	52%	43%	56%	↑
Midtown Academy	82%	86%	78%	↓
Monarch Academy Public Charter School		68%	79%	—
Monocacy Valley Montessori School	82%	85%	83%	↑
Patterson Park Public Charter School	59%	79%	84%	↑↑
Rosemont Elementary	81%	87%	80%	↓
Turning Point Academy	56%	70%	69%	↑↑
Middle Schools				
Afya Public Charter School	81%	69%	69%	↓↓
Baltimore Leadership School For Young Women		97%	82%	—
Bluford Drew Jemison MST Academy	60%	55%	37%	↓↓
Bluford Drew Jemison Stem Academy West		65%	36%	—
Chesapeake Science Point	98%	94%	93%	↓
Possibility STEM Prep Academy			51%	—
The Crossroads School	82%	88%	77%	↓
Middle/High Schools				
Baltimore Antioch Diploma Plus High School			77%	—
Baltimore Community High School			28%	—
Baltimore Freedom Academy	30%	27%	29%	↓
Baltimore Liberation Diploma Plus			33%	—
ConneXions Community Leadership Academy	40%	42%	38%	↓
High Schools				
City Neighbors High			N/A	—
Coppin Academy	99%	96%	88%	↓↓
Independence School Local I		62%	63%	—
MD Academy of Technology and Health Sciences	44%	62%	59%	↑↑
NACA Freedom And Democracy Academy II		61%	58%	—

↓ Less than 10 percentage point decrease
↓↓ More than 10 percentage point decrease
↑ Less than 10 percentage point increase
↑↑ More than 10 percentage point increase

Charter School Student Performance in Math

The total number of schools with math/algebra MSA/HSA data for all three years is 31. Of those, 13 schools (42%) experienced an increase in the percentage of students proficient or advanced, including four schools with increases of more than 10 percentage points. On the other hand, 18 schools (58%) had decreases in the proficiency rate, with seven schools showing decreases of more than 10 percentage points. As with reading/English, elementary/middle schools were most likely to achieve gains, with 65 percent of them having an increase in the proficiency rate.

Relationship between Instructional and Management Practices and Charter School Student Performance

For the evaluation, ICF Macro sought to determine the extent to which the identified instructional and management practices are being employed in Maryland charter schools and the extent to which the practices are associated with high levels of student achievement.

In order to determine the relationship of practices and student performance, ICF Macro conducted an analysis using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM). HLM is a methodology used when different "levels" of data are nested within one another (for example, data about students who are grouped together in schools). The statistical model developed by the evaluators controlled for student-level characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, special education and English language

learner status, and eligibility for FARMs. At the school level, the model controlled for demographic factors (such as the percentage of students in the school who receive special education services).

The instructional and management practices on which data were collected from the individual charter schools were coded and included as school-level variables for the HLM analysis. Unfortunately, for several reasons it proved difficult to find statistical relationships between specific practices and student achievement. Importantly, in some cases there was not enough variation among the schools to study how the variations affect student performance. In addition, the data on which the HLM model was built utilized survey data that were not independently verified. The HLM analysis did, however, produce one quite interesting result: In schools where administrators reported that they "regularly communicate the school mission and vision" to parents as part of their overall efforts to engage them, achievement on the math Maryland School Assessment (MSA) was significantly higher ($p<.05$), and achievement on the reading MSA was higher although its statistical significance is borderline ($p<.10$).

Adequate Yearly Progress of Charter Schools

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is the measure that Maryland uses to track academic progress for schools and school systems. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires that every State measure AYP and report the results for schools, school districts, and the State as a whole. For a school to make AYP in a particular year, it must achieve predetermined targets in reading and mathematics for nine student groups.

1. All students
2. Special education students
3. English language learners
4. Students receiving free/reduced-price meals
5. American Indian/Native Alaskan students
6. African American students
7. Asian/Pacific Islander students
8. White students, not of Hispanic origin
9. Hispanic students

Additionally, the "All students" group in an elementary or middle school must meet set attendance rate targets, and the "All students" group in a high school must meet set graduation rate targets. In order to make Overall AYP, a school needs to meet a total of 19 different targets (if all subgroups are represented in the school's student population).

AYP is designed to measure schools' continuous improvement each year toward the NCLB goal of 100 percent student proficiency by 2014. To achieve that goal, schools have directed their instructional improvement efforts toward low performing students, including historically low performing student subgroups. However, because the target percentage of students proficient or advanced increases yearly, it becomes increasingly challenging for schools to make Overall AYP in each successive year. As a result, even schools in which student proficiency increases may fail to make AYP.

The p-value is the probability that the observed value would be true if in fact there is no real effect. So, for example, if a difference of 3 points is observed a p-value of 0.05 means that there is only a 5% chance that this difference is not real, but only due to sampling error. A p-value of .001 means that there is only a 1% chance that this difference is not real.

As Table 11 shows, the percentage of charter schools that made Overall AYP decreased from 62 percent in 2010 to just 31 percent in 2011. This was driven primarily by decreases in the number of schools that met MSA reading and math targets for African American students, students receiving special education services, or students receiving FARMs.

The decrease in the percentage of charter schools making AYP in 2011 is quite dramatic. However, it should be noted that the same trend can also be observed in traditional schools around the State: Across Maryland the percentage of schools making AYP dropped from 70 percent in 2010 to 55 percent in 2011.

In Baltimore City, where the vast majority of charter schools are located, the percentage of elementary and middle schools making AYP decreased from 55 percent in 2009 to 40 percent in 2010 to just 11 percent in 2011. Therefore, the results shown in Table 11 are to some degree part of a systemic pattern in the State, as opposed to a reflection on the effectiveness of charter schools. Supporting this notion is the fact that seven of the fifteen (47%) Baltimore City elementary and middle schools that made AYP for 2010-2011 are charter schools.

Table 11: Adequate Yearly Progress of Charter Schools Percentage of Maryland Charter Schools Meeting AYP

Student Group	2008-2009		2009-2010		2010-2011	
	Number of Schools	% Meeting Target	Number of Schools	% Meeting Target	Number of Schools	% Meeting Target
Overall AYP	34	59%	39	62%	42	31%
All Students						
Graduation	3	100%	1	100%	3	67%
Attendance	31	100%	37	92%	34	100%
Reading	34	76%	39	79%	42	48%
Mathematics	34	68%	39	79%	42	50%
African American Students						
Reading	33	76%	39	79%	42	48%
Mathematics	33	64%	39	77%	42	50%
White Students, Not of Hispanic Origin						
Reading	12	100%	16	100%	16	100%
Mathematics	12	100%	16	100%	16	94%
Hispanic Students						
Reading	7	100%	8	100%	10	100%
Mathematics	7	100%	8	100%	10	100%
Asian/Pacific Islander Students						
Reading	1	100%	3	100%	5	100%
Mathematics	1	100%	3	100%	5	100%
American Indian/Native Alaskan Students						
Reading	1	100%	0	-	1	100%
Mathematics	1	100%	0	-	1	100%
Special Education Students						
Reading	30	70%	36	69%	40	53%
Mathematics	30	63%	36	75%	40	38%
English Language Learners						
Reading	3	67%	4	100%	5	60%
Mathematics	3	100%	4	100%	5	100%
Students Receiving FARMs						
Reading	33	76%	39	79%	42	57%
Mathematics	33	67%	39	77%	42	50%

Note: Two schools did not have AYP data available in 2010-2011. Three schools did not have AYP data available in 2009-2010.

Academic Performance of Charter Schools vs. Matched Comparison Schools

Selection of Comparison Schools

To assess the impact of the choice to attend a charter school on students' academic performance, a quasi-experimental study was conducted. The evaluators compared the academic performance of students in Maryland charter schools that were open during the 2008-2009 school year with those in a group of similar traditional schools. Schools were selected to be included in the matched comparison group because they were similar in demographic profile to the charter schools.

The process through which these schools were selected is described in detail in ICF Macro's 2009 evaluation report to MSDE. Briefly, charter and traditional schools were matched on five variables: percentage of students receiving special education services, percentage of students eligible for FARMs, and percentages of students who are African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, or Hispanic. Based on a formula, the research team calculated a single "comparison statistic" for all schools in districts with charter schools.

This statistic was used to select the comparison schools, taking into account the need to match charter schools with traditional schools having the same grade levels (elementary, elementary/middle, middle, middle/high, or high school). In some cases, this algorithm produced the same comparison school for more than one charter school, and the evaluators allowed the same school to be selected as the comparison for up to two charter schools. In other cases, if a charter school spanned more than one school level and a comparison traditional school with the same grade levels did not exist, separate comparison schools were selected for each of the levels. For this reason, the number of schools in the comparison set is slightly higher than the number of charter schools that existed in 2008-2009 (i.e., 37 comparison schools vs. 34 charter schools).

In aggregate the comparison schools are very similar to the charter schools, although the charter schools collectively serve a slightly lower percentage of students who receive special education services, a slightly higher percentage of FARMs-eligible students, and a substantially higher percentage of African American students. Despite these variations, the average comparison statistic for the two sets of schools is very close, meaning that any differences in student performance are unlikely to be the result of student demographic factors.

Student Performance in Charter and Comparison Schools

Tables 12 and 13 compare the changes in MSA proficiency rates for charter and comparison schools at each grade level, as well as for all grades combined. The first three columns display proficiency rates for 2009 through 2011, and the fourth column shows the 2-year change in these rates. The final column displays the difference in the 2-year changes between charter and comparison schools. A positive number in this column means that the percentage of students proficient or advanced in charter schools increased more than it did in comparison schools from 2009 to 2011, while a negative number indicates that the percentage of students proficient or advanced increased more in comparison schools.

Table 12 displays shows proficiency rates on the reading MSA. As shown, when results on the assessment are combined for all grades, the MSA reading proficiency rate decreased from 78 percent to 76 percent in charter schools between 2009 and 2011, and from 79 percent to 78 percent in comparison schools. When rounding is taken into account, this means that both rates decreased over the 2-year period by about 1 percent. This, combined with the fact that the 2011 proficiency rates are so close (76% for charter and 78% for comparison schools), means that there is no evidence that students in either type of school outperform the other on the reading MSA.

Results for individual grades vary—for example, in grade 7 charter school students scored better than comparison students in 2011, and had a more positive change over two years, while the opposite is true for grade 8. Overall, however, these varying effects by grade level cancel each other out, and there is no substantial evidence of differential reading achievement between charter and comparison schools.

Table 12: Percentage of Students Proficient or Advanced on the Reading MSA Charter versus Comparison Schools

Grade	2009	2010	2011	2-Year Change 2009 to 2011	Difference In 2-Year Change: Charter vs. Comparison
All Grades					
Charter	78%	78%	76%	-1%	0%
Comparison	79%	79%	78%	-1%	
Grade 3					
Charter	79%	76%	75%	-4%	-3%
Comparison	81%	79%	80%	-1%	
Grade 4					
Charter	77%	81%	79%	2%	4%
Comparison	82%	79%	80%	-2%	
Grade 5					
Charter	82%	83%	84%	1%	3%
Comparison	85%	85%	84%	-2%	
Grade 6					
Charter	77%	80%	73%	-4%	-2%
Comparison	79%	80%	77%	-2%	
Grade 7					
Charter	72%	76%	78%	6%	2%
Comparison	72%	77%	76%	4%	
Grade 8					
Charter	80%	72%	70%	-10%	-7%
Comparison	78%	70%	75%	-2%	

Table 13 provides the same analysis, this time for the mathematics MSA. Again, there is some variation between grades. For example, once again grades 7 and 8 tell opposite stories; in grade 8, charter school students score better on the math MSA (55% vs. 53% proficiency rate) and have a better change score over the past two years, while the reverse is true for grade 7.

In this case when scores from all grades are combined, comparison school students are slightly more likely to score proficient or advanced on the math MSA in 2011 (72% of comparison vs. 69% of charter school students). On the other hand, the proficiency rate in charter schools ***increased*** (68% in 2009 to 69% in 2011), while the rate in comparison schools ***decreased*** (74% to 72%). Therefore, on the math MSA the results are mixed, with comparison school students scoring slightly better but charter schools closing the gap.

Table 13: Percentage of Students Proficient or Advanced on the Math MSA Charter versus Comparison Schools

Grade	2009	2010	2011	2-Year Change 2009 to 2011	Difference In 2-Year Change: Charter vs. Comparison
All Grades					
Charter	68%	72%	69%	1%	3%
Comparison	74%	73%	72%	-2%	
Grade 3					
Charter	74%	80%	77%	2%	2%
Comparison	81%	83%	82%	1%	
Grade 4					
Charter	78%	84%	82%	4%	6%
Comparison	84%	87%	82%	-2%	
Grade 5					
Charter	70%	71%	71%	1%	1%
Comparison	76%	78%	76%	0%	
Grade 6					
Charter	66%	71%	68%	2%	3%
Comparison	75%	74%	74%	-1%	
Grade 7					
Charter	56%	61%	60%	4%	-3%
Comparison	57%	66%	64%	7%	
Grade 8					
Charter	60%	61%	55%	-6%	9%
Comparison	68%	48%	53%	-15%	

When taken as a whole, the results shown in Tables 12 and 13 do not constitute evidence that either charter or comparison traditional schools are substantially outperforming the other group.

Other Measures and Analyses

The ICF Macro evaluators also examined student attendance rates and parent satisfaction levels in both charter and comparison schools.

Attendance

As shown in Table 14, in every year from 2008-2009 to 2010-2011, the student attendance rate in charter schools exceeded the attendance rate in comparison schools. In 2010-2011, nearly three quarters (71%) of charter schools had an attendance rate of at least 95 percent, while less than half (47%) of comparison schools met this standard.

Table 14: Attendance Rates in Charter and Comparison Schools

Attendance	2009, % schools		2010, % schools		2011, % schools	
	< 95%	>= 95%	< 95%	>= 95%	< 95%	>= 95%
Charter	29%	71%	48%	52%	29%	71%
Comparison	53%	47%	53%	47%	53%	47%

Satisfaction of Charter and Comparison School Parents

In 2009, ICF Macro identified 17 items included in the annual Baltimore City school climate survey to serve as a measure of parent satisfaction for the evaluation. The survey uses a 4-point Likert scale (with no neutral response option) ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree."

For all questionnaire items, a higher percentage of Baltimore City charter school parents strongly agreed or agreed with the positive statement about their child's school. As shown in Table 15, the differences in parent responses between charter and comparison schools ranged from 2.4 to 10 percentage points; for 14 of the 17 comparisons, the difference is statistically significant. These statistically significant differences are indicated with an asterisk (*). Overall, the parent survey results seem to indicate that parents of Baltimore City charter school students are more satisfied with many aspects of their children's schools than are parents whose children attend similar traditional schools.

Table 15: Baltimore City Charter and Comparison School Parent Satisfaction With Key Aspects of their Children's Educational Experience (Percentage of Parents Strongly Agreeing or Agreeing)

Climate Survey Item	Mean % of Parents Satisfied in Charter Schools	Mean % of Parents Satisfied in Comparison Schools	Difference*
Students feel safe at this school.	92.6%	82.6%	10.0%*
This school has clearly defined rules and expectations for students' behavior.	93.7%	89.0%	4.8%*
The school provides an orderly atmosphere for learning.	88.5%	81.8%	6.7%*
Students are rewarded for positive behavior.	89.6%	84.0%	5.6%*
Teachers care about their students.	94.5%	90.6%	3.9%*
The school sets high standards for academic performance.	92.6%	86.7%	5.9%*
Teachers believe all students can do well in school if they try.	96.1%	92.7%	3.4%*
Teachers are well organized and prepared.	91.4%	87.3%	4.1%*
My child's school is making progress with academic instruction.	93.5%	88.2%	5.3%*
The school building is clean and well maintained.	89.6%	84.5%	5.1%*
The school has programs to support students' emotional and social development.	82.3%	77.5%	4.8%
Parents or guardians are welcome at this school.	94.5%	89.9%	4.7%*
The school has effective ways of involving parents in the management of student behavior.	86.9%	82.1%	4.8%*
The school tries to involve parents.	94.5%	89.6%	5.0%*
Parents have enough opportunity to provide input into the school's programmatic decisions.	80.2%	75.6%	4.6%
I receive information from the school system about how my child's school is performing.	79.2%	76.8%	2.4%
Overall, I am satisfied with my child's school.	91.3%	83.3%	8.0%*

* Significant at p<.05 level

A similar pattern is seen in Prince George's County, which administers a school climate survey every other year. The evaluators identified seven items in the district's survey that are comparable to those in the Baltimore City survey. This survey also employed a Likert scale, though a 5-point scale that included "neither agree nor disagree." As in Baltimore City, the percentage of charter school parents strongly agreeing or agreeing is consistently higher than the percentage of comparison school parents. While statistical significance is difficult to achieve with a small sample of just five schools, the difference between Prince George's charter and comparison schools is statistically significant at the p<.05 level on two items. These are related to high standards for student behavior and achievement.

Relationship of Charter School Parent Satisfaction to Student Achievement

To determine whether there is any statistical association between results from parent surveys and student performance, ICF Macro conducted an analysis of charter schools in Baltimore City where more than three quarters of Maryland charter schools are located. The sample of 3,773 students with reading MSA results and 3,405 students with math MSA results includes all Baltimore City charter schools with grades between 3 and 8 for which 2010-2011 parent survey data were available.

The analysis was conducted using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM), which has been previously described. The HLM model developed by ICF Macro controlled for student- and school-level characteristics. Each of 17 survey items selected by the evaluators from the lengthy Baltimore City climate survey was included in the model individually to determine its effect on students' 2011 reading and math MSA scores.

The results of this analysis are shown in Table 16. The coefficients in the table represent the size of the relationship between each survey item variable and student achievement. For example, the reading MSA coefficient for the first statement, "Students feel safe at this school," is 0.74. This means that for every additional percent of parents who agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, students' scale scores on the

MSA were higher by an average of 0.74 points. Table 16 also indicates the relationships that are statistically significant at p<.05 and p<.01 levels, as well as those that are approaching statistical significance (p<.10).

As shown, the percentages of parents who agreed or strongly agreed that "students feel safe" and that "parents feel welcome" at the school are positively and significantly related to student reading achievement. Two other survey items are positively and significantly related to math achievement: "Students are taught to act in a safe and responsible manner" and "the school buildings is clean and well-maintained."

A number of other survey items (those marked with a plus sign (+) in the table) very nearly meet the criteria for statistical significance (that is, their p-value is greater than 0.05 but less than 0.10). It is worth noting that the coefficients for all but one survey item are positive, suggesting a positive correlation between parent ratings and higher student achievement. Hence, the HLM analysis suggests that as an overall pattern, positive responses to parent survey items are associated with higher achievement on both the reading and math MSA.

Table 16: Relationship of Baltimore City Charter School Parent Satisfaction to Student Achievement Results of HLM Analysis of Parent Surveys

Climate Survey Item	Reading MSA Coefficient	Math MSA Coefficient
Students feel safe at this school.	0.74*	0.58
This school has clearly defined rules and expectations for students' behavior.	0.81	1.03+
The school provides an orderly atmosphere for learning.	0.43	0.62+
Students are rewarded for positive behavior.	0.32	1.29*
Teachers care about their students.	1.16+	0.76
The school sets high standards for academic performance.	0.53	0.99
Teachers believe all students can do well in school if they try.	1.90+	1.42
Teachers are well organized and prepared.	0.89+	0.80
My child's school is making progress with academic instruction.	1.16+	1.04
The school buildings is clean and well maintained.	0.57+	0.99**
The school has programs to support students' emotional and social development.	0.07	0.15
Parents or guardians are welcome at this school.	1.57*	0.70
The school has effective ways of involving parents in the management of student behavior.	0.73+	0.62
The school tries to involve parents.	1.95	1.29
Parents have enough opportunity to provide input into the school's programmatic decisions.	0.03	0.07
I receive information from the school system about how my child's school is performing.	-0.18	-0.27
Overall, I am satisfied with my child's school.	0.42	0.75

* Significant at p<.05 level ** Significant at p<.01 level + Not significant, but p<.10

Summary

Charter schools are public schools that are designed to promote school choice. Nationally, there has been considerable debate on whether charter schools are "better" and whether charter school students outperform their peers in traditional public schools. For the evaluation of the Maryland Charter School Program, ICF Macro undertook to describe the status and trends in charter schools, ascertain whether students in charter schools outperform those in comparable traditional schools, and examine the relationships between charter school practice and student achievement. In this final section, the results and findings from the evaluation are summarized.

Growth and Distribution of Charter Schools in Maryland

Since passage of the Maryland Charter School Law in 2003, the number of charter schools has increased steadily, with 44 charter schools operating in six school districts during 2010-2011. The Office of School Innovations at MSDE has actively worked to support and promote development of charter schools through a variety of training and technical assistance activities. An important issue for OSI has been ensuring that all charter schools in Maryland are of high quality and lead to positive student outcomes.

The Charter School Student Population

Statewide, more than 80 percent of charter school students are African American, about 12 percent White, and 5 percent Hispanic. The percentage of students in the various racial and ethnic groups appears stable, having changed little since 2009. However, the percentage of students eligible for FARMs or special education services has increased considerably, indicating that charter schools are serving more high-need students than in the past.

In Baltimore City—which authorizes more than three quarters of Maryland's charter schools—the student demographics in the charter schools generally mirror those of the district as a whole. However, in other districts with fewer charter schools there is more deviation from the district-wide demographic profile.

Use of Best Practices

Charter schools are employing many educational practices that are believed to impact the quality of instruction and promote student achievement. In 2010-2011, of the 25 identified instructional practices, 21 were utilized by more than two thirds of the Maryland charter schools to which they applied. This is a substantial increase compared with 2009, when just 17 practices were employed by two thirds of charter schools. On average charter schools employed about 80 percent of the relevant practices in 2010-2011.

A challenge for the evaluation has, in fact, been this extensive use by charter schools of recommended instructional practices. Because of the lack of variation among schools, it is not possible to say which specific practices contribute most to student achievement, although there does appear to be a positive relationship between regular communication with parents about a school's mission and vision and higher student performance.

Student Performance

Between 2009 and 2011, the percentage of charter school students proficient or advanced decreased slightly, with only the English language learner subgroup posting gains on both the reading and math MSA. However some charter schools, particularly those that include both elementary and middle grades, did have higher proficiency rates. Overall, 53 percent of schools had higher performance in 2011 on the reading assessment and 42 percent on the math assessment.

The percentage of charter schools that made Overall AYP decreased. This was driven primarily by decreases in the number of schools that met MSA reading and math targets for African American students, students receiving special education services, and students eligible for FARMs. Charter schools are not unique in this AYP trend. As has been discussed, in each successive year the target proficiency rate for AYP increases, making it increasingly difficult for schools to achieve Overall AYP as 2014 approaches.

A question often asked is whether charter school students outperform students in comparable traditional schools. The evidence from this evaluation indicates that there is no difference between the two types of schools. At some grade levels, charter school students outperform those in traditional schools, but at other grade levels the reverse is true.

A measure of student engagement if not "performance" per se is school attendance. On this, charter schools far outperform the matched comparison schools. In 2010-2011, 71 percent of charter schools, but just 47 percent of comparison schools, attained an attendance rate of at least 95 percent.

Parent Satisfaction

Parents of charter school students are more satisfied with many aspects of their children's schools than are parents whose children attend similar traditional schools. For many items on 2011 school climate surveys, the difference between the responses of charter and comparison school parents is statistically significant. In addition, an HLM analysis of the relationship between parent survey responses and student achievement in charter schools suggests that positive responses to school climate survey items are associated with higher achievement on both the reading and math MSAs.

Overall, the evidence on Maryland charter schools is somewhat mixed, though several things are clear. Charter schools on average are performing on par with comparable traditional schools, and some are performing at very high levels. Nearly all charter schools appear to be employing recommended instructional practices and also working to engage students and involve families. Because of the relationship of the latter—communication with and involvement of parents—to higher levels of student achievement, this may be an appropriate area of focus for OSI in the future. In particular, it may be beneficial for OSI to share this message broadly with the Maryland charter school community, identify effective strategies for fostering parent involvement, and perhaps include parent involvement strategies in some way in the Maryland Charter School Quality Standards now in development.

Frequently Asked Questions

How long has there been a public charter school program in Maryland?

The Maryland General Assembly enacted Maryland's charter school law in 2003. The 2010-2011 school year marks the eighth year of Maryland's public charter school program. However, Frederick County Public Schools approved a charter for Monocacy Valley Montessori Public Charter School one year before the law's passage.

Are charter schools private schools?

No. Charter schools are public schools. They are open to all students on a space-available basis, and they are part of the local school system in which they are located. Charter schools are funded with public taxpayer dollars, just as traditional public schools are. Charter schools must administer the Maryland School Assessments and the High School Assessments. They are subject to the provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act and must ensure that all teachers are highly qualified.

What makes charter schools different from traditional schools?

Charter schools receive flexibility in scheduling, staffing, program offerings, resource allocations, and grade configurations. However, in exchange for this flexibility they are subject to increased accountability. Success must be demonstrated through academic achievement, parental satisfaction, enrollment, fiscal responsibility, and attendance. Otherwise, local boards of education may revoke a charter or deny its renewal.

How is a charter school started?

The first step in the charter school process is the completion of a rigorous application to the local board of education in which the charter school is to be located. Applications may be submitted by staff of a public school, parents/guardians of a student attending a school in the county, a nonsectarian nonprofit entity, or a nonsectarian institution of higher education. Once the application is completed and submitted, the local board of education will conduct a review of the application and make a determination as to whether the application is approved or denied. If approved, the local board of education engages in negotiations with the applicants to further refine operational and academic details of the charter school program. For more information on how to start a charter school, contact the Office of School Innovations at 410-767-3677 or charterschools@msde.state.mdus.

The Office of School Innovations

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) offers public charter school program support and assistance to both local school systems and charter applicants and operators.

The scope of the support provided by the Office of School innovations has broadened with the growth of the charter school program. While this office continues to provide assistance in the operational aspects of charter school development and implementation, it also continues to provide expanded support to include an intensive instructional and programmatic focus.

- School Improvement Training and Strategic Planning Assistance
- On-site visits, in partnership with State, District, and school staff to assess academic rigor and school climate improvement and alignment opportunities
- Coordination of the Charter School Stakeholder Committee to identify common needs, share effective practices, and inform MSDE involvement and support
- Executive Development and Coaching Services
- Administration of the Federal Charter School Grant Program

To learn more about the Charter School Program in Maryland and the support and assistance that is available:

Call: 410-767-3677

E-mail: charterschools@msde.state.md.us

Visit our website: http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/charter_schools/