

NYC Charter Schools and Students with Special Learning Needs

2012
2013

Charter schools are leading the way in effectively educating special education students and English Language Learners in New York City and are making strong progress in recruiting more of these students into their schools.

- NYC charter schools' special education students and English Language Learners score proficient in Math and English Language Arts (ELA) at higher rates than citywide averages.
- English Language Learners at NYC charter schools become proficient in English at faster rates than in public schools citywide, where many immigrant students take five years or longer to reach proficiency.
- Special education students in charters are more likely to move into general education status or into less restrictive settings (such as a mainstream classroom with extra support).
- Charter school students with disabilities outperform citywide averages within all three service types in math, and in two of three service types in ELA.

Enrollment Challenges

The charter sector recognized that it was not accepting and retaining enough special education and ELL students and strongly supported the 2010 changes in state law that require charter schools to enroll and retain special population students at rates comparable to local district schools. The law states that a failure to do so could be grounds to revoke a school's charter.

While charters are striving to serve more of these students, it is important to remember that no public school—charter or district—provides every possible service. The comparatively small size and lottery-based enrollment of many charters have been obstacles to recruitment and servicing of all students. (After all, even a large district like NYC sends tens of thousands of its students to private schools because it cannot adequately serve them in its own schools.) Compared to district schools, the average charter school still enrolls a lower percentage of both special education students and English Language Learners, but we are quickly closing that gap.

Targeted Services and New Initiatives

Many charter schools use practices of inclusion for students with special needs, seeking to provide extra support in mainstream classrooms more often than in separate areas. Several charter schools are also explicitly designed to work with students with special needs.

Charter schools are working together to improve the quality and reach of their services:

- The charter sector's Special Education Collaborative, formed in 2011, has grown to include over 120 NYC charter schools that share expertise, resources and teacher professional development opportunities.
- The Common Online Charter School Application tool introduced by the New York City Charter School Center in 2010 makes finding and applying to charter schools a simpler process for families, including those whose primary language is not English.
- A proposal to allow charter schools to work together to provide special education services led to legislation that passed the State Senate in 2012. Charter schools hope to see this legislation move through the Assembly in 2013.

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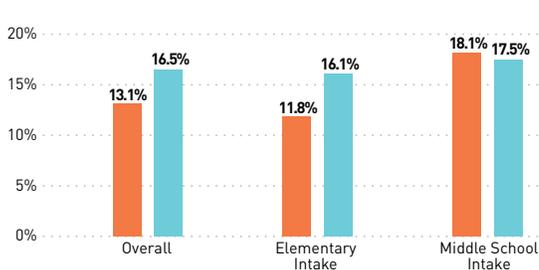
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By the Numbers

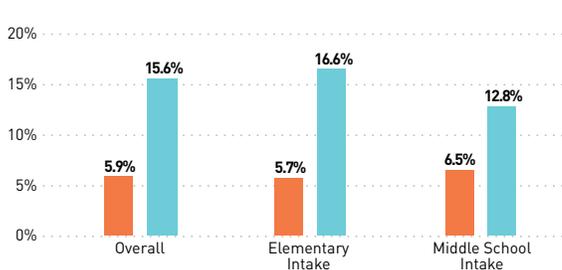
All figures reflect the 2011-12 school year.

Compared to citywide averages, charter schools enroll a lower share of English Language Learners and students in special education. (High school data are not yet available for 2011-12.)

ENROLLMENT OF STUDENTS WITH IEPs, BY INTAKE GRADE LEVEL

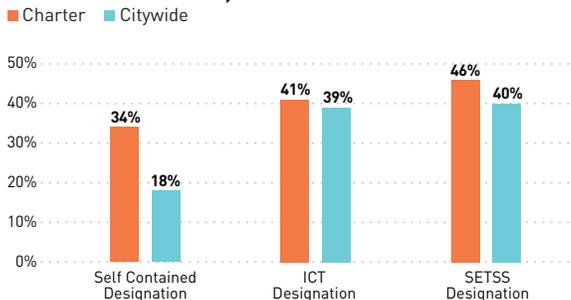


ENROLLMENT OF ELLs, BY INTAKE GRADE LEVEL

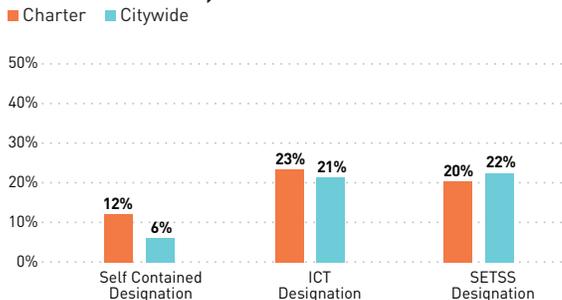


Charter school students in special education outperform city average proficiency rates in all three service types in Math, and in two of three service types in English Language Arts (ELA). (Subgroup proficiency data are not yet available for English Language Learners in 2011-12.)

MATH PROFICIENCY, STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

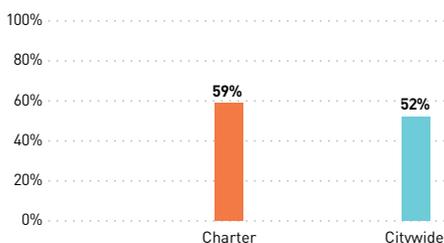


ELA PROFICIENCY, STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

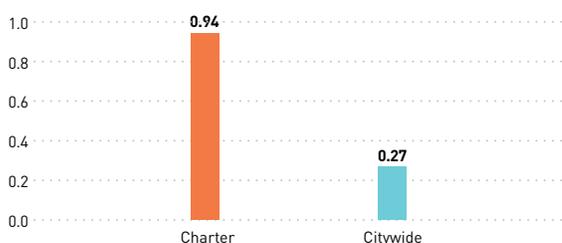


English Language Learners at NYC charter schools become proficient in English at faster rates than in public schools citywide. Special education students in charters are more likely to move into general education status or into less restrictive settings (such as a mainstream classroom with extra support).

PERCENT OF ELL STUDENTS MEETING ELL PROGRESS STANDARD



AVERAGE MOVES* TOWARDS LESS RESTRICTIVE SETTINGS (STUDENTS WITH IEPs, LAST FOUR YEARS)



*A move toward a less-restrictive setting is defined as a student spending a smaller portion of their time receiving special education services than at some time in the previous four years.

Notes

The "Closing the Achievement Gap" section of the Progress Reports provides subgroup performance statistics for students with disabilities, broken down by whether they are served in self-contained settings, Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) settings, or a "push-in/pull-out" Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS) capacity. While these subgroup classifications allow for some comparisons, students at charters may still differ in terms of their disability type and/or their amount of time receiving special education services, which are distinctions not captured by the current Progress Report methodology.

Source: New York City Department of Education Progress Report data, Charter Center analysis