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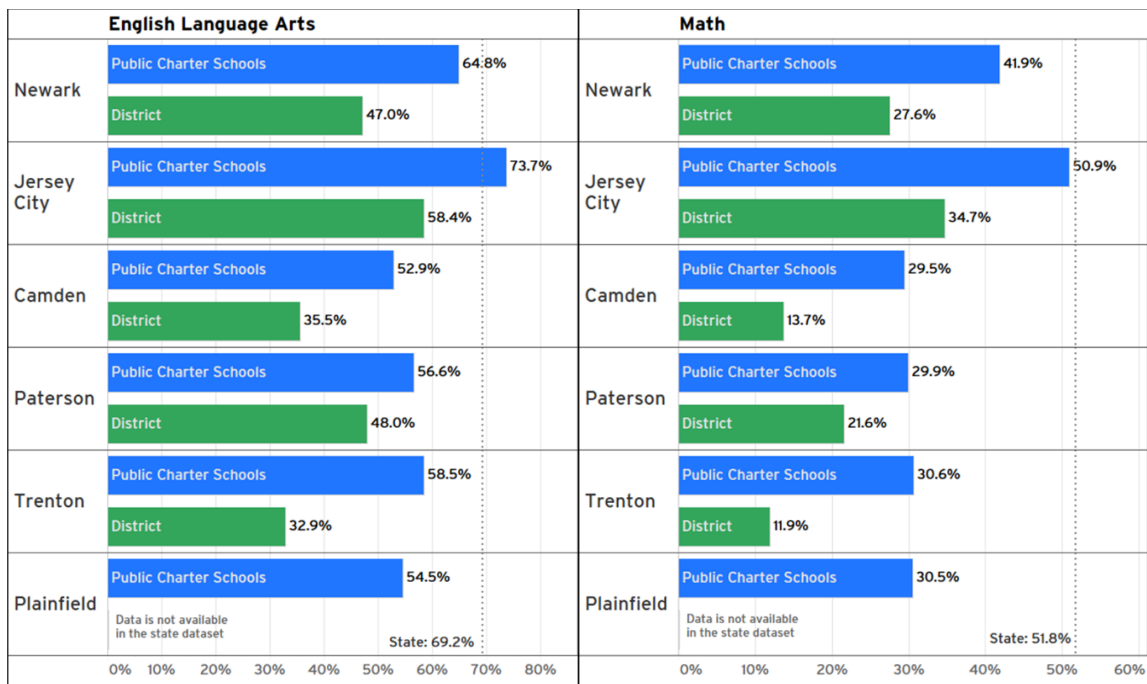
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'Start Strong' State Assessments Prove New Jersey's Public Charter Schools Accelerate Student Learning During Pandemic

Students in NJ's five largest charter cities are 32 percent more likely to approach or meet grade level standards compared to district peers in English language arts, 55 percent more likely in math; State Charter Association calls on Murphy Administration to expand high quality charter options to mitigate learning loss crisis

HAMILTON, NJ - April 7, 2022 - Yesterday, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) released school and district-level results from last fall's Start Strong assessments. Administered in September and October of 2021, Start Strong is New Jersey's first statewide exam that provides insight on how the coronavirus pandemic and related school closures impacted student learning throughout New Jersey. Analysis shows students in the state's five largest charter cities - Newark, Trenton, Camden, Jersey City, and Paterson - are 32 percent more likely to approach or meet grade level standards in English language arts (ELA) and 55 percent more likely to approach or meet grade level standards in mathematics compared to their traditional district peers. These results clearly demonstrate that public charter schools have accelerated student learning for low-income students of color during a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic. Data from Trenton was especially strong, with charters 78 percent and 157 percent more likely to approach or exceed grade level standards in ELA and in math, respectively.

**Fall 2021 Start Strong Assessment, English Language Arts and Math, All Grades
Percent Approaching or Meeting Standards (Level 2 or 3)**



"COVID-19 has upended the lives of every New Jerseyan, especially families who live in our most economically challenged communities. The 2021 Start Strong results are undeniable: Public charter schools are providing stable and welcoming learning environments that accelerate student learning for families of color and we must provide more high-quality public charter school options to meet the learning loss crisis facing our state and nation," **said Harry Lee, president of the New Jersey Public Charter Schools Association (NJPCSA).** "With 20,000 students on charter school wait lists, we urge the Murphy Administration and Commissioner of Education to support excellent public charter schools that provide a lifeline to families who are desperately seeking the best education for their children."

"During the last two years, public charter school educators did whatever it took to meet the needs of families in their communities including providing technology for remote learning and delivering school meals for hungry families," **said TJ Best, Director of Government Affairs for NJPCSA.** "Public charter schools reopened their doors for in-person instruction far earlier than most urban school districts throughout New Jersey, helping to mitigate the severe disruptions in student learning caused by the pandemic. While there is still a long road ahead, our schools are looking forward to collaborating with traditional district schools to ensure all students get the support they need to not only grow academically, but also socially and emotionally."

"From day one of the pandemic, we pivoted to meet the needs of students and families in Trenton by providing them with internet connectivity and daily phone calls to ensure we stayed connected to students. We made sure no child slipped through the cracks during this extremely challenging time. Our mission is to build a caring school community that provides a personalized education, and we continue to remain steadfast in this commitment," **said Freya Lund, School Director at Paul Robeson Charter School** in Trenton which was recently denied an expansion request to add students in Grades K-3 by NJDOE despite being recognized as a Lighthouse District by the state for strong academic outcomes.

Jersey City Charters Outperform Statewide Average in ELA; Newark Charters Approach State Average

Public charter schools in Jersey City, which include some of the most diverse public schools in the state, outperformed the state average in ELA with 73.7 percent of students approaching or meeting grade level standards compared to 69.2 percent statewide. More than 60 percent of the 6,000 students enrolled in Jersey City charter schools are eligible to receive free or reduced price lunch, and more than 3,200 students sit on charter wait lists in Jersey City today. Despite serving far more low-income families than the state average, charter schools in Jersey City have demonstrated strong learning gains during the last several years.

Newark, New Jersey's largest charter sector with more than 20,000 students enrolled in charter schools, closed in on statewide averages in ELA with public charter schools coming within five percentage points of the state average. Nearly all of Newark's public charter school students are students of color. Eighty-five percent of Newark's public charter school students come from economically disadvantaged communities and more than ten percent are students with disabilities. More than 4,000 Newark students sit on charter wait lists today.

New Data for the #LetMyChildLearn Campaign

In February, NJPCSA launched the #LetMyChildLearn campaign following the NJDOE's denial of expansions for high-performing charter schools in Newark, Trenton, Kearny, New Brunswick, and Paterson. Because of these denials, hundreds of students will no longer be able to remain at the schools they love throughout their educational careers. Decisions on reconsiderations of charter school denials are currently pending. NJPCSA urges the NJDOE to utilize this new data when reconsidering these charter school denials to ensure that all students can attend a public school that is accelerating learning and mitigating the devastating impacts of the pandemic.

For more information about the campaign, visit www.letmychildlearn.org.

About New Jersey Public Charter Schools Association

The New Jersey Public Charter Schools Association (NJPCSA) is the non-profit membership association that represents the state's charter school community and, by extension, charter school students and their parents. There are currently 87 charter schools in New Jersey serving nearly 60,000 students. We are committed to advancing quality public education for New Jersey's children through the cultivation of excellent public charter schools. The Association seeks to influence legislative and policy environments, leverage collective advocacy, and provide resources to support our members in developing and operating high quality, public charter schools.

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