Minnesota Department of Education

Interim High-Quality Charter School
2015 Method & Process Summary

PURPOSE

To establish an interim list of "high-quality" charter Local Education Agencies (LEAs) that are eligible to compete for a Federal Charter Schools Program replication/significant expansion grant and/or best practice awards.

OVERVIEW

Charter school LEAs were compared with individual district schools.

An interim "Quality Index" ranking was developed for all charter LEAs and district schools across the state of Minnesota based on:

- Absolute grade-normed proficiency
- Growth
- 4-yr cohort graduation rate

Charters in the top third (33%) of all Minnesota public schools based on the Quality Index were identified (32 charter LEAs, 22% of Minnesota charters).

Demographic information for each charter LEA was compared to that of the schools in the district in which the charter is located.

Eligible charter LEAs that were in the top 33% of the Quality Index ***and*** were above the minimum reasonable resident district percent Non-White and percent Free and Reduced Price Lunch meet the interim "high-quality" definition (22 charter LEAs, 15% of Minnesota charters).

METHOD/PROCESS

Creating the Quality Index - Overview

For schools not serving grade 12, a quality index was calculated by taking an average of the school's proficiency z-score (50%) and the school's re-normed growth z-score (50%).

For schools serving grade 12, a quality index was calculated by taking a weighted average of the school's proficiency z-score (40%), the school's growth z-score (40%), and the school's graduation z-score (20%).

For schools only having a proficiency z-score, the quality index was based 100% on that score.

The quality index was used to sort schools in descending order. From that list the top 33% of all schools was selected. 32 charter LEAs were within that top 33%.

Creating the Quality Index - Proficiency Scores

Absolute proficiency was calculated for each grade within each school using the formula:

$$\frac{Number\ of\ students\ proficient\ in\ Math + Number\ of\ students\ proficent\ in\ Reading}{Number\ of\ students\ tested\ in\ Math + Number\ of\ students\ tested\ in\ Reading}$$

Within each grade, regardless of number of students served, the mean and standard deviation of school proficiency were used to calculate a z-score for absolute proficiency. This was done to account for known statewide differences in proficiency across grade levels. Calculation of z-scores does not require a normal distribution.

The grade-level proficiency z-scores were averaged for each school across all grades served. For charter schools, the grade-level proficiency z-scores were averaged across all grades served by the LEA. Unweighted averages were used to give equal importance to proficiency in every grade served.

School and LEA proficiency z-scores were averaged across 2012, 2013, and 2014, or as many of those years as possible given available data.

Creating the Quality Index - Growth Scores

For all schools having at least 1 student with a growth score in 2012, 2013, or 2014, school-level average growth z-scores were re-scaled within each year using their mean and standard deviation to put them on the same scale as the proficiency scores. The growth z-scores were then averaged over the three years, or as many of those years as possible given available data.

Creating the Quality Index - Graduation Rates

For all schools serving grade 12, regardless of graduating class size, 4-yr cohort graduation rates from 2011, 2012, and 2013 were normed to create a graduation z-score. The graduation z-scores were then averaged over the three years, or as many of those years as possible given available data.

Eligibility and Demographic Comparison

For charters within the top 33% of LEAs based on Quality Index (32 schools), the percent of students who were Non-White and receiving Free or Reduced Price Lunch were calculated from the 2012, 2013, and 2014 enrollment files. These percentages were averaged across the three years.

To account for the diversity within districts, mean and standard deviations of the three-year average percent of students who were Non-White or receiving Free or Reduced Price Lunch were calculated across all schools in the resident district of

each charter LEA. From these statistics, minimum reasonable percents Non White and Free or Reduced Price Lunch were calculated using the formula

$$(district\ mean\ percent\ diversity) - (1.96 * district\ percent\ diversity\ standard\ deviation)$$

Using the minimums and the demographics of each LEA, it was determined if the diversity of the LEA's student population was comparable to the diversity of schools in the LEA's resident district.

In order to be eligible for further consideration, charters must have completed at least three years of operation and must not currently be identified as a "Continuous Improvement," "Focus" or "Priority" school by Minnesota's federal accountability system.

22 charter LEAs met all criteria and are eligible high-quality charter schools for the purposes of the CSP grant project during 2015.

More information is available on the MDE website.
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