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Examining the Landscape of Charter Systems in Georgia

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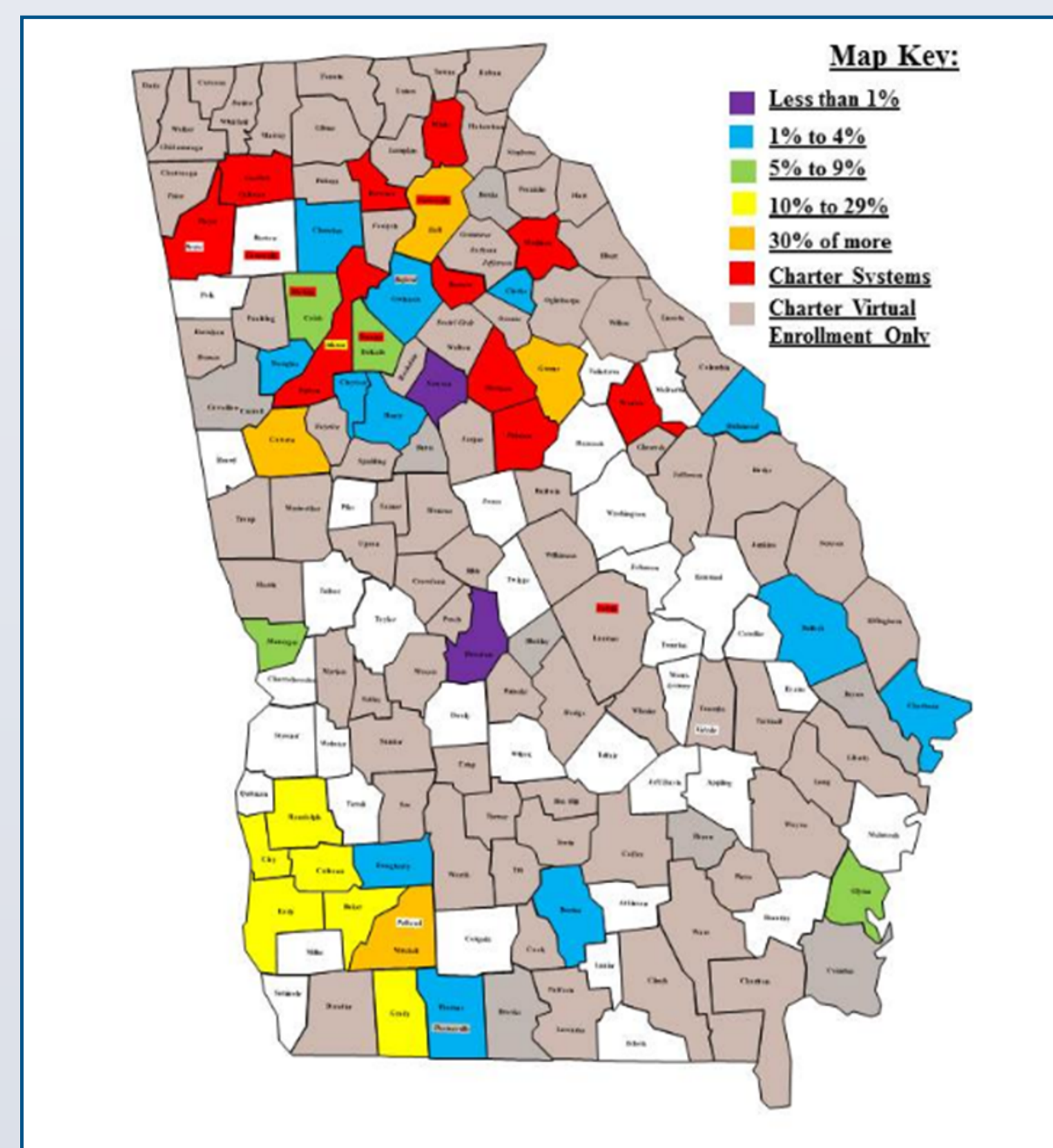
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INTRODUCTION

- Charter schools have autonomy from district and state regulations to make their own decisions about:
 - Who they hire;
 - How they structure the school day; and
 - How they spend their resources.
- In exchange for this autonomy charter schools are expected to exceed state performance on educational outcomes.
- Most charter schools operate alone from their districts or with a consortium of schools that have adopted the same/ similar curriculum.
- Charter Systems
 - The state of Georgia permits school districts to apply for charter status.
 - Each school in the district is a charter school and each school makes decisions about its people, time and money.
 - These unique systems have yet to be evaluated to determine if districts are, indeed, relinquishing autonomy to their schools and what impact new governance practices may have on district performance.

2013 MAP OF CHARTER ENROLLED STUDENTS

Charter Systems are highlighted in red.



OBJECTIVES

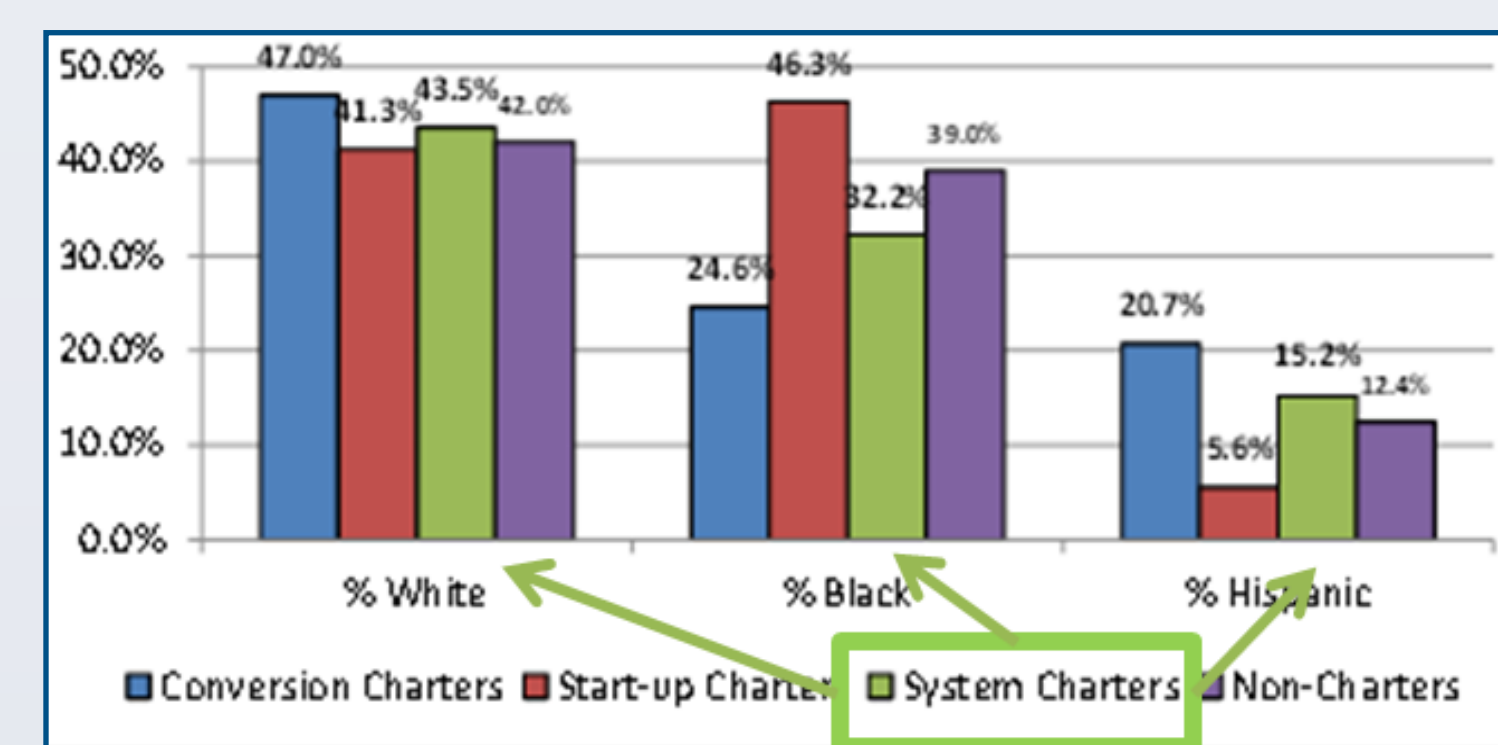
- Charter systems are evaluated to determine:
 - If they are relinquishing autonomy to the schools in their district; and
 - How they are performing on state standardized tests in elementary and middle school grades.

METHODS

- Descriptive statistics
 - This study uses descriptive statistics to illustrate the characteristics and performance of Georgia's 19 charter systems compared to traditional public school districts.
 - It also documents the governance policies of charter systems to evaluate how much autonomy schools have over their people, time and money.
- Analysis
 - Tables and figures report the characteristics and performance of charter systems relative to traditional districts in Georgia for each year in operation as a charter system.
 - Governance practices are described and assessed to determine if each district's schools have low, medium, or high levels of autonomy.
- Data
 - Demographic data, test scores and governance practices come from the Governor's Office of Student Achievement and the Georgia Department of Education.

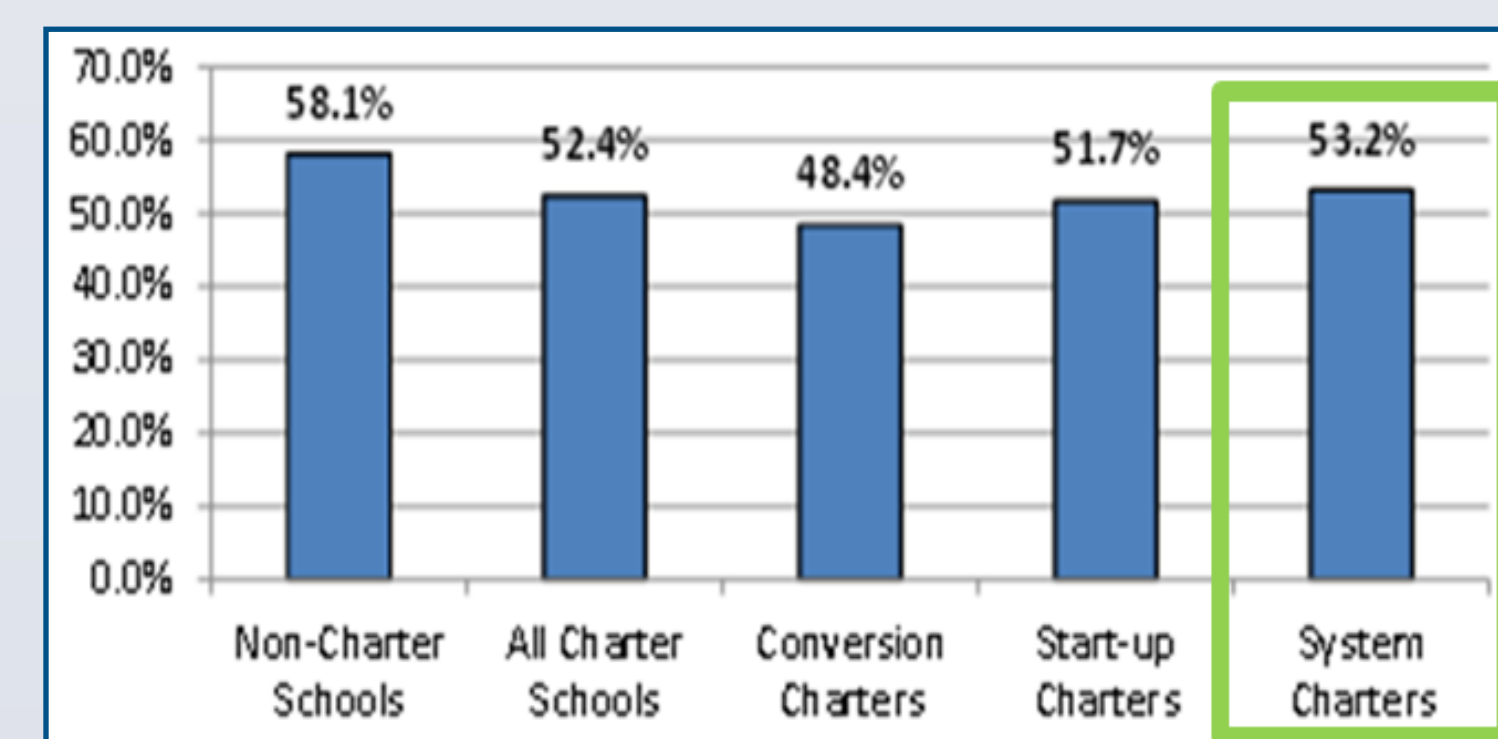
2013 STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

(By Charter Type)



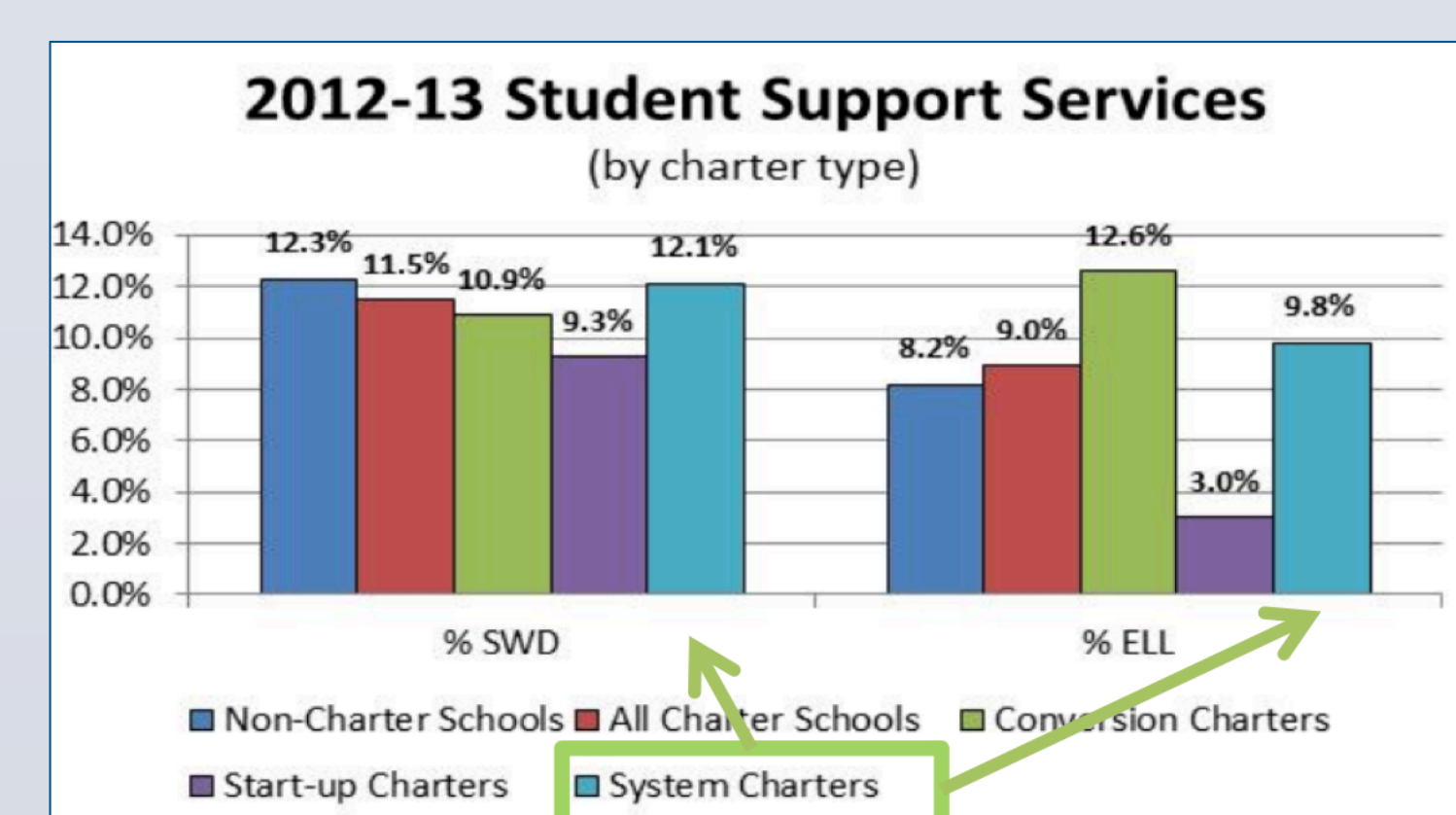
2013 FREE/REDUCED LUNCH ELIGIBILITY

(By Charter Type)



2013 STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

(By Charter Type)



RESULTS

Autonomy

- Each charter system makes the decision whether to give each school in its district autonomy regarding the way the school allocates it's people, time, and money.
- People
 - Low (< 25% of districts) grant schools autonomy for:
 - Evaluation of staff;
 - Annual employment contracts;
 - Certification requirements;
 - Compensation model of salary schedules; and
 - Pay scale, experience, and training for substitute teachers.
 - Medium (26%> 74% of districts) grant schools autonomy for:
 - Selecting professional development resources;
 - Control over position types, budgets, and qualifications; and
 - Control over hiring decisions, human resources, and work schedules.
 - High (75%>100% of districts) grant schools autonomy for:
 - Professional development requirements for staff.
- Time and Curriculum
 - Low (< 25% of districts) grant schools autonomy for:
 - Setting course/ credit requirements;
 - Setting student technology and physical education requirements;
 - Establishing curriculum maps and lesson plan requirements; and
 - Setting a staff-student ration for non-class time.
 - Medium (26%> 74% of districts) grant schools autonomy for:
 - Selecting curriculum and delivery methods;
 - Choice of textbooks, technology, instructional materials, and seat time establishment;
 - Career Pathway, dual enrollment, and credit recovery options;
 - Establishing additional mastery level requirements for performance; and
 - Selecting school calendars, daily/weekly class schedules, and co-curricular activities.
 - High (75%>100% of districts) grant schools autonomy for:
 - Selecting courses and programs offered.
- Finances and Operations
 - Low (< 25% of districts) grant schools autonomy for:
 - Managing fiscal and operational affairs independent of central office;
 - Managing transportation and food service decisions;
 - Selecting student and financial information systems; and
 - Establishing the school size and grade span.
 - Medium (26%> 74% of districts) grant schools autonomy for:
 - Setting budget priorities with funds from state, local and federal funds;
 - Ensuring the school receives all per-pupil funds to which it's entitled;
 - Maintaining a reserve fund;
 - Determining how the school uses its facility; and
 - Authorizing attendance policies.
 - High (75%< 100% of districts) grant schools autonomy for:
 - Establishing school partnerships for school growth; and
 - Establishing student codes of conduct.

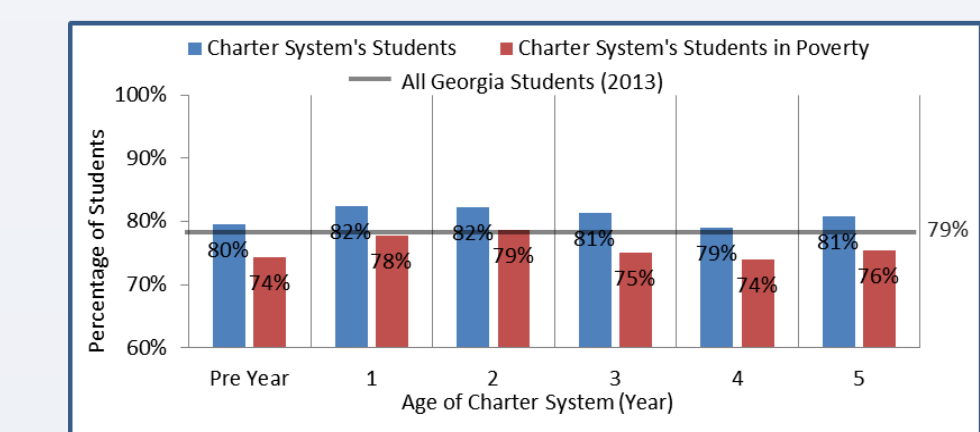
RESULTS

Student Performance

- Elementary and middle school performance for reading is on par with the state average. The largest differences between charter systems and the state average are in math.

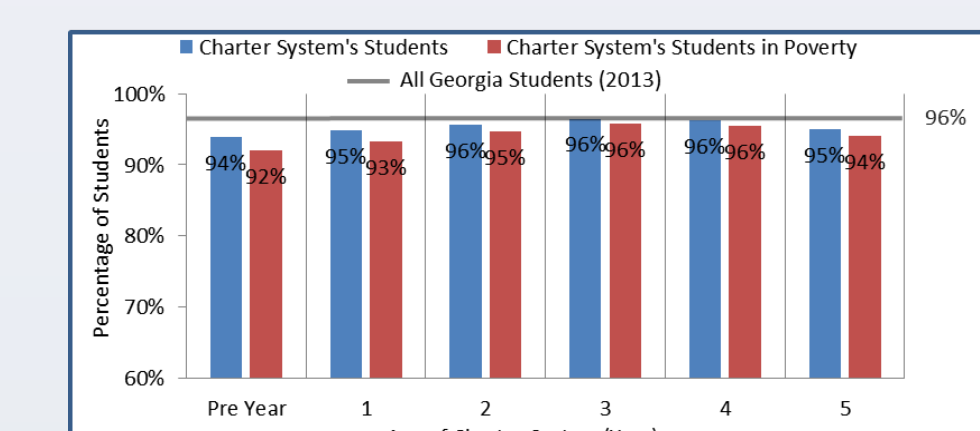
3RD GRADE MATH CRCT

Mean Percentage of Students Who Meet or Exceed Expectations (By Charter Age)



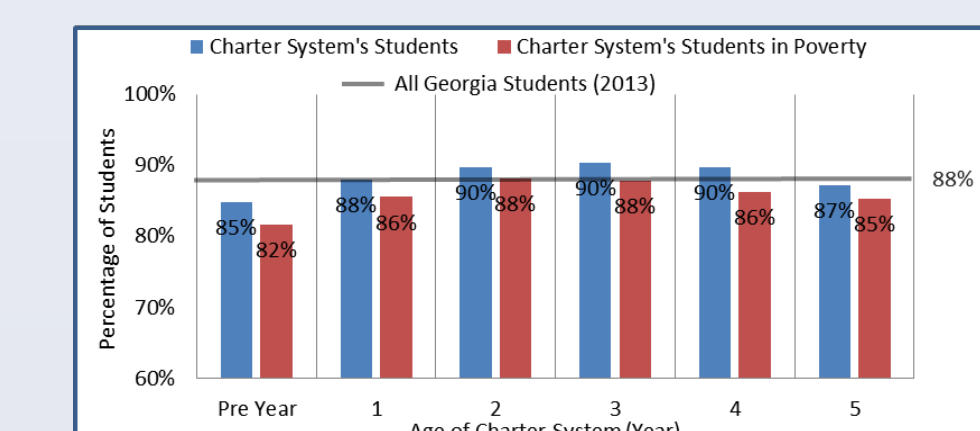
6TH GRADE MATH CRCT

Mean Percentage of Students Who Meet or Exceed Expectations (By Charter Age)



8TH GRADE MATH CRCT

Mean Percentage of Students Who Meet or Exceed Expectations (By Charter Age)



CONCLUSIONS

- Autonomy
 - Most charter systems offer little autonomy regarding high-stakes decisions within schools in the district. This lack of autonomy may limit schools' ability to innovate to improve performance.
 - Districts report more governance authority on hiring and professional development decisions, selection of curriculum, and budgeting and maintaining funds not related to personnel.
- Performance
 - Most charter systems have not significantly increased performance on standardized test scores over the period of their charters and in relation to the state average.
 - Most school districts that are granted charter status are high performing before becoming charter systems, however, they have improvements to make amongst their students in poverty.

REFERENCES

- Governor's Office of Student Achievement.* Data retrieved from <http://goa.georgia.gov/downloadable-data>
Charter Schools Annual Report. Data retrieved from <http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Charter-Schools/Documents/4%20-%202012-13%20Annual%20Report%20PPT%20-%202014-01-14.pdf>