

What Does the Research Say About Charter Schools, Strategies, and Student Achievement?

Slides 1 & 2

PEGGIE: Good afternoon. This is Peggie Garcia from the National Charter School Resource Center. Welcome to the webinar “What Does the Research Say About Charter Schools, Strategies, and Student Achievement?”

Slide 3

The National Charter School Resource Center is funded by the United States Department of Education and we are committed to promoting effective practices, providing technical assistance, and disseminating resources that are critical to ensuring the success of charter schools across the country.

Slide 4

So, welcome, everyone. We are really pleased today to welcome two distinguished presenters, and I will introduce them in one minute. I’m going to go ahead and give everyone a quick orientation to our platform first.

The first thing I want to point out is the chat on the upper left-hand corner of the screen. You’re welcome to enter a question or a comment in the chat box at any time during the webinar. So, we actually prefer you do this so that we can mute as many people as possible, which preserves the quality of the audio when we do the recording. So, if you can enter your questions in the chat box at any time during the webinar. You don’t have to wait for the Q & A. That would be great, and we can respond to them during the Q & A.

In the lower left-hand corner, there’s a file-share pod, and we’ve loaded several things there. So, on the very bottom, it says “April Slides PDF.” So, that’s actually a PDF of the presentation. So, if you did not receive the reminder e-mail that I sent this morning, you can download those slides. You just have to click on the file that you want,



“save to my computer,” and then it will open it up and you can download it on your computer. We also have the *Out of the Debate* report that we’ll be talking about and the four studies that Allison is going to discuss during the webinar.

In the note box underneath, you’ll note that we ask you to use STAR 6 to mute or unmute your lines during the webinar, if you can keep it muted for most of the time, that, again, will preserve the quality of the audio recording. If you do need to speak over the phone, you can use the little blue person in the lower left-hand corner to raise your hand, and we’ll recognize you during the Q & A—I won’t interrupt the presenters.

There is a full-screen option in the meeting part of the menu on the top of the page. So, if you’d like to use the full-screen option, you can do that, to make the size a little bit bigger, or you can look at the slides that you’ve presented if they’re a little bit small.

Finally, the webinar is being recorded. An archive will be available after the webinar at our website, www.charterschoolcenter.org. And it typically takes us about two to three business days to get that up and running. So by Monday, April 25th, the archive should be available on our website.

So, again thanks to all of you for coming. I would like to welcome now Allison Gruner Gandhi and Susan Bowles Therriault from the American Institutes for Research. We’re really pleased to have them with us. Allison is going to start off the conversation. She is one of the coauthors of one of the recent studies that we’ll be discussing today, *Out of the Debate and Into the Schools*, comparing practices and strategies in traditional, pilot, and charter schools in the city of Boston. She’s the senior research analyst at AIR who specializes in urban education, special education, and the transfer of educational research into practice. Susan Therriault is also a senior research analyst at AIR, an expert on education policy, and she was the project director and a coauthor of the charter school study *Out of the Debate* that we’ll be talking about today. So, welcome to both of you. Thank you all for joining us. We’re looking forward to a really enriching and informative conversation, and Allison, I’m going to turn it over to you. Thank you.

ALLISON: Okay. Thanks. I hope everyone can hear me.

Slide 5

We're going to spend today talking about some of the research that has been conducted about charter schools, and especially the research that has looked at the link between charter schools and student achievement, as well as the link between charter school performance and strategies that are implemented in those schools. We've divided the presentation into two parts, as Peggie mentioned. So, I'm going to be presenting the first part, and I'll just be giving a quick overview of some of the major research studies that have been conducted on charter schools, and then my colleague Susan Therriault, she will go into some more detail about a study that we coauthored last year about strategies being implemented in high-performing charter schools in the city of Boston.

Slide 6

Okay, so, as I'm sure everyone here is aware, there is an abundance of research on charter schools, and this research really covers a very broad range of study questions and topics. So, for the purposes of this presentation, we're going to talk about two specific types of studies, and we're calling those achievement studies and then strategy studies.

So, achievement studies seek to answer questions about the relationship between enrollment in a charter school and student achievement. And the most rigorous of these studies look for a causal relationship: So, does enrolling in a charter school lead to or cause high achievement for students? These types of studies are definitely very policy-relevant, and they attract a lot of attention, really because they contribute to the very current policy conversation that's going on right now about the role that charter schools can play in addressing the persistent achievement gaps that are happening in some of our lowest performing school districts.

On the other hand, strategy studies look at what is actually happening in the charter schools: So, what are the practices and strategies being employed there that are contributing or perhaps not contributing to student results? And these types of studies typically don't lend

themselves to the kind of rigorous quantitative evaluation techniques that are used in the achievement studies. They tend to use more qualitative methodologies. But it doesn't mean that the questions are any less important. So, what's really ended up happening is that the achievement studies have actually raised a lot of questions about why charter schools are having the impact that they are and why some charter schools seem to have a stronger impact than others. So, the studies that look at the strategies can help us to fill in some of those gaps in our knowledge.

Slide 7

I'm going to start, first, just by talking about the achievement studies and highlight some of the major studies that have come out recently and what their findings are. And overall, the findings across this group of studies are mixed. So, unfortunately, there really is no definitive answer to the question about what is the relationship between student achievement and charter schools. And while this may seem frustrating to not really have an answer, it's important to keep in mind that every study is different in terms of the questions it asks, the methodology it uses, and the samples that are studied. But, when you are able to take all of these factors into account and then you look across the entire body of literature, you can start to see some common patterns that emerge that do tell us a little bit about the relationship between charter schools and student achievement, and I will talk a little bit about that after I describe some examples of these studies.

So, the four examples I'm going to talk about are studies that have been in the press a lot recently, and they're often cited in policy conversations about charter schools. So, the first is Hoxby 2009, which was done in New York City. Next, this is Abdulkadiroglu, which is what we call the *Informing the Debate* study—this was done in Boston. Then, the last two are the CREDO and the Mathematica study that was funded by IES, and these two are both national studies.

Slide 8

So, first, the Hoxby study: So, this study took place in New York City, and it's part of an ongoing stream of research that's being conducted by Hoxby through the New York City charter schools evaluation

project. This particular study examined the achievement of students in New York City who applied to charter school lotteries between the 2000–01 and 2008–09 school years. The city compared achievement for those students who were selected through the lottery to attend the charter school against those who were not selected and ended up enrolling in traditional schools.

And the use of the charter school lottery here is actually very critical. This is actually a common method that's used to study the impact of charter school enrollment on student achievement. For many charter schools—and this is especially the case in New York City—the number of applicants to a particular charter school will exceed the number of available slots, and so admission ends up being determined through a random lottery. And the lottery creates a situation where some students will get into the charter school, some will not, and the decision is completely random. And so, from a researcher's point of view, this situation approximates a randomized experiment, which is considered to be the gold standard when conducting educational research on causal questions. The way you're comparing two groups that have been assigned randomly, you can assume that on average the groups will be similar, so, both in terms of characteristics that are measurable, such as race or socioeconomic status, but also in terms of characteristics that are not necessarily measurable, such as motivation or parent involvement. So, if you have groups that are similar in this way, any difference between the two groups after they attend the charter school can be attributed to the attendance of the charter school rather than any of the background characteristics.

The Hoxby study used this lottery-based evaluation method, and it found that the lotteried students outperformed the nonlotteried students in math, English, science, social studies, and the Regents exam, and they also were more likely to earn a Regents diploma. And just a couple of other important findings to point out from this study: First, Hoxby found considerable variation among individual charter schools. So, while on average she found a positive effect across all the schools in the study, there were some schools where the lottery students actually performed worse than the students who did not get in. That's important to keep in mind. Also, Hoxby looked at some school characteristics and found that a long school year, more minutes devoted to instruction in English, a rewards/penalties-based

disciplinary policy, performance-based pay for teachers, and an academic mission statement—were all associated with charter schools having a positive impact on student performance.

Slide 9

The next study is the *Informing the Debate* study. This was conducted in Boston, and it focused on middle and high schools. Like the Hoxby study, it used a lottery-based evaluation, but it also conducted a second part to the analysis, it's called an observational analysis. While lottery-based evaluations are considered the most rigorous, one of their limitations is that they can only be conducted using charter schools that have oversubscribed lotteries. And so, the findings really can only generalize to that group of schools. There are obviously other charter schools that don't have lotteries, and so the observational analysis for this study was able to include those schools in the sample as well. So, the observational study compared achievement for students in charter schools to students in traditional schools in Boston, and they used statistical techniques to control for differences between the groups in things like prior achievement, socioeconomic status, and so on. The one limitation here, though, however, is a study like this can't guarantee that all of the relevant factors are controlled for. So, there are probably some student characteristics—like motivation, for example—that can't be measured, and that may be something that actually would play a role in the difference in achievement between the schools. But what's important, really, to point out about this *Informing the Debate* study is that it used both of the methods as a way to sort of counterbalance the different limitations of each. And actually, for both of these methods, the findings were the same: Charter school students performed better than those in traditional schools.

Slide 10

The next study we want to talk about is the CREDO study—and which, again, this has gotten a lot of attention in the press, mostly because of two things: One, because it used a national sample, and second, because the findings about charter schools were negative in this study. And this study was conducted using data from 15 states, plus the District of Columbia, and it was able to compare growth in achievement for students in charter schools to that of students in traditional schools

using a very sophisticated matching technique in which they matched and compared achievement for every charter school student to what they called a virtual twin, in a traditional school. And the matching was done so that the students were virtually identical on important background characteristics such as demographics, English language proficiency, and special education status.

So, as I mentioned before, overall, the findings were negative; however, when looking a little bit closer at the study, there are a number of important variations in the findings. So, for example, on average again, across all of the students in the study, those in charter schools performed worse in reading and math than those in traditional schools. But I should point out that the difference was very small. Also, when looking just at elementary and middle school students, the findings were actually positive for those in charter schools, while in high schools and multilevel schools, the findings were negative.

Slide 11

The findings were also positive for low-income students in charter schools. And then, finally, there was considerable variation across the states. So, in reading, six states showed a positive effect for charter schools, five a negative effect, and five showed no effect. In math, six states showed a positive effect, six a negative effect, and four showed no effect. And then, just a couple other important findings, like the Hoxby study, there was significant variation across each individual charter school and also the study found some interesting variation in terms of some state policies. The states that had caps on the number of charter schools and states with multiple authorizers were more likely to show negative effects for charter schools.

Slide 12

Okay. So, the last study we wanted to mention is the Mathematica study. This was another national assessment that was just completed and published in 2010. This study is important because it used the most rigorous methodology, the lottery-based evaluation. And it also looked at a national sample. The sample included 36 middle schools across 15 states and it found overall that there was no difference in achievement between the lotteried and nonlotteried students. Again,

however, this study found significant variation across schools, with some schools showing positive effects and some showing negative effects. The study also found a positive effect for charter schools that served higher populations of low-income or low-achieving students. And then, finally, this study also found that charter schools with small enrollments and those that use ability grouping were more likely to have a positive effect on student achievement.

Slide 13

So, what does all this mean? The results across the achievement studies are mixed. However, if you look carefully at the details, you can see some common patterns. For example, these studies generally all found positive effects in urban areas and for low-income [Inaudible]. Also, the studies found a significant amount of variation across individual charter schools, and this is really important. It implies that not all charter schools are the same, and so it's really necessary for researchers to take a closer look at what is happening inside charter schools and the relationship that those practices and strategies that are happening in charter schools have on achievement. And some of the achievement studies were able to take a look at some of these strategies in charter schools and the relationship with student achievement, but there's definitely a need for more research in this area.

Slide 14

This transitions us into the second portion of the presentation on the strategy studies. Research about what's going on inside charter schools and also what kinds of strategies in charter schools seem to be having the most positive effects. This kind of research is definitely limited and, as I discussed on the previous slide, some of the research conducted on strategies comes from the achievement studies, but some also comes from standalone descriptive studies on charter schools. And there are some general themes that come out of these studies about practices that are common to charter schools. So, these include things like increased autonomy over staff, schedule, and budget; extended learning time; innovative curricula; and flexible instructional approaches—but we don't really know too much from the

literature about if and how these different strategies impact student achievement.

Slide 15

So, after this slide I'm going to turn the rest of the presentation over to my colleague, Susan Therriault. She's going to talk about a study that we conducted called *Out of the Debate and Into the Schools*. And this study was commissioned as a follow-up to *Informing the Debate*, which was the Boston study that I described earlier. Because this was a follow-up, we started the study using the findings from *Informing the Debate* as a given. So, in other words, we worked off the assumption that students in charter schools in Boston were performing better than students in traditional schools in Boston. And so, then we wanted to know what was happening in those charter schools—and, in particular, in the high-achieving charter schools—that was different than what was going on in the traditional schools and, in particular, the high-achieving traditional schools. So, for our methodology, we conducted a qualitative study that included a principal survey. We surveyed all of the charter school principals and a representative sample of traditional school principals in the city of Boston. We also conducted site visits to, actually, a total of nine schools. This included six charter and traditional schools, all of them were high-achieving, and I should make a note that this study actually included pilot schools as well. We're focusing particularly—for this presentation, we're focusing mostly on the differences between the charter schools and traditional schools, but you will see some data coming up on the next few slides about the pilot schools as well. During the site visits, we conducted principal and teacher interviews, focus groups, and also classroom observations.

Slide 16

I'm going to move to the next slide. I think Susan is going to go through our findings first. Susan, do you want to take over now?

SUSAN: Yeah, thanks, Allison. Before I begin, I just want to take a moment. There were a few questions in the chat box, but first I want to actually point out that all of the studies that have been reviewed, as well as this presentation, are available in the box right below the chat, at least that's where it is on my screen. So, if you want to download and look

closer at any of these, please feel free to. So, one of the questions that I saw, Allison, was in regard to the Hoxby study. The person was wondering whether the study determined which characteristics had a greater impact on achievement, for example, like the longer year and that sort of thing.

ALLISON: All of those characteristics did. I'm not sure if the question is asking, of those characteristics which had the most impact. I don't know if this person can clarify. I actually don't have that information in front of me, but you can download the study and find it there. Everything that's listed on the slide did have a positive impact on student achievement.

SUSAN: I'm not sure if this was in your notes. There was another question about, in the CREDO report, what were the six states that showed a positive effect in reading?

ALLISON: I would have to find it. It's on my desk, but I can't find it. If you just open up the report, it's right there in the executive summary, the list of the states.

SUSAN: Okay. And then that goes to the same for the math question, I'm assuming, as well. Then, one other question was about the term *significant variation* and was asking about... Well, they wanted you to quantify the magnitude of the difference in variation between charter versus variation in district schools. I'm not sure the studies we reviewed necessarily addressed that, but I didn't know if you wanted just to talk a little bit about the significant variation and what you mean by that when you talk about that among the charter schools.

ALLISON: So—I'm sorry, I'm not sure I understand the question, the magnitude of difference in variation among individual charter schools, I guess if that's what the question is asking about, the studies do provide some statistics to kind of quantify that and they kind of show the range between the charter schools kind of on the negative end, those that actually showed a negative effect on performance compared to those that showed a positive effect and it's a very large difference, and I would say both the Hoxby study and the Mathematica study actually do a really good job at kind of showing some graphics about that. So, I would recommend that you look at the reports.

SUSAN:

Okay. That's great. Okay. All right. Also, before I begin, I wanted to mention that some of the graphics in the coming slides may appear quite small in the partial screen. So feel free to make your screen full-screen, which you can do at the top right-hand corner. So, I'd like to discuss some of the findings that came out of the report that Allison and I, as well as several others, including Julia Casasanto-Ferro and Samantha Carney, conducted in the city of Boston. As Allison mentioned, the study was really designed making the assumption that charter schools were indeed outperforming traditional schools in the city. And we wanted to take a closer look at the practices going on in traditional pilot and charter schools that may account for differences in student performance found in *Informing the Debate*.

Slide 17

So, the research questions focused on three types of schooling options, which Allison also mentioned. Those are traditional schools, which are run by the Boston Public School District; there are the pilot schools, which are also under the purview of the Boston Public Schools, but that are granted additional autonomies in the same areas that charter schools are granted autonomies. and what's interesting about these schools is that they have the option to opt in or out of district services—like professional development, curriculum, textbooks, et cetera—and they are also able to negotiate and add amendments to the existing city teacher contract, and that's to allow these schools to accommodate the mission of the school and to kind of empower the teachers and the school leader to create a school that's built around the needs of the students that they're serving. These schools are all marked by a staff of teachers who are really empowered and really are active in helping the leader shape the school, which you'll see in the findings. And then there are charter schools, which in Massachusetts operate as their own LEA, and the study limited the charter schools that were included to those that are actually geographically located in the city of Boston. I should also say that as a first foray into this investigation, we really cast a wide net.

We looked at those key elements, such as leadership and staffing, et cetera, that are most discussed as differences among the types of schools. And these are the differences identified in policy as well as identified in research. We created a framework, what we call the

autonomy framework, which really captures these broad categories.

So, first, we wanted to look at—as far as the research questions are concerned—we wanted to look at each type of school on its own and explore how each type—that is the pilot, traditional, and charter school—operates in each area of autonomy, including, you know, what types of practices exist within those autonomies and what are the strengths and challenges of the context in which they're currently operating and allowing them to access flexibility and autonomy to make decisions in their schools.

Next, we investigated the specific practices within each of the autonomy areas in hopes of identifying areas that could account for differences in student performance levels. And I want to emphasize the word *may* here. The research again does not attribute any causal relationship. While we think these findings may reveal leads, we do believe that further research would need to be conducted in order to make definitive statements about that and their connection.

And then, last, we wanted to acknowledge that schools can be high-performing no matter what type they are. And so, we wanted to look specifically at how high-performing traditional, pilot, and charter schools operate within the autonomy framework and, importantly, how are the schools different and similar to one another in terms of the practices they employ? So, the first two questions were primarily answered by extant data and responses to the principal survey, and the last question was informed by both the principal survey and specifically a subsample of the high-achieving schools from which the principals responded and the case study data.

Slide 18

Okay. So, as I mentioned, we cast a wide net, and here's the autonomy framework and the really broad categories that we included in this framework. The areas were staffing, which encompassed hiring, firing, retaining staff, and staff attributes; scheduling and time; governance and leadership; budgeting; professional development; and curriculum, instruction, and assessment. So, as you can see, there's a lot of potential practices here, but because we were really taking our first stab at looking at what was going on, we didn't really feel like we

should exclude any of these categories. This is where you should make your screen a full screen if you can, which I'm going to do.

Slide 19

I don't think I'll be hearing a lot of oohs and ahs over the findings. It really isn't that surprising. What the slide shows is the degree of autonomy that principals reported that they possess over elements in the autonomy framework. Traditional school principals are less likely to agree with statements about possessing autonomy in the key areas of staffing and scheduling, et cetera, and charter school principals and pilot school principals, of course, who are granted this autonomy, reported having a great deal of autonomy. Some significant differences I'd really like to point out include budgeting, identifying highly qualified or effective staff, removing teachers, and adjusting the schedule.

Slide 20

Okay, so, beyond these results—which, again, are not that surprising—we did have some really interesting findings as they related to the way in which autonomy over staffing and scheduling and time seem to influence the ability of these leaders and teachers within these schools to exercise other autonomies. We started to call staffing and scheduling and time “gateway autonomies.”

And first, I'm going to discuss staffing. What is interesting about the practices in staffing is that while the differences among the whole population of traditional, pilot, and charter schools reflect the same findings I showed you in the slide before, in a sense of autonomy among principals in general, when you look at a subsample of high-achieving schools within each type—so high-achieving traditional, high-achieving pilot, and high-achieving charter schools—these differences actually lessened in some key areas.

Slide 21

So, this graph here shows the full sample of principal responses to the survey. Charter and pilot school principals were significantly more likely than traditional school principals to report that they're able to identify qualified staff to match the needs of students and that the process for hiring staff actually takes a reasonable amount of time.

Now, slightly more than half of the schools were able to identify qualified staff and felt that the process for identifying staff—of traditional schools, that is—took a reasonable amount of time, And also what’s significant here is the degree to which charter school principals felt salary and benefits helped them to recruit highly qualified teachers. I’m sure that probably sticks out for all of you. Only about one quarter of the charter school principals agreed with this statement. And so, we did some further investigation into this, and that investigation revealed that the difference between the average salaries in traditional and pilot schools, when compared to charter schools, is approximately \$28,000 a year. So, I do want to place a caveat there. The charter schools definitely have staff who are younger and newer to teaching and who may not have teaching credentials that are the same as the traditional and pilot schools. So, they may actually be at the lower end of the salary scale, but still, charter schools on average pay teachers less.

Slide 22

Okay. So, this slide shows the same information for a subset of high-achieving schools. What’s interesting is that when you look at only high-achieving schools, the difference is lessened, and in the case of identifying highly qualified staff, the difference completely disappears. Naturally, our next question was, How did this happen? To answer the question, we looked at the high-achieving case study schools, specifically the traditional schools, and what we found in our data was that the traditional school principals in our case studies placed a heavy emphasis on getting the “right” staff into their schools. For example, one traditional principal discussed developing a strong relationship with a local teacher preparation program, and this assured that the school had access to a regular and routine pipeline of qualified teachers that actually had a common philosophy. Other traditional school principals discussed gaming the district hiring system to circumvent the rules so that they could get the right people who fit into their organization, and fit was key here. When asked what the district response to this kind of action was, one of the traditional school case study principals stated “I seek forgiveness, not permission.” Indeed, the data from the high-achieving school case studies revealed an unerring focus on getting the right staff to fit in the school culture and into the building. The difference among the school types was the way in which they had to

do this, but the search for talented teachers was a constant focus in all types of these schools.

Slide 23

Okay. So, next, staffing characteristics. Again: When we look at the statements about characteristics of staff reported by principals by school type, including staff trusting one another, possessing similar values or philosophies to the school leader, the staff that are possessing the knowledge and skills for success in the school, and willingness to spend extra time and motivation to reach students, the charter and pilot schools that were granted explicit autonomy in the staffing area were significantly more likely to agree with the attributes for staff when compared to traditional school principals. You know, you might want to ask yourself, why does it seem like an important finding? Well, in the research on effective schools, these attributes of staff are important to developing a common vision and purpose within the school and ultimately can impact the climate in the school and the actual outcomes of students.

Slide 24

So, again, when just a subsample of high-achieving schools within each type is examined, at least some of these differences are minimized and some are significantly different than the whole population of traditional schools. I mean, importantly, believing staff have the knowledge and skills necessary for success and the degree to which teachers feel responsible for learning in the classroom and follow continuous improvement strategies are key differences. In the high-achieving case study schools, we found that the leaders and staff in all types of schools describe strong school cultures that they attributed to part of their success. And, you know, interestingly, leaders described how this culture helped to attract new teacher candidates to the school and also actually helped to sort out those teachers that didn't fit in. In a traditional school, principals used the strong school culture to actually encourage teachers who didn't quite fit or weren't quite meeting the school standards to leave the school, and one traditional school principal actually described how the culture made removing teachers easier because leaving became this mutual decision and was very obvious to both the leader and the teacher who was planning to leave.

Other areas of the autonomy framework that these differences impacted include curriculum and instruction, for example in the high-achieving case study schools, traditional school principals and teachers discussed how they were empowered to make adjustments in the district curriculum and pacing guides to meet the needs of individual students in their classroom and that they felt safe to make those decisions and the principal and teachers believed this had to do with the level of trust in the building. In the high-achieving case study pilot and charter schools, principals and staff also echoed this sentiment, but the difference was, traditional school principals and staff saw it as deviating from the plan rather than just meeting the needs of students.

Slide 25

Okay, so: Leadership is another area that was impacted by the staffing autonomy. But the findings in this area are a little bit different. Pilot school principals were significantly more likely to include teacher leaders in decisions about budgeting and discipline policies. And again, when we investigated this finding through the high-achieving case study schools, we found that pilot schools were often started by teachers, and that included experienced teachers who were seeking additional autonomy to serve students. So that it was drawing those teachers who really wanted to do that kind of work. Principals of pilot schools also discussed leading the school as a group process, whereby staff really did have a seat at the table. So, one might ask how this plays out in the other areas of the autonomy framework. As you can see, staffing impacts the school climate as well as the degree to which teachers are empowered to make decisions and use professional judgment as to how best serve students by way of curriculum and instruction. Among the high-achieving case study schools, the pilot and charter schools assumed this to be the case, while the traditional school principals discussed how this is a risk they were willing to take, so teachers really felt a degree of safety in taking these risks.

Slide 26

All right. Now, the second gateway autonomy is scheduling and time.

Now within this autonomy area, the differences persisted between the full sample of traditional, pilot, and charter school principals as compared to the high-achieving traditional, pilot, and charter school principals. I guess this isn't really surprising. And it probably isn't to anyone. Scheduling and time are issues that receive a lot of attention in public schools, and changing those factors and variables can be very challenging and difficult. And policies related to time and flexibility to use time continue to pose a challenge to the public education system.

Slide 27

So, while it's probably not surprising to anyone that charter school students and teachers have a longer school day, I have to say it was very surprising to us as researchers how different the amount of time that was spent in school actually was:

For students in traditional schools, the average school day was 6.1 hours. For pilot schools, it was slightly greater, at 6.42 hours; but for charter schools, it was 8.15 hours. For teachers, contracted time in traditional schools was about 6½ hours, or about 30 minutes longer than the school day for kids, and nearly 9 hours for charter schools, with pilot schools coming in at nearly 7 hours. As you can see, the actual time—that is, that time that teachers actually spend beyond the contracted school day—was significantly higher for charter schools and approaches 10 hours a day. Now, I think we'll all agree, that's a very long work day. So what does that mean? If you use the regular school calendar in Massachusetts, which is 180 days by law, it comes out to the charter school students spending an average of 378 more hours in school when compared to traditional school students. This is actually the equivalent of 62 more traditional school days. And it doesn't even account for the longer school year that many charter schools already have.

Slide 28

Okay. So, yes, time and scheduling is important, but I have to say it doesn't necessarily account for student performance differences. As a gateway autonomy, time is like a floodgate in my opinion, because the additional time really allowed principals and staff to organize the school

and organize themselves in ways that directly addressed the other autonomies and allowed them to flexibly adapt to the needs of the students in their schools. Specifically, the autonomies of professional development and curriculum and instruction were impacted by the ability to manipulate this autonomy.

Slide 29

So, charter school principals, when compared to responses of traditional school principals, revealed that they were more likely to provide professional development to a team of teachers or the whole school. And I want to emphasize that: a team of teachers or the whole school. When we looked at this data just for individuals and what were teachers participating in, you would see high levels of participation across each type of school. But when you parsed it by the schools that were actually providing this type of professional development to the team again or a whole school, these differences appeared. So, what kind of professional development were they providing? It included, what was significantly different, were the observations to another school, just bringing the whole team or the whole school—probably more likely a team—to observe practices going on in another school, and then also embedded formal internal coaching from an outside consultant. In addition to having teams participate in routine professional development to build teachers' skills, in the high-achieving case study schools, we observed differences between charter and traditional schools in that teachers in charter schools had more time, nearly daily, for collaborative planning time, had separate meeting time to discuss the progress of individual students and strategize how to optimize support and learning for each individual student. Additionally, the charter and pilot school leaders made sure professional development was threaded or connected across the year and directly related to what was going on in the classroom.

Slide 30

Okay. In the area of curriculum and instruction, as you can see, nearly 85 percent of the charter school principals reported that students spent five or more hours a week on instruction or work in math and nearly 80 percent reported students spent five or more hours on instruction or work in English language arts. Additionally, in the areas of writing composition and writing topic development, nearly 60 percent of

charter school principals reported students spent five or more hours a week in these areas. Now, the percentages that traditional school principals reported were much lower, and interestingly, the *Informing the Debate* study actually found that students in charter schools outperformed their peers in traditional schools in each of these areas. It's important to note here that because the charter school students actually spent more time in school, the charter schools had an increased ability to offer this type of instruction to students. So, it was more likely that they would be getting five or more hours of instruction, just because of the length of the school day.

Slide 31

Another important element to instruction, curriculum, and assessment is the type of support available to students. Now, this table shows that with the exception of weekend support, there were really no significant differences between the school types.

Slide 32

But, when you look in this next slide at the student supports, that are required, the picture is a bit different. Pilot and charter schools, when compared to traditional schools, were much more likely to require academic support during school hours. In other words, over 60 percent of charter schools and over half the pilot school principals reported that they had embedded student support into the regular school day. Additionally, charter schools were more likely to require weekend academic support. In the high-achieving case studies—this is obviously worth further investigation—in the high-achieving case study schools, this embedded student support was evident and prevalent. In fact, charter and pilot schools had developed highly sensitive systems through formal assessments and teacher discussions so that students who showed the first inkling of falling behind were identified to take part in the supports available daily within the school. The systems in charter and pilot case study schools were seamless and a student would participate in the support and then move out fluidly, back into the regular classroom, after the need was addressed. Now, students and teachers saw this as part of the regular school day, and many students participated, so it wasn't a small group of students that were participating in these supports. Students would move in and out and it

was part of the routine. This is important because these schools seemed to be able to address student needs early before they fell off track and ran into much larger problems.

Slide 33

Okay. So, in conclusion, we really do believe that staffing and time are critical gateway autonomies that allow leaders and staff in these schools to exercise autonomies in other areas of the framework, so it really can impinge on their ability to access other flexibilities. High-achieving schools of all types found ways to exert control over at least some parts of staffing, but time and scheduling were a much more difficult nut to crack for traditional and even pilot schools. So ultimately staffing and time contribute to the degree to which a leader is able to use other autonomy elements and the degree to which schools are able to be flexible and agile in meeting the needs of students. You know, still, the data from the high-achieving case study schools of all types revealed some things that they had in common, mainly that the leaders of these schools were really able to orchestrate the strengths and weaknesses of the staff, students, and school community to support higher performance. The key was the leader's ability to adapt to the changing circumstances. And one example is that in a traditional school, the leaders discussed developing actual flexible policies that allowed teachers to take these risks, and teachers in return were willing to take these risks and do what they believed students really needed to be served well. In pilot schools, teachers tended to be very experienced and actually considered themselves integral to the leadership of the school, and they helped to develop the flexible strategies actually to support student needs and in charter schools, the teachers did appear to be less experienced, but the principal developed a strong administrative team—so, use staffing to centralize many of the core functions and policies to take away nonclassroom responsibilities from the teachers so that they could actually concentrate on the needs of students and teaching in the classroom. All of these principals were able to look at the resources in their schools and the needs of the students and adapt. So: Data from the study suggests that the specific practices used once autonomy is granted is important, but one has to ask, you know: What are the policy implications for this study?

And so, some of the policy implications we identified were that, yeah, autonomy is clearly key, but you have to be able to use the autonomy, and the leaders we observed in these high-achieving case study schools were expert at, again, adapting and providing support and figuring out how to best meet the needs of students. But I'm not certain that all leaders are ready or at that level. So, I would say that, if you did indeed decide to grant additional autonomy to school leaders, I think it has to be autonomy with support, you know, support to build the capacity, to make the changes, and to actually find a safe place to take a few risks to meet the needs of students.

Something we cannot avoid is that increased school time really seems to make a difference in terms of staff's ability to meet and collaborate and create a coherent program for students, but also in terms of providing supports beyond the regular school curriculum that students may need to help them stay on track and address needs really early.

Again, systems for routinely monitoring student needs and embedding supports to meet the needs, really making them part of the regular school day, seem like a significant finding to us. And the systems for routinely monitoring were fascinating, actually, and some had computer systems, some had weekly discussions with teachers to identify what some gaps may be and make assignments for the following week, and some even had a registrar on hand to quickly change schedules and make assignments for students so they were getting what they needed as well as being successful in school.

And then, the other thing that really stood out to us was that there were a lot of great practices going on in these schools and, as I mentioned, as a leader you likely have to deal with the resources that are before you, but it really did occur to us that there are many practices that were going on in these case study schools that could be shared across school type. And I know that that's sometimes a difficult bridge to cross, but I think that each school type could learn something from one another, so that would be our last recommendation. I think that's it for my presentation. Allison, I guess I'll turn it back to you.

Slides 34 & 35

ALLISON: Oh, sorry. I was just going to build on the last point you were making about sort of sharing some of these strategies across school type. The implications of this report we did sort of have a lot of interest in the report from just the city of Boston about how to kind of take some of these strategies and thinking about replicating them in all schools. And so, there's just a lot to learn from charter schools, especially given the research showing that charter schools do tend to lead to increased student performance. Then, again, there's a lot to learn about what's going on in the schools that could be contributing to that increased student performance. And so, we should really take advantage of charter schools as a source of a lot of information, and we just hope that there will continue to be more research on this topic of the strategies. These strategy studies, we think, are really important to kind of rounding out the picture in terms of what research is telling us about charter schools.

SUSAN: Yeah, definitely, and I think that when we did this research we knew that we were just looking at so many areas and to identify the specific practices would be challenging, but I think what this study really contributes to the body of research that's out there on practices are to identify some leads to actually dig deeper and look at what it really means in these different school settings.

Slide 36

ALLISON: Yeah. We have a question here about what's the definition we use for a high-achieving school. We actually divided the schools in our sample into—I believe it was—thirds, sort of the highest achieving third, the middle achieving, and then the lowest achieving. What we should point out, though, is that the cutoff for each third was different by type of school. So while we were comparing high-achieving charter schools and high-achieving traditional schools, we should definitely point out that the charter schools in that group still were achieving higher than the traditional schools in that group, if that makes sense.

SUSAN: Right, so, they were cut into thirds by school type.

ALLISON: Right, and the highest achieving traditional school didn't match, even the lowest of the high-achieving charter schools. We have another question about attrition rate for charters. Why do they leave...? We

don't know the exact rate. I mean, it's different in every city or community, and I think there's various reasons why students leave. We did find some evidence about some of the charter schools in the site visits were talking about just having very strong...—oh, “teachers,” sorry—thank you for clarifying, “why *teachers* leave.” We didn't really look at that. I don't know, Susan, if you want to comment on that.

SUSAN: We did look at it, but I'm not recalling right now because I don't think we included it in the report.

ALLISON: I think we looked at just turnover rates, but we didn't kind of go into detail about the reasons why. Unfortunately, we didn't have a chance to do a teacher survey, we just did a principal survey, so we couldn't really get into a lot of information from teachers, unfortunately.

SUSAN: Yeah, and so, when we asked the case study charter schools why teachers leave, we had some questions along those lines. You know, again, it was fit and culture, that's what the response was.

ALLISON: Right.

SUSAN: But I don't think it's fair to really make a definitive statement without actually talking to teachers that do leave.

ALLISON: There's a question about differences between high-achieving schools with high-poverty and low-poverty. We made sure that all our high-achieving schools, our sort of subsample, was representative in terms of poverty. So each subgroup had a range. So, there really wasn't any difference according to poverty within those groups.

SUSAN: Right.

PEGGIE: If people have questions, you're welcome to raise your hand with the little blue person on the left and we can call on you or you can enter questions through the chat. Susan and Allison, I just have a quick question for you about authorizers. Are there authorizer practices that you might recommend based on the findings of your studies?

SUSAN: We did talk to people who were involved with authorizers just to sort of get some background and context for our study, but I think that when

we get to the level of practices in the schools, it might be beyond the scope of what an authorizer wants to include. I don't know. I'm sure there are people on the phone who are more expert at this kind of perspective than I, but yeah, I would say that maybe you could think of it, when I say autonomy with support, you may want to consider a stronger support infrastructure for newer charter schools. I mean, I can see that, especially with charter school leaders and how to use that autonomy in a sort of a coaching model.

ALLISON: And how to use the time again, just knowing that schedule and time seem to be that gateway to being able to be flexible in terms of instructional approaches and professional development. You know, authorizers could pay attention to schools' plans for doing those things.

Okay: "What are your thoughts on why state caps have a negative effect on charter school achievement? "

SUSAN: State caps on the number of charter schools?

ALLISON: Yeah, so one of the studies found, that it was the CREDO study, I don't know. My thought might be that... It's surprising to me. I would think it would be the opposite, that states that don't have caps on charter schools might.... It's hard to say, because I would just completely be putting out an opinion here. States that don't have caps on charter schools maybe don't have as much oversight over the authorizing process. I don't know. And so, that would be why—that's why this is a little bit more surprising here to me. Finding about availability of multiple authorizers makes a little bit more sense to me, if there's multiple authorizers in the state, maybe there's too much variation in the process for authorizing charter schools, and that might have an effect on some more negative effects.

The direction or magnitude of sampling bias—I'm not sure if I understand the question exactly, but— This was from our study about we had a low response rate from pilot schools.

PEGGIE: Brandon, do you want to clarify your question?

ALLISON: We definitely had a problem with response rate, yes. I think that could have definitely been a problem. We may have seen some different

results if we had higher response rates from pilot schools. Susan, if you want to comment on that.

SUSAN: Yeah, our strategies to encourage responses were intense and, as part of this work, we had the opportunity to present this study to the superintendent of Boston Public Schools, and it was our understanding that the pilot schools frequently don't respond to surveys. So, we did try our best to get all the pilot schools to respond, but, you know, we just weren't able to get them to respond to the survey. As far as the traditional schools are concerned, we sampled the traditional schools, and so the 78 percent response rate was actually, I think, quite good, and the charter schools just responded overwhelmingly.

ALLISON: Right. I think I need clarification on Matthew Wright's question. I'm not sure if I understand that. Then Daniel Haman's question, sample sizes in the diagrams with the range means around.... Yes, that would be right.

PEGGIE: Mr. Wright, do you want to speak up and clarify your question a little bit?

WRIGHT: Yeah. Can you hear me? I was just asking if there were any studies that have been performed to look at the various methodologies that are used in terms of student achievement, in terms of using data, in terms of using technology, interim assessments as opposed to one another, are there some methodologies that have proven to be more successful than others?

ALLISON: So methodologies that are more successful in predicting which factors lead to higher student achievement, is that what you mean?

WRIGHT: Yeah.

ALLISON: I would say definitely the more rigorous quantitative studies that kind of do a regression analysis and are able to measure—kind of take into account—different strategies that are happening in the schools and predict their independent effect on student achievement, that would be a more rigorous study. I don't know if there's been a study conducted about those methodologies, but some of the studies have used those

methodologies, like the Hoxby study that I mentioned and the Mathematica study.

WRIGHT: Yeah, because I'm currently funding about 71 campuses and each of them are using different methodologies or clusters of methodologies in order to achieve. So, I'm starting to look at D.C. CAS scores when they come in for 2011 in comparison for 2010 and 2009 to see where the achievement was and what methodologies may have impact, along with the other indicators.

ALLISON: So when you say methodologies, you mean what strategies are happening in the...

WRIGHT: Yeah, in terms of some use professional development, these are charter schools, some use professional development in conjunction with interim assessments and in conjunction with software like an ANET, so they cluster certain things in order to achieve certain targets in terms of AYP.

ALLISON: So the schools cluster different strategies together.

WRIGHT: Yeah.

ALLISON: Yeah, I mean to conduct research on whether that's having an impact, you could do a large-scale quantitative study, which is expensive to conduct and takes a long time. That would obviously be the most rigorous way to collect data across all of these schools. But you also could do something similar to what we did in our study which is kind of identify those schools that seem to be higher achieving and kind of look a little bit more in depth at what the practices are that are being conducted there.

WRIGHT: Very good. Thank you.

ALLISON: You're welcome.

Slides 37 and 38

PEGGIE: Okay, I think we're going to go ahead and wrap up now. Susan and Allison, I would like to thank you both very much. This was really a very

engaging and informative presentation and I would like to thank all of the participants for participating as well. We like to do surveys at the end of each webinar to give us a little bit more information about what we could do better and what worked for you and topics that you may recommend for future webinars. So if you have a couple of minutes, please do fill that out. I will send you there in a moment. This webinar will be recorded and archived at the charterschoolcenter.org website and it should be available by Monday, April 25, on the website. And please do contact us if you have any other questions. You can visit us on our website at www.charterschoolcenter.org. Thank you all for joining.