



Texas Public Charter School Program Start-Up Comprehensive Final Grant Evaluation Report: 2016–17 to 2019–20

Contributing Authors:

Safal Partners:

Shivani Chatterjee
Mukta Pandit

Gibson Consulting Group:

Joseph Shields
Danial Hoepfner
Alejandro Allen
Rex Long

Mathematica:

Kevin Booker
Christina Tuttle

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-------|
| Table of Contents | ii |
| List of Figures | vi |
| List of Tables | vii |
| List of Acronyms Used in this Report | ix |
| Executive Summary | x |
| Background | x |
| Program Evaluation | x |
| Promising Practices from Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses | xi |
| School Start-Up Planning | xi |
| Organizational Practices..... | xii |
| Instructional Practices..... | xii |
| School Climate and Staff Morale | xiii |
| Impact of Student Enrollment at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses..... | xiv |
| Student Recruitment and Retention Practices at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses..... | xv |
| Teacher Recruitment and Retention Practices at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses..... | xvii |
| Best or Promising Practices from High-Performing Charter School Campuses | xviii |
| Chapter 1 — Introduction and Background..... | 1 |
| Overview of the Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant | 1 |
| Purpose of the Report | 4 |
| Data and Methods | 4 |
| Organization of the Report | 5 |
| Chapter 2 — Practices at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses | 6 |
| Data and Methods..... | 6 |
| Annual Survey of Principals..... | 7 |
| Qualitative Data Collected through Annual Site Visits | 7 |
| Findings..... | 7 |
| Getting Started: Planning a New Charter School Campus | 7 |
| Organizational Practices..... | 14 |
| Instructional Practices..... | 17 |
| Closing the Achievement Gap for Educationally Disadvantaged Students | 24 |
| Closing the Achievement Gap for Low-Performing Students..... | 25 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Practices Related to Maintaining a Positive School Climate | 26 |
| Summary of Key Findings | 33 |
| Chapter 3 — Charter School Start-Up Grantee Outcomes | 37 |
| Data and Methods | 37 |
| Findings | 38 |
| Relationship between Student Enrollment in a Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campus and Outcomes | 38 |
| Summary of Key Findings | 62 |
| Chapter 4 — Student Recruitment and Retention Practices at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses | 64 |
| Student Recruitment and Hiring Strategies | 64 |
| Effective Student Retention Strategies | 66 |
| Comparison of Student Characteristics and Mobility Patterns for Students Enrolled at Public Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses and Comparable Traditional Public-School Campuses | 69 |
| Summary of Key Findings | 73 |
| Chapter 5 — Teacher Recruitment and Retention Practices at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses | 75 |
| Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategies | 75 |
| Methods for Attracting and Recruiting High-Quality Teachers | 75 |
| Methods for Retaining Teachers | 77 |
| Characteristics of Teachers at Public Charter Schools Start-Up Grantee Campuses and Teachers at Feeder Pattern Traditional Public Schools | 79 |
| Comparison of Teacher Retention and Mobility Patterns for Teachers at Public Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses and Comparable Traditional Public School Campuses | 80 |
| Summary of Key Findings | 83 |
| Teacher Recruitment and Hiring | 83 |
| Teacher Retention | 84 |
| Chapter 6 — Best or Promising Practices at High-Performing Charter School Campuses | 85 |
| Organizational Practices | 85 |
| Instructional Practices and Teacher Supports | 85 |
| Campus Climate and Staff Morale | 86 |
| Student Recruitment and Retention | 87 |
| Teacher Recruitment and Retention | 87 |
| Chapter 7 — Summary of Findings | 88 |
| Practices at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses | 88 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Charter School Start-Up Planning..... | 88 |
| Organizational Practices..... | 88 |
| Instructional Practices..... | 89 |
| Campus Climate and Staff Morale | 89 |
| Student Recruitment | 90 |
| Student Retention | 90 |
| Teacher Recruitment and Hiring | 91 |
| Teacher Retention | 91 |
| Charter School Start-Up Grantee Outcomes..... | 92 |
| References | 94 |
| Appendix A: Overview of Evaluation Approach and Data Collection Methods | 95 |
| Analysis of Best or Promising Practices at Campuses Funded Through the Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant..... | 95 |
| Annual Survey of Principals at Campuses Funded through the Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant..... | 95 |
| Annual Site Visits to Campuses Funded through the Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant | 96 |
| Analysis of Best or Promising Practices at High-Performing Charter School Campuses | 97 |
| Statewide Survey of Charter School Principals..... | 97 |
| Identifying High-Performing Campuses from Student Impact | 97 |
| Data Collection | 98 |
| Charter School Site Visits: Charter School Start-up Grantee Campuses and High-performing Campuses | 99 |
| Analysis of Charter School Outcomes to Identify High-Quality Campuses | 99 |
| Analysis of Teacher Characteristics and Retention Patterns | 104 |
| Analysis of Student Characteristics and Mobility Rates..... | 104 |
| Appendix B: Technical Appendix – Impact Analysis Methodology | 106 |
| Estimating Impacts of Charter School Start-up Grantee Campuses on Student Achievement | 106 |
| Methodology for Descriptive Analyses..... | 108 |
| Appendix C: CLASS Observation Protocol..... | 109 |
| Classroom Assessment Scoring System | 109 |
| CLASS Dimensions | 109 |
| How CLASS Data was Used in the Evaluation..... | 111 |
| Appendix D: Principal Survey Instruments | 112 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Charter School Principal Survey | 112 |
| Appendix E: Principal Interview and Teacher Focus Group Protocols | 124 |
| Principal Interview Questions – Start-Up Charter Schools (Fall 2017, 2018, and 2019) | 124 |
| Principal Interview Questions – High Performing Charter Schools (Spring 2018) | 128 |
| Teacher Focus Group Questions – Start-Up Charter Schools | 131 |
| Teacher Focus Group Questions – High-performing charter schools | 133 |
| Appendix F: Impact Analysis Tables | 135 |

List of Figures

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 2.1 Mean CLASS Observation Scores for Public Charter School Start-Up Grantees and High-Performing Charter Schools..... | 23 |
| Figure 2.2 Campus Staff and Morale: Percentage of Principals in Strong Agreement with Statements, by Year of Serving Students..... | 27 |
| Figure 3.1 STAAR-Mathematics Outcomes for Cohort 1 Charter School Start-Up Grantee Elementary Campuses Compared to Matched Traditional Public Schools, 2017–18 and 2018–19..... | 42 |
| Figure 3.2 STAAR-Reading Outcomes for Cohort 1 Charter School Start-Up Grantee Elementary Campuses Compared to Matched Traditional Public Schools, 2017–18 and 2018–19..... | 43 |
| Figure 3.3 STAAR-Mathematics Outcomes for Cohort 2 Charter School Start-Up Grantee Elementary Campuses Compared to Matched Traditional Public Schools, 2017–18 and 2018–19..... | 45 |
| Figure 3.4 STAAR-Reading Outcomes for Cohort 2 Charter School Start-Up Grantee Elementary Campuses Compared to Matched Traditional Public Schools, 2017–18 and 2018–19..... | 46 |
| Figure 3.5 STAAR-Mathematics and Reading Outcomes for Cohort 3 Charter School Start-Up Grantee Elementary Campuses Compared to Matched Traditional Public Schools, 2018–19..... | 47 |
| Figure 3.6 STAAR-Mathematics Outcomes for Cohort 1 Charter School Start-Up Grantee Middle School Campuses Compared to Matched Traditional Public Schools, 2017–18 and 2018–19..... | 51 |
| Figure 3.7 STAAR-Reading Outcomes for Cohort 1 Charter School Start-Up Grantee Middle School Campuses Compared to Matched Traditional Public Schools, 2017–18 and 2018–19..... | 52 |
| Figure 3.8 STAAR-Mathematics Outcomes for Cohort 2 Charter School Start-Up Grantee Middle School Campuses Compared to Matched Traditional Public Schools, 2017–18 and 2018–19..... | 53 |
| Figure 3.9 STAAR-Reading Outcomes for Cohort 2 Charter School Start-Up Grantee Middle School Campuses Compared to Matched Traditional Public Schools, 2017–18 and 2018–19..... | 54 |
| Figure 3.10 STAAR-Mathematics and Reading Outcomes for Cohort 3 Charter School Start-Up Grantee Middle School Campuses Compared to Matched Traditional Public Schools, 2018–19..... | 56 |
| Figure 3.11 Algebra I EOC Exam Outcomes for Cohort 1,2, and 3 Charter School Start-Up Grantee High School Campuses Compared to Matched Traditional Public Schools, 2017–18 and 2018–2019..... | 57 |
| Figure 3.12 English I EOC Exam Outcomes for Cohort 1, 2, and 3 Charter School Start-Up Grantee High School Campuses Compared to Matched Traditional Public Schools, 2017–18 and 2018–19..... | 58 |
| Figure 3.13 School Readiness of Kindergarteners for Charter School Start-Up Grantee Elementary Campuses Compared to Matched Traditional Public Schools, 2017–18 and 2018–19..... | 59 |
| Figure 3.14 Early Reading Indicators for Charter School Start-Up Grantee Elementary Campuses Compared to Matched Traditional Public Schools, 2017–18 and 2018–19..... | 60 |
| Figure 5.1 Comparison of Mobility Patterns between 2017–18 and 2018–19 for Teachers at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses and Comparable Traditional Public School Campuses who Left their 2017–18 Campus..... | 82 |
| Figure 5.2 Comparison of Mobility Patterns between 2018–19 and 2019–20 for Teachers at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses and Comparable Traditional Public School Campuses who Departed their 2018–19 Campus..... | 83 |

List of Tables

| | |
|---|----|
| Table 1.1 Profile of Texas Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grantee Campuses, Cohorts 1–4..... | 2 |
| Table 2.1 School Start-Up Planning Processes: Percentage of Principals Mentioning Item as Important, According to Principal Interviews, by Year of Serving Students | 8 |
| Table 2.2 Most Time Spent on Activities or New Systems: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First- or Second-Most Time Spent, by Year of Serving Students | 10 |
| Table 2.3 Supports Provided to Charter Schools by Charter Management Organizations/Districts: Percentage of Principals Mentioning Item in Interviews, by Year of Serving Students | 11 |
| Table 2.4 Supports Provided to Charter Schools by the Texas Education Agency: Percentage of Principals Mentioning Item in Interviews, by Year of Serving Students | 13 |
| Table 2.5 Challenges in Starting Charter School: Percentage of Principals Mentioning Item in Interviews, by Year of Serving Students | 14 |
| Table 2.6 Most Important School Organizational Practices Related to Executing their Campus’s Mission: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Important, by Year of Serving Students..... | 15 |
| Table 2.7 Effective Methods for Getting Parents Involved in Their Children’s Education: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Impactful, by Year of Serving Students | 17 |
| Table 2.8 Most Frequently Observed Instructional Practices: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Frequently Observed, by Year of Serving Students | 18 |
| Table 2.9 Most Impactful Instructional Practices Observed: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Frequently Observed, by Year of Serving Students | 19 |
| Table 2.10 Most Impactful Teacher Supports for Improving Instructional Practices: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Impactful, by Year of Serving Students | 20 |
| Table 2.11 Most Impactful Approaches in Closing the Achievement Gaps for Educationally Disadvantaged Students: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Impactful, by Year of Serving Students..... | 25 |
| Table 2.12 Most Impactful Instructional Practices in Closing the Achievement Gap for Low-Performing: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Impactful, by Year of Serving Students..... | 26 |
| Table 2.13 Most Important Indicators of Positive School Climate: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Important, by Year of Serving Students..... | 28 |
| Table 2.14 Principal Interviews: Principals’ Perceptions of Teaching Conditions at Their Own Campuses, by Year of Serving Students | 29 |
| Table 2.15 Teacher Focus Groups: Teachers’ Perceptions of Teaching Conditions, by Year of Serving Students..... | 30 |
| Table 2.16 Most Impactful Approaches in Maintaining Positive Student-to-Teacher and Student-to-Student Interactions: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Impactful, by Year of Serving Students..... | 32 |
| Table 3.1 Average STAAR-Mathematics and STAAR-Reading Scores for Cohort 1, 2, and 3 Elementary School Students, 2017–18 and 2018–19 | 40 |
| Table 4.1 Effective Recruitment Methods for Attracting Students to Enroll: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Effective, by Year of Serving Students | 64 |
| Table 4.2 Most Effective Approaches for Retaining Students: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Important, by Year of Serving Students | 67 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Table 4.3 Role in Student Retention: Percent of Teacher Focus Groups Noting Item as Important, by Year of Serving Students..... | 69 |
| Table 4.4 Comparison of Student Characteristics at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses and Traditional Public Charter School Campuses in Feeder Districts, 2017–18 and 2018–19 | 70 |
| Table 4.5 Characteristics of Students Enrolled in 2017–18 at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses and Traditional Public Charter School Campuses in Feeder Districts Who Did Not Enroll in the Same Campus in 2018–19 | 72 |
| Table 4.6 Characteristics of Students Enrolled in 2018–19 at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses and Traditional Public Charter School Campuses in Feeder Districts Who Did Not Enroll in the Same Campus in 2019-20..... | 73 |
| Table 5.1 Effective Methods for Attracting High-Quality Teachers: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Effective, by Year of Serving Students | 76 |
| <i>Table 5.2 Most Important Criteria when Hiring New Teachers: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Important, by Year of Serving Students.....</i> | <i>77</i> |
| Table 5.3 Effective Approaches for Retaining High-Quality Teachers: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Important, by Year of Serving Students | 78 |
| Table 5.4 Most Heavily Weighted Criteria when Deciding Whether to Continue a Teacher’s Employment: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Important, by Year of Serving Students.... | 79 |
| Table 5.5 Characteristics of Teachers at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses Compared to Teachers Working at Feeder Districts | 80 |

List of Acronyms Used in this Report

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)
Charter Management Organization (CMO)
U.S. Department of Education (ED)
English Learner (EL)
End-of-Course (EOC)
Ordinary Least Square (OLS)
Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
Professional Development (PD)
Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS)
Professional Learning Community (PLC)
Propensity Score Matching (PSM)
Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)
Quasi-Experimental Design (QED)
State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC)
Special Education (SPED)
State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)
Texas Education Agency (TEA)
Texas Education Code (TEC)
Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment (TELPAS)

Executive Summary

Background

In 2016, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) awarded a five-year Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant to the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The grant is intended to increase national understanding of the charter school model by providing financial assistance for the planning, program design, and initial implementation of charter schools and by expanding the number of high-quality charter schools available to students. The grant program is also intended to increase understanding of the charter school model by evaluating the effects of such schools on student outcomes, staff, and parents. The federal grant guidelines allow a maximum of 18 months for the planning and program design of each charter school and 24 months for the initial implementation of each charter school. In line with these requirements, TEA awarded sub-grants to 50 charter schools, which began serving students during the evaluation period. The first cohort included in the evaluation consisted of nine campuses which received funding from 2016 to 2018, the second cohort consisted of 17 campuses which received funding from 2017 to 2019, the third cohort consisted of 11 campuses which received funding from 2018 to 2020, and the fourth cohort consisted of 13 campuses which received funding from 2019 to 2021.

Program Evaluation

In May 2017, TEA contracted with Safal Partners and their research partners Mathematica and Gibson Consulting Group to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Texas Charter School Program Start-Up Grant. Broadly, the purpose of the evaluation is to identify promising practices exhibited by charter school start-up grantees and established high-performing charter schools across the state, examine student and teacher recruitment and retention strategies within the start-up grantee campuses, and assess the efficacy and impact on students of their enrollment in start-up grantee campuses.¹

To address the research questions related to promising organizational and instructional practices, student recruitment and retention approaches, and teacher recruitment and retention, the evaluation team relied upon annual principal surveys, principal interviews, teacher focus groups, and classroom observations conducted during the 2017–18, 2018–19, and 2019–20 school years. For the student recruitment and retention and teacher recruitment and retention analyses, the evaluation team also analyzed extant data provided by TEA to better understand student and teacher characteristics and mobility patterns. TEA provided student-level, teacher-level, and school-level data, which was used to analyze the relationship between student enrollment at campuses funded through the Texas Public Charter School Start-Up Grant and academic outcomes for students. The promising practices analyses included in this report include campuses from all four cohorts of Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant campuses, and the student outcomes analyses presented in this report include start-up grantee campuses from the first three cohorts.²

¹ Statistical models were used to assess the performance of a sample of 100 high-quality campuses based on standardized test scores (i.e., State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Reading, STAAR-Mathematics for Grades 3–8, and end-of-course (EOC) exam scores for Grades 9–12). Campuses ranked in the top half of the 100 high-quality charter school campuses were categorized as high-performing for the purposes of this evaluation. See Appendix A for additional detail on high-performing schools for the purpose of this evaluation.

² Cohort 4 began serving students in 2019–20 and student outcomes data were not yet available.

Promising Practices from Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses

School Start-Up Planning

Principals at new charter school campuses funded through the Public Charter School Start-Up Grant shared their perspectives on practices that contributed to successfully getting their schools up and running. As campuses moved from their first to their third year of serving students, what principals believed to be the most important, effective, or impactful practices evolved in ways that reflected the maturity of the charter school.

- Principals at charter school start-up grantee campuses shared that determining specific school needs and practices and developing processes related to hiring, onboarding, and training new staff were among the most important tasks when getting a school up and running.
 - School leaders at schools in their first year of operations were more inclined to discuss stakeholder communications as a key start-up activity, while principals at campuses in their second and third years were more inclined to elaborate on the importance of hiring and getting staff and teachers up to speed.
 - As charter school campuses matured from their first to third year, principals tended to focus more intensely on improving the quality of instructional practices through the development of effective support systems for teachers.
- According to principals in both open-enrollment and in-district charter start-up grantee campuses, their respective charter management organization (CMOs) or their school districts served in a mentor role for principals, providing support and feedback.³
 - As campuses matured from their first to their third years of serving students, campus principals were more inclined to rate operational support from CMOs and districts as important to their development as a new charter school. This operational support included purchasing supplies and materials and offering curricular support, transportation, and food services for the campuses.
- School leaders reported several challenges related to starting up a new school, including the process of recruiting and enrolling students, staffing their schools, financial issues, securing adequate facilities and supplies, and difficulties with communicating school goals to stakeholders (e.g., parents and students).
 - Principals at campuses in their second and third year of operations were more inclined to discuss the challenges associated with attracting talented educators, especially when enrollment counts were fluctuating.

³In this report the terms open-enrollment charters and in-district charters are used. The term open-enrollment charter school is used to refer to both state authorized charter schools that operate as independent local education agencies (LEAs) with a charter holder governing board (see Texas Education Code (TEC), Chapter 12, Subchapter D), and college, university or junior college charter schools (see TEC, Chapter 12, Subchapter E). These two types of charter schools can enroll students from any school districts in their approved geographic boundaries. The term in-district charter is used to refer to charter school campuses authorized by the governing body of an independent school district (ISD) (see TEC Chapter 12, Subchapter C).

Organizational Practices

The evaluation explored a number of factors key to organization and management in charter school start-up grantee campuses. These included important practices related to the charter school campus mission and parent involvement with the school and in their child's education. Key findings include the following:

- All charter start-up grantee campuses ranked the following as one of the five most important practices related to executing the campus's mission: using student data to inform instruction, hiring exemplary teachers to support other teachers, maximizing instructional time, and using classroom observations to regularly monitor instructional quality.
 - Concentrating on maximizing instructional time rose in importance as charter schools matured from their first to third year of operation.
- During interviews, principals at charter school start-up grantee campuses stressed the importance of effective and consistent communications with teachers, students, and parents as an important organizational practice.
- Regular individualized teacher-parent communications and the use of a system for parents to monitor student attendance, grades, and progress emerged as the two most commonly noted approaches for principals at charter school start-up grantee campuses to get parents involved in their child's education.
 - Regular individualized communications between teachers and parents was rated as the most effective communication method to engage parents by principals at first-year and second-year charter schools, while parent-teacher conferences was rated as the most effective method for getting parents involved in their child's education by principals at campuses in their third year of operation.

Instructional Practices

Providing support for teachers is critical for charter campuses to continually improve the quality of instruction at their campuses. Key findings related to instructional practices are as follows:

- Regardless of whether a campus was in their first, second or third year of operations, establishing positive relationships between students and teachers, maximizing learning time, and using formative assessment data to guide instruction were all rated by principals as one of the top five most frequently observed and most impactful instructional practices.
- Charter school start-up grantee principals also found the use of hands-on activities in class with a variety of different modalities to be an impactful practice.
- Charter school start-up grantee principals felt that reviewing student performance data with teachers was the most impactful teacher support for improving instruction.
 - As campuses matured from the first to the third year of operation, providing feedback to teachers based on formally scheduled observations was more likely to be rated as one of the most impactful teacher supports.

- Teachers at start-up grantee campuses in their second and third years of operation were more likely to note the frequency and importance of communications and collaboration with other teachers, as well as the use of instructional rounds where they visit the classrooms of other teachers, as important supports.
- Classrooms were observed using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), which measures effective teacher-student interactions in Pre-K – 12th grade. For three of the four CLASS observational domains (Emotional Support, Instructional Support, and Student Engagement), average CLASS scores were lower in the second year of serving students before rising back to year one levels in their third year of operation.
 - CLASS observation scores for the Classroom Organization domain demonstrated higher average scores as start-up grantee campuses moved from their first to second to third year of serving students.
- When compared to CLASS results at high-performing charter school campuses in Texas, Public Charter School Start-Up Grant recipients received higher CLASS observation scores for the Emotional Support and Student Engagement domains than high-performing charter schools, but lower Instructional Support domain scores.
 - Average Classroom Organization scores for charter school start-up grantee campuses showed continual improvement. They were lower than high-performing charter schools in their first year of operations, comparable in their second year of operations, and higher in their third year.
- Principals felt that a variety of in-class interventions (e.g., small groups, differentiated and individualized instruction), along with strong teacher-student connections and out-of-class in-school interventions (e.g., tutoring labs and targeted pull-out instruction by interventionists), were the most effective approaches to closing the achievement gap for educationally disadvantaged students at risk of dropping out of school.
- Small group instruction in class was rated by principals as the most effective method for closing the achievement gap for persistently low-performing students.
 - As charter start-up grantee campuses matured from the first to the third year of operations, the proportion of principals rating small group instruction as the first or second most impactful approach grew substantially.

School Climate and Staff Morale

In fast-paced charter school environments, keeping campus climate and staff morale positive can be challenging. There are a large number of factors that contribute to high staff morale and the development of a positive campus environment. The evaluation team examined the climate, staff morale, and teaching conditions at charter school start-up grantee campuses and examined differences in results as campuses matured from the first to the third year of operations.

- Across most of the campus climate measures, there was a marked spike in agreement among school leaders between the first and second year of operations, followed by a drop in their third year of serving students. Campus climate measures that followed this pattern include teachers

trusting each other, teachers trusting their principal, a culture of professionalism, value placed on teamwork and collaboration, and staff morale level.

- Whether a campus was in its first, second, or third year of serving students, principals rated teamwork and collaboration highest in terms of agreement.
- Principals felt that demonstration of genuine care for students and academic growth were the two most important factors associated with creating a positive school climate.
- While principals and teachers in all years of operation tended to be in general agreement about there being a positive climate at their campuses, teachers at campuses in their third year of operations were more inclined to express that the climate was poor or negative compared to teachers at campuses in their first or second years of serving students.
- Regardless of their year of operation, the majority of principals felt that working conditions at their start-up grantee campuses were positive. A larger proportion of principals at campuses in their third year of serving students recognized challenges related to heavy workloads, high expectations, and stress on teachers compared to principals at campuses in their first or second years of operation.
 - Smaller percentages of teachers described the working conditions as positive as schools moved from the first to the third year of operation.
 - Increasing percentages of teachers characterized working conditions as challenging due to unrealistic workloads, high expectations, and lack of teacher supports, which resulted in high stress levels for teachers.
- Regardless of whether the charter school start-up grantee campus was in its first, second, or third year of serving students, principals rated developing strong teacher-student relationships, establishing clear behavioral expectations, and engaging students in the classroom as the most impactful approaches to maintaining a positive classroom environment.
- Teachers and principals stressed the development of relationships with students, consistency in behavioral expectations, restorative discipline practices, parent communications, and positive reinforcement as effective practices for reducing student behavioral issues.

Impact of Student Enrollment at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses

This part of the evaluation estimated the effects of enrollment in charter school start-up grantee campuses on State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)-Reading, STAAR-Mathematics, Algebra I end-of-course (EOC), and English I EOC exams. To facilitate comparisons across schools, test scores were standardized across each subject, grade, and year using information from the entire Texas student population. Results presented in these standardized units can be described, relative to the standard deviation of the overall test score distribution, as standard deviation units. Students who attended charter school start-up grantee campuses during the 2017–18 and 2018–19 school years were matched with students at traditional public school campuses in order to identify a group of students enrolled in traditional public school campuses who shared similar prior test scores and other student and school characteristics. Statistical models that controlled for differences in student characteristics

and prior academic achievement were used to estimate the effect of enrollment at a charter school start-up grantee campus on student academic outcomes.

The evaluation looked at outcomes for students enrolled in Cohort 1, Cohort 2, and Cohort 3 charter school start-up grantee campuses. No consistent positive or negative impact was found as a result of attending grantee charter schools.

- At the elementary school level, there were individual charter school start-up grantee campuses in Cohort 2 and 3 that showed statistically significant differences, some positive and some negative, in STAAR-Mathematics and STAAR-Reading test results when compared to matched students enrolled in traditional public schools after controlling for student differences.
- At the middle school level, there were individual charter school start-up grantee campuses in all three cohorts that showed statistically significant differences, some positive and some negative.
- For Algebra I and English I EOC exams for students enrolled in high school grantee campuses, after controlling for differences in student and school characteristics, the overall average effect for the English I EOC exam across the two Cohort 2 high school campuses was significantly positive in 2017–18.
- When comparing the overall STAAR-Mathematics and STAAR-Reading test results for charter school start-up grantee campuses to the results for those campuses for different student groups, for each student group and grade range the average results for each student group across all campuses in that grade range are not statistically different from the average results for all students in that grade range. The consistency of results across student groups indicates that the overall results are not driven by the performance of any particular student group.

Student Recruitment and Retention Practices at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses

The analyses of start-up grantee campus principal survey data, principal interview data, and teacher focus group data from 2017–18, 2018–19, and 2019–20 were used to describe the approaches used by start-up grantee campuses to attract, recruit, admit, enroll, serve, and retain students. The evaluation team also analyzed extant data to create tables related to the characteristics of students enrolled at start-up grantee campuses, as well as enrollment and attrition patterns for students. Principals at campuses funded through the Charter School Program Start-Up Grant were asked in annual surveys to rank the most effective recruitment methods for attracting students to enroll at their charter school. Key findings are as follows:

- Word-of-mouth advertising from parents of students currently enrolled at the school was ranked by principals as the most effective methods for recruiting students to their new charter school campus.
 - While this was rated as the most effective recruitment method by all principals, it was rated as one of the two most effective methods of student recruitment more commonly by school leaders in the second and third years of operation.

- The use of social media to advertise the new charter school was more prominent at schools in their first and second years of operation, while open houses to share information about the campuses were ranked as more effective by principals at campuses in their third year of serving students.
- When asked about their target population for student recruitment, principals most commonly indicated they were either open-enrollment with no specific target populations or that their target populations were based on a geographic boundary.
 - For principals who did mention specific student populations for recruitment, the most commonly noted student groups were economically disadvantaged students, students interested in a particular field or career path (e.g., science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) academy), and students who were struggling in traditional public school environments.
- For principals at start-up grantee campuses in their second or third year of serving students, the building of meaningful relationships between teachers and students, the establishment of a safe and collaborative environment, the academic growth of students, the delivery of student-centered instruction, and effective communications between teachers and parents were ranked as the five most effective approaches for retaining students from one year to the next.
- Teachers at charter school start-up grantee campuses also discussed how they play a role in student retention by establishing positive relationships with parents and students, and by delivering high-quality instruction. Student happiness, a sense of belonging, and the availability of extracurricular activities were also cited by teachers as important drivers for student retention.
- The vast majority of students enrolled at charter school start-up grantee campuses in 2017–18 (91%) or 2018–19 (92%) remained in that campus the entire school year.
 - Of those who transferred during either school year, approximately 63% went to traditional public schools while 17% of those who transferred enrolled at a different charter school campus.
- The majority (78%) of students enrolled at charter school start-up grantee campuses in 2017–18 or 2018–19 also returned to that campus for the next school year.
 - Of those that transferred, 55% left for a traditional public school and 28% attended a different charter school during the next school year.
 - Students who left a start-up grantee campus during the summer of 2018 were more likely to be white and African American and less likely to be Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, or an English language learner when compared to students who continued in that school in 2019–20.

Teacher Recruitment and Retention Practices at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses

The evaluation team also analyzed principal survey data, principal interview data, and CSP teacher focus group data from 2017–18, 2018–19, and 2019–20 to describe the methods by which start-up grantee campuses attract, recruit, and retain highly-qualified instructors. Recruiting and retaining high-quality educators is important when developing a new charter school campus or expanding an existing campus, as it is critical to support enrollment increases or an expansion of the grades served. With this in mind, the evaluation examined a variety of issues related to recruiting and retaining high-quality educators at charter school start-up grantee campuses, including: 1) methods for attracting high-quality educators; 2) criteria for hiring teachers; 3) methods for retaining high-quality teachers; and 4) measures used to decide on whether or not to retain teachers.

- While principals shared a wide array of effective teacher recruitment methods, they consistently rated word-of-mouth advertising about the school and current teachers recruiting colleagues as the most effective teacher recruitment strategies.
 - The use of social media to recruit teachers was more prominent among first-year campuses, and the use of current teachers to recruit colleagues became more prominent as campuses matured from the first to the third year of operation.
- Passion for teaching, teacher fit with the mission of the campuses, and strong demonstrated pedagogical skills were rated by principals as the three most important considerations when hiring new teachers.
 - As campuses matured from the first to the third year of serving students, the need for teachers with strong demonstrated pedagogical skills rose in importance as a hiring criterion.
- Principals at charter school start-up grantee campuses in their first and second years of serving students rated regular feedback to teachers regarding instructional practices and dedicated planning time as the two most effective approaches to retaining high-quality teachers.
 - For principals at third-year charter schools, dedicated planning time was the top-ranked teacher retention approach, followed by incentive pay based on student and/or school performance metrics.
- When it came to teacher retention, principals and teachers alike emphasized identification with the school culture as an important consideration for teachers when they are deciding whether to return to teach at a campus for another year.
- Regardless of the maturity of the charter start-up grantee campus, principals shared that instructional effectiveness (i.e., teaching methods) is by far the most important consideration when deciding whether to retain a teacher, followed by the academic performance of students in a teacher’s classroom, student engagement in class, and the teacher’s cultural fit with the campus.

- The two-year teacher retention rate at charter school start-up grantee campuses was 16 percentage points lower than it was for teachers working at comparable traditional public school campuses (57% vs. 73%).
- Teachers at start-up grantee campuses who left their 2017–18 and 2018–19 teaching positions were approximately twice as likely to transition to a different role at their campus when compared to teachers who left their teaching position at traditional public school campuses.
- Teachers at start-up grantee campuses are typically younger, have fewer years of teaching experience, are more likely to be first-year teachers, and have less tenure at their school than their counterparts at traditional public school campuses.

Best or Promising Practices from High-Performing Charter School Campuses

The study investigated promising practices in place at high-performing charter school campuses. The evaluation relied primarily on survey data collected from charter school principals statewide in spring 2018 and data collected through interviews with school principals, focus groups with teachers, and classroom observations. The study then utilized the data from high-performing charter school campuses compared to other established charter school campuses not identified as high-performing to assess differences in practices between these two groups of schools.

Differentiating characteristics of high-performing charter schools were identified as potential best or promising practices that could be emulated by other charter school campuses across the state. These survey findings were further supplemented with interview data collected from school leaders and teachers at high-performing charter schools. The results are organized by organizational practices, instructional practices, and practices that contribute to the establishment of a positive school climate. A detailed description of the analysis and its findings were originally presented in the [Texas Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant Evaluation Report: 2016–17 and 2017–18](#), and are presented again in this report.

Chapter 1 — Introduction and Background

Overview of the Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant

In 2016, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) was awarded a five-year Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant from the U.S. Department of Education (ED).⁴ ED's goals of this grant are to increase national understanding of the charter school model by:

- Providing financial assistance for the planning, program design, and initial implementation of charter schools;
- Evaluating the effects of such schools, including the effects on students, student achievement, staff, and parents; and
- Expanding the number of high-quality charter schools available to students.

Under the terms of the federal grant, TEA received funding for approximately 10 to 15 new charter school campuses annually.⁵ Grant awards were issued by TEA to local education agencies and included 50 charter school campuses across four different cohorts of charter school start-up grantees.⁶ This includes nine Cohort 1 campuses (with three years of serving students), 17 campuses from Cohort 2 (with three years of serving students), 11 campuses from Cohort 3 (with two years of serving students), and 13 campuses from Cohort 4 (with one year of serving students).

Table 1.1 provides a list of campuses from Cohorts 1–4 funded through the Texas Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant, the grades that each campus serves, and whether they are an open-enrollment charter school campus or an in-district charter school campus. For additional information regarding the various types of charter school, see Texas Education Code (TEC) Chapter 12.⁷

⁴ The federal grant guidelines allow for start-up funding not to exceed 18 months for planning and program design of the charter school and 24 months for the initial implementation of the charter school. In line with these requirements, the Texas Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant, funded from the larger federal grant, allows four to five months for the planning period (or 16 to 17 months if the charter school postponed opening after receiving the grant) and 22 to 23 months for initial implementation (or 10 to 11 months if the charter school had postponed opening).

⁵ As of the 2019–20 school year, there were a total of 775 open-enrollment charter school campuses authorized by the State Board of Education (SBOE) or the Commissioner of Education and 102 campus charter schools authorized by independent school districts in operation in the state. This count of open-enrollment charter school campuses does not include campuses that are active but did not enroll students in the 2019–20 school year ($n = 5$) or open-enrollment charter schools campuses that are authorized by Texas Education Code Section 29.259 or Texas Human Resources Code Section 221.0071 ($n = 7$).

⁶ One charter school campus, Promesa Public School, Inc. — San Antonio, was not open for the 2019–20 school year and was not included in this evaluation of the Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant Program.

⁷ In this report the terms open-enrollment charters and in-district charters are used. The term open-enrollment charter school is used to refer to both state authorized charter schools that operate as independent local education agencies (LEAs) with a charter holder governing board (see Texas Education Code (TEC), Chapter 12, Subchapter D), and college, university or junior college charter schools (see TEC, Chapter 12, Subchapter E). These two types of charter schools can enroll students from any school districts in their approved geographic boundaries. The term in-district charter is used to refer to charter school campuses authorized by the governing body of an independent school district (ISD) (see TEC Chapter 12, Subchapter C).

Table 1.1 Profile of Texas Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grantee Campuses, Cohorts 1–4

| Grantee Organization | Charter Campus Name | Cohort | Type of Charter School Campus | Grades Served |
|---|--|---------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| A+ Unlimited Potential | A+ Unlimited Potential | 1 | Open-enrollment | 6–8 |
| Harmony Public Schools - Harmony School of Science – Houston | Harmony School of Innovation – Katy | 1 | Open-enrollment | K–12 |
| Harmony Public Schools - Harmony Science Academy (El Paso) | Harmony School of Excellence (El Paso) | 1 | Open-enrollment | K–6 |
| Kauffman Leadership Academy | Kauffman Leadership Academy | 1 | Open-enrollment | 6–10 |
| Meadow Oaks Education Foundation | Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy | 1 | Open-enrollment | 6–10 |
| Riverwalk Education Foundation - School of Science and Technology | School of Science and Technology - Houston | 1 | Open-enrollment | K–6 |
| Riverwalk Education Foundation - School of Science and Technology Discovery | School of Science and Technology - Advancement | 1 | Open-enrollment | K–8 |
| Portico Education Foundation | Trivium Academy | 1 | Open-enrollment | K–6 |
| The Hughen Center Inc. - Bob Hope School | Bob Hope Elementary | 2 | Open-enrollment | PK–5 |
| Compass Rose Academy | Compass Rose Academy | 2 | Open-enrollment | 6–12 |
| Harmony Public Schools - Harmony School of Excellence | Harmony School of Enrichment - Houston | 2 | Open-enrollment | K–5 |
| Harmony Public Schools - Harmony School of Science (Houston) | Harmony School of Excellence - Sugar Land | 2 | Open-enrollment | 6–8 |
| Harmony Public Schools - Harmony Science Academy (Austin) | Harmony Science Academy - Cedar Park | 2 | Open-enrollment | PK–4 |
| Harmony Public Schools - Harmony Science Academy (San Antonio) | Harmony School of Innovation - Brownsville | 2 | Open-enrollment | 6–12 |
| Harmony Public Schools - Harmony Science Academy (San Antonio) | Harmony School of Excellence – Laredo | 2 | Open-enrollment | 9–12 |
| Harmony Public Schools - Harmony Science Academy (Waco) | Harmony School of Innovation - Grand Prairie | 2 | Open-enrollment | PK–6 |
| Harmony Public Schools - Harmony Science Academy (Waco) | Harmony School of Innovation – Waco | 2 | Open-enrollment | 7–12 |
| Longview ISD | East Texas Montessori Prep Academy | 2 | In-District | PK–K |
| Longview ISD | Bramlette STEAM Academy & Judson STEAM Academy (092303044) | 2 | In-District | 1–8 |
| Sam Houston State University | Sam Houston State University Charter School | 2 | Open-enrollment | K–2 |
| San Antonio ISD | CAST Tech HS | 2 | In-District | 9–10 |
| San Antonio ISD | Advanced Learning Academy | 2 | In-District | PK–11 |
| San Antonio ISD | Lamar Elementary | 2 | In-District | EE–6 |
| San Antonio ISD | Mark Twain Dual Language Academy | 2 | In-District | PK–2 |

Source. Texas Education Agency, 2017, 2018, and 2019.

Continues

Table 1.1 Profile of Texas Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grantee Campuses, Cohorts 1–4, cont.

| Grantee Organization | Charter Campus Name | Cohort | Type of Charter School Campus | Grades Served |
|---|--|---------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| San Antonio ISD | Ogden Elementary | 2 | In-District | EE–6 |
| Wilco Montessori Partners Inc. | Goodwater Montessori School | 2 | Open-enrollment | PK–8 |
| Bridgeway Preparatory Academy Charter | Bridgeway Preparatory Academy | 3 | Open-enrollment | PK–2 |
| Etoile Academy Charter School | Etoile Academy Charter School | 3 | Open-enrollment | 5–8 |
| Legacy Collegiate Middle and High School for Careers in Health and Wellness | Legacy School of Sport Sciences | 3 | Open-enrollment | 6–11 |
| Lone Star Language Academy | Lone Star Language Academy | 3 | Open-enrollment | K–5 |
| Promesa Public Schools | Promesa College Prep West Corpus Christi | 3 | Open-enrollment | PK–5 |
| San Antonio ISD | P.F. Stewart Elementary School | 3 | In-District | PK–5 |
| San Antonio ISD | Steele Montessori Academy | 3 | In-District | EE–2 |
| San Antonio ISD | Washington Irving Dual Language Academy | 3 | In-District | PK–2 |
| The Hughen Center, Inc. | Bob Hope School – Beaumont | 3 | Open-enrollment | PK–2 |
| Valor Public Schools | Valor Public Schools | 3 | Open-enrollment | K–8 |
| Yellowstone Education Foundation | Yellowstone College Preparatory | 3 | Open-enrollment | 5–8 |
| Fort Worth ISD | John T. White Elementary School | 4 | In-District | EE–5 |
| Marshall ISD | Marshall Early Graduation School | 4 | In-District | 6–12 |
| Midland ISD | Young Women’s Leadership Academy | 4 | In-District | 6–7 |
| San Antonio ISD | Charles C. Ball Academy | 4 | In-District | EE–8 |
| San Antonio ISD | Carroll ECEC | 4 | In-District | EE–2 |
| San Antonio ISD | Fenwick Academy | 4 | In-District | EE–8 |
| San Antonio ISD | Jefferson High School | 4 | In-District | 9–12 |
| San Antonio ISD | Woodlawn Academy | 4 | In-District | EE–8 |
| Bloom Academy Inc. | Bloom Academy Charter School | 4 | Open-enrollment | K–5 |
| Wire Hollow Education Innovation | Elementary School for Education Innovation | 4 | Open-enrollment | K–5 |
| Harmony Public Schools – Harmony School of Excellence | Harmony Science Academy – Cypress | 4 | Open-enrollment | K–5 |
| Promesa Public Schools, Inc. – Promesa Public Schools | Promesa College Prep – Brownsville | 4 | Open-enrollment | PK–4 |
| Rêve Preparatory Inc. | Rêve Preparatory Charter School | 4 | Open-enrollment | K–8 |

Source. Texas Education Agency, 2017, 2018, and 2019.

Purpose of the Report

The broad purpose of this evaluation is to:

- Identify promising practices exhibited by grantees and successful charter schools within the state;
- Examine the effectiveness and impact of the Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant; and
- Examine student and teacher recruitment strategies within start-up grantee campuses.

To accomplish these broad research goals, this report addresses the following five research objectives:

- Identify best or promising practices within Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant recipients;
- Examine the impact of the Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant;
- Explore the manner in which Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant recipients attract, recruit, admit, enroll, serve, and retain students;
- Explore the manner in which Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant recipients attract, recruit, and retain highly-qualified instructors; and
- Identify best or promising practices in high-quality charter schools within the state.

TEA contracted with Safal Partners and its research associates, Mathematica Policy Research and Gibson Consulting Group, to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Texas Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant. This evaluation report documents the practices of these new charter school campuses over the 2017–18, 2018–19, and 2019–20 school years.⁸

Data and Methods

This evaluation relied on a variety of data and methods to address the five evaluation research objectives.⁹ TEA provided student-level, teacher-level, and school-level data, including student achievement on State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) exams, State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) data related to teacher certifications, and demographic data, grade-level retention data, and attendance data from the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS).¹⁰ This data was then used to analyze the relationship between student enrollment at campuses funded through the Texas Public Charter School Start-Up Grant and academic outcomes for students.

To complement this statistical analysis of student outcomes, primary data were collected through annual principal surveys. Site visits included interviews with school leaders, teacher focus groups, and classroom observations using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Observation Protocol. The team administered a statewide survey of all charter school principals in spring 2018, and annual surveys of charter school start-up grantee campus principals in spring 2019 and spring 2020. On-site data were collected during visits to 10 start-up grantee campuses in fall 2017, 10 high-performing

⁸ The impact analyses does not include the 2019–20 school year because data for this school year was not yet available. In addition, standardized test were not administered in Texas in spring 2020 due to the Covid-19 health crisis.

⁹ Additional detail on the evaluation approach and data collection methods are provided in Appendices A and B.

¹⁰ Teacher-level data related to certification and length of tenure were also collected and analyzed in the evaluation.

charter school campuses in spring 2018, and 20 start-up grantee campuses in both fall 2018 and fall 2019.^{11, 12}

Organization of the Report

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 provides information related to the start-up, organizational, and instructional practices of Public Charter School Start-Up grantee campuses. Chapter 3 provides results from analyses related to the performance of matched students enrolled at charter school start-up grantee campuses relative to students enrolled at traditional public school campuses. Chapter 4 contains information about how Public Charter School Start-Up grantee campuses attract, recruit, enroll, and retain students. Chapter 5 contains information about how Public Charter School Start-Up grantee campuses attract, recruit, and retain high-quality teachers at their campuses. Chapter 6 summarizes information about best or promising practices in place at high-performing charter school campuses versus those of other charter schools, which was reported in the interim report for this evaluation project, *Texas Public Charter School Program Start-Up Evaluation Report: 2016–17 and 2017–18* (Davila et al., 2020). Chapter 7 includes a summary of key findings from this evaluation.

Appendix A includes an overview of the evaluation approach and data collection methods. Appendix B includes technical details related to the charter school start-up grantee impact analyses. Appendix C provides detailed information related to the CLASS observation protocol. Appendix D contains the annual charter school principal survey instrument. Appendix E contains the principal interview and teacher focus group protocols used to collect program information from participants at charter school start-up grantees and high-performing charter schools. Lastly, Appendix F contains statistical output related to the charter school start-up grantee impact analyses.

¹¹ Statistical models were used to assess the performance of a sample of 100 high-quality campuses, based on standardized test scores (i.e., STAAR-Reading, STAAR-Mathematics for Grades 3–8, and end-of-course (EOC) exam scores for grades 9–12). Campuses ranked in the top half of the 100 high-quality charter school campuses were categorized as high-performing for the purposes of this analysis.

¹² Additional details regarding the CLASS observation tool are provided in Appendix C.

Chapter 2 — Practices at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses

This chapter investigates practices at new charter school campuses, funded through the Texas Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant.

Findings in this chapter are generally organized into two areas:

- 1) Planning and getting a new charter school campus off the ground; and
- 2) Operating a new charter school campus and serving students.

Practices related to the following key areas are explored in this chapter:

- Organizational practices (including practices related to getting a new campus up and running);
- Instructional practices (including methods used to close the achievement gap for educationally-disadvantaged and low-performing students);
- Quality of instruction; and
- Practices related to maintaining a positive school climate.

Teacher recruitment and retention practices in place at Public Charter School Program Start-Up grantee campuses are addressed in Chapter 4 of this report and practices related to student recruitment and retention strategies are covered in Chapter 5.

Data and Methods

To explore practices at charter school start-up grantee campuses, the evaluation relied on charter school principal surveys administered in spring 2018, 2019, and 2020, grantee site visits conducted in fall 2017, 2018, and 2019, and administrative data provided by TEA.¹³ During site visits to start-up grantees, data were collected through interviews with school leaders, focus groups with teachers, and classroom observations.¹⁴ Practices in this chapter of the report are based on these principal and teacher perspectives. To facilitate comparisons by grantee maturity, these findings are presented based on the number of years the charter school campus has been serving students rather than by school year:

- Analyses of campuses in their first year of operations include 2017–18 results from Cohorts 1 and 2, 2018–19 results from Cohort 3 campuses, and 2019–20 results from Cohort 4 campuses.
- Analyses of campuses in their second year of operations include 2018–19 results from Cohorts 1 and 2, and 2019–20 results from Cohort 3 campuses.
- Analyses of campuses in their second third year of operations include 2019–20 results from Cohorts 1 and 2, which were in their third year of serving students through the grant.¹⁵

¹³ See Appendix D for the principal survey instrument, and Appendix E for the principal interview and teacher focus group protocols.

¹⁴ Teacher-student observations were scored using the CLASS Observation Protocol and scores for each of the following domains were compiled: Emotional Support; Classroom Organization; Instructional Support; and Student Engagement. At least three classroom observations occurred at each school.

¹⁵ Because only a small portion of the Cohort 1 charter start-up grantee campuses were operational for the full 2016–17 school year, the evaluation operationalized the 2017–18 school year as the first year serving students for Cohorts 1 and 2.

Annual Survey of Principals

Principals of new charter school campuses funded through the Texas Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant were asked to rank the importance, impactfulness, or effectiveness of various items related to organizational practices, school climate, and instructional practices through a survey administered to all principals at start-up grantee campuses. The research team then calculated the percentage of principals at charter school start-up grantee campuses who rated a particular response option as the first or second most important, impactful, or effective approach for a wide array of questions related to key aspects of schools noted above. Through this approach, the study identifies trends and assesses differences between charter schools in their first, second, or third year of serving students through the grant.

Thirty principals (60% of the 50 start-up grantee campuses) completed the survey at their campus during its first year of serving students. Thirty principals, or 81% of the 37 start-up grantee campuses who served students for a second year, completed the survey of practices at their campus during that second year of serving students. Seventeen principals, or 65% of the 26 start-up grantee campuses who served students for three years, completed the survey of practices at their campuses during that third year of serving students.

Qualitative Data Collected through Annual Site Visits

Twenty start-up grantees in their first year of serving students, 20 start-up grantees in their second year of serving students, and 10 start-up grantees in their third year of serving students, participated in site visits.¹⁶ Site visits included interviews with school leaders (typically the school principal), classroom observations, and focus groups with observed teachers. A total of 81 teachers at campuses in their first year of serving students, 69 teachers at campuses in their second year of serving students, and 33 teachers at campuses in their third year of serving students were observed and scored using the CLASS Observation Protocol.¹⁷

Findings

Getting Started: Planning a New Charter School Campus

During fall site visits, the evaluation team engaged principals and teachers at grantee campuses in discussions about organizational practices that have been important to getting their campuses started. The spring surveys taken by principals at grantee campuses also queried them about school start-up activities and where they were spending most of their time and energy. This section covers key planning activities related to the development of these processes and procedures, roles and responsibilities, and the attainment of outside support. This section also includes challenges faced by charter school leaders while trying to get their schools up and running.

Development of Processes and Procedures

Regardless of whether a campus was in its first, second, or third year of serving students through the Charter School Program Start-Up Grant Program, school leaders continued to prioritize the determination of school needs and practices, hiring and training staff, and communications with stakeholders. As Table 2.1 shows, three quarters of school principals at campuses in their first and

¹⁶ This comprised 40% of the 50 grantees in their first year of operation; 54% of the 37 grantees in their second year; and 36% of the 26 grantees in their third year.

¹⁷ See Appendix C for the detailed CLASS Observation Protocol which was used during all classroom observations.

second year of serving students discussed the assessment of school needs and the development of practices, policies, and procedures to address those needs as being essential to start-up operations.

Table 2.1 School Start-Up Planning Processes: Percentage of Principals Mentioning Item as Important, According to Principal Interviews, by Year of Serving Students

| Year 1, Cohorts 1–4 (n=20) | | Year 2, Cohorts 1–3 (n=20) | | Year 3, Cohorts 1 and 2 (n=10) | |
|--|-----|--|-----|--|-----|
| 1. Determining school needs and practices | 75% | 1. Determining school needs and practices | 75% | 1. Determining school needs and practices | 50% |
| 2. Communicating with stakeholders | 30% | 2. Processes related to staff (training, hiring, etc.) | 45% | 2. Processes related to staff (training, hiring, etc.) | 50% |
| 3. Student recruitment | 20% | 3. Increased focus on data | 15% | 3. Student recruitment | 10% |
| 4. Processes related to staff (training, hiring, etc.) | 15% | 4. Working with partners | 15% | 4. Communicating with stakeholders | 10% |
| 5. Working with partners | 5% | 5. Communicating with stakeholders | 10% | 5. Increased focus on data | 10% |

Source. Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campus Principal Interviews, Gibson Consulting Group and Safal Partners, 2017, 2018, and 2019. Note. Year 1 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2017), Cohort 3 (fall 2018), and Cohort 4 principals (fall 2019). Year 2 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2018), and Cohort 3 (fall 2019). Year 3 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2019).

As an example of how school leaders are working to assess school needs, reflect on results, and make continued improvements, a principal in their second year of serving students shared that they “*did a lot of reflection at the end of year one to figure out what was working, what wasn't working — trying to anchor to metrics that we had set around STAAR data, TELPAS data, and the other more rubric-driven data that we'd collected.*”¹⁸ This sentiment was still echoed by 50% of school leaders interviewed during their third year of serving students.

For principals in their first year of serving students, communications with stakeholders emerged as the second most commonly noted practice related to starting a new school. This dropped in prominence as schools moved into their second and third years of operation. One first year principal shared the following perspective:

¹⁸ TELPAS refers to the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System, which assesses the progress that English language learners (ELs) make in learning the English language.

“We had a series of just family sessions, just our families, both current families and potential families to share our learning and get feedback on what [kind of] school they were hoping to create. We then brought plans, as we generated them, to [the families] and tuned them and got feedback on the directions we were going. We talked also with our faculty to get feedback from them so they could have a strong input into the plan. As we wrote the charter document, we brought it to all those different stakeholders, both separately and then together, to get feedback on it. As we generated it, they were tuning in, offering their feedback.”

—Year 1 Principal

While processes related to hiring and training new teachers and staff were commonly mentioned by principals regardless of how long they had been operational, 45% of principals in their second year of serving students and 50% of principals in their third year of serving students noted this practice as an important school start-up activity compared to 15% principals in their first year of serving students. One principal at a school in their third year of operations shared that *“planning the supports for the teachers and the professional development that they need, so that we can support student success, has been critical this year.”*

Intensified Focus on Instructional Practices as Charter School Campuses Mature

Through annual surveys of principals at charter school start-up grantee campuses, school leaders were asked about how they were spending their time. These survey data show that, as charter school campuses matured from the first to the third year of serving students, principals became more focused on making improvements in the quality of instruction and hiring effective educators to teach their students.

For campuses in their first year of serving students under the grant, principals tended to spread their time more evenly across a variety of activities, with 21% to 24% of principals indicating that each of the following areas was their first or second most time-consuming function:

- Developing support systems for high-quality instructional practices (24%);
- Communications with parents (24%);
- Addressing student behavioral issues (24%);
- Ensuring the development of effective lesson plans (21%); and
- Student recruitment (21%).

However, as schools moved into their second and third year of serving students, the majority of principals indicated that developing support systems for high-quality instructional practices was either their first or second most time-consuming function. This was the case for 55% of principals at campuses in their second year of serving students under the grant and 82% of principals at campuses in their third year of serving students.

For principals in their first year of serving students under the grant, hiring high-quality teachers did not emerge as one of the top five most time-consuming functions of principals. However, it did take up the second-most amount of time for principals at campuses in their second or third year of serving students under the grant. Just over one quarter of principals at charter start-up grantee campuses in their second year of serving students and 35% of principals at campuses in their third year of serving students

indicated that hiring educators was their first- or second-most time-consuming activity. (See Table 2.2 for more details.)

It is also important to note that, regardless of the year of charter school operations, ensuring the development of effective lesson plans, addressing student behavioral issues, and recruiting students were among the five most time-intensive activities for principals at charter school start-up grantee campuses.

Table 2.2 Most Time Spent on Activities or New Systems: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First- or Second-Most Time Spent, by Year of Serving Students

| Year 1, Cohorts 1–4 (n=29) | | Year 2, Cohorts 1–3 (n=29) | | Year 3, Cohorts 1 and 2 (n=17) | |
|--|-----|--|-----|--|-----|
| 1. Developing support systems for high-quality instructional practices | 24% | 1. Developing support systems for high-quality instructional practices | 55% | 1. Developing support systems for high-quality instructional practices | 82% |
| 2. Communications with parents | 24% | 2. Hiring high-quality teachers | 28% | 2. Hiring high-quality teachers | 35% |
| 3. Addressing student behavioral issues | 24% | 3. Ensuring the development of effective lesson plans | 24% | 3. Ensuring the development of effective lesson plans | 18% |
| 4. Ensuring the development of effective lesson plans | 21% | 4. Addressing student behavioral issues | 24% | 4. Addressing student behavioral issues | 18% |
| 5. Student recruitment | 21% | 5. Student recruitment | 24% | 5. Student recruitment | 18% |

Source. Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campus Principal Survey, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018, 2019, and 2020. *Note.* Year 1 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (surveyed in fall 2017), Cohort 3 principals (fall 2018), and Cohort 4 principals (fall 2019). Year 2 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2018), and Cohort 3 principals (fall 2019). Year 3 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2019).

Charter Management Organization (CMO) or School District Support

Principals that participated in interviews at start-up grantee campuses reported receiving critical support from a CMO and/or school district while planning and growing their new charter school campus. Regardless of whether their campus was in its first, second, or third year of serving students under the grant, school leaders most commonly noted that CMOs and district offices served in a mentor role (e.g., providing support and feedback) and provided operational assistance. (See Table 2.3 for more details.) A principal in their first year of operation described some of the critical mentoring support that they received:

“We often confer with professors that are on our board of trustees. We look to them for assistance when we have curriculum questions. We have also brought in a Licensed Specialist in School Psychology (LSSP) from that department to help us with the capital behavior issues that we were having, so it's very nice. We don't have to search out for an expert, we have experts that are readily available when we need them, and that's the main goal and purpose of how the [CMO] staff supports us.”

–Year 1 Principal

Table 2.3 Supports Provided to Charter Schools by Charter Management Organizations/Districts: Percentage of Principals Mentioning Item in Interviews, by Year of Serving Students

| Year 1, Cohorts 1–4 (n=20) | | Year 2, Cohorts 1–3 (n=20) | | Year 3, Cohorts 1 and 2 (n=10) | |
|--|-----|--|-----|--|-----|
| 1. Serving in a mentor role — providing support and feedback | 40% | 1. Operational assistance | 35% | 1. Operational assistance | 60% |
| 2. Operational assistance | 20% | 2. Serving in a mentor role — providing support and feedback | 20% | 2. Serving in a mentor role — providing support and feedback | 40% |
| 3. Providing structure | 15% | 3. Compliance | 20% | 3. Professional development | 10% |
| 4. Professional development | 10% | 4. Professional development | 20% | 4. Academic assistance | 10% |
| 5. Funding | 10% | 5. Research and evaluation | 5% | 5. Innovation assistance | 10% |

Source. Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campus Principal Interviews, Gibson Consulting Group and Safal Partners, 2017, 2018, and 2019. Note. Year 1 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2017), Cohort 3 (fall 2018), and Cohort 4 principals (fall 2019). Year 2 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2018), and Cohort 3 (fall 2019). Year 3 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2019).

As charter campuses matured, operational assistance became more prominent in discussions with principals, increasing from being mentioned by 20% of principals in year 1 of serving students to 35% of principals at campuses in their second year of serving students and 60% of campuses in their third year of serving students. This support came in various forms, such as purchasing educational materials, providing curriculum or curricular support, developing materials and structure for teacher trainings and student orientations, supporting transportation needs, assisting with student recruitment, working with external vendors for various services, coordinating food services, and providing guidance related to grant expenditures and school operational policies. A principal at an in-district charter school in their second year of operations shared “[We] didn’t have to worry about transportation. We didn’t have to worry about food services. We didn’t have to worry about a health nurse.” They emphasized that, by relying on the district to handle many of the operational and logistical issues that schools face, principals are able to “ride the coattails of the district” and “put their energy and focus into academics.” Please see Table 2.3 above for more details around how CMOs and districts supported charter school start-up grantees.

Support from the Texas Education Agency

Principals were asked about ways in which TEA has supported their campus's start-up activities. In response, no matter if campuses were in their first, second, or third year of serving students through the grant program, the campus principals consistently mentioned the following areas of TEA support:

- Providing guidelines and feedback (35% to 50% of campus principals)
- General support – TEA staff are responsive to grantee questions and requests for information (20% to 50% of campus principals)
- Funding (35% to 50% of campus principals)
- Workshops, professional development, and other training (5% to 50% of campus principals).

School leaders talked about how TEA staff provided guidance on how to submit grant amendments and allowable expenditures with grant funds, how to grow student enrollment, professional development, and other school-related policies. Principal remarks reflect that TEA staff have been very supportive of their start-up efforts and provided useful guidance. One principal at a charter start-up grantee campus in their second year of serving students under the grant talked at length about the responsiveness of TEA and how staff at the agency provided encouragement and guidance.

“[Everyone] I talked to at TEA [kept] saying, ‘We want you to succeed. We're on your side.’ I feel that. There's always been that support and even when we were having struggles financially and with sorting out all that startup grant thing, I would always get a response from TEA. They didn't ignore me or brush me off. I really appreciate that support.”

–Year 2 Principal

Workshops and other professional development provided by TEA tended to be noted as valuable more often by principals at campuses in their third year of operation (50%) than those in their first (5%) or second year of serving students through the grant (10%). Support related to compliance (including evaluations and audits) was also noted more frequently by principals at start-up grantee campuses in their third year of operations (40%), than campuses in their first (none of 20 campuses) or second (5%) year of serving students. See Table 2.4 below for more details.

Table 2.4 Supports Provided to Charter Schools by the Texas Education Agency: Percentage of Principals Mentioning Item in Interviews, by Year of Serving Students

| Year 1, Cohorts 1–4 (n=20) | | Year 2, Cohorts 1–3 (n=20) | | Year 3, Cohorts 1 and 2 (n=10) | |
|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|
| 1. Providing guidelines and feedback | 35% | 1. Providing guidelines and feedback | 40% | 1. Providing guidelines and feedback | 50% |
| 2. Funding | 35% | 2. General support – TEA staff are responsive to grantee questions and requests for information | 40% | 2. Workshops, professional development, and other training | 50% |
| 3. General support – TEA staff are responsive to grantee questions and requests for information | 20% | 3. Funding | 20% | 3. Funding | 40% |
| 4. Workshops, professional development, and other training | 5% | 4. Workshops, professional development, and other training | 10% | 4. Compliance (including evaluations or audits) | 40% |
| 5. There have been issues reported with support received | 5% | 5. Compliance (including evaluations or audits) | 5% | 5. General support – TEA staff are responsive to grantee questions and requests for information | 30% |

Source. Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campus Principal Interviews, Gibson Consulting Group and Safal Partners, 2017, 2018, and 2019. Note. Year 1 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2017), Cohort 3 (fall 2018), and Cohort 4 principals (fall 2019). Year 2 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2018), and Cohort 3 (fall 2019). Year 3 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2019).

Challenges in Getting Started

Principals interviewed were asked to describe the challenges they experienced when starting their campuses. School leaders reported several challenges related to start-ups, including student enrollment, staffing for their schools, financial issues, adequate facilities and supplies procurement, and difficulties with communicating school goals to stakeholders (e.g., parents and students). As Table 2.5 shows, the recruitment of students to a new charter school campus was the most frequently discussed challenge by principals at charter schools in their first year of operation. A principal in their first year of serving students through the grant described the interrelated nature of three prominent school start-up challenges — student enrollment, financial issues, and staffing. They pointed out that for them “*the biggest challenge has been enrollment; ... enrollment drives how much money we have coming in and that drives who we can hire, drives everything. I would say that’s the most difficult part.*”

Digging deeper into the staffing issue, which was the most frequently mentioned challenge for principals at campuses in their second and third year of serving students, school leaders talked about how attracting talented educators can be challenging and how it is difficult to hire for grade levels that are experiencing enrollment challenges, therefore making the number of teachers needed uncertain. This aligns with findings presented in Table 2.2, where it was shown that principals in their second or third years of operation indicated that hiring high-quality educators accounted for a substantive amount of their time. A principal in their second year of serving students shared that “*Talent is always a struggle right now in education; ... the challenge has been with the mobility of this campus, and me wanting to*

budget conservatively, staffing for grade levels that are always on the fence.” Principals at charter start-up grantee campuses also framed staffing challenges in terms of finding high-quality teachers that are a good fit with the mission of their specific campus, and being able to retain those educators from year to year.

Table 2.5 provides the percentage of principals at campuses in their first, second, and third year of serving students through the Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant who mentioned specific challenges in getting their new school off the ground.

Table 2.5 Challenges in Starting Charter School: Percentage of Principals Mentioning Item in Interviews, by Year of Serving Students

| Year 1, Cohorts 1–4 (n=20) | | Year 2, Cohorts 1–3 (n=20) | | Year 3, Cohorts 1 and 2 (n=10) | |
|--|-----|--|-----|---|-----|
| 1. Enrollment and recruitment | 30% | 1. Staffing challenges | 20% | 1. Staffing challenges | 30% |
| 2. Financial challenges | 25% | 2. Financial challenges | 15% | 2. Operational challenges | 20% |
| 3. Communicating school goal(s) to stakeholders (including parents and students) | 25% | 3. Enrollment and recruitment | 15% | 3. Financial challenges | 10% |
| 4. Staffing challenges | 20% | 4. Facility/equipment challenges | 15% | 4. Enrollment and recruitment | 10% |
| 5. Facility/equipment challenges | 15% | 5. Communicating school goal(s) to stakeholders (including parents and students) | 10% | 5. Communicating school goals(s) to stakeholders (including parents and students) | 10% |

Source. Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campus Principal Interviews, Gibson Consulting Group and Safal Partners, 2017, 2018, and 2019. *Note.* Year 1 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2017), Cohort 3 (fall 2018), and Cohort 4 principals (fall 2019). Year 2 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2018), and Cohort 3 (fall 2019). Year 3 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2019).

Organizational Practices

The study explored several key factors related to start-up grantee campus school organization and management, including important practices related to executing the charter school campus mission and getting parents involved with the school and in their child’s education.

Executing Charter School Campus Mission

Principals who were surveyed were asked to rank the most important practices for executing their campus’s mission. At least one out of every three principals at campuses in their first (30%), second (37%), and third (35%) year of serving students through the grant ranked hiring exemplary teachers to support other teachers as one of the top two most important practices related to executing the charter schools’ mission. (See Table 2.6 for more details.)

Table 2.6 Most Important School Organizational Practices Related to Executing their Campus’s Mission: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Important, by Year of Serving Students

| Year 1, Cohorts 1–4 (n=30) | | Year 2, Cohorts 1–3 (n=30) | | Year 3, Cohorts 1 and 2 (n=17) | |
|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|
| 1. Use of data to inform instruction | 37% | 1. Hiring exemplary teachers to support other teachers | 37% | 1. Concentration on maximizing instructional time | 41% |
| 2. Hiring exemplary teachers to support other teachers | 30% | 2. Fit of teachers with school mission and educational philosophies | 33% | 2. Regular monitoring of practices through classroom observations | 41% |
| 3. Fit of teachers with school mission and educational philosophies | 27% | 3. Concentration on maximizing instructional time | 30% | 3. Hiring exemplary teachers to support other teachers | 35% |
| 4. Regular monitoring of practices through classroom observations | 23% | 4. Regular monitoring of practices through classroom observations | 27% | 4. Clarity in the educational philosophy instilled | 18% |
| 5. Concentration on maximizing instructional time | 23% | 5. Use of data to inform instruction | 23% | 5. Use of data to inform instruction | 18% |

Source. Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campus Principal Survey, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018, 2019, and 2020. Note. Year 1 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2017), Cohort 3 principals (fall 2018), and Cohort 4 principals (fall 2019). Year 2 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2018), and Cohort 3 principals (fall 2019). Year 3 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2019).

Regardless of the year of operation, use of data to inform instruction remained was one of the top five most important practices related to executing the charter school’s mission. However, it was ranked as the top practice by principals in their first year of serving students, but dropped to the fifth most important practice for principals at schools in their second and third year of serving students.

Similarly, concentration on maximizing instructional time remained one of the top five most important practices related to executing the charter school’s mission for principals regardless of the year of operation. However, principal responses indicate that, while important regardless of years of operation, maximizing instructional time became more and more important as time went on. Concentrating on maximizing instructional time was ranked as the fifth most important practice for principals during their schools’ first year of serving students, the third most important practice for principals at schools in their second year of operations, and the top practice by principals in their third year of serving students. Please see Table 2.6 above for specific details on how this practice compared over time and to other practices.

Important Organizational Practices for New Charter Schools

During the course of principal interviews, two themes were consistently discussed by principals regardless of how long they had been serving students. First, the importance of effective communications with teachers, students, and parents was noted by 30% of principals in their first year of serving students, and 40% of principals in the second and third years of serving students. A principal in their second year of operations elaborated on the importance of consistency in communications:

“We've definitely had to really look at how we are communicating to make sure we're all doing the same thing, we're all saying the same things, and we're doing the things that we all need to be doing in our classrooms. I would say one of the key systems that we've had to put in place has been our communication and our modes of communication.”

—Year 2 Principal

Second, developing operating procedures was a critical practice that grew in importance as charter schools matured from their first to third year of serving students. Developing procedures related to decision making practices, consistent routines, and systematic structures was discussed by 10% of principals at campuses in their first year of operations, 35% of principals at campuses in their second year of operations, and 50% of principals at campuses in their third year of serving students. One principal at a campus in its third year of serving students discussed how the growth of the school has impacted their need to revisit procedures and develop new systems to help the school run smoothly:

“Now that we're growing, we've put other structures in place, tardies and attendance and things of that nature that maybe ... were not necessarily a focus in the past just because of the sheer numbers. Now it's more formal.”

—Year 3 Principal

School leaders at campuses in their first (25% of principals interviewed) and second (15% of principals interviewed) years of operation discussed the importance of establishing clear roles and responsibilities so they “*know who does what, who needs to be on the team, who needs to do what, who's doing what in the organization.*” By the time schools reached their third year of serving students, it appears as though these roles and responsibilities had already been established and did not emerge in discussions with school leaders; however, a larger percentage of school leaders at campuses in their third year of operations (40% of principals interviewed) considered staffing decisions as an important organizational practice than their counterparts in newer schools (less than 10% of principals interviewed).

Parent Involvement

Getting parents involved in their child’s education, as well as involved with supporting a new charter campus, are both important objectives for schools that received funding through the grant. To understand how charter school start-up grantees accomplish these two objectives, the evaluation team asked start-up principals via surveys to rank their top two most effective methods for getting parents involved in their child’s education. As Table 2.7 shows, a large percentage of start-up principals surveyed each year ranked three parent communication methods among the top two most effective. Regular individualized teacher-parent communications were more prominent for principals at campuses in their first (37%) and second (50%) years of operation than for principals at campuses in their third year of serving students (18%). While these teacher-parent communications seem to be less effective after two years, principals believed that regular email communications to all parents remained equally effective during each of the first three years of serving students, with 37% of principals at campuses in their first

year of serving students, 23% of principals in their second year of serving students, and 35% of principals at campuses in their third year of serving students ranking it as one of the two most effective methods. Parent-teacher conferences were increasingly ranked as effective as time went on. Thirty-three percent of principals at campuses in their first year of operations ranked this method as one of the top two most effective for getting parents involved, which rose to 40% for principals at campuses in their second year, then up to 53% for principals at campuses in their third year of operations.

Table 2.7 Effective Methods for Getting Parents Involved in Their Children’s Education: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Impactful, by Year of Serving Students

| Year 1, Cohorts 1–4 (n=30) | | Year 2, Cohorts 1–3 (n=31) | | Year 3, Cohorts 1 and 2 (n=17) | |
|--|-----|--|-----|--|-----|
| 1. Regular individualized teacher-parent communications | 37% | 1. Regular individualized teacher-parent communications | 50% | 1. Parent-teacher conferences | 53% |
| 2. Regular email communications to all parents | 37% | 2. Parent-teacher conferences | 40% | 2. Regular email communications to all parents | 35% |
| 3. Parent-teacher conferences | 33% | 3. System for parents to monitor attendance, grades, and assignments | 27% | 3. System for parents to monitor attendance, grades, and assignments | 29% |
| 4. Parent volunteer opportunities | 20% | 4. Regular email communications to all parents | 23% | 4. Regular individualized teacher-parent communications | 18% |
| 5. System for parents to monitor attendance, grades, and assignments | 20% | 5. After-school events for parents to interact with their children | 23% | 5. After-school events for parents to interact with their children | 18% |

Source. Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campus Principal Survey, Gibson Consulting Group, 2017, 2018, and 2019. Note. Year 1 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (spring 2018), Cohort 3 (spring 2019), and Cohort 4 principals (spring 2020). Year 2 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (spring 2019), and Cohort 3 (spring 2020). Year 3 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (spring 2020).

Instructional Practices

After establishing effective organizational practices and methods for recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers, providing support for teachers to be successful is essential for charter campuses to deliver the highest quality of instruction possible to their students. Considering this, the evaluation team examined the following at charter school start-up grantee campuses:

- Frequently observed instructional practices;
- Most impactful instructional practices observed;
- Impactful teacher supports for improving instructional practices;
- Approaches for closing the achievement gaps for educationally disadvantaged students; and
- Methods for closing the achievement gaps for low-performing students.

Additionally, data related to instructional practices observed at start-up grantee campuses are presented in this section.

Most Frequently Observed Instructional Practices

As Table 2.8 shows, establishing positive relationships between teachers and students was the most frequently observed instructional approach at charter school start-up grantee campuses in their first and second year of serving students, with 62% of principals at campuses in their first year of operations and 44% of principals at campuses in their second year of operations ranking this as the first or second most commonly observed instructional practice. The proportion of principals at campuses in their third year of serving students who ranked establishing positive relationships between teachers and students as the first or second most commonly observed instructional practice dropped to 25%.

Table 2.8 Most Frequently Observed Instructional Practices: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Frequently Observed, by Year of Serving Students

| Year 1, Cohorts 1–4 (n=29) | | Year 2, Cohorts 1–3 (n=27) | | Year 3, Cohorts 1 and 2 (n=16) | |
|--|-----|--|-----|--|-----|
| 1. Establishing positive relationships between the teacher and student | 62% | 1. Establishing positive relationships between the teacher and student | 44% | 1. Use of formative data in student assessments to guide instruction | 44% |
| 2. Use of formative data in student assessments to guide instruction | 28% | 2. Use of formative data in student assessments to guide instruction | 30% | 2. Maximizing learning time | 38% |
| 3. Establishment of clear learning targets for each lesson plan | 24% | 3. Allowing teachers flexibility in curriculum and lesson planning | 30% | 3. Establishing positive relationships between the teacher and student | 25% |
| 4. Maximizing learning time | 21% | 4. Maximizing learning time | 26% | 4. Allowing teachers flexibility in curriculum and lesson planning | 25% |
| 5. Use of hands-on activities in class with a variety of modalities | 14% | 5. Establishment of clear learning targets for each lesson plan | 22% | 5. Effective use of technology in the classroom | 19% |

Source. Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campus Principal Survey, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018, 2019, and 2020. Note. Year 1 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2017), Cohort 3 principals (fall 2018), and Cohort 4 principals (fall 2019). Year 2 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2018), and Cohort 3 principals (fall 2019). Year 3 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2019).

The use of formative data in student assessments to guide instruction was more commonly observed at charter school campuses in their third year of serving students (44%) than it was at first-year (28%) or second-year (30%) charter school start-up grantee campuses. Maximizing learning time was increasingly ranked as one of the top two most commonly observed instructional practices by 21% of principals at campuses in their first year of operation, 26% of principals at campuses in their second year, and 38% of principals at third-year campuses. (See Table 2.8 for details.)

Most Impactful Instructional Practices Observed

There was a considerable degree of alignment between the most frequently observed instructional practices presented in Table 2.8 and the most impactful instructional approaches observed by principals. As Table 2.9 shows, regardless of the number of years the charter school campus has been serving students through the grant, establishing positive relationships between teachers and students was most commonly ranked by principals as the first or second most impactful instructional practice observed (33% to 44%, depending on the number of years the campus has been in operation). Other impactful

instructional practices observed that ranked among the two most effective by principals at charter school start-up grantee campuses include:

- Use of formative data in student assessments to guide instruction (26% to 44%, depending on the number of years the campus has been in operation);
- Maximizing learning time (19% to 26%, depending on the number of years the campus has been in operation); and
- Use of hands-on activities in class with a variety of different strategies (15% to 25%, depending on the number of years the campus has been in operation).

No consistent patterns related to impactful instructional practices were evident when the number of years a campus had been in operation was considered.

Table 2.9 Most Impactful Instructional Practices Observed: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Frequently Observed, by Year of Serving Students

| Year 1, Cohorts 1–4 (n=29) | | Year 2, Cohorts 1–3 (n=27) | | Year 3, Cohorts 1 and 2 (n=16) | |
|--|-----|--|-----|--|-----|
| 1. Establishing positive relationships between the teacher and student | 41% | 1. Establishing positive relationships between the teacher and student | 33% | 1. Establishing positive relationships between the teacher and student | 44% |
| 2. Use of formative data in student assessments to guide instruction | 38% | 2. Allowing teachers flexibility in curriculum and lesson planning | 30% | 2. Use of formative data in student assessments to guide instruction | 44% |
| 3. Use of hands-on activities in class with a variety of modalities | 21% | 3. Use of formative data in student assessments to guide instruction | 26% | 3. Use of hands-on activities in class with a variety of modalities | 25% |
| 4. Maximizing learning time | 21% | 4. Maximizing learning time | 26% | 4. Maximizing learning time | 19% |
| 5. Effective use of technology in the classroom | 17% | 5. Establishment of clear learning targets for each lesson plan | 26% | 5. Facilitating meaningful peer interactions | 13% |

Source. Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campus Principal Survey, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018, 2019, and 2020. Note. Year 1 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2017), Cohort 3 principals (fall 2018), and Cohort 4 principals (fall 2019). Year 2 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2018), and Cohort 3 principals (fall 2019). Year 3 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2019).

Most Impactful Teacher Supports for Improving Instructional Practices

Regardless of the number of years a campus has been operational, the review of student performance data with teachers was viewed as the most impactful method for improving their teachers’ instructional practices. Also ranked as one of top two most impactful supports for improving instructional practices at these principal’s start-up grantee campuses were providing feedback based on walk-throughs or informal observations (22% to 35%) and coaching support (26% to 33%). While it was not ranked as one of the five most impactful teacher supports for improving instructional practices by principals at campuses in their first or second year of operations, providing feedback to teachers based on formal, scheduled observations was rated as the third most impactful teacher support by principals at campuses in their third year of operations. (See Table 2.10.)

Table 2.10 Most Impactful Teacher Supports for Improving Instructional Practices: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Impactful, by Year of Serving Students

| Year 1, Cohorts 1–4 (n=29) | | Year 2, Cohorts 1–3 (n=27) | | Year 3, Cohorts 1 and 2 (n=15) | |
|--|-----|---|-----|--|-----|
| 1. Review student performance data with teachers | 45% | 1. Review student performance data with teachers | 41% | 1. Review student performance data with teachers | 33% |
| 2. Providing feedback based on walk-throughs or informal observations | 35% | 2. Use of professional learning communities (PLCs) | 30% | 2. Coaching support | 33% |
| 3. Coaching support | 31% | 3. Providing dedicated planning time for teachers to collaborate | 30% | 3. Providing feedback based on formal, scheduled observations | 33% |
| 4. Use of professional learning communities (PLCs) | 24% | 4. Coaching support | 26% | 4. Providing based on walk-throughs or informal observations | 27% |
| 5. Allowing teachers flexibility in the use of curriculum and planning | 17% | 5. Providing feedback based on walk-throughs or informal observations | 22% | 5. Providing dedicated planning time for teachers to collaborate | 27% |

Source. Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campus Principal Survey, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018, 2019, and 2020. Note. Year 1 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2017), Cohort 3 principals (fall 2018), and Cohort 4 principals (fall 2019). Year 2 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2018), and Cohort 3 principals (fall 2019). Year 3 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2019).

Teachers who participated in focus groups were asked how they supported each other in improving instructional practices at their campuses. Teachers from 50% of the focus groups at campuses in their first year of operation, 100% of focus groups at campuses in their second year of serving students, and 90% of focus groups at campuses in their third year of serving students discussed at length the many ways in which they communicate and collaborate with other teachers to learn new and better ways of providing instruction to their students. A teacher at a school in their second year of serving students shared the following description of what collaboration looks like at their school:

“We collaborate a lot. ... We're each innovating in our own space here, too, so one of us might hear an idea from a reading or an article or a video and try in our classrooms and say, ‘Hey, I tried this and it worked.’ We adopt it in our other classrooms and I say, ‘That works for your kids, not for mine,’ or, ‘Maybe I didn't perform it the way that you did, so can I get your eyes on this maybe the next time I do it and tell me what's wrong.’”

–Year 2 Teacher

Communication and collaboration at charter schools allows teachers to share ideas and learn more about how other teachers are delivering various lessons. Teachers have the opportunity to informally share ideas, lesson plans, and instructional materials, ask questions of each other, and visit each other's classrooms. As one teacher at a campus in their third year of operations states, “we pull resources for each other. If I'm doing social studies, I'll pull stuff for all of [the] grade [levels] so all of [the] grade levels

are] on the same page and we collaborate a lot. I think all the grades do that. All the teachers are always in each other's room. It's like a family really."

During site visits, principals at grantee campuses were also asked about professional learning communities (PLCs) and the use of instructional rounds. Regardless of the campus' year of operations, nearly all principals (90% to 100%) indicated that PLCs were in place and were benefitting their schools, and 60% to 65% of principals shared that time during the regular school day was provided for PLCs to meet. PLCs are an effective mechanism for school leaders and teachers to share successful instructional practices with each other and *"go through learning objectives that worked or didn't work and seek out help."* PLCs are also a good opportunity for educators to provide *"mentorship and professional development for an initiative such as a new writing initiative or [to decide whether] we're going to focus on persuasive writing these next two weeks."* A principal at a school in their first year of serving students shared that *"PLCs are not only a mechanism of support for new teachers, but it's really causing them to learn good pedagogical skills"*, while a principal at a campus in their second year of operations said *"I think that it gives them a chance to collaborate and just to live with each other. It's really important."* Instructional rounds allow teachers to visit the classrooms of their peers and learn through observation of effective lesson plan delivery, pedagogical approaches and classroom management methods.

Instructional rounds were used less frequently at campuses in their first year of serving students (25%) than they were at campuses in the second (55%) and third (40%) years of operation. Most of the principals who indicated that they were using instructional rounds indicated that they were benefitting their school; however, due to staffing and coverage challenges, this teacher support was not possible at all start-up grantee charter schools. A principal at a campus in their second year of serving students discussed the value of seeing high-quality instruction being delivered by experienced educators, and how the instructional round experience helps to improve collaboration across a grade-level team, department, and school:

"You can talk about what you do in your classroom, but it makes a big difference when you can actually see what it looks like. I think that's how [instructional rounds are] helping [teachers]. They're getting ideas from each other for curriculum, for lessons, for classroom management. It is building climate as well because it's not, 'Well, this is my classroom, that's yours.' They see everyone kind of as working together not a separate entity, which is good."

–Year 2 Principal

Evidence of Instructional Quality at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses

The research team visited a total of 50 Public Charter School Start-Up Grant recipients across four different grantee cohorts during the fall of 2017, 2018, and 2019. Over this three year period, 81 teachers at campuses in their first year of serving students, 69 teachers at campuses in their second year of operations, and 33 teachers at campuses in their third year of operations were observed and scored across 10–12 dimensions and 3–4 domains on the CLASS Observation Tool. The evaluation observed these teachers using the CLASS K–3 (for Grades K–3), CLASS Upper Elementary (for Grades 4–5), and CLASS Secondary (for Grades 6–12) protocols. See Appendix C for a more detailed description of the CLASS observation protocol that was used for these observations. Additionally, data collected through

observations of teachers at high-performing charter schools in spring 2018 are provided as a reference point in this section in comparison to the charter school start-up grantee campus scores.¹⁹ The CLASS observation tool was used to assess instructional quality across the 10 charter school campuses. Mean scores were calculated for the following four CLASS domains:

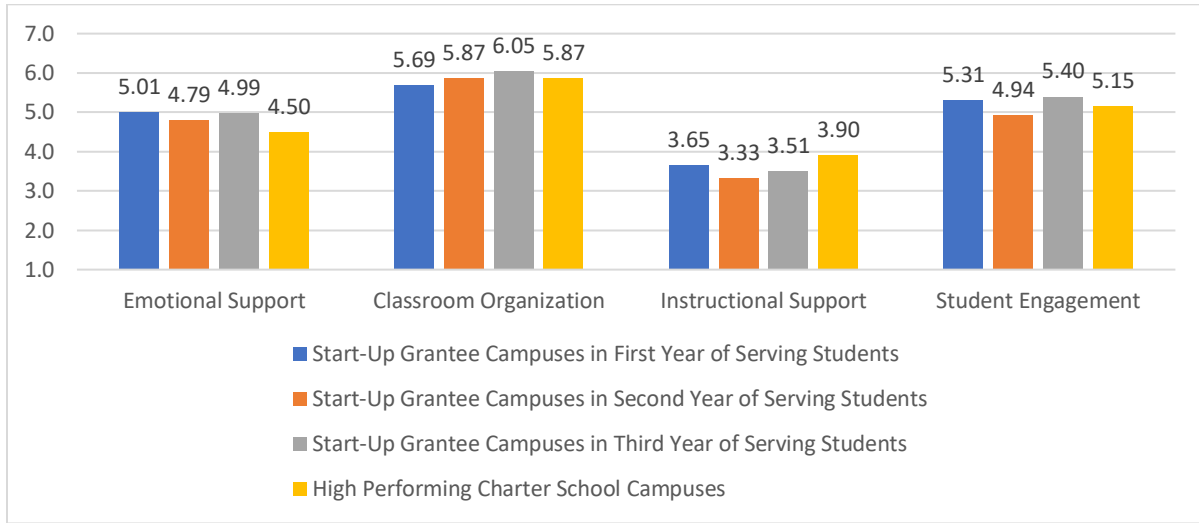
- **Emotional Support** (Includes dimensions such as positive and negative climate, teacher sensitivity, and regard for student perspectives)
- **Classroom Organization** (Includes dimensions such as behavioral management, productivity, and instructional learning formats)
- **Instructional Support** (Includes dimensions such as concept development, content understanding, analysis and inquiry, quality of feedback, instructional dialogue, language modeling, analysis, and problem-solving)
- **Student Engagement** (The degree to which students are focused and are participating in the learning activity presented or facilitated by the teacher)²⁰

As Figure 2.1 illustrates, teachers at charter school start-up grantees received CLASS observation scores roughly in-line with those of teachers at high-performing charter campuses. Mean CLASS observation scores for the Emotional Support domain were in the 4.79 to 5.01 range for start-up grantee campuses in their first through third years of serving students, which was higher than the mean Emotional Support domain scores for teachers at high-performing charter schools (4.50). The Emotional Support domain measures the ability of teachers to support social and emotional functioning in the classroom and includes measurements related to positive and negative climate, responsiveness to students' academic and emotional needs, and the extent to which teachers place an emphasis on students' perspectives, interests, and motivations. Higher Emotional Support domain scores at start-up grantee campuses may be indicative of teachers providing supports for students in at-risk situations (Pianta, La Paro & Hamre, 2015). During surveys, principals at start-up grantee campuses emphasized that establishing positive relationships between teachers and students was one of the most frequently observed instructional practices and the most impactful practice. Based on relatively high Emotional Support observation scores, this focus on relationship building and social-emotional learning appears to be positively impacting classrooms at new charter school campuses funded through the Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant.

¹⁹ The definition of high-performing charter schools is based on an analysis of charter school campuses designated as high-quality by TEA. See Appendix A for the full definition.

²⁰ Dimensions included in the four CLASS domains vary depending upon the CLASS instrument used (i.e., K-3, Upper Elementary, Secondary).

Figure 2.1 Mean CLASS Observation Scores for Public Charter School Start-Up Grantees and High-Performing Charter Schools



Source. CLASS observation scores, Gibson Consulting Group, 2017, 2018, and 2019. *Notes.* CLASS score scale ranges from 1 to 7. Year 1 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 classrooms (fall 2017), Cohort 3 classrooms (fall 2018), and Cohort 4 classrooms (fall 2019). Year 2 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 classrooms (fall 2018), and Cohort 3 classrooms (fall 2019). Year 3 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 classrooms (fall 2019). A total of 81 teachers from charter start-up grantee campuses were observed at campuses in their first year of serving students, 69 teachers were observed at campuses in their second year of serving students, and 33 were observed at campuses in their third year of serving students. A total of 39 teachers were observed at high-performing charter schools not funded as part of the Charter School Program Start-Up Grant Program.

As Figure 2.1 shows, Classroom Organization scores tended to increase with the number of years charter school start-up grantee campuses have been in operation. This finding may be related to charter school campuses improving their support of teachers and/or improving recruitment and hiring practices over time. Mean Classroom Organization scores for teachers at start-up grantee campuses in their second (5.87) or third (6.05) year of serving students tended to be in line with or higher than mean scores for teachers at high-performing charter schools (5.87). The relatively high classroom observation scores observed at start-up grantee campuses over the 2017 to 2019 period may also be related to the principal’s emphasis on maintaining positive teacher-student relationships, as well as the emphasis placed on the use of highly engaging hands-on activities using a variety of different modalities and maximizing learning time. These practices can improve student engagement and reduce behavioral incidents through the use of activities that interest students and pacing that keeps students busy, which result in higher Classroom Organization observation scores.

There was not a consistent pattern between mean Instructional Support scores and the number of years the charter school start-up grantee campuses were in operation. Interestingly, the mean Instructional Support score of 3.65 for teachers at campuses in their first year of operations was high when compared to 3.33 and 3.51 for teachers at campuses in their second and third years of operation, respectively. However, the mean Instructional Support score for teachers at high-performing charter schools was higher than those of all start-up grantee campus teachers. This may be related to the fact that high-performing charter schools have been in operation for a longer period of time than start-up grantee campuses and have had more time to develop proven strategies and activities to enhance learning outcomes, to deepen analysis and inquiry, and to improve the quality of feedback and questioning

through teacher-student and peer interactions that correspond to higher scores in the Instructional Support domain (see Figure 2.1 for more details). The average Instructional Support domain scores observed at start-up grantee campuses are well within the medium range for this CLASS component, which historically has substantially lower scores than other domains. Based on principal survey data, the quality of instruction at these new charter school campuses is largely supported by reviewing student data with teachers, providing feedback to teachers after formal and informal observations, providing coaching support, and facilitating PLCs. These practices in place at start-up grantee campuses are consistent with methods that could positively impact Instructional Support observation scores.

During interviews with charter school start-up grantee campus principals, they were asked to describe the quality of instruction at their schools. During these interviews, the topic of continuous improvement in instructional practices was often discussed. School leaders talked about how they wanted to see *“students engaged in all hands-on activities or as much as possible,” “interaction in the classroom,”* and *“kids talking and kids learning from each other.”* The following comment by a principal at a school in their second year of operations is illustrative of these discussions:

“Yes, I think [the quality of instruction has] varied. I think every year we get a little bit better, we get a little bit clearer on what our non-negotiables are. ... Like how to ... teach project-based learning well, and how to facilitate experiences, and how to make them student-generated instead of adult-generated. That's a hard thing to do.”

—Year 2 Principal

There was also not a consistent pattern between mean Student Engagement scores and the number of years the charter school start-up grantee campus was in operation. The mean Student Engagement score for teachers at campuses in their first year of operations was 5.31, compared to 4.94 for teachers at campuses in their second year, and 5.40 for teachers at campuses in their third year of operations. Teachers at campuses in their first and third years of serving students did post higher Student Engagement scores than their counterparts at high-performing charter schools (5.15). (See Figure 2.1.)

[Closing the Achievement Gap for Educationally Disadvantaged Students](#)

Educationally disadvantaged students are defined in this evaluation as those students identified as being at risk of dropping out of school. These students often require additional assistance and focus at any campus. This section focuses on strategies for closing the achievement gap for these students at start-up grantee campuses in their first, second, or third year of serving students.

The two highest-rated methods for closing the achievement gap for educationally disadvantaged students were small-group instruction in class, which allows teachers to use class time to provide targeted instruction and assistance, and strong teacher-student relationships and connections. Between 41% and 52% of charter school start-up grantee campus principals ranked small-group instruction in class as one of the top two most impactful strategies for closing the achievement gap for educationally disadvantaged students. Likewise, 40% to 48% of principals ranked strong teacher-student relationships as one of the two most impactful approaches to closing the achievement gap for educationally-disadvantaged students. Other approaches, such as differentiated in-class instruction, individualized

instruction in class, and targeted pull-out instruction by an interventionist were also consistently ranked as one the top five most impactful practices. (See Table 2.11.)

Table 2.11 Most Impactful Approaches in Closing the Achievement Gaps for Educationally Disadvantaged Students: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Impactful, by Year of Serving Students

| Year 1, Cohorts 1–4 (n=29) | | Year 2, Cohorts 1–3 (n=27) | | Year 3, Cohorts 1 and 2 (n=15) | |
|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|
| 1. Strong teacher-student relationships and connections | 48% | 1. Small-group instruction in class | 52% | 1. Small-group instruction in class | 47% |
| 2. Small-group instruction in class | 41% | 2. Strong teacher-student relationships and connections | 41% | 2. Strong teacher-student relationships and connections | 40% |
| 3. Collaboration between teachers | 21% | 3. Differentiated in-class instruction | 33% | 3. In-school instructional or tutoring labs | 27% |
| 4. Differentiated in-class instruction | 21% | 4. Individualized instruction in class | 22% | 4. Differentiated in-class instruction | 20% |
| 5. Individualized instruction in class | 21% | 5. Targeted pull-out instruction by interventionist | 15% | 5. Targeted pull-out instruction by interventionist | 20% |

Source. Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campus Principal Survey, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018, 2019, and 2020. *Note.* Year 1 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2017), Cohort 3 principals (fall 2018), and Cohort 4 principals (fall 2019). Year 2 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2018), and Cohort 3 principals (fall 2019). Year 3 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2019).

These survey results were further confirmed through interviews with principals where differentiated instruction and the use of strategic group strategies were the two most commonly discussed approaches for closing the achievement gaps for struggling students. A principal at a campus in their first year of serving students described their approach as follows:

“Our child-centered and child-driven individualized and personalized educational planning is the way that we will close that [achievement] gap. We are using data not only formal data, but anecdotal data, observation, all of that to really determine what's stopping the child from being able to reach the levels of academic, social, and emotional competency that will allow them to interact fully in the environment.”

–Year 1 Principal

Closing the Achievement Gap for Low-Performing Students

Students identified as lowest-performing are defined in this evaluation as those students at the bottom 10% in reading and mathematics performance. This section explores how charter schools work with low-performing students and identifies practices in place at start-up grantee campuses related to closing the achievement gaps for this group of students.

As Table 2.12 shows, small-group instruction (39% to 67%) and differentiated in-class instruction (21% to 35%) were most commonly ranked by principals as the first or second most impactful method for closing the achievement gap for the lowest-performing students enrolled at their start-up grantee campuses. As campuses matured from their first year (39%) to their second year (54%), to their third year (67%) of serving students, the percentage of school leaders ranking small-group instruction as one of two most impactful for reducing the achievement gap for low-performing students increased markedly, along with differentiated in-class instruction. Another instructional strategy consistently ranked among the five most impactful included targeted pull-out instruction by interventionist (21% to 27%).

Table 2.12 Most Impactful Instructional Practices in Closing the Achievement Gap for Low-Performing: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Impactful, by Year of Serving Students

| Year 1, Cohorts 1–4 (n=28) | | Year 2, Cohorts 1–3 (n=26) | | Year 3, Cohorts 1 and 2 (n=15) | |
|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|
| 1. Small-group instruction in class | 39% | 1. Small-group instruction in class | 54% | 1. Small-group instruction in class | 67% |
| 2. Differentiated in-class instruction | 21% | 2. Differentiated in-class instruction | 35% | 2. Differentiated in-class instruction | 27% |
| 3. Targeted pull-out instruction by interventionist | 21% | 3. Targeted pull-out instruction by interventionist | 23% | 3. Targeted pull-out instruction by interventionist | 27% |
| 4. Individualized instruction in class | 18% | 4. Individualized instruction in class | 23% | 4. Flexible grouping strategies in class | 20% |
| 5. In-school instructional or tutoring labs | 18% | 5. Before or after school tutoring or enrichment programs | 15% | 5. Collaboration between teachers | 20% |

Source. Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campus Principal Survey, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018, 2019, and 2020. Note. Year 1 analyses include responses from Cohorts 1 and 2 principals (spring 2018), Cohort 3 (spring 2019), and Cohort 4 principals (spring 2020).

Practices Related to Maintaining a Positive School Climate

There are many factors that contribute to the development and maintenance of a positive campus environment. This section examines perceptions of climate, staff morale, and teaching conditions at charter school start-up grantee campuses. It also captures information critical to maintaining a positive school climate and effective methods for maintaining positive interactions between students and teachers, including disciplinary procedures.

Perceptions of Campus Climate and Staff Morale at their Schools

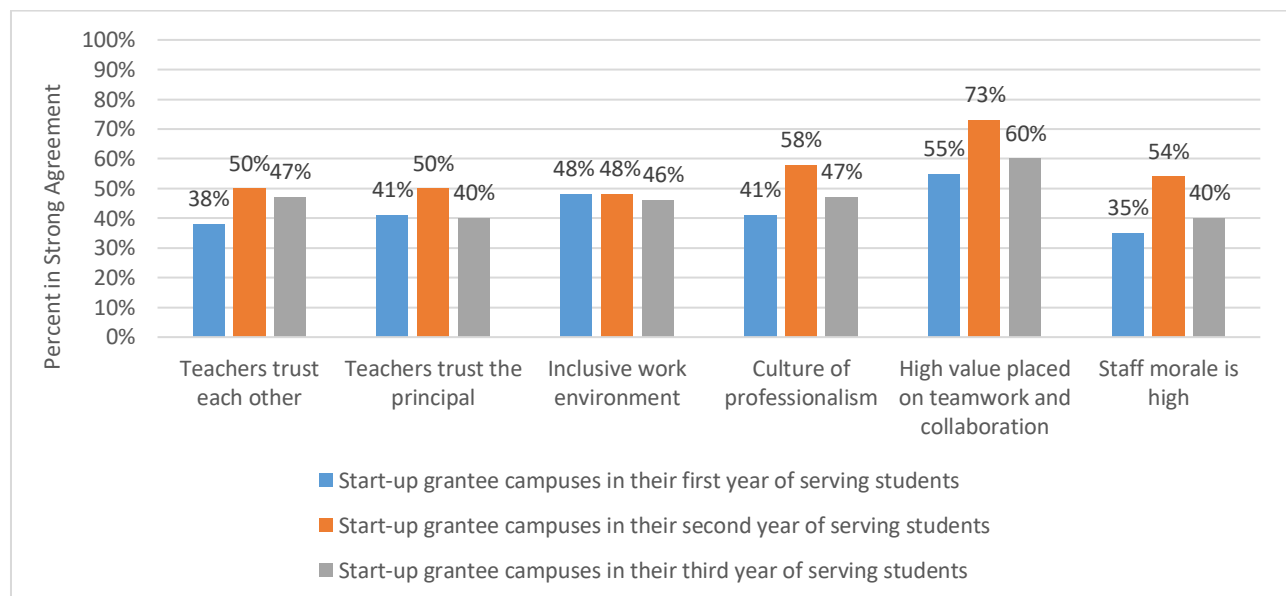
Principal survey respondents at charter school start-up grantee campuses were asked to rate their level of agreement about a series of statements related to campus climate and staff morale.²¹ As Figure 2.2 illustrates, for many campus climate and culture items, principals at new charter schools in their first year of serving students were less likely to strongly agree than their principal counterparts at start-up grantee campuses in their second year of operations. The percent of principals in strong agreement with the various campus climate and culture statements also tended to drop for principals at start-up grantee

²¹ A 4-point scale was used where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly agree.

campuses in their third year of operations. For example, 38% of principals at campus in their first year, 50% of campuses in their second year, and 47% of principals at campuses in their third year of serving students strongly agreed that teachers trust each other at their school, and 41% of principals at campus in their first year, 50% of campuses in their second year, and 40% of principals at campuses in their third year of serving students strongly agreed that teachers trust their principal. Similar trends were observed when principals provided their perspectives on the extent to which there is a culture of professionalism and staff morale is high at their new charter school campus.

The highest rated item was a high value placed on teamwork and collaboration at their school, where 55% of principals at campus in their first year, 73% of campuses in their second year, and 60% of principals at campuses in their third year of serving students strongly agreed with the statement. The item related to having an inclusive work environment remained stable across principals at first year (48%), second year (48%), and third year (46%) campuses. (Figure 2.2)

Figure 2.2 Campus Staff and Morale: Percentage of Principals in Strong Agreement with Statements, by Year of Serving Students



Source. Charter School Grantee Start-Up Campus Principal Survey, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018, 2019, and 2020. *Note.* Year 1 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2017), Cohort 3 principals (fall 2018), and Cohort 4 principals (fall 2019). Year 2 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2018), and Cohort 3 principals (fall 2019). Year 3 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2019). Results are based on 29 responses from principals at charter school start-up grantee campuses in their first year of serving students, 26 responses from principals at start-up grantee campuses in their second year of serving students, and 15 responses from principals at start-up grantee campuses in their third year of serving students.

Principals at charter school start-up grantee campuses were also asked to rank the most important indicators of a positive school climate. As Table 2.13 shows, regardless of the year of operations for the campus, the genuine care for students and the academic growth of students were consistently ranked in the top 5 by principals. Principals at start-up grantee campuses in their first or second year of operation were more inclined to emphasize the importance of campus staff sharing a common set of beliefs about schooling and learning; while principals in their second or third year of serving students tended to rate

developing a culture of shared success as one of the five most important indicators of a positive school climate.

Table 2.13 Most Important Indicators of Positive School Climate: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Important, by Year of Serving Students

| Year 1, Cohorts 1–4 (n=29) | | Year 2, Cohorts 1–3 (n=26) | | Year 3, Cohorts 1 and 2 (n=15) | |
|--|-----|--|-----|---|-----|
| 1. Genuine care for students | 41% | 1. Academic growth of students | 46% | 1. Genuine care for students | 27% |
| 2. Culture of respect between students and teachers | 35% | 2. Campus staff share a common set of beliefs about schooling/learning | 42% | 2. Development of a family atmosphere | 27% |
| 3. Academic growth of students | 24% | 3. Opportunities for teachers to collaborate | 23% | 3. Academic growth of students | 27% |
| 4. Campus staff share a common set of beliefs about schooling/learning | 20% | 4. Genuine care for students | 19% | 4. Culture of respect between students and teachers | 20% |
| 5. Development of a family atmosphere | 17% | 5. Culture of shared success | 15% | 5. Culture of shared success | 20% |

Source. Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campus Principal Survey, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018, 2019, and 2020. *Note.* Year 1 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2017), Cohort 3 principals (fall 2018), and Cohort 4 principals (fall 2019). Year 2 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2018), and Cohort 3 principals (fall 2019). Year 3 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2019).

Principals interviewed were asked how they would characterize the school climate and staff morale at their campus. Teachers were asked to explore the same questions during focus groups. The majority of principals and teachers agreed that their campus had a generally positive climate. Between 60% and 80% of principals felt this way depending on the year of operation, and between 70% and 85% of teachers felt the same, depending on the year of operation. Principals regularly referred to creating an environment where *“The children don’t want to take a sick day because they want to come to school”* and that school staff *“genuinely miss our children when they’re not here, and the parents feel that.”* One principal shared the following sentiment that was echoed by others: *“We consider ourselves a family ... and we’re all there to help each other.”*

Despite the generally positive campus climate comments from teachers participating in focus groups, teachers at start-up grantee campuses in their third year of serving students were more likely to describe a negative campus climate (20% of focus groups) than teachers at first or second year campuses. However, the majority of focus group discussions related to school climate was focused on *“supportive administration”* who provided an environment that allowed teachers to *“flourish and thrive,”* where *“everyone is valued”* and *“your voice is heard without lip service.”* A teacher from a campus in its third year of serving students shared the following perspective on the climate of their campus:

“I always say that [everyone is] very supportive. Just from parents to being so involved and supportive and just wishing the best for their child and wanting the best. Administrators, very detail-oriented with the data and the support along the way. If you're struggling with something, there is always either a mentee or a mentor that you can talk to in your department or just a co-worker. The climate is just really supportive and then with the students, it's a lot of one on one. You get to grow with these students.”

–Year 3 Teacher

Teaching Conditions

When asked about teaching conditions, principals at charter school start-up grantee campuses were more inclined than teachers at their schools to focus on the positive aspects of the school (e.g., camaraderie, collaborative environment, reasonable class sizes, teacher supports), while still recognizing some challenges related to the teaching conditions at a new charter school campus (e.g., chaotic and stressful environment, heavy workloads, high expectations for teachers and students). As Table 2.14 shows, the majority (70% to 75%) of principals at schools in their first, second, and third year of serving students shared positive beliefs about teaching conditions at their campuses. This compared to 55% of teacher focus groups at campuses in their first year of operation, 45% of teacher focus groups at campuses in their second year of operations, and 40% of teacher focus groups at campuses in their third year of operations. Thus, from the teacher perspective, teaching conditions tended to be more challenging as start-up grantee campuses matured from their first to their third year of serving students. (See Table 2.15.)

Table 2.14 Principal Interviews: Principals’ Perceptions of Teaching Conditions at Their Own Campuses, by Year of Serving Students

| Year 1, Cohorts 1–4 (n=20) | | Year 2, Cohorts 1–3 (n=20) | | Year 3, Cohorts 1 and 2 (n=10) | |
|--|-----|--|-----|---|-----|
| Positive (camaraderie among teachers, resources, teacher supports) | 70% | Positive (collaborative environment, resources) | 75% | Positive (resources, class size, teacher supports) | 70% |
| Challenging (chaotic environment, stressful) | 30% | Challenging (stressful, heavy workload, high expectation of instructional practices, student behavior, student population) | 35% | Challenging (heavy workload, high expectations of instructional practices, lack of resources, high expectations of student results, hard place to teach, chaotic environment) | 50% |

Source. Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campus Principal Interviews, Gibson Consulting Group and Safal Partners, 2017, 2018, and 2019. Note. Year 1 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2017), Cohort 3 (fall 2018), and Cohort 4 principals (fall 2019). Year 2 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2018), and Cohort 3 (fall 2019). Year 3 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2019).

Table 2.15 Teacher Focus Groups: Teachers’ Perceptions of Teaching Conditions, by Year of Serving Students

| Year 1, Cohorts 1–4 (n=20) | | Year 2, Cohorts 1–3 (n=20) | | Year 3, Cohorts 1 and 2 (n=10) | |
|---|-----|--|-----|--|------|
| Challenging (heavy workload, lack of resources, stressful) | 60% | Challenging (heavy workload, lack of resources, stressful, understaffed, high expectations of instructional practices) | 70% | Challenging (heavy workload, high expectations, stressful, lack of resources, chaotic environment, lack of teacher supports, understaffed) | 100% |
| Positive (have necessary materials and resources, teacher supports) | 55% | Positive (have necessary materials and resources, teacher supports, manageable workload) | 45% | Positive (have necessary materials and resources, teacher supports, collaboration, manageable workload) | 40% |

Source. Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campus Teacher Focus Groups, Gibson Consulting Group and Safal Partners, 2017, 2018, and 2019. Note. Year 1 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2017), Cohort 3 (fall 2018), and Cohort 4 principals (2019). Year 2 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2018), and Cohort 3 (fall 2019). Year 3 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2019).

Principals commented that *“Thanks to the grant, teachers have the resources that they need;”* *“resource-wise, I feel that teachers have everything they possibly need;”* and *“teaching conditions are pretty good compared to some of the charter schools I started out with.”* However, principals also acknowledged the tremendous workloads of teachers and the stress that creates. One principal at a school in its third year of operations elaborated on the challenging teaching conditions at their campus, including extra duties for teachers which are required to meet high expectations from parents:

“The teaching load here, to be honest, is too much, too much work to do. That's the one thing that is a big challenge for the teachers. That's why while [we are] hiring the people, that's the third step that we talk about it, is our expectations because I have to do that. If I don't hold that expectation high, I won't have those parents because the parents, they know that we do a bunch of extra stuff. Of course, to be able to do a bunch of those extra things, you have to work harder.”

–Year 3 Principal

A total of 60% of teacher focus groups at campuses in their first year of operations, 70% of teacher focus groups at campuses in their second year of operations, and 100% of teacher focus groups at campuses in their third year of serving students involved one or more teachers who described their working conditions as challenging. When compared to how principals responded, there is a clear discrepancy between how teachers and principals feel. Thirty percent of principals in their first year, 35% in their second year, and 50% in their third year of serving students perceived their teachers’ work conditions to be challenging. (See Tables 2.14 and 2.15.) Teachers expressed concerns that they are being stretched too thin with *“having to do interventions for tested subjects on top of their already heavy workload which cuts into their planning period,”* *“being assigned leadership positions in addition to teaching duties,”* and having to *“teach a new curriculum.”* One teacher at a school in their third year of serving

students talked about the heavy workload and the stress associated with it: *“Then they have those additional stressors ... that's the way I feel with the work that we're getting because it's a lot. It's a lot of work, where I feel like we take it home. I try not to take it home, but I'm taking it home.”* Another teacher from a charter school start-up grantee campus in their second year of operations called the workload unrealistic, and as much as they love working with the kids, they won't be returning to their school.

“I think our workload is not realistic. I think it's always causing teachers either a lot of stress and anxiety. Actually, I know that that is the case, ... it's like having to always choose what you have to sacrifice in order to accomplish something else. Which I think is really unfortunate because it either means sacrificing some part of your work and instruction or preparation or, and more often, unfortunately, some part of your personal life to the point. ... I don't plan to teach next year because it's to the point that [the workload is too heavy]. ... I don't think I can do another year like this year.”

–Year 2 Teacher

Approaches to Developing and Maintaining a Positive School Climate and Improving Student Behavior

As Table 2.16 shows, over half of the principals ranked development of strong teacher-student relationships as the first or second most impactful approach for maintaining positive interactions between teachers and students and among students, regardless of whether a charter school start-up grantee is in their first (57%), second (52%), or third (53%) year of serving students. Setting clear behavioral expectations was ranked by principals as the second most impactful approach, followed by effective student engagement in the classroom.

Table 2.16 Most Impactful Approaches in Maintaining Positive Student-to-Teacher and Student-to-Student Interactions: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Impactful, by Year of Serving Students

| Year 1, Cohorts 1–4 (n=28) | | Year 2, Cohorts 1–3 (n=27) | | Year 3, Cohorts 1 and 2 (n=15) | |
|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|
| 1. Development of strong teacher-student relationships | 57% | 1. Development of strong teacher-student relationships | 52% | 1. Development of strong teacher-student relationships | 53% |
| 2. Clear behavioral expectations | 39% | 2. Clear behavioral expectations | 48% | 2. Clear behavioral expectations | 40% |
| 3. Effective student engagement in the classroom | 32% | 3. Effective student engagement in the classroom | 41% | 3. Effective student engagement in the classroom | 20% |
| 4. Effective communications with parents | 21% | 4. Proactive steps to curb misbehavior in the classroom | 30% | 4. Effective communications with parents | 20% |
| 5. Proactive steps to curb misbehavior in the classroom | 21% | 5. Effective communications with parents | 19% | 5. Proactive steps to curb misbehavior in the classroom | 20% |

Source. Charter School Campus Principal Survey, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018, 2019, and 2020. Note. Year 1 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2017), Cohort 3 principals (fall 2018), and Cohort 4 principals (fall 2019). Year 2 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2018), and Cohort 3 principals (fall 2019). Year 3 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2019).

During interviews with principals, the evaluation team asked principals to discuss approaches used to reduce student behavioral issues. During these interviews, school leaders discussed developing relationships with students, having consistent parent communications around behavioral expectations, utilizing restorative discipline practices, and using positive reinforcement as some of the most effective ways to reduce student behavioral issues.²² A principal at a school in their third year of serving students felt that *“Our number one thing here is that we all have a relationship with our kids and the better the relationship, the less likely they are to have any discipline issues”*; while another principal at a brand new charter school in its first year of operation talked about parent communications being key to understanding student behavior; *“talking with parents and understanding from their perspective what the child needed [helped behavioral issues]. The other thing that’s been really helpful for us in our communication with parents is them telling us what’s working at home.”*

One school leader referenced restorative discipline practices as an effective method to reduce behavioral issues, saying that *“allowing kids the opportunity to understand your why also makes a really big difference”* in improving student behavior at their campus. Another principal described how they operationalize restorative discipline practices at their school to improve student behavior: *“Our advisory period is built around compass circles. ... This is just like a circle time, restorative [discipline] practices time for each cohort to sit and talk and talk about issues that we face at the school, talk about issues that they’ve faced in their lives and ask and answer questions with one or more staff members present. That’s been a super effective culture-building piece for us.”*

²² Restorative discipline is a relational approach to building school climate and addressing student behavior. The approach fosters belonging over exclusion, social engagement over control, and meaningful accountability over punishment.

Summary of Key Findings

The most impactful, important, and effective start-up, organizational, and instructional practices noted by principals through survey and interview responses, and confirmed by teachers during focus group sessions, include the following:

Charter School Start-Up Planning

- Principals at charter start-up grantee campuses shared that determining school needs, practices, and developing processes related to hiring, onboarding, and training new staff were among the most important when getting a school up and running. School leaders at charter school start-up grantee campuses in their first year of operations were more inclined to discuss stakeholder communications as a key start-up activity, while principals at campuses in their second and third years were more inclined to elaborate on the importance of hiring and getting staff and teachers up to speed.
- As charter school campuses matured from the first to the third year of operation, principals tended to focus more intensely on improving the quality of instructional practices through the development of effective support systems for teachers.
- According to principals at charter start-up grantee campuses, CMOs and their school districts served in a mentor role providing support and feedback for principals. As campuses matured from the first to the third year of serving students, CMOs and districts tended to provide greater operational support for new schools (e.g., purchasing educational materials, providing curriculum or curricular support, developing materials and structure for teacher trainings and student orientations, supporting transportation needs, providing student recruitment assistance, working with external vendors for various services, coordinating food services, and providing guidance related to grant expenditures and school operational policies).
- School leaders reported several challenges related to starting a new school, including enrolling student, staffing their schools, overcoming financial issues, securing adequate facilities and supplies, and managing difficulties with communicating school goals to stakeholders (e.g., parents and students). Principals at campuses in their second and third year of serving students were more inclined to discuss how the challenges associated with attracting talented educators can be challenging and how it is difficult to hire when grade levels are experiencing enrollment challenges and the number of teachers needed is not clear.

Organizational Practices

- Regardless of whether a charter school start-up grantee campus was in their first, second, or third year, using student data to inform instruction, hiring exemplary teachers to support other teachers, maximizing instructional time, and using classroom observations to regularly monitor instructional quality were consistently ranked by principals as being among the five most important practices related to executing the campus's mission. However, concentrating on maximizing instructional time rose in importance as charter schools matured from their first to third years of operation.

- During interviews, principals at charter school start-up grantee campuses stressed the importance of effective and consistent communications with teachers, students, and parents as an important organizational practice. Principals at campuses in their first and second years of operation also noted the importance of establishing clear roles and responsibilities for teachers and staff.
- Principals rated having regular individualized teacher-parent communications and a system for parents to monitor student attendance, grades, and progress emerged as two most commonly noted effective methods for encouraging parent involvement in their student’s education.
- Regular individualized communications between teachers and parents was deemed the most effective communication method to engage parents by principals at campuses during their first and second year of serving students; while parent-teacher conferences were rated as the most effective method for getting parents involved in their child’s education.

Instructional Practices

- Regardless of whether a campus was in their first, second or third year of operations, establishing positive relationships between students and teachers, maximizing learning time, and the use of formative data in assessments to guide instruction were rated by principals as one of the top five most frequently observed and most impactful instructional practices. The use of hands-on activities in class with a variety of different modalities also emerged as an impactful practice from the perspective of charter school start-up grantee campus principals.
- At campuses in their first, second, and third year of operations, principals rated the review of student performance data with teachers as the most impactful teacher support for improving instruction. As campuses matured from their first to their third year of operation, providing feedback to teachers based on formally scheduled observations was more likely to be rated as one of the most impactful teacher supports.
- Teachers at start-up grantee campuses in their second and third years of operation were more likely to note the frequency and importance of communications and collaboration with other teachers and the use of instructional rounds where they visit the classrooms of other teachers as important supports.
- For three of the four CLASS observational domains — Emotional Support, Instructional Support, and Student Engagement — the mean CLASS scores tended to dip in the second year of serving students before rising back to year 1 levels in the third year of operation. On the other hand, CLASS observation scores for the Classroom Organization domain showed gradual improvements as charter school start-up grantees moved from their first to second to third year of serving students.
- When compared to CLASS results at high-performing charter school campuses in Texas, Public Charter School Start-Up Grant recipients received higher CLASS observation scores for the

Emotional Support and Student Engagement domains than high-performing charter schools, but lower Instructional Support domain scores. The mean Classroom Organization scores for charter school start-up grantees were lower than high-performing charter schools in their first year of operation, comparable in their second year of operation, and higher in their third year of operation.

- Principals felt that a variety of in-class interventions (e.g., small groups, differentiated, and individualized instruction), along with strong teacher-student connections and out-of-class, in-school interventions (e.g., tutoring labs and targeted pull-out instruction by interventionists), were the most effective approaches to closing the achievement gap for educationally disadvantaged students at risk of dropping out of school.
- Small group instruction in class was rated by principals as the most effective methods for closing the achievement gap for persistently low-performing students, and the proportion of principals rating this as the first or second most impactful approach grew substantially as start-up grantee campuses mature from the first to the third year of serving students.

Campus Climate and Staff Morale

- Across most of the campus climate measures, such as teachers trusting each other, teachers trusting their principal, a culture of professionalism, value placed on teamwork and collaboration, and staff morale level, there was a marked spike in agreement among school leaders between the first and second year of operation that these factors were present, followed by a drop in their third year of serving students. Across all years, the highest-rated item was having a high value placed on teamwork and collaboration.
- Principals felt that a demonstration of genuine care for students and academic growth were the two most important factors associated with creating a positive school climate.
- While principals and teachers tended to be in general agreement about whether a positive climate existed at their campuses, teachers at campuses in their third year of operation were more inclined to express that the climate was poor or negative.
- Regardless of how long their campus had been serving students, the majority of principals felt that working conditions at their charter school start-up grantee campuses were positive, with an increased proportion of principals at campuses in their third year of serving students recognizing challenges related to heavy workloads, high expectations, and stress on teachers. Meanwhile, smaller percentages of teachers described the working conditions as positive compared to principals. As schools moved from the first to the third year of operations, increasing percentages of teachers characterized working conditions as challenging due to unrealistic workloads, high expectations, and lack of teacher supports, which resulted in high stress levels for teachers.
- Principals at campuses in their first, second, and third years of serving students felt that the development of strong teacher-student relationships, the establishment of clear behavioral

expectations, and effective student engagement in the classroom were the most impactful approaches to maintaining a positive classroom environment.

- Teachers and principals also discussed the development of relationships with students, parent communications consistency in behavioral expectations, restorative discipline practices, parent communications, and positive reinforcement as some of the most effective ways to reduce student behavioral issues.

Chapter 3 — Charter School Start-Up Grantee Outcomes

This chapter presents findings from a series of statistical analyses that examine the relationship between student enrollment at campuses funded through the Texas Public Charter School Start-Up Grant Program and academic outcomes, for both the 2017–18 and 2018–19 school years. This chapter also includes results related to how enrollment at charter school start-up grantees may have differentially impacted various student groups. Data from Cohort 1, 2, and 3 start-up grantees were included in this series of statistical analyses.

Data and Methods

The evaluation team used a quasi-experimental design with matched comparison groups to estimate the effect of enrollment in a charter school start-up grantee campus during the 2017–18 and 2018–19 school years on the following student outcomes:

- STAAR-Reading;
- STAAR-Mathematics;
- Algebra I EOC exam; and
- English I EOC exam.

Students who attended charter school start-up grantee campuses during either the 2017–18 or 2018–19 school years were matched using propensity score matching (see Appendix B for details) with comparable students at traditional public school campuses in order to identify a group of students enrolled in traditional public school campuses who share similar prior test scores and other student and school characteristics. Statistical models were then developed that controlled for differences in student characteristics and prior academic achievement between students enrolled at the two different types of campuses. These statistical models were used to estimate the effect of enrollment at a start-up grantee campus on various student academic outcomes.

The statistical model for estimating effects of enrollment compares the average outcomes on the STAAR-Mathematics, STAAR-Reading, Algebra I EOC, and English I EOC exams for students attending charter school start-up grantee campuses to the matched comparison students using a regression approach that accounts for students' baseline characteristics. The regression approach combines grade levels and groups campuses by the grade range they serve. Because the analysis is quasi-experimental, these control variables play the important role of accounting for any initial differences between the charter school start-up grantee students and comparison group students before the former group entered a charter school start-up grantee campus. Students attending a charter school start-up grantee campus are included in the analysis for the time period for which they were enrolled.²³

²³ In a prior report on outcomes (Davila et al. 2020), an alternative approach was employed. In that report, any student who ever enrolled in a grantee charter was kept in the charter analysis group regardless of whether the student remained in a charter school campus or transferred to another school. Both methods were examined for this analysis with only the results of one presented here as the results are almost identical between the two methods. See Appendix A for more details.

The evaluation also examined whether campus effects differed across the following seven student groups:

1. Females (versus males)
2. Race/ethnicity
3. Students receiving special education (SPED) services
4. Students classified as economically disadvantaged
5. Students classified as English language learners (ELs)
6. Students classified as at risk of dropping out
7. Students who are low-performing and educationally-disadvantaged

Methods for Descriptive Analyses

In addition to the analyses examining student outcomes using the matched comparison methodology, the evaluation also included descriptive analyses to examine differences between students enrolled in charter school start-up grantee campuses and students in traditional public schools in feeder districts. The first set of descriptive analyses looks at the average STAAR-Mathematics and STAAR-Reading scores separately for elementary and middle school campuses, comparing average scores for students enrolled at start-up grantee campuses, matched students enrolled at traditional public school campuses, and all students enrolled at traditional public campuses in feeder districts. These average scores are presented both in scale scores and in standard deviation units. The main average scores presented are the scores used as the outcome measure for the analysis in that year, either 2017–18 or 2018–19. Also presented are the average baseline scores, which are the average of the most recent test scores available for each student prior to their entering the charter school start-up grantee campus. See Appendix B for more details.

The second set of descriptive analyses examine data on indicators of school readiness for kindergarten students and early reading indicators for early elementary students. Because these indicators occur prior to Grade 3, the grade level when STAAR testing begins, no baseline test score data is available for these students, so a regression-based impact analysis is not feasible. Instead, these descriptive analyses present, for the 2017–18 and 2018–19 school years, the campus average values of these indicators for each charter school start-up grantee elementary campus. Also presented is the average value for these indicators for elementary schools in feeder districts, to provide context for interpreting the average values. This descriptive analysis presents simple average values for these indicators and should not be interpreted as an impact analysis. See Appendix B for more details.

Findings

Relationship between Student Enrollment in a Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campus and Outcomes

The evaluation estimated the effects of enrollment in a charter school start-up grantee campus on the following student outcomes: STAAR-Reading, STAAR-Mathematics, Algebra I EOC exams, and English I EOC exams. To facilitate combining data across grades and years, test scores were standardized across each subject, grade, and year, using information from the entire statewide Texas student population. Results presented in these standardized units can be described, relative to the standard deviation of the overall test score distribution, as standard deviation units. More detailed information on this process and outcomes are found in Appendix F.

Results for Students Enrolled at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Elementary Campuses

Before examining results from the statistical model, it is helpful to look at the descriptive average STAAR-Mathematics and STAAR-Reading scores for elementary school students. Table 3.1 shows those scores for three groups of students: (1) students enrolled at start-up grantee elementary campuses, (2) matched students enrolled at traditional public elementary campuses from feeder districts, and (3) all students enrolled at traditional public elementary campuses in feeder districts.²⁴ These average STAAR scores are presented for both the 2017–18 and 2018–19 school years, and in both scale scores and standard deviation units, to allow for easier comparison.

Students enrolled at charter school start-up grantee elementary campuses (column 1, Table 3.1) have average STAAR-Mathematics and STAAR-Reading scores below the state average, both at baseline and in the analysis year, for both 2017–18 and 2018–19.²⁵ This is shown by the negative average scores in standard deviation units, as a score at the statewide average would be 0.00 in standard deviation units. Similarly, comparing column 1 with column 3, students enrolled at start-up grantee elementary campuses have average STAAR-Mathematics and STAAR-Reading scores below the average for students in feeder districts in both years, both at baseline and in the analysis year.

²⁴ Feeder district is defined by where the students attending the charter school would have attended had they remained in traditional public schools. For this evaluation, campus feeders were defined if at least five students enrolled in the charter school start-up grantee campus. Matched students were selected from feeder districts.

²⁵ The baseline year is defined as the most recent year for which the student has test score data prior to entering the charter school start-up grantee campus. See Appendix A for more details.

Table 3.1 Average STAAR¹-Mathematics and STAAR-Reading Scores for Cohort 1, 2, and 3 Elementary School Students, 2017–18 and 2018–19

| Test scores | Students enrolled at charter school start-up grantee elementary campuses | Matched students enrolled at traditional public elementary campuses | Students enrolled at traditional public elementary campuses in feeder district |
|--|--|---|--|
| 2017–18 analysis | | | |
| STAAR-Mathematics Scale Score | 1596 | 1595 | 1605 |
| STAAR-Mathematics score in standard deviation units | -0.10 | -0.11 | -0.01 |
| STAAR-Reading Scale Score | 1545 | 1544 | 1549 |
| STAAR-Reading score in standard deviation units | -0.07 | -0.08 | -0.01 |
| Baseline STAAR-Mathematics Scale Score | 1595 | 1596 | 1507 |
| Baseline STAAR-Mathematics score in standard deviation units | -0.18 | -0.18 | -0.02 |
| Baseline STAAR-Reading Scale Score | 1469 | 1469 | 1472 |
| Baseline STAAR-Reading score in standard deviation units | -0.11 | -0.11 | -0.01 |
| 2018–19 analysis | | | |
| STAAR-Mathematics Scale Score | 1589 | 1590 | 1618 |
| STAAR-Mathematics score in standard deviation units | -0.18 | -0.17 | 0.00 |
| STAAR-Reading Scale Score | 1538 | 1538 | 1552 |
| STAAR-Reading score in standard deviation units | -0.09 | -0.09 | 0.00 |
| Baseline STAAR-Mathematics Scale Score | 1511 | 1511 | 1522 |
| Baseline STAAR-Mathematics score in standard deviation units | -0.13 | -0.13 | -0.01 |
| Baseline STAAR-Reading Scale Score | 1467 | 1467 | 1473 |
| Baseline STAAR-Reading score in standard deviation units | -0.09 | -0.09 | -0.01 |

Source. Public Education Information Management System data, STAAR-Mathematics for Grades 3–8, Texas Education Agency, 2017–18 and 2018–19. Note. Test scores were standardized by subject, grade, and year, based on statewide means and standard deviations, with the statewide average defined as zero. Baseline test scores are from the most recent year for which the student has test score data prior to entering the charter school start-up grantee campus. Sample includes a total of includes 3,625 students attending Charter School Start-up Grantee campuses, 3,625 matched comparison students, and 349,108 students enrolled at traditional public campuses in feeder districts.

¹ State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

Average baseline STAAR-Mathematics and STAAR-Reading scores are identical for students enrolled at charter school start-up grantee elementary campuses (column 1, Table 3.1) and for matched students enrolled at traditional elementary campuses (column 2, Table 3.1). The similarities in scores attributable to the matching process which itself includes baseline test scores as a matching variable, so the two groups are expected to end up with almost identical average baseline scores.

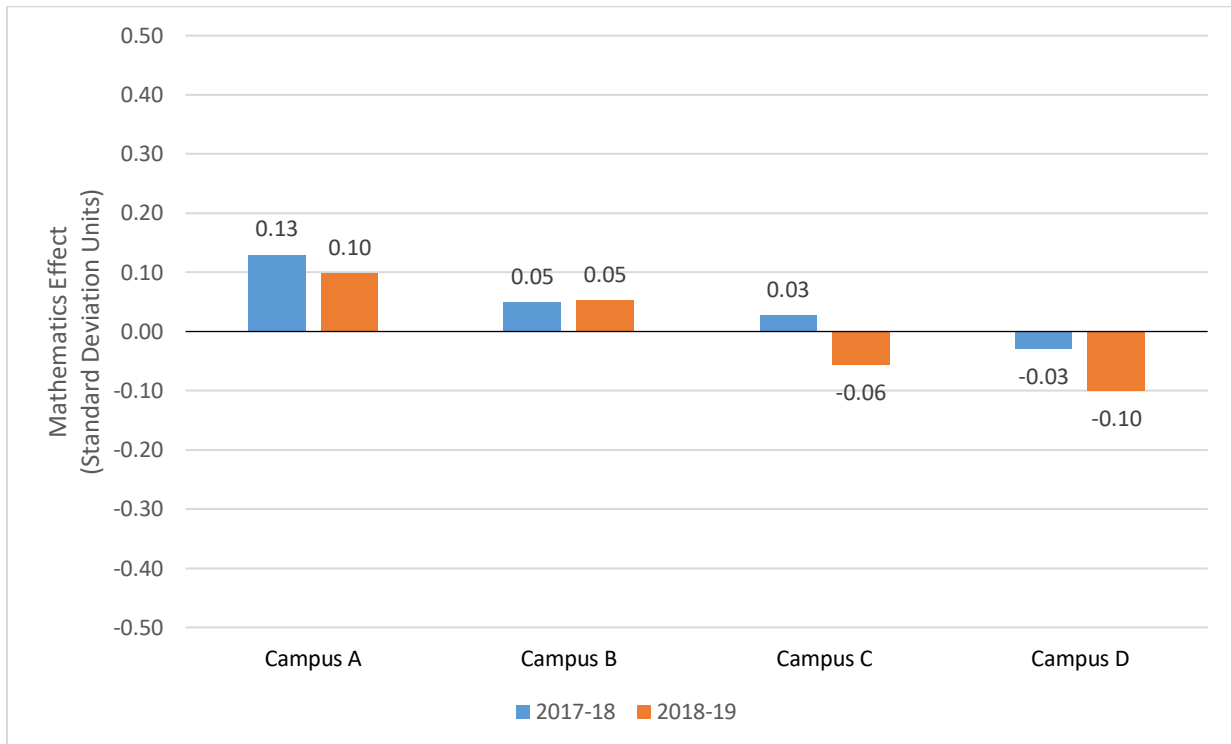
Because these two groups are matched to be identical at baseline, one simple method of comparing performance between the two groups is to compare average STAAR scores in the analysis year, since

both students in both groups began at the same test score levels on average. Comparing the STAAR-Mathematics and STAAR-Reading scores from the analysis year shows that average scores are almost the same between the two groups, indicating that it is unlikely there is any meaningful or significant difference in performance between the students from grantee campuses and their matched comparisons from traditional campuses on STAAR-Mathematics and STAAR-Reading outcomes.

This pattern of there being generally no significant differences between average STAAR-Mathematics and STAAR-Reading scores for students enrolled at charter school start-up grantee elementary campuses and matched students enrolled at traditional elementary campuses is confirmed by the analysis done using the statistical model. Figure 3.1 shows the 2017–18 and 2018–19 STAAR-Mathematics results for Cohort 1 elementary schools. After controlling for student and school characteristics, no start-up grantee campuses had either statistically higher or lower STAAR-Mathematics scores, compared with matched students enrolled in traditional public schools.²⁶ The overall average effect across the four Cohort 1 start-up grantee elementary campuses in STAAR-Mathematics was positive in 2017–18 (0.05 standard deviation units) and zero in 2018–19, which is not statistically different from zero in either year.

²⁶ Throughout this report, the term “significantly” indicates something that is statistically significant at the 5% level, meaning that there is less than a 5% chance that the difference is due to chance alone.

Figure 3.1 STAAR¹-Mathematics Outcomes for Cohort 1 Charter School Start-Up Grantee Elementary Campuses Compared to Matched Traditional Public Schools, 2017–18 and 2018–19



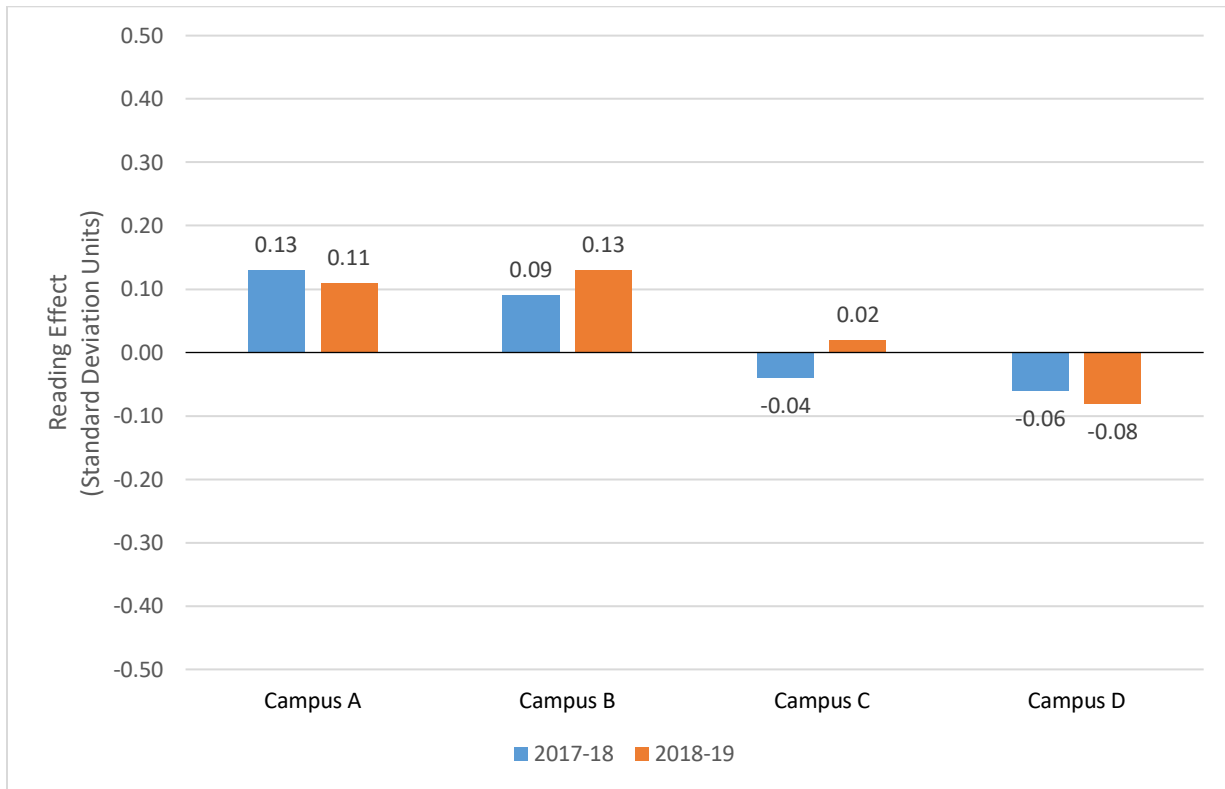
* Indicates statistically significant where $p < 0.05$. No scores shown on this figure are statistically significant.

Source. Public Education Information Management System data, STAAR-Mathematics for Grades 3-8, Texas Education Agency, 2017–18 and 2018–19. Note. Reported effects are statistically adjusted for student and school characteristics. Test scores were standardized by subject, grade, and year, based on statewide means and standard deviations. Sample size includes 1,961 students attending Charter School Start-up Grantee campuses and 1,961 matched comparison students. See Appendix F for full results and details.

¹ State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

Figure 3.2 shows the 2017–18 and 2018–19 STAAR-Reading results for Cohort 1 elementary schools. After controlling for student and school characteristics, no charter school start-up grantee campuses had significantly higher or lower STAAR-Reading scores compared to matched students enrolled in traditional public schools. The overall average effect across the four Cohort 1 elementary start-up grantee campuses was positive in 2017–18 (0.03 standard deviation units) and in 2018–19 (0.05 standard deviation units) and which is not statistically different from zero in either year.

Figure 3.2 STAAR¹-Reading Outcomes for Cohort 1 Charter School Start-Up Grantee Elementary Campuses Compared to Matched Traditional Public Schools, 2017–18 and 2018–19



* Indicates statistically significant where $p < 0.05$. No scores shown on this figure are statistically significant.

Source. Public Education Information Management System data, STAAR-Reading for Grades 3-8, Texas Education Agency, 2017–18 and 2018–19. Note. Reported effects are statistically adjusted for student and school characteristics. Test scores were standardized by subject, grade, and year, based on statewide means and standard deviations. Sample size includes 1,993 students attending Charter School Start-up Grantee campuses and 1,993 matched comparison students. See Appendix F for full results and details.

¹ State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

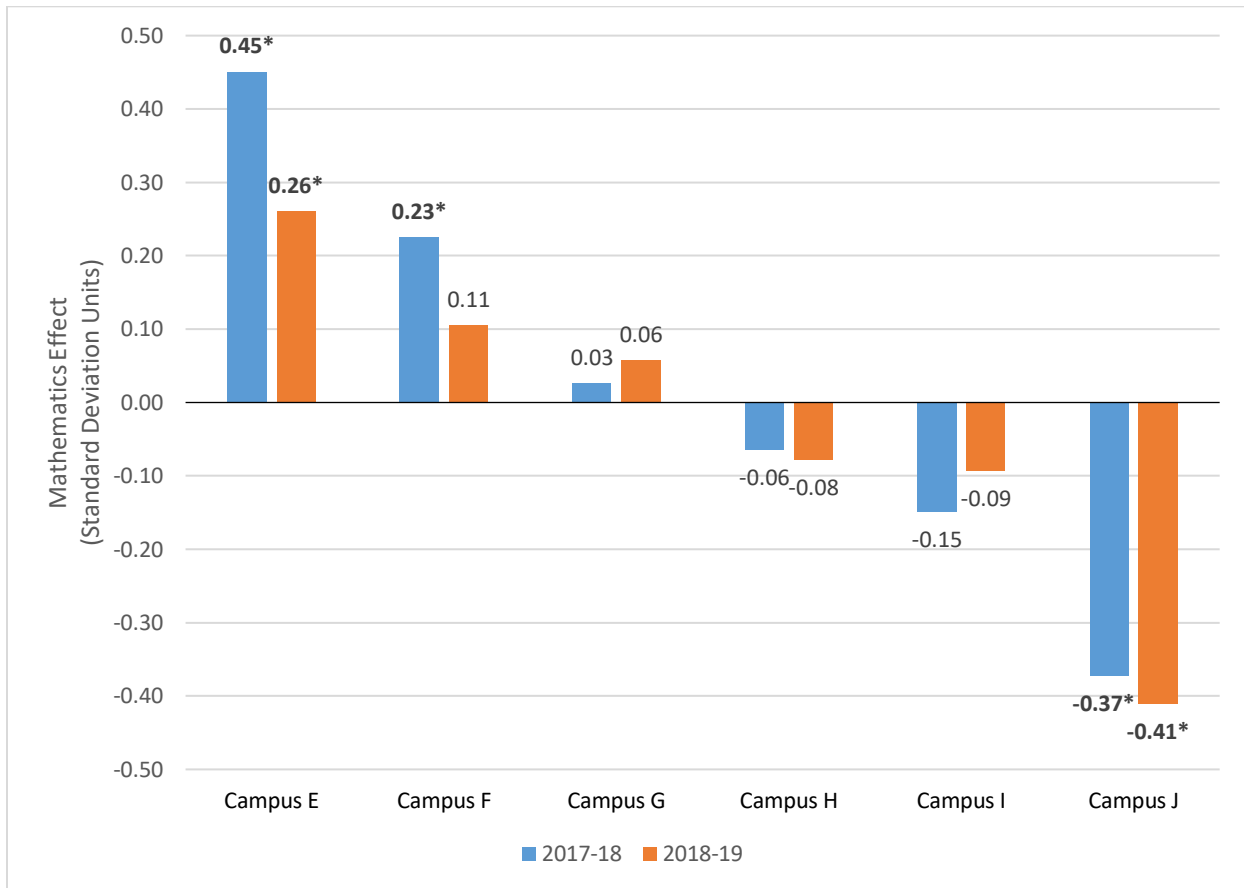
Figure 3.3 shows the 2017–18 and 2018–19 STAAR-Mathematics results for Cohort 2 elementary schools. After controlling for student and school characteristics, one campus, Campus E, had significantly higher STAAR-Mathematics scores in both years, compared to matched students enrolled in traditional public schools. On average, students enrolled in this campus scored 0.45 standard deviation units higher on the STAAR-Mathematics test than the comparison group STAAR in 2017–18 and 0.26 standard deviation units in 2018–19. Another campus, Campus F, had statistically higher STAAR-Mathematics scores in 2017–18, with students enrolled in this campus scoring on average 0.23 standard deviation units higher on the STAAR-Mathematics test than the comparison group STAAR in 2017–18.

One charter school start-up grantee campus, Campus J, had significantly lower STAAR-Mathematics scores in both years, compared with matched students enrolled in traditional public schools. On average, students enrolled in this campus scored 0.37 standard deviation units lower on the STAAR-Mathematics test than the comparison group STAAR in 2017–18 and 0.41 standard deviation units in 2018–19. The overall average effect across the six Cohort 2 start-up grantee elementary campuses in STAAR-Mathematics was positive in 2017–18 (0.02 standard deviation units) and negative in 2018–19 (-0.03 standard deviation units), which is not statistically different from zero in either year.

One way to think about the magnitude of an effect in standard deviation units is to calculate how far that effect would move a student in terms of their percentile rank on the STAAR-Mathematics test score distribution. Elementary students attending charter school start-up grantee campuses were on average performing at the 38th percentile on STAAR-Mathematics, prior to entering the start-up grantee campus, meaning that 38 percent of students in the state scored equal to or lower than them in that subject, grade, and year. A positive effect of 0.45 standard deviation units for Campus E in 2017–18 is approximately equivalent to the difference between a student scoring at the 38th percentile and a student scoring at the 56th percentile.²⁷ Similarly, a negative effect of 0.41 standard deviation units for Campus J in 2018–19 is approximately equivalent to the difference between a student scoring at the 38th percentile and a student scoring at the 24th percentile.

²⁷ These calculations assume a normal test score distribution and are generally very close to those generated using the actual test score distribution for all students in Texas.

Figure 3.3 STAAR¹-Mathematics Outcomes for Cohort 2 Charter School Start-Up Grantee Elementary Campuses Compared to Matched Traditional Public Schools, 2017–18 and 2018–19



* Indicates statistically significant where $p < 0.05$.

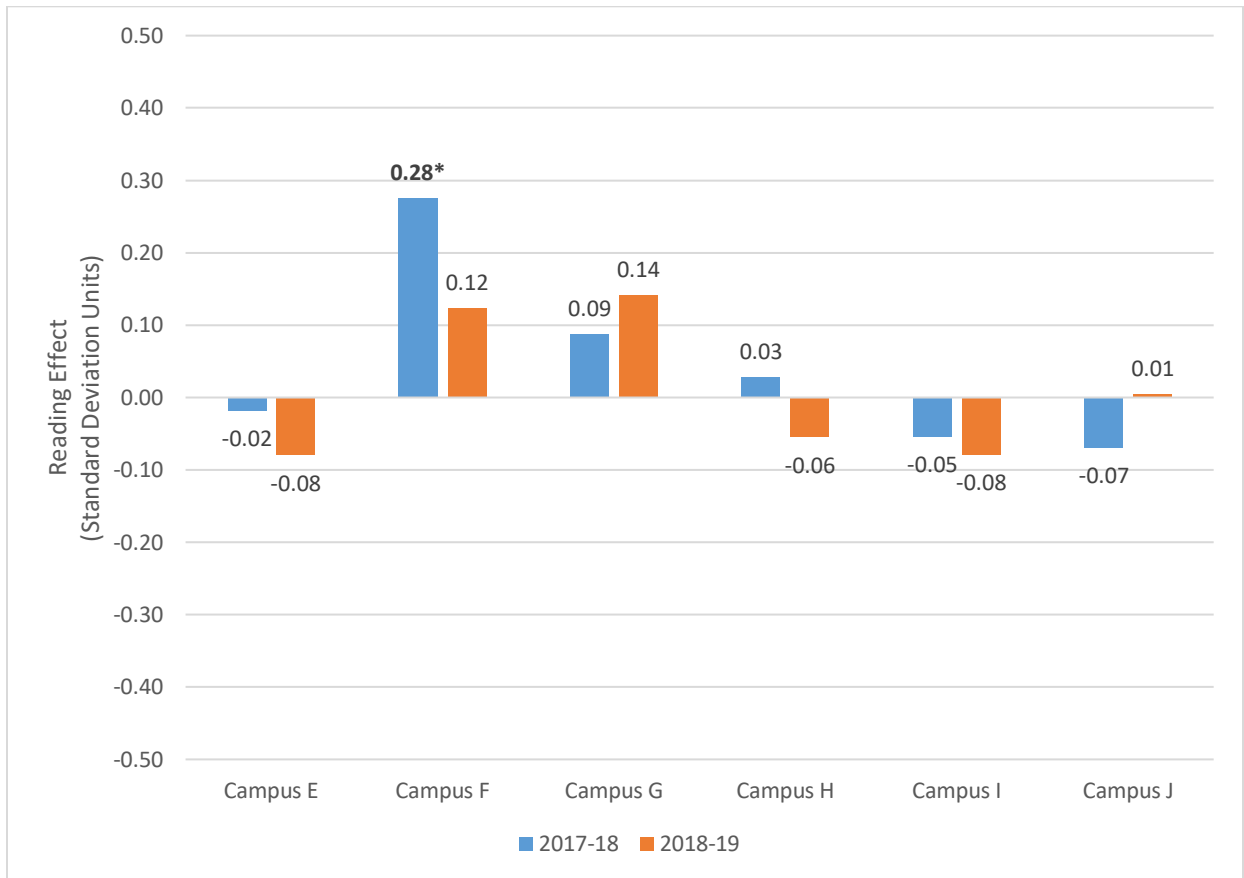
Source. Public Education Information Management System data, STAAR-Mathematics for Grades 3-8, Texas Education Agency, 2017–18 and 2018–19. Note. Reported effects are statistically adjusted for student and school characteristics. Test scores were standardized by subject, grade, and year, based on statewide means and standard deviations. Sample size includes 1,322 students attending Charter School Start-up Grantee campuses and 1,322 matched comparison students. See Appendix F for full results and details.

¹ State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

Figure 3.4 shows the 2017–18 and 2018–19 STAAR-Reading results for Cohort 2 elementary schools. After controlling for student and school characteristics, one campus, Campus F, had significantly higher STAAR-Reading scores in 2017–18, compared with matched students enrolled in traditional public schools. On average, students enrolled in this campus scored 0.28 standard deviation units higher on the STAAR-Reading test than the comparison group in 2017–18, approximately equivalent to the difference between a student scoring at the 40th percentile and a student scoring at the 52nd percentile.

No other Cohort 2 elementary campuses had significantly higher or lower Reading scores in either year, compared with matched students enrolled in traditional public schools. The overall average effect across the six Cohort 2 charter school start-up grantee elementary campuses was positive in 2017–18 (0.04 standard deviation units) and in 2018–19 (0.01 standard deviation units), which is not statistically different from zero in either year.

Figure 3.4 STAAR¹-Reading Outcomes for Cohort 2 Charter School Start-Up Grantee Elementary Campuses Compared to Matched Traditional Public Schools, 2017–18 and 2018–19



* Indicates statistically significant where $p < 0.05$.

Source. Public Education Information Management System data, STAAR-Reading for Grades 3-8, Texas Education Agency, 2017–18 and 2018–19. Note. Reported effects are statistically adjusted for student and school characteristics. Test scores were standardized by subject, grade, and year, based on statewide means and standard deviations. Sample size includes 1,341 students attending Charter School Start-up Grantee campuses and 1,341 matched comparison students. See Appendix F for full results and details.

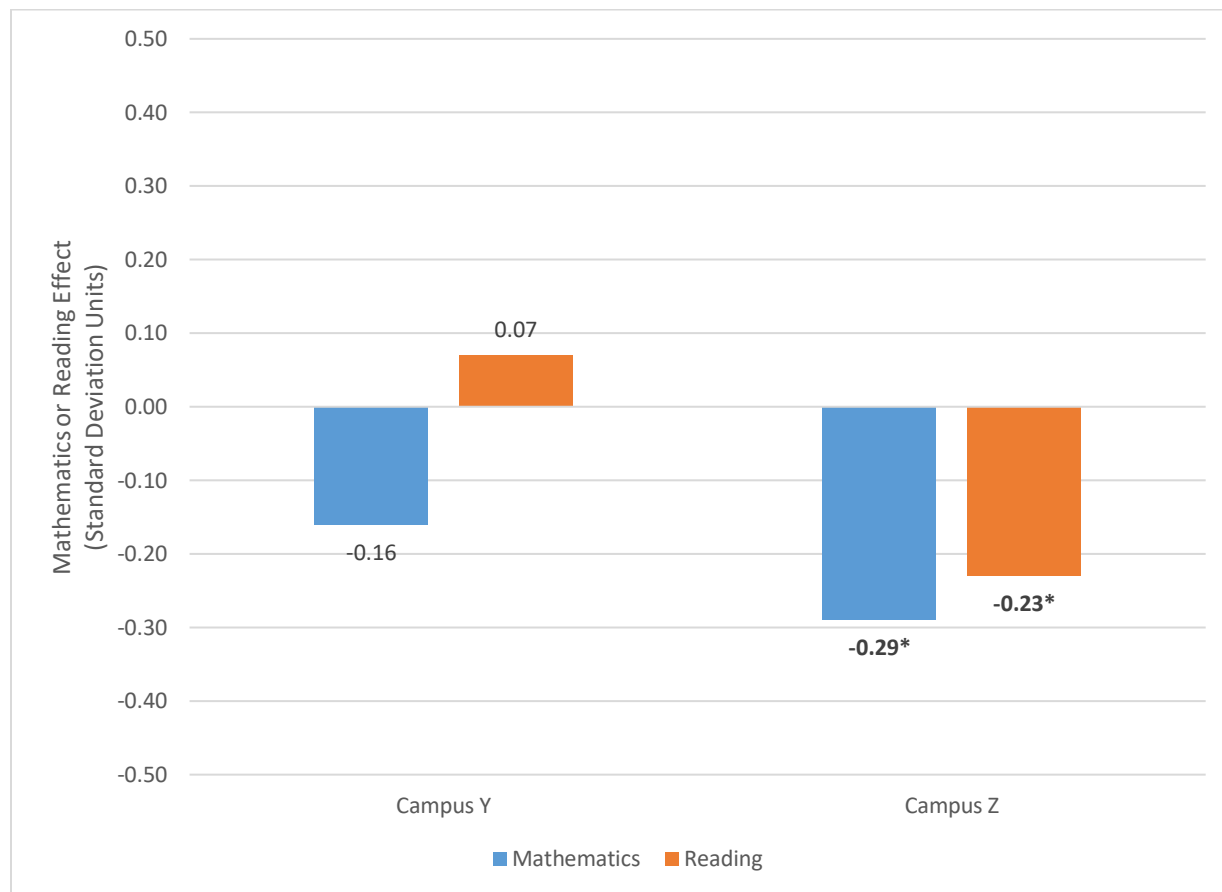
¹ State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

Figure 3.5 shows the 2018–19 STAAR-Mathematics and STAAR-Reading results for Cohort 3 elementary schools. After controlling for student and school characteristics, one campus, Campus Z, had significantly lower STAAR-Mathematics and STAAR-Reading scores, compared with matched students enrolled in traditional public schools. On average, students enrolled in this campus 0.29 standard deviation units lower on the STAAR-Mathematics test than the comparison group, which is approximately equivalent to the difference between a student scoring at the 38th percentile and a student scoring at the 28th percentile. Enrollment in Campus Z was also associated with a decrease in scores on the STAAR-Reading test of 0.23 standard deviation units.

No Cohort 3 elementary campuses had significantly higher STAAR-Mathematics or STAAR-Reading scores, compared with matched students enrolled in traditional public schools. The overall average effect across the two Cohort 3 start-up grantee elementary campuses was significantly negative for STAAR-Mathematics (-0.23 standard deviation units), approximately equivalent to the difference

between a student scoring at the 38th percentile and a student scoring at the 30th percentile. The overall average effect for STAAR-Reading was -0.08 standard deviation units, which is not statistically different from zero.

Figure 3.5 STAAR¹-Mathematics and Reading Outcomes for Cohort 3 Charter School Start-Up Grantee Elementary Campuses Compared to Matched Traditional Public Schools, 2018–19



* Indicates statistically significant where $p < 0.05$.

Source. Public Education Information Management System data, STAAR-Mathematics for Grades 3–8, STAAR-Reading for Grades 3–8, Texas Education Agency, 2018–19. Note. Reported effects are statistically adjusted for student and school characteristics. Test scores were standardized by subject, grade, and year, based on statewide means and standard deviations. Sample size includes 291 students attending Charter School Start-up Grantee campuses and 291 matched comparison students. See Appendix F for full results and details.

¹ State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

For charter school start-up grantee elementary schools, while some campuses show significantly positive or negative effects, the overall average effects are generally not significantly different from zero, except for the negative average effect for Cohort 3 STAAR-Mathematics. Campus performance is highly correlated over time within subjects, with correlations ranging from 0.75 to 0.96 (where 0 is completely uncorrelated and 1 is perfectly correlated). Campus performance is also positively correlated across subjects within years—highly for Cohort 1 (0.89 for STAAR-Mathematics and 0.93 for STAAR-Reading), less highly for Cohort 2 (0.45 for STAAR-Mathematics, 0.10 for STAAR-Reading). These consistently positive correlations indicate that campuses that perform well in one year tend to perform

well in the following year in the same subject, and that campuses that perform well in one subject tend to also perform well in the other subject.

Results for Students Enrolled at Charter School Start-up Grantee Middle School Campuses

As with the elementary school analysis, it is helpful before examining the statistical model results for middle schools to first look at the descriptive average STAAR-Mathematics and STAAR-Reading scores for middle school students. Table 3.2 shows those scores for three groups of students: (1) students enrolled at charter school start-up grantee middle school campuses, (2) matched students enrolled at traditional public middle school campuses, and (3) all students enrolled at traditional public middle school campuses in feeder districts.

Students enrolled at start-up grantee middle school campuses (column 1, Table 3.2) have average STAAR-Mathematics and STAAR-Reading below the state average, both at baseline and in the analysis year, for both 2017–18 and 2018–19. This is shown by the negative average scores in standard deviation units, as a score at the statewide average would be 0.00 in standard deviation units. Similarly, comparing column 1 with column 3, students enrolled at charter school start-up grantee middle school campuses have average STAAR-Mathematics and STAAR-Reading below the average for students in feeder districts in both years, both at baseline and in the analysis year.

Table 3.2 Average STAAR¹-Mathematics and STAAR-Reading Scores for Cohort 1, 2, and 3 Middle School Students, 2017–18 and 2018–19

| Test scores | Students enrolled at charter school start-up grantee middle school campuses | Matched students enrolled at traditional public middle school campuses | Students enrolled at traditional public middle school campuses in feeder district |
|--|---|--|---|
| 2017–18 analysis | | | |
| STAAR-Mathematics Scale Score | 1674 | 1673 | 1681 |
| STAAR-Mathematics score in standard deviation units | -0.02 | -0.02 | -0.01 |
| STAAR-Reading Scale Score | 1657 | 1655 | 1677 |
| STAAR-Reading score in standard deviation units | -0.06 | -0.07 | -0.01 |
| Baseline STAAR-Mathematics Scale Score | 1602 | 1602 | 1623 |
| Baseline STAAR-Mathematics score in standard deviation units | -0.14 | -0.14 | -0.02 |
| Baseline STAAR-Reading Scale Score | 1562 | 1562 | 1575 |
| Baseline STAAR-Reading score in standard deviation units | -0.09 | -0.09 | -0.02 |
| 2018–19 analysis | | | |
| STAAR-Mathematics Scale Score | 1673 | 1674 | 1687 |
| STAAR-Mathematics score in standard deviation units | -0.05 | -0.04 | 0.00 |
| STAAR-Reading Scale Score | 1662 | 1663 | 1672 |
| STAAR-Reading score in standard deviation units | -0.06 | -0.06 | -0.02 |
| Baseline STAAR-Mathematics Scale Score | 1622 | 1622 | 1632 |
| Baseline STAAR-Mathematics score in standard deviation units | -0.08 | -0.08 | -0.02 |
| Baseline STAAR-Reading Scale Score | 1560 | 1560 | 1565 |
| Baseline STAAR-Reading score in standard deviation units | -0.05 | -0.05 | -0.02 |

Source: Public Education Information Management System data, STAAR-Mathematics for Grades 3–8, Texas Education Agency, 2017–18 and 2018–19. Note. Test scores were standardized by subject, grade, and year, based on statewide means and standard deviations, with the statewide average defined as zero. Baseline test scores are from the most recent year for which the student has test score data prior to entering the charter school start-up grantee campus. Sample includes a total of includes 3,146 students attending Charter School Start-up Grantee campuses, 3,146 matched comparison students, and 415,691 students enrolled at traditional public campuses in feeder districts.

¹ State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

Average baseline STAAR-Mathematics and STAAR-Reading scores are identical for students enrolled at charter school start-up grantee middle school campuses (column 1; Table 3.3) and for matched students enrolled at traditional middle school campuses (column 2; Table 3.3), due to matching on baseline test scores, so differences in average performance between the two groups can be simply assessed by comparing average STAAR scores in the analysis year since both students in both groups began at the same test score levels on average. Comparing those analysis years, STAAR-Mathematics and STAAR-Reading scores shows that average scores are almost the same between the two groups, indicating that

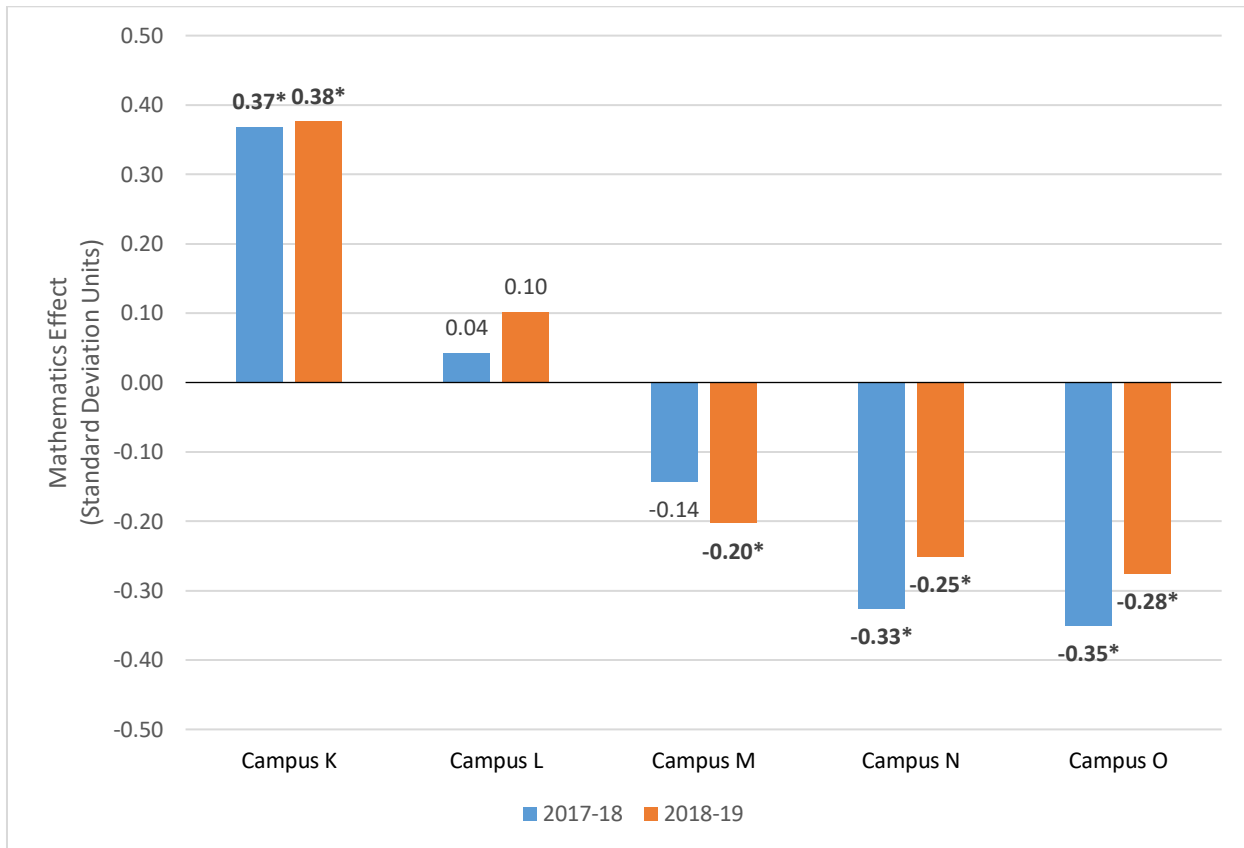
it is unlikely there is any meaningful or significant difference in performance between the two groups on STAAR-Mathematics and STAAR-Reading outcomes.

As with elementary schools, this pattern of there being generally no significant differences between average STAAR-Mathematics and STAAR-Reading scores for students enrolled at charter school start-up grantee middle school campuses and matched students enrolled at traditional middle school campuses is confirmed by the analysis using the statistical model. Figure 3.6 shows the 2017–18 and 2018–19 STAAR-Mathematics results for Cohort 1 middle schools. After controlling for student and school characteristics, one campus, Campus K, had significantly higher STAAR-Mathematics scores in both years, compared with matched students enrolled in traditional public schools. On average, students enrolled in this campus scored 0.37 standard deviation units higher on the Mathematics test than the comparison group in 2017–18 and 0.38 standard deviation units in 2018–19, approximately equivalent to the difference between a student scoring at the 39th percentile and a student scoring at the 54th percentile.

Two charter school start-up grantee campuses had significantly lower STAAR-Mathematics scores in 2017–18, and three had significantly lower scores in 2018–19, compared with matched students enrolled in traditional public schools. On average, students enrolled in Campus N scored 0.33 standard deviation units lower on the STAAR-Mathematics test than the comparison group in 2017–18 and 0.25 standard deviation units in 2018–19. On average, students enrolled in Campus O scored 0.35 standard deviation units lower on the STAAR-Mathematics test than the comparison group in 2017–18, approximately equivalent to the difference between a student scoring at the 39th percentile and a student scoring at the 26th percentile, and a decrease in scores of 0.28 standard deviation units in 2018–19. On average, students enrolled in Campus M scored 0.20 standard deviation units lower on the STAAR-Mathematics test than the comparison group in 2018–19.

The overall average effect across the five Cohort 1 middle school charter school start-up grantees in STAAR-Mathematics was negative in 2017–18 (-0.08 standard deviation units) and in 2018–19 (-0.05 standard deviation units), neither of which are statistically different from zero.

Figure 3.6 STAAR¹-Mathematics Outcomes for Cohort 1 Charter School Start-Up Grantee Middle School Campuses Compared to Matched Traditional Public Schools, 2017–18 and 2018–19



* Indicates statistically significant where $p < 0.05$.

Source. Public Education Information Management System data, STAAR-Mathematics for Grades 3-8, Texas Education Agency, 2017–18 and 2018–19. Note. Reported effects are statistically adjusted for student and school characteristics. Test scores were standardized by subject, grade, and year, based on statewide means and standard deviations. Sample size includes 1,296 students attending Charter School Start-up Grantee campuses and 1,296 matched comparison students. See Appendix F for full results and details.

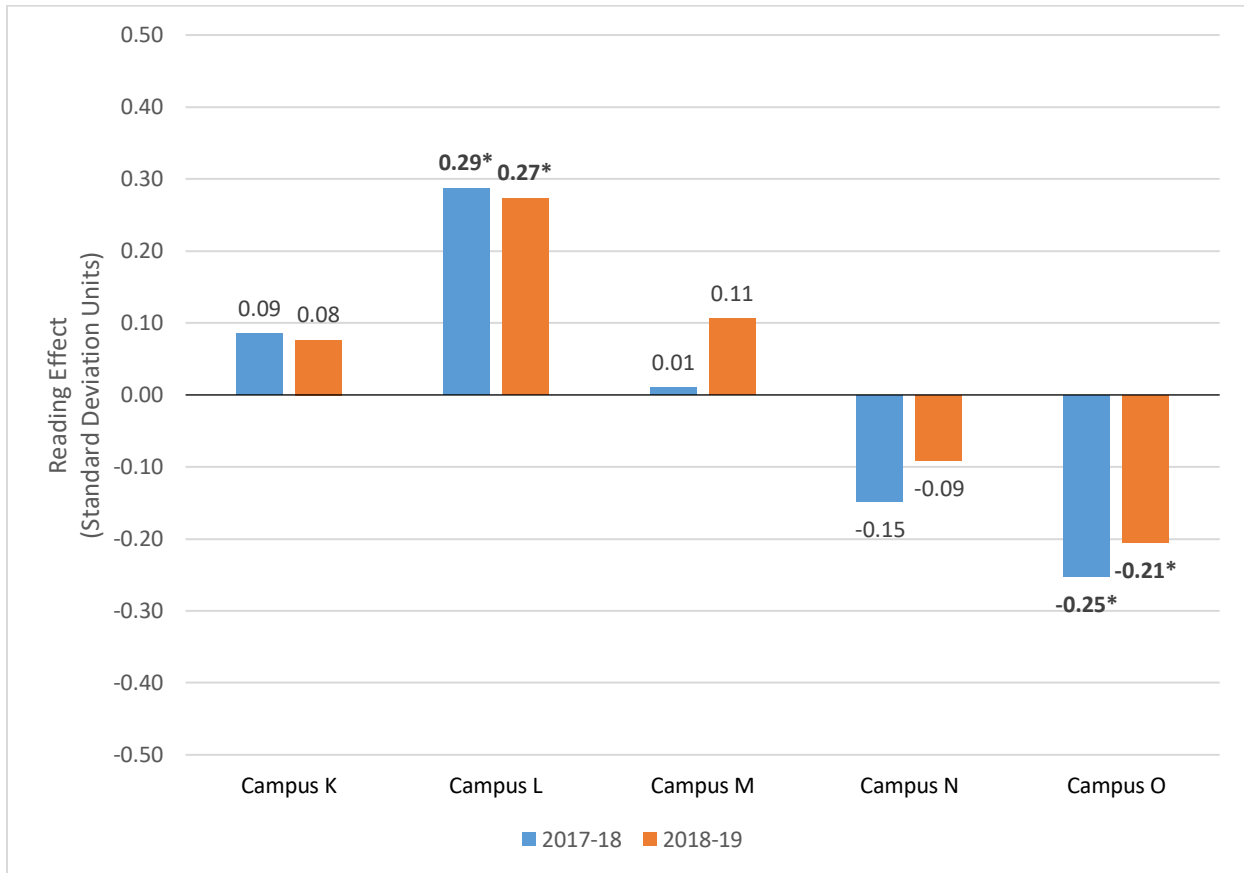
¹ State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

Figure 3.7 shows the 2017–18 and 2018–19 STAAR-Reading results for Cohort 1 middle schools. After controlling for student and school characteristics, one campus, Campus L, had significantly higher STAAR-Reading scores in both years, compared with matched students enrolled in traditional public schools. On average, students enrolled in this campus scored 0.29 standard deviation units higher on the STAAR-Reading test than the comparison group in 2017–18, approximately equivalent to the difference between a student scoring at the 41st percentile and a student scoring at the 53rd percentile, and 0.27 standard deviation units in 2018–19.

One charter school start-up grantee campus had significantly lower STAAR-Reading scores in 2017–18 and 2018–19 compared to matched students enrolled in traditional public schools. On average, students enrolled in Campus O scored 0.25 standard deviation units lower on the STAAR-Reading test than the comparison group STAAR in 2017–18, which is approximately equivalent to the difference between a student scoring at the 41st percentile and a student scoring at the 32nd percentile, and 0.21 standard deviation units in 2018–19. The overall average effect across the five Cohort 1 middle school start-up

grantee campuses in STAAR-Reading was zero in 2017–18 and 0.03 standard deviation units in 2018–19, which is not statistically different from zero.

Figure 3.7 STAAR¹-Reading Outcomes for Cohort 1 Charter School Start-Up Grantee Middle School Campuses Compared to Matched Traditional Public Schools, 2017–18 and 2018–19



* Indicates statistically significant where $p < 0.05$.

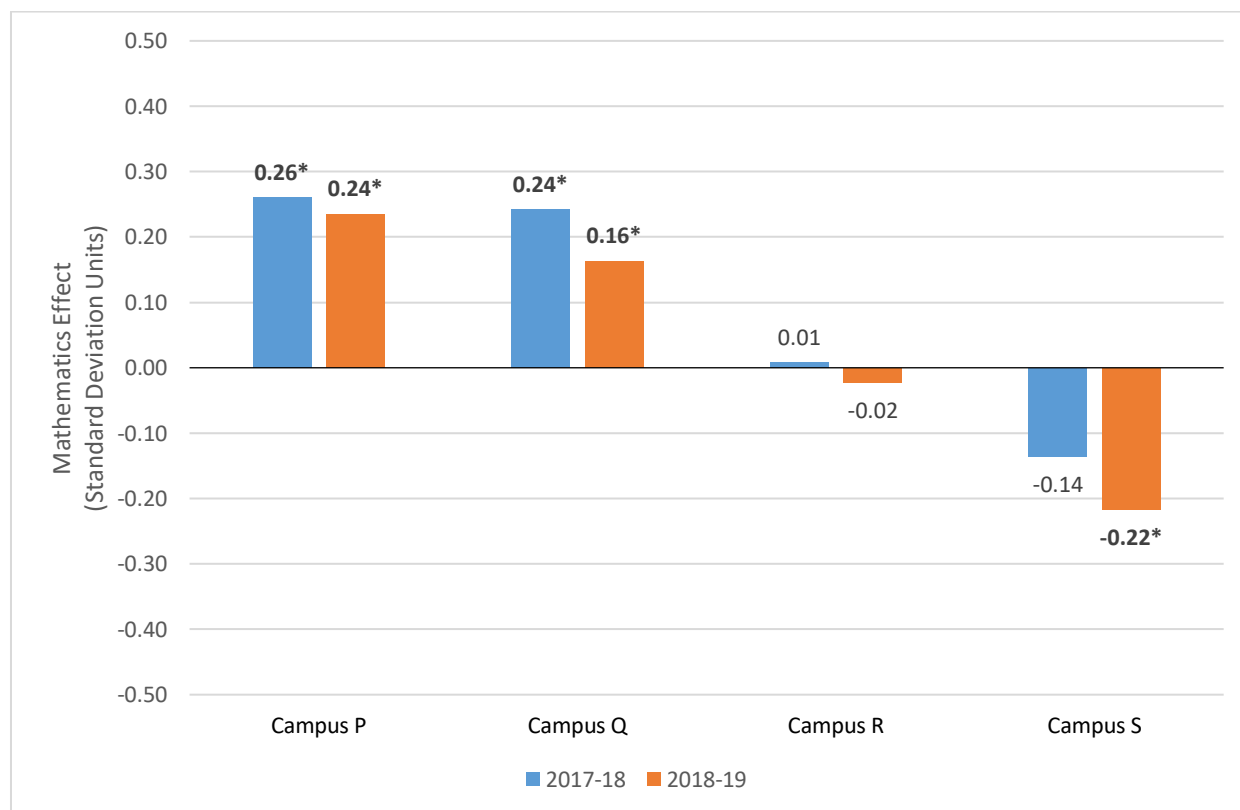
Source. Public Education Information Management System data, STAAR-Reading for Grades 3–8, Texas Education Agency, 2017–18 and 2018–19. Note. Reported effects are statistically adjusted for student and school characteristics. Test scores were standardized by subject, grade, and year, based on statewide means and standard deviations. Sample size includes 1,324 students attending Charter School Start-up Grantee campuses and 1,324 matched comparison students. See Appendix F for full results and details.

¹ State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

Figure 3.8 shows the 2017–18 and 2018–19 STAAR-Mathematics results for Cohort 2 middle schools. After controlling for student and school characteristics, two campuses had significantly higher STAAR-Mathematics scores in both years, compared with matched students enrolled in traditional public schools. On average, students enrolled in Campus P scored 0.26 standard deviation units higher on the STAAR-Mathematics test than the comparison group in 2017–18, approximately equivalent to the difference between a student scoring at the 39th percentile and a student scoring at the 49th percentile, and 0.24 standard deviation units in 2018–19. On average, students enrolled in Campus Q scored 0.24 standard deviation units higher on the STAAR-Reading test than the comparison group STAAR in 2017–18 and 0.16 standard deviation units in 2018–19.

One charter school start-up grantee campus, Campus S, had significantly lower STAAR-Mathematics scores in 2018–19, compared with matched students enrolled in traditional public schools, with students enrolled in that campus scoring on average 0.22 standard deviation units lower on the STAAR-Mathematics test than the comparison group in 2018–19, approximately equivalent to the difference between a student scoring at the 39th percentile and a student scoring at the 31st percentile. The overall average effect across the four Cohort 2 middle school start-up grantee campuses in STAAR-Mathematics was positive in 2017–18 (0.09 standard deviation units) and in 2018–19 (0.04 standard deviation units), and not statistically different from zero in either year.

Figure 3.8 STAAR¹-Mathematics Outcomes for Cohort 2 Charter School Start-Up Grantee Middle School Campuses Compared to Matched Traditional Public Schools, 2017–18 and 2018–19



* Indicates statistically significant where $p < 0.05$.

Source. Public Education Information Management System data, STAAR-Mathematics for Grades 3-8, Texas Education Agency, 2017–18 and 2018–19. Note. Reported effects are statistically adjusted for student and school characteristics. Test scores were standardized by subject, grade, and year, based on statewide means and standard deviations. Sample size includes 1,436 students attending Charter School Start-up Grantee campuses and 1,436 matched comparison students. See Appendix F for full results and details.

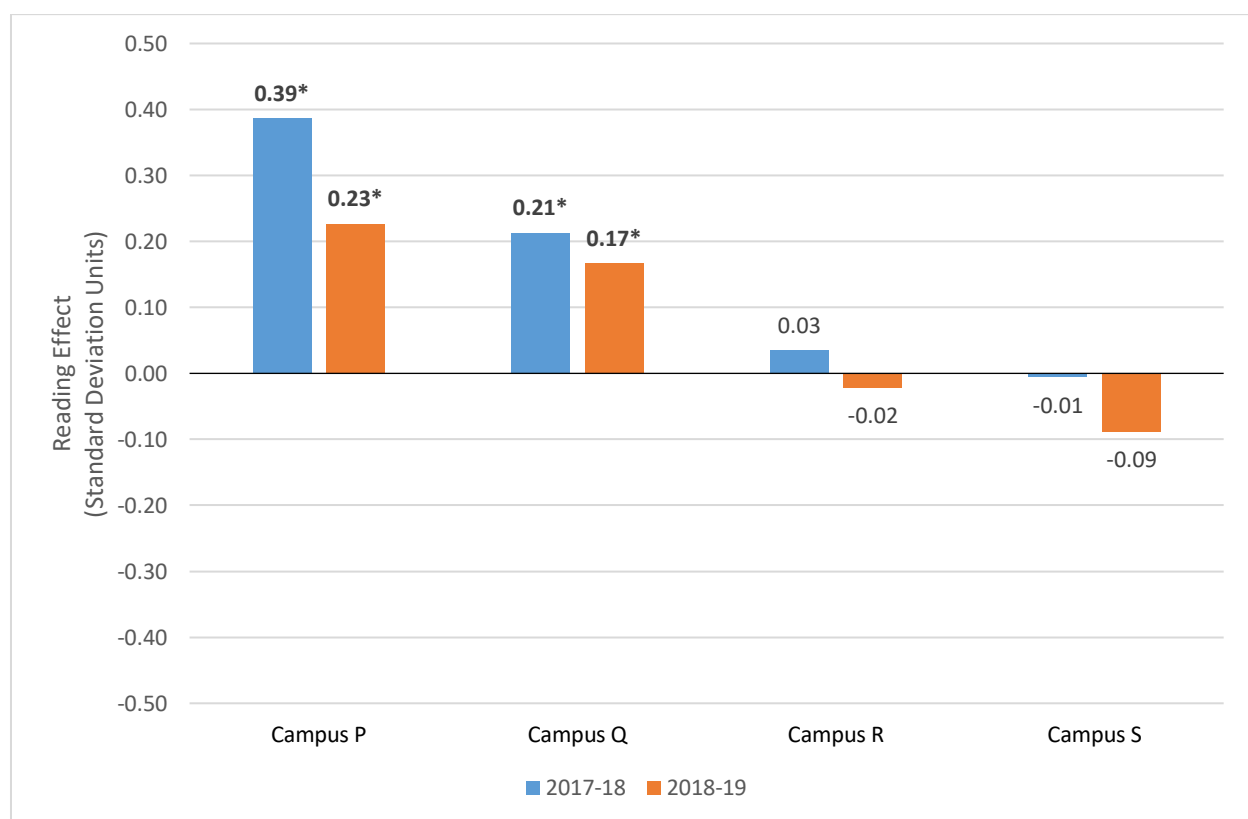
¹ State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

Figure 3.9 shows the 2017–18 and 2018–19 STAAR-Reading results for Cohort 2 middle schools. After controlling for student and school characteristics, two campuses had significantly higher STAAR-Reading scores in both years, compared with matched students enrolled in traditional public schools. On average, students enrolled in Campus P scored 0.39 standard deviation units higher on the STAAR-Reading test than the comparison group in 2017–18, approximately equivalent to the difference between a student scoring at the 41st percentile and a student scoring at the 56th percentile, and 0.23

standard deviation units in 2018–19. On average, students enrolled in Campus Q scored 0.21 standard deviation units higher on the STAAR-Reading test than the comparison group in 2017–18 and 0.17 standard deviation units in 2018–19.

No campuses had significantly lower STAAR-Reading scores in either year, compared with matched students enrolled in traditional public schools. The overall average effect across the four Cohort 2 charter school start-up grantee middle school campuses in STAAR-Reading was significantly positive in 2017–18 (0.16 standard deviation units), approximately equivalent to the difference between a student scoring at the 41st percentile and a student scoring at the 47th percentile, and positive in 2018–19 (0.07 standard deviation units) and not statistically different from zero.

Figure 3.9 STAAR¹-Reading Outcomes for Cohort 2 Charter School Start-Up Grantee Middle School Campuses Compared to Matched Traditional Public Schools, 2017–18 and 2018–19



* Indicates statistically significant where $p < 0.05$.

Source. Public Education Information Management System data, STAAR-Reading for Grades 3-8, Texas Education Agency, 2017–18 and 2018–19. Note. Reported effects are statistically adjusted for student and school characteristics. Test scores were standardized by subject, grade, and year, based on statewide means and standard deviations. Sample size includes 1,458 students attending Charter School Start-up Grantee campuses and 1,458 matched comparison students. See Appendix F for full results and details.

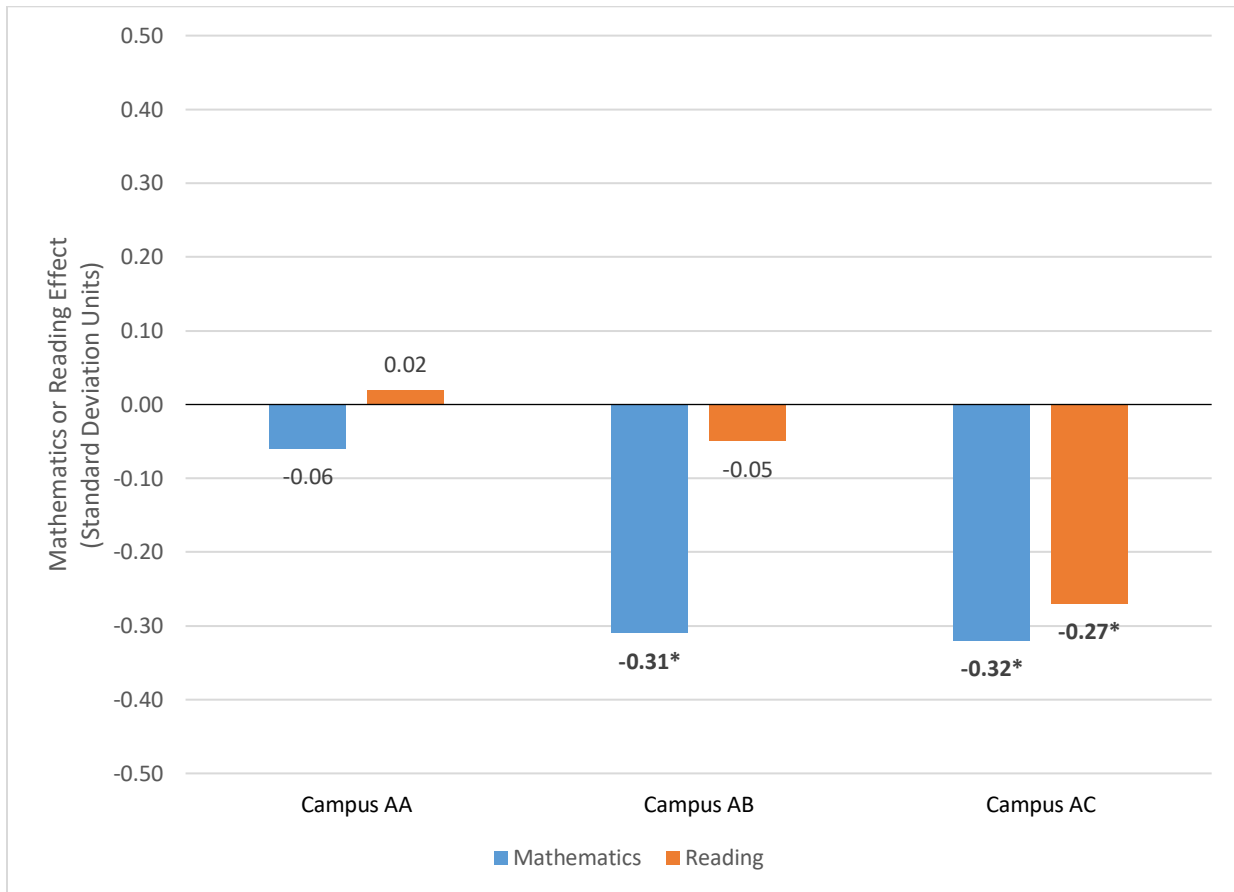
¹ State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

Figure 3.10 shows the 2018–19 STAAR-Mathematics and STAAR-Reading results for Cohort 3 middle schools.²⁸ After controlling for student and school characteristics, two campuses, had significantly lower STAAR-Mathematics scores, and one significantly lower STAAR-Reading Scores, compared with matched students enrolled in traditional public schools. Students enrolled in Campus AC on average scored 0.32 standard deviation units lower on the STAAR-Mathematics test than the comparison group, and on the STAAR-Reading test 0.27 standard deviation units. Students enrolled in Campus AB on average scored 0.31 standard deviation units lower on the STAAR-Mathematics test than the comparison group STAAR.

No Cohort 3 middle school campuses had significantly higher STAAR-Mathematics or STAAR-Reading scores, compared with matched students enrolled in traditional public schools. The overall average effect across the two Cohort 3 start-up grantee middle school campuses was significantly negative for STAAR-Mathematics (-0.23 standard deviation units), approximately equivalent to the difference between a student scoring at the 39th percentile and a student scoring at the 30th percentile, and negative for STAAR-Reading (-0.10 standard deviation units) and not statistically different from zero.

²⁸ Cohort 3 schools were not in operation in the 2017–18 school year, therefore only outcomes for the 2018–19 school year are available for this cohort.

Figure 3.10 STAAR¹-Mathematics and Reading Outcomes for Cohort 3 Charter School Start-Up Grantee Middle School Campuses Compared to Matched Traditional Public Schools, 2018–19



* Indicates statistically significant where $p < 0.05$.

Source. Public Education Information Management System data, STAAR-Mathematics for Grades 3-8, STAAR-Reading for Grades 3-8, Texas Education Agency, 2018–19. Note. Reported effects are statistically adjusted for student and school characteristics. Test scores were standardized by subject, grade, and year, based on statewide means and standard deviations. Sample size includes 364 students attending Charter School Start-up Grantee campuses and 364 matched comparison students. See Appendix F for full results and details.

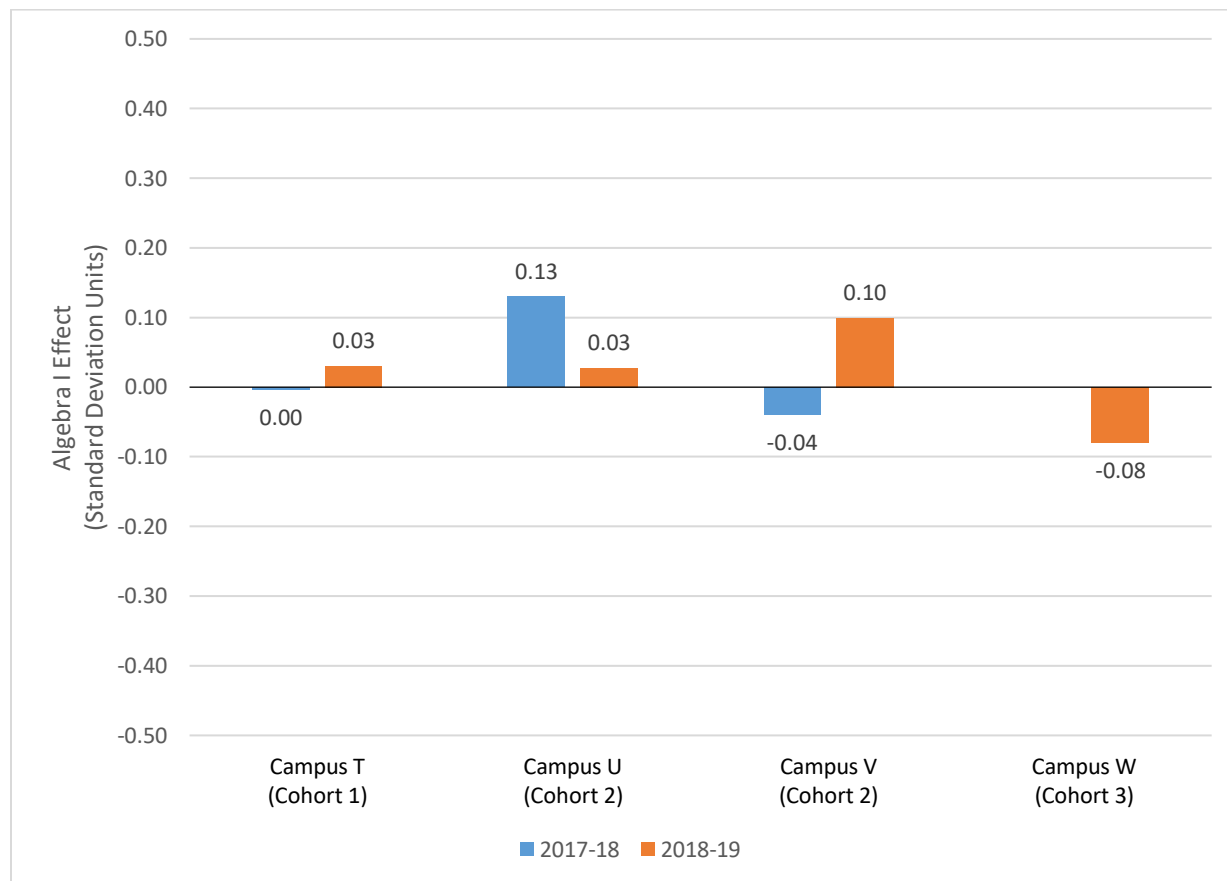
¹ State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

Generally, for start-up grantee middle schools, while some campuses show significantly positive or negative effects, the overall average effects are generally not significantly different from zero, except for the positive average effect for Cohort 2 STAAR-Mathematics and the negative average effect for Cohort 3 STAAR-Mathematics. Campus performance is very highly correlated over time within subjects for Cohorts 1 and 2, with correlations ranging from 0.97 to 0.99, and positively correlated across subjects within years, less highly so for 2017–18 (0.71 for STAAR-Mathematics and 0.58 for STAAR-Reading), more highly for 2018–19 (0.91 for STAAR-Mathematics, 0.98 for STAAR-Reading). These highly positive correlations indicate that, for Cohorts 1 and 2, campuses that perform well in one year tend to perform well in the following year in the same subject, and that campuses that perform well in one subject tend to also perform well in the other subject.

Results for Students Enrolled at Charter School Start-Up Grantee High School Campuses

Figure 3.11 shows the 2017–18 and 2018–19 Algebra I EOC exam results for Cohort 1, 2, and 3 high schools. After controlling for student and school characteristics, no charter school start-up grantee campuses had significantly higher or lower Algebra I EOC exam scores compared with matched students enrolled in traditional public schools. The overall average effect across the two Cohort 2 campuses was positive in 2017–18 (0.05 standard deviation units) and in 2018–19 (0.07 standard deviation units), but not statistically different from zero in either year.

Figure 3.11 Algebra I EOC Exam Outcomes for Cohort 1, 2, and 3 Charter School Start-Up Grantee High School Campuses Compared to Matched Traditional Public Schools, 2017–18 and 2018–2019



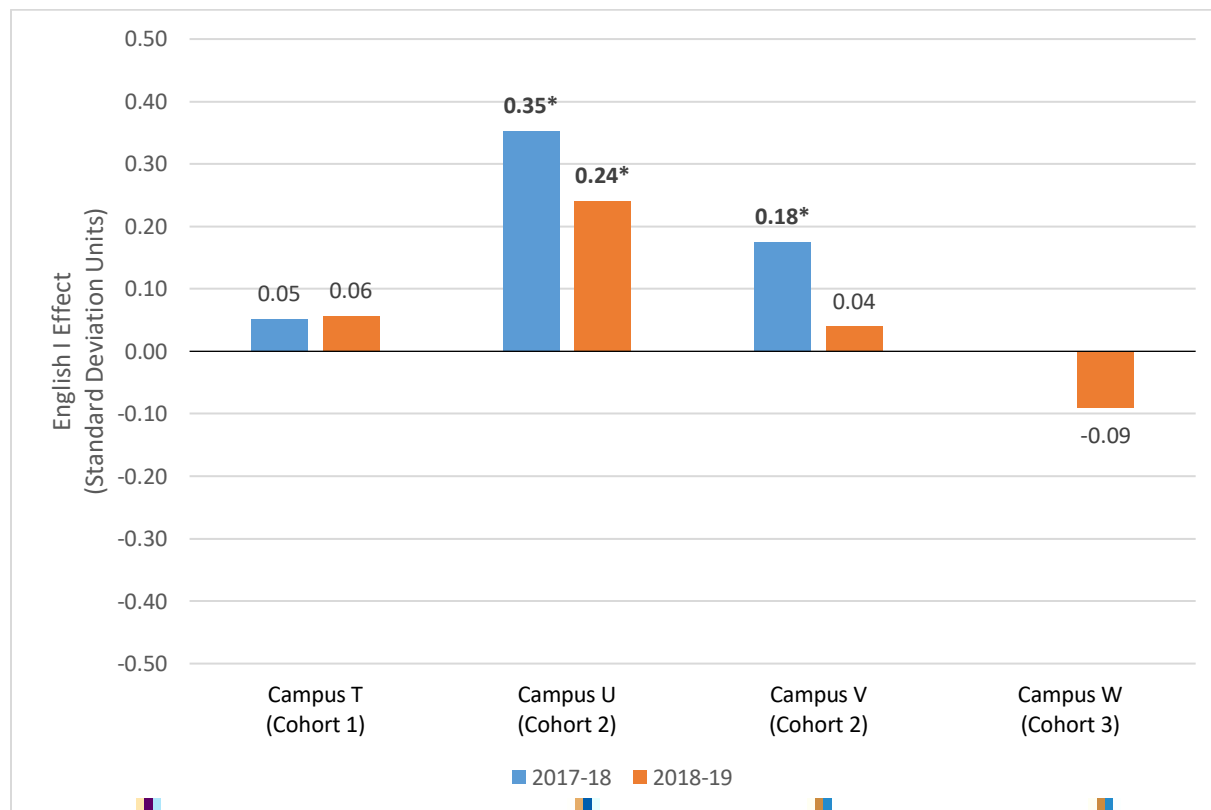
* Indicates statistically significant where $p < 0.05$. No scores shown on this figure are statistically significant.

Source. Public Education Information Management System EOC data, Texas Education Agency, 2017–18 and 2018–19. Note. Reported effects are statistically adjusted for student and school characteristics. Test scores were standardized by subject, grade, and year, based on statewide means and standard deviations. Sample includes students taking Algebra I in grades 9–12. Sample size includes 368 students attending Charter School Start-up Grantee campuses and 368 matched comparison students. See Appendix F for full results and details.

Figure 3.12 shows the 2017–18 and 2018–19 English I EOC exam results for Cohort 1, 2, and 3 high schools. After controlling for student and school characteristics, two charter school start-up grantee campuses had significantly higher English I EOC exam scores in 2017–18, and one had significantly higher scores in 2018–19, compared to matched students enrolled in traditional public schools. On average, students enrolled in Campus U scored 0.35 standard deviation units higher on the English I EOC exam than the comparison group in 2017–18, approximately equivalent to the difference between a student

scoring at the 36th percentile and a student scoring at the 50th percentile, and 0.24 standard deviation units in 2018–19. On average, students enrolled in Campus V scored 0.18 standard deviation units higher on the English I EOC exam than the comparison group in 2017–18. The overall average effect across the two Cohort 2 campuses was significantly positive in 2017–18 (0.26 standard deviation units), approximately equivalent to the difference between a student scoring at the 36th percentile and a student scoring at the 46th percentile. In 2018–19, the overall average effect across the four high school campuses was 0.10 standard deviation units, which is not statistically different from zero.

Figure 3.12 English I EOC Exam Outcomes for Cohort 1, 2, and 3 Charter School Start-Up Grantee High School Campuses Compared to Matched Traditional Public Schools, 2017–18 and 2018–19



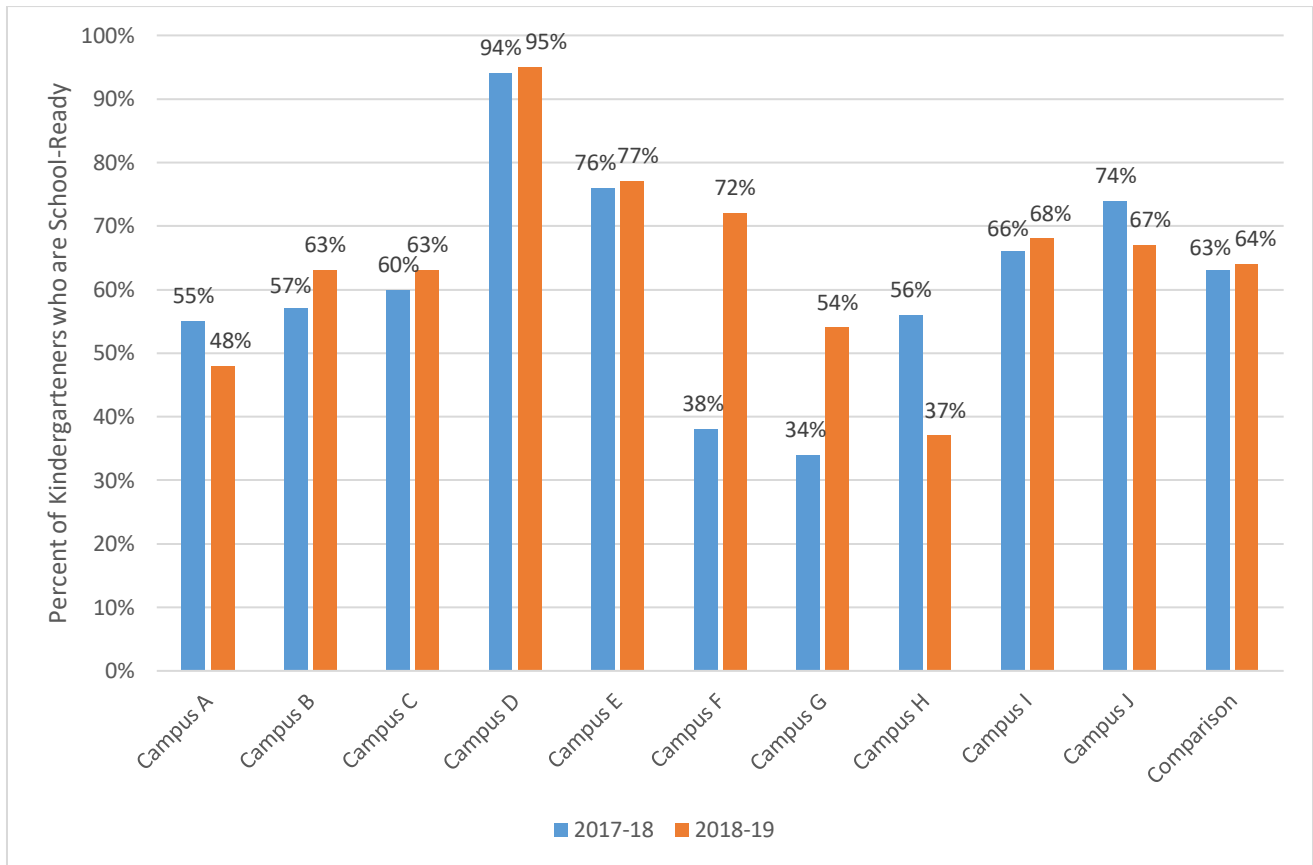
* Indicates statistically significant where $p < 0.05$.

Source. Public Education Information Management System EOC data, Texas Education Agency, 2017–18 and 2018–19. Note. Reported effects are statistically adjusted for student and school characteristics. Test scores were standardized by subject, grade, and year, based on statewide means and standard deviations. Sample size includes 505 students attending Charter School Start-up Grantee campuses and 505 matched comparison students. See Appendix F for full results and details.

Descriptive Analysis of Elementary Student Data

In addition to the STAAR-test score outcomes for elementary school grades, the evaluation also analyzed data on school readiness for kindergarten students and early reading indicators for early elementary students. Because no baseline data is available for students on these outcomes, a regression-based impact analysis was not feasible. However, descriptive analyses of outcomes for the charter school start-up grantee campuses that serve these grade ranges were possible. Note that these represent simple differences in average outcomes across campuses and should not be interpreted as impacts. These descriptive results for school readiness for kindergarteners are shown in Figure 3.13 below.

Figure 3.13 School Readiness of Kindergarteners for Charter School Start-Up Grantee Elementary Campuses Compared to Matched Traditional Public Schools, 2017–18 and 2018–19

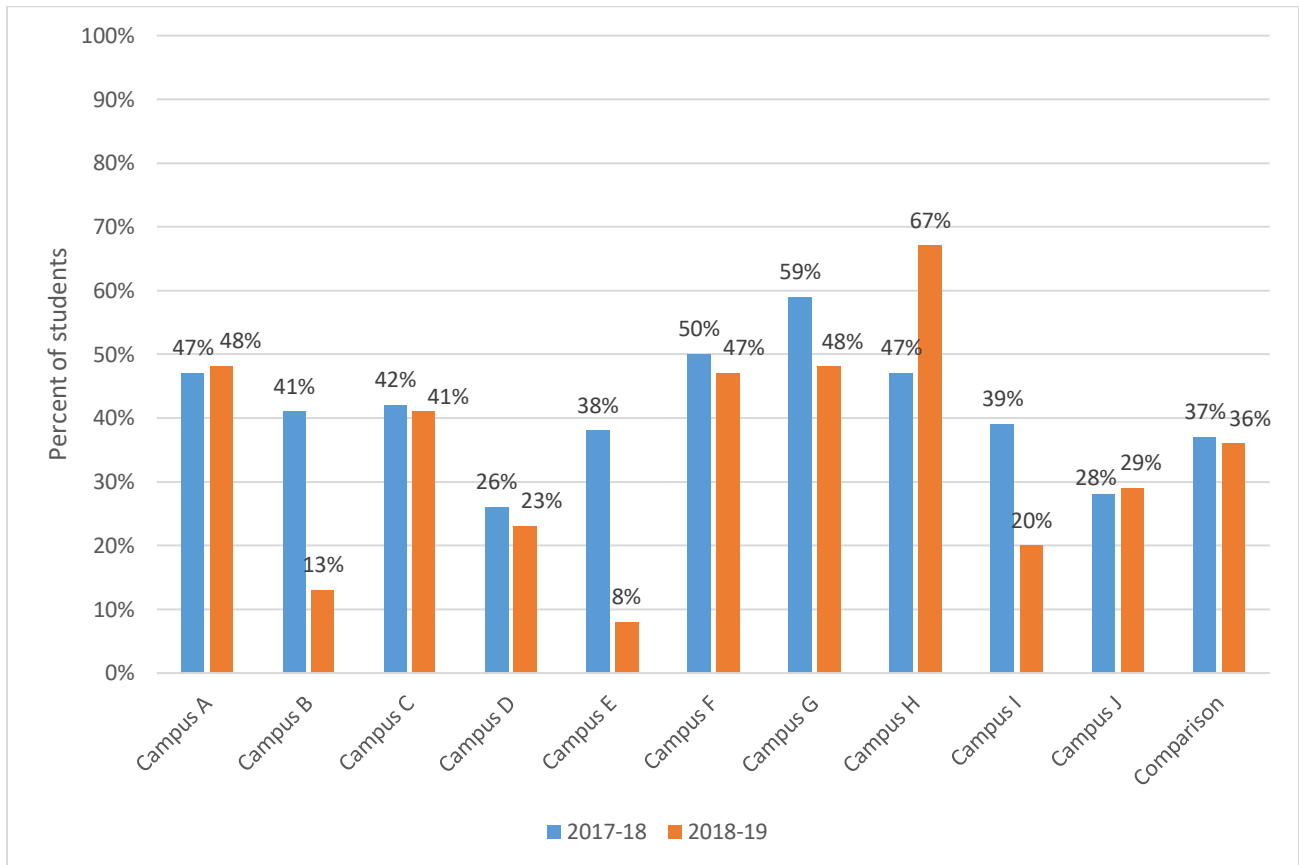


Source. Public Education Information Management System and Early Childhood Database System databases, Texas Education Agency, 2017–18 and 2018–19. *Note.* The School Readiness Indicator indicates whether a student assessed by a reading instrument on the commissioner’s list or approved by district committee under TEC 28.006, has been determined to be prepared for school. This measure applies only to Grades KG. Analyses include a total of 771 students enrolled in campuses which received funding through the Texas Public Charter School Start-Up Grant program and 402,783 students in feeder districts.

Of the ten charter school start-up grantee campuses with students in kindergarten, six of the campuses have a lower percentage of kindergarteners identified as school-ready in 2017–18, and five in 2018–19, compared to students enrolled in comparison feeder districts. See Appendix F for more details.

Figure 3.14 shows descriptive results for early reading indicator data. Of the ten charter school start-up grantee campuses with students in early elementary grades, eight of the campuses have a higher percentage of eligible students identified as eligible for accelerated reading instruction in 2017–18, and five in 2018–19, compared to students enrolled in feeder districts.

Figure 3.14 Early Reading Indicators for Charter School Start-Up Grantee Elementary Campuses Compared to Matched Traditional Public Schools, 2017–18 and 2018–19



Source. Public Education Information Management System databases, Texas Education Agency, 2017–18 and 2018–19. Note. The Early Reading Indicator indicates whether a student is eligible for accelerated reading instruction as indicated by the administered reading instrument on the commissioner’s list or approved by district committee under TEC 28.006. This measure applies only to Grades KG, 01, and 02. Analyses include a total of 2,307 students enrolled in campuses which received funding through the Texas Public Charter School Start-Up Grant program and 834,819 students at comparable traditional public school campuses.

Charter School Enrollment Effects Across Student Groups

In addition to the performance of the overall student population enrolled in charter school start-up grantee campuses, it is also important to see how students in different student groups perform at those campuses, compared to a matched comparison sample of students from that same student group enrolled in traditional public schools. To examine performance for students in these different student groups, the same statistical model as the overall sample was used, except the evaluation team allowed for the effect to vary by student group. This adjustment yields results that give an estimate of how well students in each particular student group are performing at each start-up grantee campus, after controlling for differences in student groups.

The evaluation examined whether campus impacts differed across the following seven student groups:

1. Females (versus males)
2. Race/ethnicity
3. Students receiving SPED services

4. Students classified as economically disadvantaged
5. Students classified as ELs
6. Students classified as at-risk
7. Students who are low-performing and educationally-disadvantaged

Tables with results for the student group models are presented in Appendix F. The results show that, in most cases, the STAAR results for each student group are very similar to the overall results, with estimated effects for specific student groups generally very similar to the overall effects. For both elementary and middle schools, the overall average effect across all campuses is not significantly different from zero for any student group for either STAAR-Mathematics or STAAR-Reading in either year, and results are highly correlated across subjects and years.

Across the different student groups and grade ranges, there are a few cases where the results are not as similar for a particular outcome compared to the overall group. These cases are caused by instances where one or more campuses have substantially different estimated effects for a particular outcome and student group than the overall estimated effect for those campuses. This amount of variation by student group is expected and indicates that the overall results for the campus are not in large part driven by particular student groups.

One way to compare the student group results with the overall results is to examine how correlated each set of student group results is with the overall results for that subject, year, and grade range. For elementary schools in 2017–18, the student group results are very highly correlated with the overall results, with correlations greater than 0.9 for every student group for both subjects. In 2018–19, the student group results are somewhat less highly correlated with the overall results for most student groups, with correlations generally in the 0.6 to 0.8 range. The least correlated results are STAAR-Reading scores for students receiving SPED services, which are only 44% correlated to overall student results. This means that the STAAR-test performance of students receiving SPED services at a campus is less strongly associated with the results of the overall student body at that campus than for other student groups. For middle schools, the student group results are also very highly correlated with the overall results, with correlations higher than 0.85 for every student group in both subjects and years except for STAAR-Reading for SPED students (0.68 correlation) in 2017–18.

Reading and mathematics performance for different student groups are also correlated across subjects and over time, indicating that campuses that are performing well for a student group in one subject tend to also perform well for that student group in the other subject, and that campuses that are performing well for a student group in one year tend to also perform well for that student group in the following year. See Appendix F for more details.

Comparing Estimated Student Group Effects to Achievement Gaps

The evaluation also compared the average student group results by grade range to the achievement gaps in feeder districts to see how they compare in size. This approach compares the student group results for African American and Hispanic students to the average achievement gap between white and African American/Hispanic students (the race/ethnicity gap), and the student group results for economically disadvantaged students to the gap between economically disadvantaged and not economically disadvantaged students (the economic disadvantage gap). Note that in all cases these average student group results are not significantly different from zero.

Because the average effects for these student groups are generally small, they are also a relatively small percentage of the size of the achievement gap in feeder districts. The average student group effects vary from 3% to 15% of the race/ethnicity gap for African American students, and from 5% to 12% of the race/ethnicity gap for Hispanic students. The biggest of these overall average effects is -0.08 standard deviation units for African American middle school students in STAAR-Mathematics in 2018–19, equal to 15% of the race/ethnicity gap. The average student group effects for economically disadvantaged students range from 2% to 14% of the economic disadvantage gap. The biggest of these overall average effects is 0.07 standard deviation units for middle school STAAR-Reading in 2018–19, equal to 14% of the economic disadvantage gap. See Appendix F for detailed results.

Summary of Key Findings

The key findings from the statistical comparison of performance for students enrolled in a charter school start-up grantee campus and a matched comparison sample of students enrolled in traditional public schools are listed below.

Relationship Between Student Enrollment in a Charter School Start-up Grantee Campus and Outcomes

- Overall, across all outcomes and grade ranges, a few campuses across the three cohorts have significant positive or negative effects, after controlling for selected student background variables, and comparing to a matched sample of students in traditional public schools in the feeder district. However, the general pattern is that the overall average effects for each cohort and year are small and not significantly different from zero, especially for Cohorts 1 and 2.
- For STAAR-Mathematics, after controlling for differences in student groups, there were some significant differences in outcomes for students enrolled in charter school start-up grantee elementary campuses. Two start-up grantee campuses had performances that were significantly positive (both in Cohort 2), and two significantly negative (one in Cohort 2 and 1 in Cohort 3) in either 2017–18 or 2018–19, compared to a matched sample of students enrolled in traditional public schools.
- For STAAR-Reading, after controlling for differences in student groups, there were a few significant differences in outcomes for students enrolled in charter school start-up grantee elementary campuses. One start-up grantee campus had a performance that was significantly positive (Cohort 2) and one significantly negative (Cohort 3) in either 2017–18 or 2018–19, compared to a matched sample of students enrolled in traditional public schools.
- For STAAR-Mathematics, after controlling for differences in student groups, there were some significant differences in outcomes for students enrolled in charter school start-up grantee middle school campuses. Three start-up grantee campuses had performances that were significantly positive (one in Cohort 1 and two in Cohort 2) and six that had performances that were significantly negative (three in Cohort 1, one in Cohort 2, and two in Cohort 3) in either 2017–18 or 2018–19, compared to a matched sample of students enrolled in traditional public schools.
- For STAAR-Reading, after controlling for differences in student groups, there were some significant differences in outcomes for students enrolled in charter school start-up grantee

middle school campuses. Three start-up grantee campuses had performances that were significantly positive (one in Cohort 1 and two in Cohort 2) and two significantly negative (one in Cohort 1 and one in Cohort 3) in either 2017–18 or 2018–19, compared to a matched sample of students enrolled in traditional public schools.

- For English I and Algebra I EOC exams for students enrolled in the charter school start-up grantee high school campuses, after controlling for differences in student groups, two start-up grantee campuses had significantly positive English I EOC exam scores in either 2017–18 or 2018–19, compared with matched students enrolled in traditional public schools. The overall average effect on English I was significantly positive for Cohort 2. Both the individual campus effects and the overall average effects on Algebra I were not statistically different from zero for all cohorts.
- For charter school start-up grantee elementary campuses, six out of ten campuses had a lower percentage of kindergarten students classified as school ready in 2017–18, and five out of ten in 2018–19, compared to students in feeder districts. Eight out of ten start-up grantee elementary campuses had a higher percentage of students identified as eligible for accelerated reading instruction in 2017–18, and five out of ten in 2018–19, compared to students enrolled in feeder districts.

Charter School Enrollment Effects Across Student Groups

- When comparing the overall performance of charter school start-up grantee campuses to the performance of those campuses for different student groups, in every case the average results for particular student groups are not statistically different from zero or from the overall estimated effects for all students.

Comparing Estimated Effects to Achievement Gaps

- Comparing the student group results for African American and Hispanic students to the average achievement gap between white and African American/Hispanic students (the race/ethnicity gap), the overall average effects for these student groups are generally small, and they are also a relatively small percentage of the size of the achievement gap in feeder districts. The biggest of the overall average effects is -0.08 standard deviation units for African American middle school students in STAAR-Mathematics in 2018–19, equal to 15% of the race/ethnicity gap.
- Comparing the student group results for economically disadvantaged students to the gap between economically disadvantaged and not economically disadvantaged students (the economic disadvantage gap), the biggest of the overall average effects is 0.07 standard deviation units for middle school STAAR-Reading in 2018–19, equal to 14% of the economic disadvantage gap.

Chapter 4 — Student Recruitment and Retention Practices at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses

The purpose of this chapter is to examine methods by which Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant recipients attract, recruit, admit, enroll, serve, and retain students. Similar to the analyses described in Chapter 2 of this report, the analysis of start-up grantee campus principal survey data, principal interview data, and teacher focus group data from 2017–18, 2018–19, and 2019–20 were used to describe the approaches used by start-up grantee campuses to attract, recruit, admit, enroll, serve, and retain students. The evaluation team also analyzed extant data to create tables related to the characteristics of students enrolled at start-up grantee campuses, as well as enrollment and attrition patterns for students.

Student Recruitment and Hiring Strategies

In Chapter 2 of this report, student recruitment was cited by school leaders at charter school start-up grantee campuses as one of the most challenging aspects of getting a new charter school up and running. As Table 4.1 illustrates, principals at campuses funded through the Charter School Program Start-Up Grant were asked in annual surveys to rank the most effective recruitment methods for attracting students to enroll at their charter school. The majority of principals in their first (55%), second (96%) and third (74%) years of serving students through the grant rated word of mouth from parents of currently enrolled students as the first or second most effective student recruitment method.

Table 4.1 Effective Recruitment Methods for Attracting Students to Enroll: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Effective, by Year of Serving Students

| Year 1, Cohorts 1–4 (n=29) | | Year 2, Cohorts 1 -31–3 (n=27) | | Year 3, Cohorts 1 and 2 (n=15) | |
|--|-----|--|-----|--|-----|
| 1. Word of mouth from parents of currently enrolled students | 55% | 1. Word of mouth from parents of currently enrolled students | 96% | 1. Word of mouth from parents of currently enrolled students | 74% |
| 2. Social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.) | 41% | 2. Social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.) | 33% | 2. Open houses where information about the campus is presented | 33% |
| 3. Open houses where information about the campus is presented | 24% | 3. Flyers about the campus in area neighborhoods | 19% | 3. Flyers about the campus in area neighborhoods | 33% |
| 4. Principal presentations at local events (e.g., Rotary Club) | 21% | 4. Published information about campus in community newsletters | 14% | 4. Social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.) | 27% |
| 5. Flyers about the campus in area neighborhoods | 17% | 5. Open houses where information about the campus is presented | 11% | 5. Other | 13% |

Source. Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campus Principal Survey, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018, 2019, and 2020. *Note.* Year 1 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (spring 2018), Cohort 3 principals (spring 2019), and Cohort 4 principals (spring 2020). Year 2 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (spring 2019), and Cohort 3 (spring 2020). Year 3 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (spring 2020).

Interviews with principals confirmed the effectiveness of word-of-mouth advertising. During an onsite interview, a principal from a campus in its second year of operation shared that *“Our best way that we have gotten kids into our building and enrolled in our school is just the word of mouth of the parents that are happy with us and have been here.”* Another principal at a first-year campus expressed regret about spending grant money on advertising because *“all of our 30-something new students that we got this year were on word of mouth.”* Because schools moving into their second and third years of operation have growing student enrollments, it is logical that this word-of-mouth advertising would become more important for more mature schools which are building a reputation for quality education. A principal in their third year of operations expressed the following perspective on student recruitment:

“The most effective way [to recruit] is word-of-mouth. One of the questions ... that they put in while they’re doing the registration, ‘How did you hear about us?’ Most of the time, I would say more than 80%, I saw those results that they heard from a friend, from a family friend, from a neighbor.”

–Year 3 Principal

Social media advertising through Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and other platforms was also ranked as one of the top two most effective student recruitment methods by 41% of principals at campuses in their first year of operation, 33% of principals at campuses in their second year of operation, and 27% of principals at campuses in their third year of operation under the grant. The distribution of flyers about the campus in area neighborhoods (17% to 33%) and open houses where information about the campus is presented (11% to 33%) were also among the student recruitment methods most frequently ranked by principals as one of two most effective student recruitment methods. (Table 4.1). During interviews, principals of charter school start-up grantee campuses reinforced the importance and effectiveness of neighborhood fliers and open houses to share information about their new charter school campus.

When asked about their target population for student recruitment, principals most commonly indicated that their campuses are either open-enrollment with no specific target populations or that their campus targeted populations based on a geographic boundary.²⁹ As a principal from a charter school start-up grantee campus in their second year of serving students shared, *“We are a neighborhood school first. ... The first target population is to secure as many neighborhood kids as we can, to make sure that we are a school that people want to go to.”* When specific student groups were mentioned in interviews, the recruitment of economically disadvantaged students, students interested in a particular field or career path (e.g., STEM academy), and students who are struggling in traditional public school environments often came up as part of the discussion.³⁰ A principal at a charter school campus in their first year of serving students discussed their approach to serving students who are struggling in the traditional public school system:

²⁹ Open-enrollment/no target response represents 25% to 40% of principals, and based on geographic boundary represents 10% to 35% of principals interviewed, depending on year of operations. This may vary for open-enrollment charter schools and in-district charter schools funded through the Charter School Program Start-Up Grant.

³⁰ These types of responses represented 10% to 15% of the principals interviewed, depending on year of operations.

“Our target population is the child who is not having their needs met in their current setting, and that could be a bored, gifted kid or a kid with dyslexia that's not getting the services they need. It's any child. We've said this when we've been collaborating with [the] school district, 'We're not trying to take your best because you're already doing a good job with those. We want the ones that you're not reaching. That's our mission in life. Give us the ones that you're not reaching because we feel that we have a program that can reach almost every kid.'”

—Year 1 Principal

Effective Student Retention Strategies

Principals surveyed were asked to rank the most effective strategies for retaining students. Forty percent of principals at charter school start-up grantee campuses in their second and third years of serving students ranked building meaningful relationships between teachers and students and establishment of a safe and collaborative environment at their campuses as one of the top two most effective methods for retaining students at their schools. Having demonstrated academic growth of students was ranked as one of the top two most effective retention approaches by 32% of principals at campuses in their second year of serving students and by 27% of principals at campuses in their third year of serving students. Providing student-centered instruction and effective communications between teachers and parents were ranked as the fourth and fifth most effective approaches for retaining students at their campuses. (Table 4.2)

Table 4.2 Most Effective Approaches for Retaining Students: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Important, by Year of Serving Students

| Year 2, Cohorts 1–3 (n=25) | | Year 3, Cohorts 1 and 2 (n=15) | |
|--|-----|--|-----|
| 1. Building meaningful relationships between teachers and students | 40% | 1. Building meaningful relationships between teachers and students | 40% |
| 2. Establishment of a safe and collaborative environment at the campus | 40% | 2. Establishment of a safe and collaborative environment at the campus | 40% |
| 3. Demonstrated academic growth of students | 32% | 3. Demonstrated academic growth of students | 27% |
| 4. Student-centered instruction | 16% | 4. Student-centered instruction | 27% |
| 5. Effective communications between teachers and parents | 16% | 5. Effective communications between the campus leadership and parents | 20% |

Source. Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campus Principal Survey, Gibson Consulting Group and Safal Partners, 2018, 2019, and 2020. *Note.* Because of the nature of the question (i.e., Effective methods for retaining students), only 4 campus principals in their first year of serving students answered this question. Thus, Year 1 results are not reported in this table. Year 2 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (spring 2019), and Cohort 3 (spring 2020). Year 3 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (spring 2020).

During site visits, principals and teachers were asked directly about effective methods for retaining students at their start-up grantee campuses. They were asked about their role in student retention and what factors they consider important to retaining students.

Responses from school leaders regarding student retention were somewhat consistent with the survey results in that they discussed the need to create “*a sense of belonging*” which can be accomplished through the establishment of strong teacher-student relationships and an environment that is safe and collaborative. A principal from a school in their second year of operations discussed how student retention is directly related to “*a strong sense of belonging*” and “*school culture more than anything else.*” Other major themes related to student retention emerged from principal interviews, including parent communications (cited by 50% of principals at Year 1 campuses, 35% of principals at Year 2 campuses, and 40% of teachers at Year 3 campuses) as perhaps the most important driver for retaining students at their charter schools. A principal in their first year of serving students talked about why parent communication is so important:

“I think parent communication is probably the biggest thing [that ensures retention] because oftentimes, especially because our model is so different, we have to make sure that parents have a clear definition of what success looks like with their child in this setting. If they have a clear definition for what it looks like, then they'll be able to gauge whether or not, ‘Okay. Is this the right fit or not for my child?’”

–Year 1 Principal

Providing high-quality instruction was discussed by 30% of principals at Year 1 campuses, 25% of principals at Year 2 campuses, and 40% of teachers at Year 3 campuses. These principals and teachers saw high-quality instruction as a key driver for retaining students at their campus. To illustrate this point, a school leader from a campus in its third year of operations indicated that they have *“set ... priorities this year ... around reading framework, math framework, consistency of the instruction and then data-driven practices.”* While not as frequently discussed, 15% of principals in their second and 25% of those in their third year of serving students also discussed the provision of extracurricular and enrichment activities as an important step toward retaining students. Twenty percent of principals at campuses in their third year of operations discussed *“building student and family investment in the school”* and *“focusing on school culture”* as important steps that they are working on to improve student retention rates.

During teacher focus groups, teachers were also asked about their role in helping to improve student retention at their schools. As Table 4.3 shows, participants from over half of the focus groups conducted with teachers at campuses in all three years of serving students discussed how they contribute to student retention by developing relationships with their students. As an example of teacher sentiment that was echoed by many educators participating in focus groups, one teacher at a campus in their first year of operations shared that *“I want to make sure that our kids know that we care about them, and that their families feel like they have a voice and that I care what they have to say ... because I do”*; while another added the importance of *“giving them a voice, listening to them and then taking their feedback and implementing it and changing things.”*

The second and third most commonly discussed ways in which teachers support student retention were parent communications (noted by one or more participants in 30% to 35% of teacher focus groups across years of operation) and the delivery of high-quality instruction (mentioned by one or more participants in 20% to 30% of teacher focus groups across years of operation). A teacher from a campus in its second year of operation discussed student academic progress in the following way: *“I feel like that's the main [factor], when [students] see progress. When they come in and they see that they were at this level and then they've increased by the end of the year.”*

Promoting student and parent participation in school activities and clubs and creating a positive environment were also noted as important student retention activities by teacher focus groups at two of the 10 campuses in their third year of serving students (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 Role in Student Retention: Percent of Teacher Focus Groups Noting Item as Important, by Year of Serving Students

| Year 1, Cohorts 1–4 (n=20) | | Year 2, Cohorts 1–3 (n=20) | | Year 3, Cohorts 1 and 2 (n=10) | |
|--|-----|--|-----|--|-----|
| 1. Relationships with students | 65% | 1. Relationships with students | 50% | 1. Relationships with students | 70% |
| 2. Providing high quality instruction | 30% | 2. Parent communication | 35% | 2. Parent communication | 30% |
| 3. Parent communication | 30% | 3. Providing high quality instruction | 30% | 3. Providing high quality instruction | 20% |
| 4. Creating a positive environment | 10% | 4. Promoting student and parent participation in school activities and clubs | 10% | 4. Promoting student and parent participation in school activities and clubs | 20% |
| 5. Student growth (including academics and social-emotional) | 5% | 5. Student growth (including academics and social-emotional) | 5% | 5. Creating a positive environment | 20% |

Source. Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campus Teacher Focus Groups, Gibson Consulting Group and Safal Partners, 2017, 2018, and 2019. Note. Year 1 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 teachers (fall 2017), Cohort 3 teachers (fall 2018), and Cohort 4 teachers (fall 2019). Year 2 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 teachers (fall 2018), and Cohort 3 teachers (fall 2019). Year 3 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 teachers (fall 2019).

When asked to elaborate on the most important factors in retaining students, participants in teacher focus groups hit on many familiar methods discussed in this chapter, including parent communications, academic progress, student happiness and sense of belonging, and extracurricular activities such as clubs, dance, and sports. Teachers discussed how important it was to provide opportunities for students that they may not ordinarily have access to and that *“their parents may not be able to afford”* and to create *“activities that students really enjoy [which are] affordable for families.”* A teacher at a campus in its first year of operation elaborated on the importance of parent communications for retaining their students in the following way: *“I’ve heard a lot too about communication being important to retention. A lot of parents have talked to me about how they appreciate how much communication there’s been ... not just teacher and family, but school-wide. I think that is beneficial, ... how well they communicate to their families. That’s something I’ve had several parents comment to me about.”*

Comparison of Student Characteristics and Mobility Patterns for Students Enrolled at Public Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses and Comparable Traditional Public-School Campuses

To supplement findings from the annual survey of principals and qualitative data (i.e., principal interviews and teacher focus groups) collected through site visit information on approaches to student recruitment and retention, the evaluation used student-level data collected from TEA. The study conducted an analysis of student characteristics and mobility patterns at campuses that received funding through the Texas Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant.

The characteristics, retention, and mobility patterns of students enrolled at charter school start-up grantee campuses were compared to those of students enrolled in traditional public school campuses in feeder districts, which are defined by where the student attending the charter school would have attended had they remained in traditional public schools.

Student Characteristics

To determine the patterns of student enrollment, retention, and attrition at campuses that received funding through the Public Charter School Start-Up Grant, and how these patterns compared to traditional public school campuses in feeder districts, the evaluation includes an analysis of student-level data collected by TEA through PEIMS.

As Table 4.4 shows, students attending charter school start-up grantee campuses in 2017–18 and 2018–19 were comparable but were somewhat more likely to be African American and less likely to be Hispanic than students attending traditional public schools in the feeder districts. Students attending charter school start-up grantee campuses also were slightly less likely to be female or receive SPED services, and slightly more likely to be identified as an EL student. Differences were also observed between the percentage of economically disadvantaged students (66% for charter school start-up grantee campuses versus 62% at traditional public school campuses in 2017–18, and 66% versus 63% in 2018–19). Forty-seven percent of charter school start-up grantee campus students were at-risk students, compared to 61% at traditional public school campuses in 2017–18, and 48% of start-up grantee campus students were at-risk versus 60% of traditional campus students in 2018–19.

Table 4.4 Comparison of Student Characteristics at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses and Traditional Public Charter School Campuses in Feeder¹ Districts, 2017–18 and 2018–19

| Student Characteristics | Charter School Start-Up Grantee Students, 2017–18 | Traditional Public School Students, 2017–18 | Charter School Start-Up Grantee Students, 2018–19 | Traditional Public School Students, 2018–19 |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| African American | 18% | 15% | 20% | 15% |
| Hispanic | 52% | 56% | 53% | 56% |
| White | 22% | 20% | 17% | 20% |
| Female | 48% | 49% | 48% | 49% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 66% | 62% | 66% | 63% |
| EL ² | 22% | 22% | 21% | 23% |
| Received SPED ³ Services | 8% | 10% | 9% | 11% |
| At-risk | 47% | 61% | 48% | 60% |

Source. Public Education Information Management System, 2017–18 and 2018–19. Note. Analyses include a total of 12,141 (2017–18) and 20,518 (2018–19) students attending campuses which received funding through the Texas Public Charter School Start-Up Grant program and 2,497,301 (2017–18) and 3,035,091 (2018–19) students at traditional public school campuses in feeder districts. Feeder district is defined by where the students attending the charter school would have attended had they remained in traditional public schools; see Appendix A for details.

¹ Feeder district is defined by where the students attending the charter school would have attended had they remained in traditional public schools. For this evaluation, campus feeders were defined if at least five students enrolled in the charter school start-up grantee campus. Matched students were selected from feeder districts.

² English Learners (EL)

³ Special Education (SPED)

Student Mobility Patterns

The evaluation first explored the number of students that transferred out of a charter school start-up grantee campus during the school year. Of the 28,572 students who were enrolled at the start of the

2017–18 or 2018–19 school years at charter school start-up grantee campuses, 2,421 (8%) of them were not enrolled at the same campus at the end of that school year. Of these 2,421 students that left during either the 2017–18 or 2018–19 school years, 413 transferred to a different charter school campus (17%), and 1,528 transferred to a traditional public school (63%). For those who transferred during either school year, approximately 63% went to traditional public schools while 17% of those who transferred enrolled at a different charter school campus. The remaining 480 students (20%) left the Texas public school system.³¹ See Appendix A for details of the methodology.

The evaluation study compared the characteristics of those 2,421 students that transferred out of charter school start-up grantee campuses during the school year to those who remained enrolled at the same campus. The students who left during the year were less likely to be ELs, less likely to be economically disadvantaged, and on average had lower prior-year test scores in both STAAR-Mathematics and STAAR-Reading tests.

The evaluation also explored the number of students that returned to their start-up grantee campus the following year, identified by comparing end-of-school-year enrollment data to the subsequent year's fall enrollment data. Approximately 77% of students enrolled at charter school start-up grantee campuses in 2017–18 returned to that campus for the next school year, compared to 80% of traditional public school students. Of the 2,054 students (23%) that were not enrolled at the charter school start-up grantee campus in 2018–19, 57% left for a traditional public school and 27% attended a different charter school in 2018–19. The remaining 16% of students left the Texas public school system.

For students enrolled in 2018–19, 74% of charter school start-up grantee students returned to the same campus in 2019–20, compared to 79% of traditional public school students. Of the 3,932 students (26%) that were not enrolled at the charter school start-up grantee campus in 2019–20, 59% left for a traditional public school, 24% attended a different charter school in 2019–20, and the remaining 17% of students left the Texas public school system.

Table 4.5 shows the characteristics of students enrolled at charter school start-up grantee campuses in 2017–18, both students who did not enroll in the charter school start-up grantee campus in the subsequent year (identified by comparing end-of-school-year enrollment data to fall enrollment data) and those who returned to enroll in the same campus in 2018–19. Comparing the first two columns, African American students were more likely to leave the grantee campus than Hispanic students. Students who did not enroll at the same campus in 2018–19 were less likely to be economically disadvantaged, or identified as an EL, compared to students who returned to enroll in the same campus in 2018–19. Comparing column 1 to column 3, 2017–18 charter school start-up grantee students who did not enroll at the same campus in 2018–19 were more likely to be white and less likely to be Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, identified as an EL, or to receive SPED services compared to traditional public school students who did not enroll in the same campus in 2018–19.

³¹ These students could not be found in the statewide PEIMS data at the end of the year, indicating that they left the Texas public school system; this may be the case for a variety of reasons, such as entering private school, moving out of the state, being homeschooled, and others. The reasons students left the system are not collected in PEIMS for Grades 6 and below, and a more detailed analysis of leaver reasons for Grade 7–12 was not conducted for this analysis.

Table 4.5 Characteristics of Students Enrolled in 2017–18 at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses and Traditional Public Charter School Campuses in Feeder¹ Districts Who Did Not Enroll in the Same Campus in 2018–19

| Student Characteristics | Charter School Start-Up Grantee Leaving Students | Charter School Start-Up Grantee Continuing Students | Traditional Public School Leaving Students | Traditional Public School Continuing Students |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|--|---|
| African American | 19% | 13% | 21% | 13% |
| Hispanic | 46% | 56% | 54% | 57% |
| White | 23% | 23% | 17% | 21% |
| Female | 50% | 48% | 48% | 49% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 60% | 64% | 71% | 61% |
| ELs ² | 19% | 24% | 25% | 24% |
| Received SPED ³ Services | 7% | 8% | 12% | 10% |
| Number | 2,054 | 6,704 | 384,350 | 1,509,729 |

Source. Public Education Information Management System databases, Texas Education Agency, 2017–18 and 2018–19. Note. Analyses include a total of 8,758 students attending campuses in 2017–18 which received funding through the Texas Public Charter School Start-Up Grant program and 1,894,079 students attending traditional public school campuses in feeder districts in 2017–18.

¹ Feeder district is defined by where the students attending the charter school would have attended had they remained in traditional public schools. For this evaluation, campus feeders were defined if at least five students enrolled in the charter school start-up grantee campus. Matched students were selected from feeder districts.

² English Learners (ELs)

³ Special Education (SPED)

Similarly, Table 4.6 shows that 2018–19 charter school start-up grantee students who did not enroll at the same campus in 2019–20 were more likely to be African American and white, and less likely to be Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, or identified as an EL, compared to students who returned to enroll in the same campus in 2019–20. Compared to traditional public school students who did not enroll in the same campus in 2019–20, charter school start-up grantee students who did not enroll at the same campus in 2019–20 were more likely to be white and less likely to be Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, identified as an EL, or to receive SPED services.

Table 4.6 Characteristics of Students Enrolled in 2018–19 at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses and Traditional Public Charter School Campuses in Feeder¹ Districts Who Did Not Enroll in the Same Campus in 2019–20

| Student Characteristics | Charter School Start-Up Grantee Leaving Students | Charter School Start-Up Grantee Continuing Students | Traditional Public School Leaving Students | Traditional Public School Continuing Students |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|--|---|
| African American | 24% | 16% | 22% | 13% |
| Hispanic | 46% | 57% | 53% | 56% |
| White | 20% | 17% | 17% | 21% |
| Female | 48% | 48% | 48% | 49% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 62% | 65% | 72% | 61% |
| ELs ² | 16% | 24% | 24% | 24% |
| Received SPED ³ Services | 9% | 8% | 13% | 11% |
| Number | 3,932 | 11,351 | 434,067 | 1,862,760 |

Source. Public Education Information Management System databases, Texas Education Agency, 2018–19 and 2019–20. Note. Analyses include a total of 15,283 students attending campuses in 2018–19 which received funding through the Texas Public Charter School Start-Up Grant program and 2,296,827 students attending traditional public school campuses in feeder districts in 2018–19.

¹ Feeder district is defined by where the students attending the charter school would have attended had they remained in traditional public schools. For this evaluation, campus feeders were defined if at least five students enrolled in the charter school start-up grantee campus. Matched students were selected from feeder districts.

² English Learners (EL)

³ Special Education (SPED)

Summary of Key Findings

The most impactful, important, or effective practices related to student recruitment and retention at charter school start-up grantee campuses, as identified by principals and teachers, include the following approaches:

Student Recruitment

- Word-of-mouth advertising from parents of students currently enrolled at the school was ranked by principals as the most effective methods for recruiting students to their new charter school campus. While this was rated as an effective recruitment method by all principals, it was ranked as more effective by school leaders in the second and third years of operation.
- The use of social media to advertise the new charter school was more prominent at schools in their first and second years of operation, while open houses to share information about the campuses were ranked as more effective by principals at campuses in their third year of serving students.
- When asked about their target population for student recruitment, principals most commonly indicated they are either open-enrollment with no specific target populations or that their target populations are based on a geographic boundary. For principals who did mention specific student populations for recruitment, the most commonly noted student groups were

economically disadvantaged students, students interested in a particular field or career path (e.g., STEM academy), and students who were struggling in traditional public school environments.

Student Retention

- For principals at charter school start-up grantee campuses in their second or third year of serving students, the building of meaningful relationships between teachers and students, the establishment of a safe and collaborative environment, the academic growth of students, the delivery of student-centered instruction, and effective communications between teachers and parents were ranked as the five most effective approaches for retaining students from one year to the next.
- Teachers at charter school start-up grantee campuses also discussed how they play a role in student retention by establishing positive relationships with parents and students and by delivering high-quality instruction. Student happiness, a sense of belonging, and the availability of extracurricular activities were also cited by teachers as important drivers for student retention.
- For most demographic categories, the make-up of students enrolled at charter school start-up grantee campuses and matched traditional public schools are comparable, with the largest difference being that charter school start-up grantee campuses enroll a smaller proportion of students at-risk of dropping out of school compared to traditional public schools in feeder districts.
- The vast majority of students enrolled at charter school start-up grantee campuses in 2017–18 (91%) or 2018–19 (92%) remained in that campus the entire school year. For those who transferred during either school year, approximately 63% went to traditional public schools while 17% of those who transferred enrolled at a different charter school campus.
- The majority (74%) of students enrolled at charter school start-up grantee campuses in 2018–19 also returned to the same campus in 2019–20. Of those that transferred, 59% left for a traditional public school and 24% attended a different charter school during the next school year.
- Students who were enrolled in a charter school start-up grantee campus in 2018–19 but did not enroll in the same campus in 2019–20 were more likely to be white and African American and less likely to be Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, or an EL when compared to students who continued in that school in 2019–20.

Chapter 5 — Teacher Recruitment and Retention Practices at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the manner in which Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant recipients attract, recruit, and retain highly-qualified instructors. Similar to the analytic approach described in Chapter 2 and also used in Chapter 4 of this report, the analysis of principal survey data, CSP principal interview data, and CSP teacher focus group data from 2017–18, 2018–19, and 2019–20 were used to describe the methods by which charter school start-up grantees attract, recruit, and retain highly-qualified instructors. The evaluation team also analyzed extant data from TEA to create tables related to teacher retention and mobility patterns for charter school start-up grantee campuses and matched comparison campuses.

Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategies

Recruiting and retaining high-quality educators is important when developing a new charter school campus or expanding an existing campus due to an enrollment increase or an expansion of grades served. With this in mind, the evaluation examined a variety of issues related to recruiting and retaining high-quality educators at charter school start-up grantee campuses, including:

- Methods for attracting high-quality educators;
- Criteria for hiring teachers;
- Methods for retaining high-quality teachers; and
- Measures used to decide on whether or not to retain teachers.

Methods for Attracting and Recruiting High-Quality Teachers

As Table 5.1 illustrates, the majority of start-up principal survey respondents in their first (59%), second (73%), and third (67%) year of serving students ranked word-of-mouth about the school as one of the two most effective ways to attract high-quality teachers to their campuses. During interviews conducted during annual site visits, principals discussed how this process is facilitated by *“inviting people to just see our model and just to come and visit their school”* so they can go out and spread the word to like-minded educators, and by *“finding colleges and universities that are producing graduates where the institution and the student, the graduate, have a mission alignment that already connects to [our school].”* A principal in their second year of serving students talked about how *“there are a few other schools across the country, K–12 schools that have teachers that will hear about us through those small networks and then come to find that they really are compelled by what we’re doing.”*

Using current teachers to recruit colleagues was more commonly ranked by principals in annual surveys as one of the two most effective methods for attracting talented teachers by principals at campuses in their second (42%) and third (67%) year of operation than by principals at campuses in their first year of serving students (31%). Job fairs and recruitment services were also consistently ranked among the two most effective teacher recruitment approaches by school leaders at charter school start-up grantee campuses. Principals at campuses in their first year of operations tended to rely more heavily on social media (35% ranking it as one of the two most effective recruitment methods) to attract quality teachers than their counterparts at charter schools in their second and third years of operation, neither of whom ranked social media in the top five recruitment methods. (See Table 5.1 for more details.)

Table 5.1 Effective Methods for Attracting High-Quality Teachers: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Effective, by Year of Serving Students

| Year 1, Cohorts 1–4 (n=29) | | Year 2, Cohorts 1–3 (n=26) | | Year 3, Cohorts 1 and 2 (n=15) | |
|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|
| 1. Word of mouth about the school | 59% | 1. Word of mouth about the school | 73% | 1. Current teachers recruiting colleagues | 67% |
| 2. Social media (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn) | 35% | 2. Current teachers recruiting colleagues | 42% | 2. Word of mouth about the school | 67% |
| 3. Current teachers recruiting colleagues | 31% | 3. Recruitment services (e.g., Indeed, Zip Recruiter) | 27% | 3. Job fairs | 27% |
| 4. Job fairs | 31% | 4. Job fairs | 19% | 4. Recruitment services (e.g., Indeed, Zip Recruiter) | 20% |
| 5. Recruitment services (e.g., Indeed, Zip Recruiter) | 21% | 5. Online advertisements | 19% | 5. Online advertisements | 13% |

Source. Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campus Principal Survey, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018, 2019, and 2020. Note. Year 1 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2017), Cohort 3 principals (fall 2018), and Cohort 4 principals (fall 2019). Year 2 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2018), and Cohort 3 principals (fall 2019). Year 3 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2019).

During interviews with start-up principals, networking and word of mouth was most commonly discussed by school leaders at campuses in their first (35%), second (85%), and third (50%) year of serving students as the most effective way to recruit teachers.

A substantial proportion of principals in their first (25%), second (30%), and third (40%) year of serving students through the grant program shared their perspectives on the importance of a careful and effective hiring or application process. Job fairs were also among the five most commonly noted effective teacher recruitment approaches (discussed by 15% to 25% of the principals interviewed). Principals at more mature schools were more inclined to cite these two recruitment methods as effective. A school leader at a campus in their third year of operations elaborated on the importance of having a thoughtfully crafted hiring or application process which hits on the educational philosophy of the teacher, the pedagogical skills of the teacher, and the teacher’s comfort level with the expectations of the school:

“...the three steps of the interview [aid in effective recruitment]. The first interview, we ask the questions to understand... their educational philosophy. After that, we see, of course, number one, they have to be highly qualified and certified... we call them for a second time, to see their teaching style, like how well they're able to teach, how well they're able to deliver the instruction...In the third part, we talk about our expectations”

-Year 1 Principal

Criteria for Hiring Teachers

When hiring new teachers, it is important that school leaders establish criteria for teacher candidates. Making sure teachers shared a strong passion for teaching was consistently ranked by start-up grantee campus principals as one of the most important criteria considered, regardless of the maturity of the charter school. This hiring criterion was ranked as the first or second most important hiring criterion by 38% of principals at campuses in their first year, 31% of principals at campuses in their second year, and 33% of principals at campuses in their third year of serving students. Other criteria these principals felt were important included passion for teaching, strong demonstrated pedagogical skills, teacher fit with the educational philosophy of the school, content expertise, and teacher certification. When the maturity of the charter school was considered, some variation in the ranking of hiring criteria is observed. (See Table 5.2).

Table 5.2 Most Important Criteria when Hiring New Teachers: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Important, by Year of Serving Students

| Year 1, Cohorts 1–4 (n=29) | | Year 2, Cohorts 1–3 (n=26) | | Year 3, Cohorts 1 and 2 (n=15) | |
|--|-----|--|-----|--|-----|
| 1. Passion for teaching | 38% | 1. Teacher fit with the mission of the charter school campus | 39% | 1. Strong demonstrated pedagogical skills | 40% |
| 2. Teacher fit with the mission of the charter school campus | 28% | 2. Teacher fit with the educational philosophy of the school | 35% | 2. Teacher fit with the mission of the charter school campus | 40% |
| 3. Strong demonstrated pedagogical skills | 28% | 3. Passion for teaching | 31% | 3. Passion for teaching | 33% |
| 4. Teacher fit with educational philosophy of the school | 24% | 4. Strong demonstrated pedagogical skills | 23% | 4. Teacher certification | 27% |
| 5. Content expertise | 17% | 5. Teacher certification | 23% | 5. Content expertise | 20% |

Source. Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campus Principal Survey, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018, 2019, and 2020. Note. Year 1 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2017), Cohort 3 principals (fall 2018), and Cohort 4 principals (fall 2019). Year 2 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2018), and Cohort 3 principals (fall 2019). Year 3 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (fall 2019).

A principal at a campus in their first year of serving students shared how they prioritized their hiring criteria, with making sure the educational philosophy of the prospective teacher and the new charter school were in synch before exploring the teacher’s qualifications, credentials, and pedagogical skills.

“The three steps of the interview [aid in effective recruitment]. In the first interview, we ask the questions to understand ... their educational philosophy. After that, we see, of course, number one, they have to be highly qualified and certified; ... we call them for a second time, to see their teaching style, like how well they're able to teach, how well they're able to deliver the instruction. ... In the third part, we talk about our expectations”

-Year 1 Principal

Methods for Retaining Teachers

The stress associated with working at a new charter school can be high for principals, teachers, and staff, so developing effective approaches for increasing teacher retention from year to year is important for consistency, development of lasting relationships with students and parents, and to the long-term success of charter school campuses.

As Table 5.3 demonstrates, principals at campuses in their first (50%) and second (30%) years of operation were more likely than their counterparts at campuses in their third year of operation (20%) to rank the providing of regular feedback on instructional practices to teachers as the first or second most effective strategies for retaining high-quality teachers. Meanwhile, a larger proportion of principals at campuses in their third year of operation (47%) ranked providing dedicated planning time to teachers as the first or second most effective strategy for retaining high-quality teachers. However, it's worth noting that providing dedicated planning time was still rated as the second most effective approach by 36% of principals at first-year campuses and 30% of principals at second-year campuses, indicating that this approach is a high priority for all principals. Other effective retention methods ranked by principals in the top five include effective curriculum and supplemental materials, incentive pay, and smaller class sizes.

Table 5.3 Effective Approaches for Retaining High-Quality Teachers: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Important, by Year of Serving Students

| Year 1, Cohorts 1–4 (n=14) | | Year 2, Cohorts 1–3 (n=27) | | Year 3, Cohorts 1 and 2 (n=15) | |
|---|-----|--|-----|---|-----|
| 1. Regular feedback on instructional practices | 50% | 1. Regular feedback on instructional practices | 30% | 1. Dedicated planning time | 47% |
| 2. Dedicated planning time | 36% | 2. Dedicated planning time | 30% | 2. Incentive pay based on student and/or school performance metrics | 33% |
| 3. Incentive pay based on student and/or school performance metrics | 21% | 3. Effective curriculum and supplemental materials | 26% | 3. Effective curriculum and supplemental materials | 27% |
| 4. Smaller class sizes | 21% | 4. Smaller class sizes | 22% | 4. Regular feedback on instructional practices | 20% |
| 5. Effective curriculum and supplemental materials | 14% | 5. Flexibility in lesson planning | 22% | 5. Structured PLCs | 20% |

Source. Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campus Principal Survey, Gibson Consulting Group, 2018, 2019, and 2020. *Note.* Year 1 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (spring 2018), Cohort 3 principals (spring 2019), and Cohort 4 principals (spring 2020). Year 2 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (spring 2019), and Cohort 3 (spring 2020). Year 3 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (spring 2020).

During interviews with charter school start-up grantee principals, discussions turned to the most effective methods for getting teachers to return to their campus from one year to the next. Regardless of the campus' maturity, the vast majority of principals (70% to 80%) engaged in discussions about how the school culture, including “*their relationship with school leadership*”, “*experience in the classroom*”, and “*the level of support and the type of school culture they feel is around them as a whole*” as the most important ingredients to realizing high teacher retention rates. Other retention methods noted during

interviews included teacher advancement strategies, higher compensation, and high-quality training and development opportunities.

Criteria for Retaining Teachers

Charter school start-up grantee campus principals surveyed were asked to weigh the importance of various criteria when considering whether or not to continue a teacher’s employment at their campus. As Table 5.4 shows, regardless of the maturity of the charter school campus, instructional effectiveness and student performance were ranked by principals as the two most heavily weighted criteria when deciding whether or not to retain a teacher from one school year to the next. Approximately 69% of start-up principal respondents in their first year of serving students, 82% of principals at campuses in their second year of serving students, and 73% of principals in their third year of operations ranked instructional effectiveness as the first or second most important consideration to teacher retention. Student performance was ranked as the first or second most important criteria for deciding whether to retain a teacher by 48% to 56% of principals surveyed. Cultural fit with the campus, classroom management, and student engagement were also considered to be important criteria, with student engagement ranking higher with principals at more mature campuses in their third year of serving students.

Table 5.4 Most Heavily Weighted Criteria when Deciding Whether to Continue a Teacher’s Employment: Percentage of Principals Rating Item as First or Second Most Important, by Year of Serving Students

| Year 1, Cohorts 1–4 (n=29) | | Year 2, Cohorts 1–3 (n=27) | | Year 3, Cohorts 1 and 2 (n=15) | |
|--------------------------------|-----|--------------------------------|-----|-----------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Instructional effectiveness | 69% | 1. Instructional effectiveness | 82% | 1. Instructional effectiveness | 73% |
| 2. Student performance | 48% | 2. Student performance | 56% | 2. Student performance | 47% |
| 3. Cultural fit with campus | 24% | 3. Classroom management | 19% | 3. Student engagement | 27% |
| 4. Classroom management | 24% | 4. Cultural fit with campus | 19% | 4. Cultural fit with campus | 20% |
| 5. Student engagement | 17% | 5. Student engagement | 15% | 5. Classroom management | 13% |

Source: Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campus Principal Survey, Gibson Consulting Group and Safal Partners, 2018, 2019, and 2020.

Note. Year 1 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (spring 2018), Cohort 3 principals (spring 2019), and Cohort 4 principals (spring 2020). Year 2 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (spring 2019), and Cohort 3 (spring 2020). Year 3 analyses include responses from Cohort 1 and 2 principals (spring 2020).

Characteristics of Teachers at Public Charter Schools Start-Up Grantee Campuses and Teachers at Feeder Pattern Traditional Public Schools

As Table 5.5 shows, teachers working at charter school start-up grantee campuses in 2017–18 and 2018–19 were typically younger than teachers in comparison schools. Teachers working at charter school start-up grantee campuses possessed fewer years of teaching, were more likely to be first-year teachers, and had less tenure at their school. Teachers working at these charter school grantee campuses were also less likely to have provisional or probationary certification (18% vs. 24% in 2017–18 and 14% vs. 19% in 2018–19), compared to teachers at schools in feeder districts, which are defined by

where the students attending the charter school would have attended had they remained in traditional public schools (see Appendix A for details).³²

Table 5.5 Characteristics of Teachers at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses Compared to Teachers Working at Feeder¹ Districts

| Teacher Characteristic | Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses, 2017–18 | Feeder Districts, 2017–18 | Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses, 2018–19 | Feeder Districts, 2018–19 |
|--|---|---------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Average age of teachers | 37.4 | 41.2 | 37.7 | 41.2 |
| Average number of years of teaching experience | 6.5 | 10.9 | 6.5 | 11.0 |
| Percentage of first-year teachers | 28% | 12% | 32% | 11% |
| Average number of years of tenure at campus | 2.5 | 7.3 | 2.5 | 7.3 |
| Percentage of teachers with provisional or probationary certifications | 18% | 24% | 14% | 19% |
| Percentage of teachers receiving certifications through alternative certification programs | 34% | 38% | 43% | 39% |
| Percent of teachers with masters or Ph.D. | 29% | 31% | 37% | 32% |

Source: State Board of Educator Certification and Public Education Information Management System databases, Texas Education Agency, 2017–18 and 2018–19.

Note: Analyses include a total of 968 (2017–18) and 1,355 (2018–19) teachers employed at campuses which received funding through the Texas Public Charter School Start-Up Grant program and 254,015 (2017–18) and 324,501 (2018–19) teachers at comparable traditional public school campuses. Feeder district is defined by where the students attending the charter school would have attended had they remained in traditional public schools; see Appendix A for details.

¹ Feeder district is defined by where the students attending the charter school would have attended had they remained in traditional public schools. For this evaluation, campus feeders were defined if at least five students enrolled in the charter school start-up grantee campus. Matched students were selected from feeder districts.

Comparison of Teacher Retention and Mobility Patterns for Teachers at Public Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses and Comparable Traditional Public School Campuses

The evaluation examined the retention of teachers by looking at patterns in teacher mobility and retention over a two-year period, from the 2017–18 school year to the beginning of the 2019–20 school year. This teacher retention rate over two years (between the 2017–18 and 2019–20 school years) at charter school start-up grantee campuses (57%) was substantially lower than the retention rate for teachers working at comparable traditional public school campuses (73%). See Appendix A for details of the methodology.

³² Teachers in open-enrollment charter schools must hold a bachelor’s degree but are not required by the state to hold a teaching certificate unless they are a special education or bilingual education/English as a second language teacher.

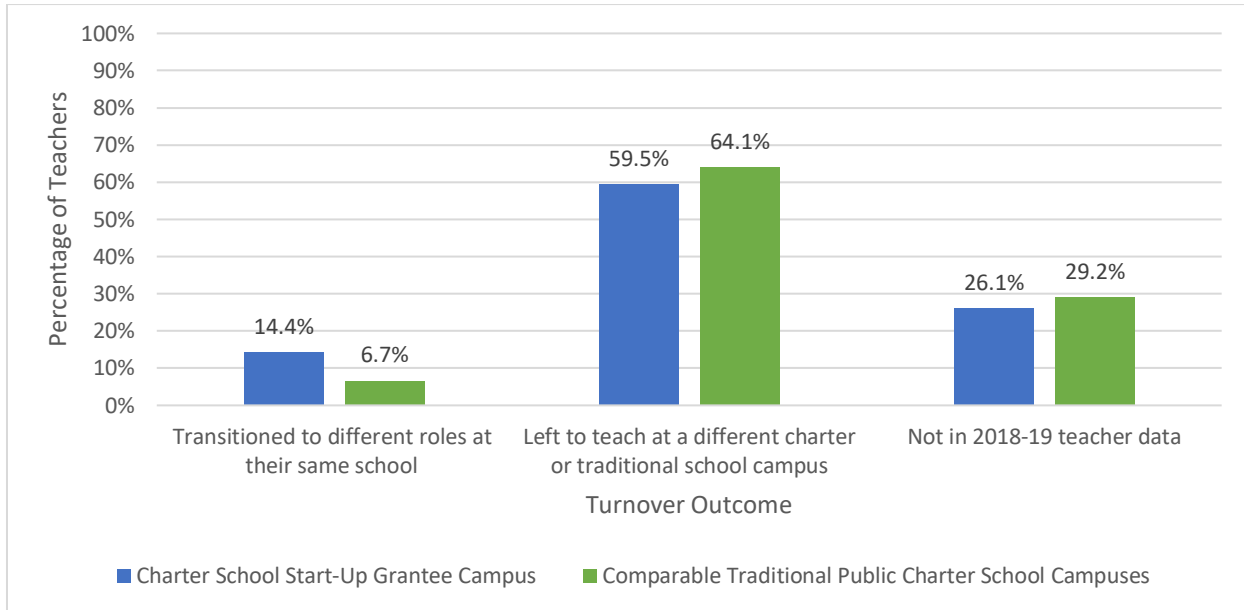
The evaluation also explored mobility patterns of teachers over the same two-year period, from the 2017–18 school year to the beginning of the 2019–20 school year. This analysis looks at 2017–18 charter school start-up grantee campus teachers who were not in a teaching position at the same campus at the beginning of the 2019–20 school year. One hundred and twenty-six out of 294 teachers who taught at charter school start-up grantee campuses in 2017–18 were no longer in teaching positions at that school at the start of the 2019–20 school year. Of those 126 teachers:

- 14% transitioned to different roles at their same school (n=18);
- 19% left to teach at another charter school (n=24);
- 21% left to teach at a traditional public school (n=26); and
- 46% were not in the 2019–20 teacher data (n=58).

Comparing characteristics of the 168 (of 294) 2017–18 teachers who remained to teach in their charter school start-up grantee campus in 2019–20 to the 126 teachers who were no longer teaching at that school in 2019–20, teachers who left were more likely to be white (81% vs 45%), and more likely to have been in their first year of teaching (58% vs 35%). It was also more likely for the teachers who left to have been in their first year at that school in 2017–18 (71% vs 61%), and more likely that they had taken an alternative certification route (50% vs 45%).

Figure 5.1 illustrates differences in mobility patterns for teachers at charter school start-up grantee campuses and comparable traditional public school campuses. These comparisons are done separately by year, with Figure 5.1 showing differences in mobility between the 2017–18 and 2018–19 school years, and Figure 5.2 showing differences in mobility between 2018–19 and 2019–20. Teachers who left their teaching positions at their 2017–18 charter school start-up grantee campus were more likely to transition to a different role at their campus (14% vs. 7%). They were less likely to not be teaching in a Texas public school (26% vs. 29%) and to leave to teach at another charter or traditional public school (60% vs. 64%) when compared to teachers who left their teaching position at their 2017–18 traditional public school campus.

Figure 5.1 Comparison of Mobility Patterns between 2017–18 and 2018–19 for Teachers at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses and Comparable Traditional Public School Campuses who Left their 2017–18 Campus

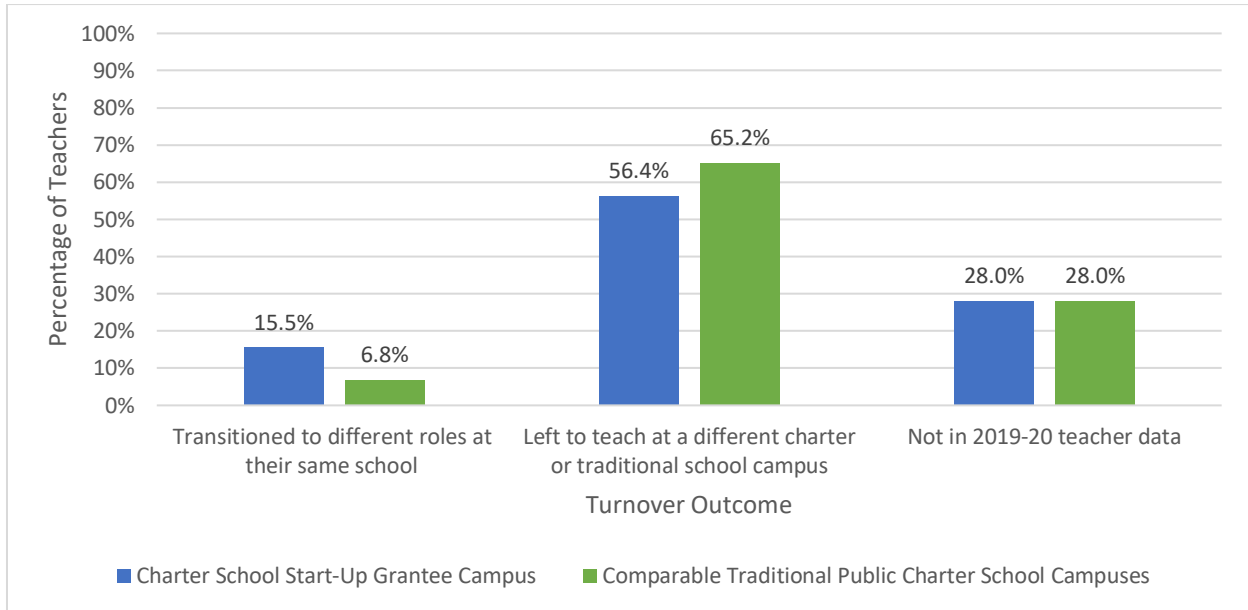


Source. Public Education Information Management System databases, Texas Education Agency, 2017–18 and 2018–19.

Note. Analyses include a total of 333 teachers employed in 2017–18 at campuses which received funding through the Texas Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant program who were not teaching at that school in 2018–19 and 66,012 teachers at comparable traditional public school campuses.

Figure 5.2 illustrates differences in mobility patterns for teachers at charter school start-up grantee campuses and comparable traditional public school campuses between the 2018–19 and 2019–20 school years. Teachers who left their teaching positions at their 2018–19 charter school start-up grantee campus were more likely to transition to a different role at their campus (16% vs. 7%), and less likely to leave to teach at another charter or traditional public school (56% vs. 65%) when compared to teachers who left their teaching position at their 2018–19 traditional public school campus.

Figure 5.2 Comparison of Mobility Patterns between 2018–19 and 2019–20 for Teachers at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses and Comparable Traditional Public School Campuses who Departed their 2018–19 Campus



Source. Public Education Information Management System databases, Texas Education Agency, 2018–19 and 2019–20.

Note. Analyses include a total of 502 teachers employed in 2018–19 at campuses which received funding through the Texas Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant program who were not teaching at that school in 2019–20 and 84,617 teachers at comparable traditional public school campuses.

Summary of Key Findings

The most impactful, important, or effective practices related to the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers at charter school start-up grantee campuses as identified by principals and teachers, include the following approaches:

Teacher Recruitment and Hiring

- While principals shared a wide array of effective teacher recruitment methods, they consistently rated word-of-mouth advertising about the school and current teachers recruiting colleagues as the most effective teacher recruitment strategies. The use of social media to recruit teachers was more prominent among first-year campuses, and the use of current teachers to recruit colleagues became more prominent as campuses matured from the first to the third year of operation.
- Passion for teaching, teacher fit with the mission of the campuses, and strong demonstrated pedagogical skills were rated by principals as the three most important considerations when hiring new teachers. As campuses matured from the first to the third year of serving students, the need for teachers with strong demonstrated pedagogical skills rose in importance as a hiring criterion.

Teacher Retention

- Through annual surveys, principals at charter school start-up grantee campuses in their first and second years of serving students rated regular feedback to teachers regarding instructional practices and dedicated planning time as the two most effective approaches to retaining high-quality teachers. For principals at third-year charter schools, dedicated planning time was the top-ranked teacher retention approach, followed by incentive pay based on student and/or school performance metrics.
- During interviews, principals and teachers stressed the importance of school culture as an important consideration for teachers when they are deciding whether or not to return to teach at a campus for another year.
- Regardless of the maturity of the charter start-up grantee campus, principals shared that instructional effectiveness is by far the most important consideration when deciding whether to retain a teacher, followed by student performance, student engagement, and cultural fit with the campus.
- Teachers at charter school start-up grantee campuses are typically younger, have fewer years of teaching experience, are more likely to be first-year teachers, and have less tenure at their school than their counterparts at traditional public school campuses.
- The two-year teacher retention rate (between the 2017–18 and 2019–20 school years) at charter school start-up grantee campuses was 16 percentage points lower than it was for teachers working at comparable traditional public school campuses (57% vs. 73%).
- Teachers at charter start-up grantee campuses who left their 2017–18 and 2018–19 teaching positions were approximately twice as likely to transition to a different role at their campus when compared to teachers who left their teaching position at a traditional public school campus, which implies that new charter schools may have more opportunities for advancement into leadership roles.
- Teachers at charter school start-up grantee campuses who left their 2017–18 and 2018–19 teaching positions were less likely than their traditional public school counterparts to be teaching in another charter or traditional public school in Texas in the subsequent school year.

Chapter 6 — Best or Promising Practices at High-Performing Charter School Campuses

This chapter summarizes promising practices in place at high-performing charter school campuses. Using data from the spring 2018 statewide survey of charter school campus principals from high-performing and other charter school campuses, as well as data collected through site visits to high-performing charter schools in spring 2018 (i.e., principal interviews, teacher focus groups, and classroom observations), the evaluation team explored best or promising practices at high-performing charter school campuses and other charter school campuses. A summary of best or promising practices related to school organization and management, positive school climate maintenance, instruction and teacher supports, student recruitment and retention, and teacher recruitment and retention are presented below. For a fully detailed summary of the methodology used to define, measure the impact of, and select high-performing campuses can be found in Appendix A. For more details on the process for collecting data and assessing practices, as well as a more expansive list of best or promising practices, please refer to the [Texas Public Charter School Start-Up Grant 2016–17 and 2017–18 Evaluation Report](#).

Organizational Practices

- Clarity in the educational philosophy and mission of the charter schools were rated by principals at high-performing charter school campuses as the most important practice to executing the campus' mission, and high-performing charter school principals were more likely to rate this as an important item than their counterparts at other charter school campuses.
- The creation of a youth culture at the campus, which can impact student satisfaction with their educational experience, academic performance, and student retention at the school was also identified as an emerging practice at high-performing charter schools.
- Getting parents connected to the school and involved in their child's education is an important organizational activity for charter schools. It requires a great deal of intentionality, focus, organization, and creativity. School leaders at high-performing charter schools placed more emphasis on the use of open houses and regular school day events for parents to interact with their children to increase parent engagement than principals at other charter school campuses.
- Principals at high-performing charter schools were also more likely than principals at other charter schools to encourage parents to attend parent meetings, conferences, open houses, and other campus events, and to participate in school fundraising events. These practices can be considered promising practices to engage parents in their child's education and connect them to the charter school.

Instructional Practices and Teacher Supports

- The establishment of positive relationships between the teacher and student was reported to be the most frequently observed instructional strategy by principals across all charter schools. However, maximized learning time, meaningful peer interactions, and the effective use of scaffolding were more frequently observed by principals at high-performing charter schools than principals at other charter school campuses.

- Principals at high-performing charters were more likely to indicate that reviewing student data with teachers and using student data to gauge the performance of teachers were more impactful strategies for improving instructional practices than principals at other charter school campuses.
- For both principals at high-performing and other charter schools, establishing strong teacher-student relationships and connections and various forms of in-class and out-of-class academic interventions (i.e., targeted pull-out instruction by interventionists) are ranked as some of the most impactful approaches to closing achievement gaps for educationally disadvantaged and low-performing students.
- The use of SPED services, differentiated and individualized instruction in class, and communications with parents about their child’s academic performance were deemed by principals at high-performing charter schools to be more critical approaches for closing achievement gaps for economically disadvantaged and low-performing students.
- Instructional practices observed at high-performing charter schools reflect high-quality teacher-student interactions related to effective instructional supports and classroom management approaches.

Campus Climate and Staff Morale

- Principals at high-performing charter schools were much more inclined to strongly agree than their counterparts at other charter schools that staff morale is high at their campus, that teachers trust their principal, and that teachers trust each other. In addition, a larger proportion of principals at high-performing charter school campuses were in strong agreement that their campus has an inclusive work environment, that a high value is placed on teamwork and collaboration, and that there is a culture of professionalism at their school.
- Principals at all charter schools (high-performing and otherwise) consistently chose the following important approaches to maintaining a positive school climate: campus staff sharing a common set of beliefs about schooling, genuine care for students, a culture of respect, and academic growth of students. However, principals at high-performing charter schools placed more emphasis on campus staff sharing a common set of beliefs about schooling and learning and the social-emotional growth of students.
- High-performing charter schools differed from other charter schools in their classroom management practices as well, with a larger percentage of principals at high-performing charter school campuses ranking the use of proactive steps to curb misbehavior and strong anti-bullying policies as the two most impactful approaches in maintaining positive student-to-student and student-to-teacher interactions.

Student Recruitment and Retention

- For all charter school principals, word-of-mouth advertising from parents of students currently enrolled was ranked as the most effective recruitment tool. However, the use of open houses and the educational philosophy of the school were both more commonly ranked as effective practices by principals at high-performing charter schools than at other charter schools.
- Building meaningful relationships between teachers and students and establishing a safe and collaborative school environment were among the two most effective methods for retaining students in both groups of charter school campuses. However, high-performing charter school campuses placed a greater emphasis on instructional strategies (e.g., student-centered instruction and the use of multiple instructional approaches to meet academic needs) as effective student retention strategies.

Teacher Recruitment and Retention

- Principals at all charter schools (high-performing and otherwise) ranked the use of current teachers to recruit colleagues as the most important method for recruiting high-quality teachers, while high-performing charter school principals were more likely to rank online advertisements as one of the two most effective recruitment methods.
- Similar to start-up grantee campus principals, instructor effectiveness was ranked as the first or second most important criteria when considering teacher retention. None of the high-performing charter school principals considered incentive pay to be one of their top two methods for recruiting teachers. Importantly, principals at high-performing charter schools were more inclined to consider a teacher's educational fit with the school's educational philosophy and mission when hiring new educators at their campuses.
- For both high-performing and other charter schools, instructional effectiveness, classroom management, student engagement, student performance, and cultural fit with the campuses were deemed by principals to be most important when deciding whether or not to retain a teacher.
- Principals across all charter school campuses consistently ranked smaller class sizes and the providing of regular feedback to the teacher regarding instructional practices as the top two most effective approaches for retaining high-quality teachers. Principals at high-performing charter schools placed more emphasis on providing teachers with smaller class sizes and professional learning communities to support teacher retention and reduce the risk of burn out.
- Principals at high-performing charter schools did not rank teacher incentive pay as one of the five most effective tools for retaining high-quality teachers.

Chapter 7 — Summary of Findings

This chapter summarizes the findings from an investigation of the start-up, organizational, and instructional practices of Public Charter School Start-Up grantee campuses described in Chapter 2, analyses related to the performance of start-up charter school campuses described in Chapter 3, analyses of the student recruitment and retention strategies in place at start-up grantee campuses described in Chapter 4, and analyses of the teacher recruitment and retention practices in place at start-up grantee campuses described in Chapter 5.

Practices at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses

An investigation of practices at the charter school start-up grantee campuses led to a number of key findings related to start-up planning, organizational practices, instructional practices, school climate, student recruitment and retention methods, and approaches to teacher recruitment, hiring, and retention.

Charter School Start-Up Planning

- Principals at charter start-up grantee campuses shared that determining school needs, practices, and developing processes related to hiring, onboarding, and training new staff were among the most important when getting a school up and running. School leaders at charter school start-up grantee campuses in their first year of operation were more inclined to discuss stakeholder communications as a key start-up activity, while principals at campuses in their second and third years were more inclined to elaborate on the importance of hiring and getting staff and teachers up to speed.
- As charter school campuses matured from the first to the third year of operation, principals tended to focus more intensely on improving the quality of instructional practices through the development of effective support systems for teachers.
- According to principals at charter start-up grantee campuses, CMOs and their school districts served a mentor role providing support and feedback for principals.
- School leaders reported several challenges related to starting a new school, including enrolling students, staffing their schools, managing financial issues, securing adequate facilities and supplies, and overcoming difficulties with communicating school goals to stakeholders (e.g., parents and students).

Organizational Practices

- Regardless of whether a charter school start-up grantee campus was in their first, second, or third year of serving students, using student data to inform instruction, hiring exemplary teachers to support other teachers, maximizing instructional time, and using classroom observations to regularly monitor instructional quality were consistently ranked by principals as being among the five most important practices related to executing the campus's mission.
- During interviews, principals at charter school start-up grantee campuses emphasized effective and consistent communications with teachers, students, and parents as an important

organizational practice. Principals at campuses in their first and second years of operation also noted the importance of establishing clear roles and responsibilities for teachers and staff.

- Regular individualized communications between teachers and parents was deemed the most effective communication method to engage parents by principals at campuses during their first and second year of serving students; while parent-teacher conferences were rated as the most effective method for getting parents involved in their child's education.

Instructional Practices

- Regardless of whether a campus was in their first, second, or third year of operations, establishing positive relationships between students and teachers, maximizing learning time, and using formative data in assessments to guide instruction were rated by principals as three of the top five most frequently observed and most impactful instructional practices.
- For principals at year 1, 2, and 3 start-up grantee campuses, principals rated the review of student performance data with teachers as the most impactful teacher support for improving instruction.
- Teachers at charter school start-up grantee campuses in their second and third years of operation were more likely to note the frequency and importance of communications, collaboration with other teachers, and the use of instructional rounds where they visit the classrooms of other teachers as important supports.
- CLASS observation scores for the Classroom Organization domain showed gradual improvements as charter school start-up grantees moved from their first to second to third year of serving students.
- When compared to CLASS results at high-performing charter school campuses in Texas, Public Charter School Start-Up Grant recipients received higher CLASS observation scores for the Emotional Support and Student Engagement domains than high-performing charter schools, but lower Instructional Support domain scores.
- Principals felt that a variety of in-class interventions, strong teacher-student connections, and out-of-class in-school interventions were the most effective approaches to closing the achievement gap for educationally disadvantaged students at risk of dropping out of school.
- Small group instruction in class was rated by principals as the most effective methods for closing the achievement gap for persistently low-performing students.

Campus Climate and Staff Morale

- Principals felt that a demonstration of genuine care for students and academic growth were the two most important factors associated with creating a positive school climate.

- While principals and teachers tended to be in general agreement about whether a positive climate existed at their campuses, teachers at campuses in their third year of operation were more inclined to express that the climate was poor or negative.
- Regardless of how long their campus had been serving students, the majority of principals felt that working conditions at their charter school start-up grantee campuses were positive, with an increased proportion of principals at campuses in their third year of serving students recognizing challenges related to heavy workloads, high expectations, and stress on teachers. Meanwhile, smaller percentages of teachers described the working conditions as positive compared to principals. As schools moved from the first to the third year of operations, increasing percentages of teachers characterized working conditions as challenging due to unrealistic workloads, high expectations, and lack of teacher supports, which resulted in high stress levels for teachers.
- Principals at campuses in their first, second, and third years of serving students felt that the development of strong teacher-student relationships, the establishment of clear behavioral expectations, and effective student engagement in the classroom were the most impactful approaches to maintaining a positive classroom environment.

Student Recruitment

- Word-of-mouth advertising from parents of students currently enrolled at the school was ranked by principals as the most effective methods for recruiting students to their new charter school campus.
- The use of social media to advertise the new charter school was more prominent at schools in their first and second years of operation, while open houses to share information about the campuses were ranked as more effective by principals at campuses in their third year of serving students.
- When asked about their target population for student recruitment, principals most commonly indicated they are either open-enrollment with no specific target populations or that their target populations are based on a geographic boundary.

Student Retention

- For principals at charter school start-up grantee campuses in their second or third year of serving students, the building of meaningful relationships between teachers and students, the establishment of a safe and collaborative environment, the academic growth of students, the delivery of student-centered instruction, and effective communications between teachers and parents were ranked as the five most effective approaches for retaining students from one year to the next.
- Teachers at charter school start-up grantee campuses also discussed how they play a role in student retention by establishing positive relationships with parents and students, and by

delivering high-quality instruction. Student happiness, a sense of belonging, and the availability of extracurricular activities were also cited by teachers as important drivers for student retention.

- For most demographic categories, the make-up of students enrolled at charter school start-up grantee campuses and matched traditional public schools are comparable, with the of the largest difference being that charter school start-up grantee campuses enroll a smaller proportion of students at-risk of dropping out of school compared to traditional public schools in feeder districts.
- The vast majority of students enrolled at charter school start-up grantee campuses in 2017–18 (91%) or 2018–19 (92%) remained in that campus the entire school year. For those who transferred during either school year, approximately 63% went to traditional public schools while 17% of those who transferred enrolled at a different charter school campus.
- Students who were enrolled in a charter school start-up grantee campus in 2018–19 but did not enroll in the same campus in 2019–20 were more likely to be white and African American and less likely to be Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, or an EL when compared to students who continued in that school in 2019–20.

Teacher Recruitment and Hiring

- While principals shared a wide array of effective teacher recruitment methods, they consistently rated word-of-mouth advertising about the school and current teachers recruiting colleagues as the most effective teacher recruitment strategies.
- Passion for teaching, teacher fit with the mission of the campuses, and strong demonstrated pedagogical skills were rated by principals as the three most important considerations when hiring new teachers. As campuses matured from the first to the third year of serving students, the need for teachers with strong demonstrated pedagogical skills rose in importance as a hiring criterion.

Teacher Retention

- Through annual surveys, principals at charter school start-up grantee campuses in their first and second years of serving students rated regular feedback to teachers regarding instructional practices and dedicated planning time as the two most effective approaches to retaining high-quality teachers. For principals at third-year charter schools, dedicated planning time was the top-ranked teacher retention approach, followed by incentive pay based on student and/or school performance metrics.
- During interviews, principals and teachers also stressed the importance of school culture as an important consideration for teachers when they are deciding whether or not to return to teach at a campus for another year.

- Regardless of the maturity of the charter start-up grantee campus, principals shared that instructional effectiveness is by far the most important consideration when deciding whether to retain a teacher, followed by student performance, student engagement, and cultural fit with the campus.
- Teachers at charter school start-up grantee campuses are typically younger, have fewer years of teaching experience, are more likely to be first-year teachers, and have less tenure at their school than their counterparts at traditional public school campuses.
- The two-year teacher retention rate (between the 2017–18 and 2019–20 school years) at charter school start-up grantee campuses was 16 percentage points lower than it was for teachers working at comparable traditional public school campuses (57% vs. 73%).

Charter School Start-Up Grantee Outcomes

The evaluation estimated effects of enrollment in a charter school start-up grantee campus on the following student outcomes: STAAR-Reading, STAAR-Mathematics, Algebra I EOC exams, and English I EOC exams.

- Overall, across all outcomes and grade ranges, a few campuses across the three cohorts have significantly positive or negative effects, after controlling for differences in student groups, compared to a matched sample of students in traditional public schools, but the general pattern is that the overall average effects for each cohort and year are small and generally not significantly different from zero, especially for Cohorts 1 and 2.
- For STAAR-Mathematics outcomes for students enrolled in charter school start-up grantee elementary campuses, two campuses had performances that were significantly positive and two significantly negative in either 2017–18 or 2018–19, and the overall average effect was significantly negative for Cohort 3, and not significantly different from zero for Cohorts 1 and 2.
- For STAAR-Reading outcomes for students enrolled in charter school start-up grantee elementary school campuses, one campus had a performance that was significantly positive and one significantly negative in either 2017–18 or 2018–19, and the overall average effect was not significantly different from zero for any cohort.
- For STAAR-Mathematics outcomes for students enrolled in charter school start-up grantee middle school campuses, three campuses had performances that were significantly positive and six significantly negative in either 2017–18 or 2018–19, and the overall average effect was significantly negative for Cohort 3, and not significantly different from zero for Cohorts 1 and 2.
- For STAAR-Reading outcomes for students enrolled in charter school start-up grantee middle school campuses, three campuses had performance that was significantly positive and two significantly negative in either 2017–18 or 2018–19, and the overall average effect was significantly positive for Cohort 2 in 2017–18, and not significantly different from zero for Cohorts 1 and 3.

- For English I and Algebra I EOC exams for students enrolled in the charter school start-up grantee high school campuses, two campuses had significantly positive English I EOC exam scores in either 2017–18 or 2018–19, and the overall average effect on English I was significantly positive for Cohort 2. Both the individual campus effects and the overall average effects on Algebra I were not statistically different from zero for all cohorts.

References

- Bifulco, Robert. "Can Nonexperimental Estimates Replicate Estimates Based on Random Assignment in Evaluations of School Choice? A Within-Study Comparison." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, vol. 31, no. 3, 2012, pp. 729–751.
- Cook, T., W. Shadish, and V. Wong. "Three Conditions Under Which Experiments and Observational Studies Produce Comparable Causal Estimates: New Findings from Within-Study Comparisons." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, vol. 27, no. 4, 2008, pp. 724–750.
- Davila, J, Chatterjee, S., Shields, J., Carle, J, Long, R., Pham, C., Booker, K., & Tuttle, C. (2020). Texas Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant Evaluation Report: 2016–17 and 2017–18. (Published for the Texas Education Agency). Houston, TX: Safal Partners.
- Fortson, Kenneth, Philip Gleason, Emma Kopa, and Natalya Verbitsky-Savitz. "Horseshoes, Hand Grenades, and Treatment Effects? Reassessing Whether Nonexperimental Estimators are Biased." *Economics of Education Review*, vol. 44, February 2015, pp. 10–13.
- Furgeson, Joshua, Brian Gill, Joshua Haimson, Alexandra Killewald, Moira McCullough, Ira Nichols-Barrer, Bing ru Teh, Natalya Verbitsky Savitz, Melissa Bowen, Allison Demeritt, Paul Hill, and Robin Lake. "Charter-School Management Organizations: Diverse Strategies and Diverse Student Impacts." Cambridge, MA: Mathematica Policy Research, January 2012.
- Hamre, B. K., & Pianta, R. C. (2007). Learning opportunities in preschool and early elementary classrooms. In R. C. Pianta, M. J. Cox, & K. L. Snow (Eds.), *School readiness and the transition to kindergarten in the era of accountability* (pp. 49–83). Baltimore, MD, US: Paul H Brookes Publishing.
- Pianta, R., La Paro, K. & Hamre, B. (2015). *The Classroom Assessment Scoring System – Manual K–3*. Baltimore, MD, US: Paul H. Brooks Publishing.
- Tuttle, Christina Clark, Brian Gill, Phil Gleason, Virginia Knechtel, Ira Nichols-Barrer, and Alexandra Resch. "KIPP Middle Schools: Impacts on Achievement and Other Outcomes." A report of the National Evaluation of KIPP Middle Schools. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, February 2013.
- Tuttle, Christina Clark, Philip Gleason, Virginia Knechtel, Ira Nichols-Barrer, Kevin Booker, Gregory Chojnacki, Thomas Coen, and Lisbeth Goble. "Understanding the Effect of KIPP as it Scales: Volume I, Impacts on Achievement and Other Outcomes." Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, September 2015.

Appendix A: Overview of Evaluation Approach and Data Collection

Methods

This appendix includes additional detail related to data collection and analysis approaches used in the evaluation of the Texas Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant.

Analysis of Best or Promising Practices at Campuses Funded Through the Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant

To assess what school leaders and teachers felt were the most promising practices related to start-up planning, organizational practices, instructional practices and supports, approaches to maintaining a positive school climate, student recruitment and retention, and teacher recruitment and retention in place at Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grantee campuses, the evaluation team utilized various data sources, including:

- Annual surveys of principals (conducted in fall 2017, fall 2018, and fall 2019);
- Annual site visits to charter school start-up grantee campus, which included interviews with school leaders, teacher focus groups, and classroom observations (conducted in spring 2018, spring 2019, and spring 2020); and
- Collection and analysis of extant data from TEA related to student and teacher characteristics, student mobility, and teacher retention.

Annual Survey of Principals at Campuses Funded through the Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant

The evaluation developed a survey instrument which gathered information from charter school principals across the areas of interest: 1) Respondent background; 2) Organization-level practices; 3) Instructional practices; 4) Working with educationally disadvantaged students; 5) Working with low-performing students; 6) Student discipline; 7) Teacher recruitment and retention; 8) Student recruitment and retention; and 9) School climate.

The charter school principal survey was programmed into Qualtrics, the online survey platform used by Gibson, and initial email invitations to participate in the data collection effort were delivered on February 12, 2018. The survey remained open until April 2, 2018. Over this period, a total of 10 reminder emails were delivered to principals who had not yet completed their survey.

In spring 2018, the online survey was administered to 26 principals at charter school start-up grantee campuses, and 14 completed surveys were received over the February 12 – April 2, 2018 period resulting in a response rate of 54%. In spring 2019, the online survey was administered to 37 principals at start-up grantee campuses, and 31 completed surveys were received over the April 18 – May 18, 2019 period for a response rate of 84%. In spring 2020, survey email invitations were delivered to principals at 50 charter school campuses, and 32 surveys were returned over the March 4 – April 6, 2020 period for a response rate of 64%.

Survey responses were then pooled across years based on whether the principals were at a campus in their first year, second year, or third year of serving students. For campuses in their first year of serving

students (Cohorts 1 and 2 in 2017–18, Cohort 3 in 2018–19, and Cohort 4 in 2019–20), 30 of the 50 possible start-up grantee campuses (60%) are represented in the survey results presented in Chapters 2, 4, and 5 of this report.³³ For campuses in their second year of serving students (Cohorts 1 and 2 in 2018–19, and Cohort 3 in 2019–20), 30 of the 37 possible start-up grantee campuses (81%) are represented in the survey results. For campuses in their third year of serving students (Cohorts 1 and 2 in 2019–20), 17 of the 26 possible start-up grantee campuses (65%) are represented in the survey results.

[Annual Site Visits to Campuses Funded through the Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant](#)

The purpose of fall 2017, 2018, and 2019 site visits to charter school start-up grantee campuses and spring 2018 site visits to high-quality, high-performing charter school campuses was to collect information related to best or promising practices related to:

- Organizational practices
- Instructional-level practices
- Serving educationally disadvantaged and low-performing students
- Methods for reducing student behavioral issues
- Approaches for recruiting and retaining students
- Approaches for recruiting and retaining teachers
- Methods for establishing a positive school climate

To accomplish these project objectives, the evaluation team developed interview protocols for campus principals and a focus group protocol for teachers. Interviews with campus principals, focus groups with teachers, and classroom observations were conducted while onsite at 10 charter school start-up grantee campuses in fall 2017, 20 start-up grantee campuses in fall 2018 (October 10 - November 27, 2018), and 20 start-up grantee campuses in fall 2019 (October 10 – November 19, 2019). In each of these three years, a statewide sample of Texas Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant recipients was selected by the evaluation team and approved by TEA staff. Geographic region, cohort (i.e., when the campus began serving students) and charter school type (i.e., open-enrollment, in-district charter) were taken into account when selecting centers for site visits.

Over the October 17 – November 16, 2017 period, a total of 49 different teachers were observed and scored using the CLASS protocol, 48 teachers participated in one-hour focus group interviews, and each of the 10 campus principals participated in 75–90-minute interviews. Over the October 10 – November 27, 2018 period, 77 different teachers were observed and scored using the CLASS protocol, 74 teachers participated in one-hour focus group interviews, and each of the 20 campus principals participated in 75–90-minute interviews. Lastly, between October 10 and November 16, 2017 period, 60 different teachers were observed and scored using the CLASS protocol, 60 teachers participated in one-hour focus group interviews, and each of the 20 campus principals participated in 75–90-minute interviews.

³³Only 13 of the 14 charter school campuses funded in Cohort 4 began serving students during the 2019–20 school year resulting in a total start-up grantee population of 50.

As noted above, during the course of site visits, classrooms were observed and scored for a sample of 3–5 teachers at each charter school campus using the CLASS K–3 (for Grades K–3), CLASS Upper Elementary (for Grades 4–5), and CLASS Secondary (for Grades 6–12) protocols. All site visit team members who conducted observations were certified as reliable on one or more levels of the CLASS observation protocol, which was used to assess instructional quality across charter school campuses.

Similar to the analysis for principal survey results, qualitative data collected during site visits were pooled according to the number of years in which the charter school start-up grantee campuses had been serving students. For campuses in their first year of serving students (Cohorts 1 and 2 in 2017–18, Cohort 3 in 2018–19, and Cohort 4 in 2019–20), 20 of the 50 possible start-up grantee campuses (40%) are represented in the qualitative results presented in Chapters 2, 4, and 5 of this report. For campuses in their second year of serving students (Cohorts 1 and 2 in 2018–19, and Cohort 3 in 2019–20), 20 of the 37 possible charter school start-up grantee campuses (81%) are represented in the qualitative results. For campuses in their third year of serving students (Cohorts 1 and 2 in 2019–20), 10 of the 26 possible start-up grantee campuses (38%) are represented in the qualitative results. In addition, 81 classrooms at campuses in their first year of serving students, 69 classrooms at campuses in their second year of serving students, and 33 classrooms in their third year of serving students were observed and scored using the CLASS Observation Protocol.

Analysis of Best or Promising Practices at High-Performing Charter School Campuses

Statewide Survey of Charter School Principals

To learn about what principals at high-performing charter schools felt were the most impactful, effective, and important methods for various school functions (e.g., organizational practices, instructional practices, teacher recruitment and retention, student recruitment and retention, and maintaining school morale), the evaluation administered a survey to all charter school principals in Texas. This online survey, which was administered in spring 2018, allowed for the comparison of responses by principals at high-performing charter schools and principals at other charter schools.

Identifying High-Performing Campuses from Student Impact

TEA designated 184 charter campuses as high-quality in 2017. Using the initial population of 184 campuses, 100 high-quality charter campuses were selected for analysis using stratified random sampling. To conduct this analysis, TEA data sources were used to 1) conduct propensity score matching to identify a comparison group for each high-quality charter school campus and 2) estimate impact models to measure the extent to which campuses improved student outcomes.³⁴

More specifically, the evaluation used de-identified, longitudinally-linked student data from TEA. The variables included:

- STAAR-Reading and STAAR-Mathematics scores in Grades 3 through 8: the primary outcome, a key matching variable, and a baseline covariate;
- STAAR end-of-course (EOC) scores, a primary outcome for high school grades;

³⁴ Of the 184 initial campuses, all 63 campuses that comprise Charter Schools with four or fewer campuses are included. For the nine charter LEAs with five or more campuses, stratified random sampling was used to select a sample of 37 campuses, stratifying by grade range and geographic location, ensuring a representative sample. This yielded a total analysis sample of 100 high-quality charter campuses.

- Early reading indicators and school readiness (for kindergarten) indicators, representing potential baseline covariates and matching variables for early elementary school grades; and
- Demographic characteristics used for matching and as baseline covariates.

The impact model the evaluation used was a matched comparison group quasi-experimental design (QED) for the subsample of 100 high-quality charter campuses.³⁵ Moreover, high-performing campuses in this model were identified using three-year impacts calculated with TEA data for the 2013–2014 school year (to capture baseline data) through the 2016–2017 school year.

Finally, to make this analysis of state test scores comparable across grades and years, all raw test scores were converted to z-scores defined relative to the statewide distribution of scores in each grade, year, and subject.

Students whose baseline test score(s) were missing were imputed for the treatment group, ensuring all students with at least one recorded baseline test score remained in the sample.

Data Collection

The purpose of the spring 2018 survey of charter school principals was to aid in the identification of best or promising practices in high-quality charter school campuses within the state. To accomplish these project objectives, the evaluation developed a survey instrument which gathered information from charter school principals across the areas of interest: 1) Respondent background; 2) Organization-level practices; 3) Instructional practices; 4) Working with educationally disadvantaged students; 5) Working with low-performing students; 6) Student discipline; 7) Teacher recruitment and retention; 8) Student recruitment and retention; and 9) School climate. The survey was developed in fall 2017 and was approved by the Texas Education Agency Data Governance Board during their January 2018 meeting.

To improve the accuracy of principal emails required for the online survey, the evaluation downloaded the AskTED list of charter school campus principals and engaged in a systematic process of verifying principal contact information through the review of charter school websites and by making telephone inquiries to charter school campuses. This contact verification process took place in January and February 2018. The charter school principal survey was then programmed into Qualtrics, the online survey platform used by Gibson, and initial email invitations to participate in the data collection effort were delivered on February 12, 2018. The survey remained open until April 2, 2018. Over this period, a total of 10 reminder emails were delivered to principals who had not yet completed their survey.

Of the 765 charter school principals included on the original survey distribution list, a total of 693 surveys (91%) were successfully delivered. A total of 308 completed surveys were received, for an overall response rate of 44%.

³⁵ The methods used for the matched-student QED are based extensively on the methods developed and presented in Tuttle, et al., 2013.

A comparison of responses from 23 principals at high-performing charter school campuses and responses from 172 principals at other charter school campuses not included on TEA's 2017 high-quality charter school list are summarized in Chapter 4 of this report.³⁶

Charter School Site Visits: Charter School Start-up Grantee Campuses and High-performing Campuses

Qualitative data collected through principal interviews, teacher focus groups, and classroom observations were used to supplement data collected through the statewide survey of principals. Based on an analysis of student performance data conducted by the evaluation, a statewide sample of 10 high-performing charter school campuses was selected by the evaluation and approved by TEA staff. Similar to the charter school start-up grantee campus analysis described in this appendix, geographic region, grade span served, and student performance on STAAR-Reading and STAAR-Mathematics were taken into account when selecting centers for spring 2018 site visits.

Over the March 19 to April 26, 2017 period, a total of 39 different teachers were observed and scored using the CLASS protocol, 40 teachers participated in 60-minute focus group interviews, and each of the 10 campus principals participated in 75–90-minute interviews.

Analysis of Charter School Outcomes to Identify High-Quality Campuses

The analytic approach described below for identifying high-quality campuses is very similar to that used for estimating effects for charter start-up grantee campuses. The overall matching and statistical modeling approach for identifying high-quality campuses is described in this appendix, and then Appendix B will describe the differences in the approach used for estimating effects for charter start-up grantee campuses.

Matching Students from Feeder Schools

The validity of the research design hinges on the extent to which propensity matching accounts for important differences between students who enter charter school campuses and students in comparison groups.

This matching was done using a variant of the propensity score matching (PSM) approach employed in Tuttle et al., 2013 and Tuttle et al., 2015, relying on observed demographic characteristics and baseline achievement to select a well-matched comparison group for charter students at each high-quality charter school campus.

The treatment group consisted of any student entering one of the 100 Texas charter school campuses during the 2014–15, 2015–16, or 2016–17 school years. The comparison group was selected by considering all students across districts identified as feeder districts to that charter school, defined by examining where the students attending those charter schools would have attended had they gone to a traditional public school.

Overall, the analysis of high-quality charter schools included a sample of 100 schools, sampled from a group of 184 high-quality charter schools identified by TEA. The analysis calculated three-year impacts,

³⁶ A total of 98 survey responses from new charter schools not part of the charter school start-up grant program (n=26), designated as high-quality by TEA in 2017 (n=72) are not included in the analyses conducted for this evaluation.

using data from 2013–14 through 2016–17. Three-year impacts allow for following students for up to three years at the school and estimating the combined impact of all three years at the school on their cumulative achievement growth. For students observed for less than three years, the model estimated the impacts for the period the students were at the school.

To make the analysis of state test scores comparable across grades and years, all raw test scores were converted to scores in standard deviation units (z-scores), defined relative to the statewide distribution of scores in each grade, year, and subject. In other words, first, the difference between each student's raw score and the mean score in that grade, year, and subject is calculated, then divided the difference by the standard deviation of raw scores in that grade, year, and subject. Thus, each z-score reflects a student's achievement level relative to the average student in the relevant cohort (in terms of the number of standard deviations above or below the mean).

To avoid omitting students who are missing one or more baseline test scores, missing baseline data for students in the treatment group is imputed, ensuring all students with at least one recorded baseline test score remain in the sample. Missing outcome observations are not imputed, nor is data for students missing baseline test scores in both subjects.

For charter school campuses serving middle and high school grades, the baseline test scores used in the PSM are the STAAR-Mathematics and Reading scores from the year prior to charter entry: Grade 8 scores for students entering a charter high school in Grade 9 and Grade 5 scores for students entering a charter middle school in Grade 6. However, the earliest grade for which STAAR tests are available is Grade 3; therefore, students entering a charter elementary school in Grade 3 or earlier did not have baseline STAAR test scores. In these cases, students in Grades 4 and 5 were included using the students' Grade 3 STAAR scores as a baseline test score for matching, as this was the earliest available score for these students.

The treatment group consists of any student entering one of the sample Texas charter school campuses during the 2014–15, 2015–16, or 2016–17 school years. The comparison group is selected by considering all students across districts identified as feeder districts to that charter school, where feeder districts are defined as those including at least one non-treatment campus identified as the campus of residence for at least five students in that charter school, in the same grade and year as potential comparison students, while retaining in the actual comparison group only those students whose characteristics and achievement during the baseline period match those of treatment group students.

The propensity score matching was implemented by first estimating, separately for each school, and among students in traditional public schools in the appropriate feeder districts for that school during the baseline period, a logistic regression model predicting whether a given student enters a charter school campus in the subsequent year (the model's dependent variable) based on their baseline characteristics and test scores (the model's independent variables). The first step for the matching was to estimate a propensity score for each student in the sample. The propensity score model used baseline mathematics and reading test scores (measured in the grade prior to charter entry or earliest grade, as discussed above) as predictors. Other predictors include corresponding missing test score indicators, indicators for sex, race/ethnicity, campus of residence, students classified as economically disadvantaged, SPED, EL, and any two-way interactions of these covariates.

With these propensity scores determined for each student, nearest-neighbor matching (without replacement) matched comparison group students to treatment group students, testing for equivalence

on baseline test scores, and the key demographic characteristics (race/ethnicity, SPED, EL, economically disadvantaged).

The study tested the balance of the treatment group and the matched comparison group by conducting a test of the significance of differences between the two groups in their baseline test scores and other demographic variables (race/ethnicity, gender, SPED status, FRL status, and limited English proficiency status). For the matched comparison group sample associated with each treatment school, the study required the baseline test scores of treatment students and comparison students to be balanced in both STAAR-Mathematics and STAAR-Reading; the study also required there to be no more than one significant difference on any of the other demographic characteristics listed above. The study considers a covariate to be balanced when the means of this covariate for the comparison group are not significantly different from the treatment group at the 5% level. If the first round of matching did not identify a comparison group meeting these criteria, the propensity score estimation model for that school was adjusted, a new set of propensity-scores was re-estimated, a new matched comparison group was obtained, and the balance between the treatment group and the new matched comparison group was tested. These steps were iterated until the matched comparison group achieved balance with the treatment group according to the study's criteria.

The combination of propensity-score matching and regression analysis accounts for differences in observed baseline characteristics and achievement scores between treatment students and comparison students (in other words, the differences associated with initial selection into charter schools). But it remains possible that treatment students and comparison students differ in unobserved ways that may affect later test scores. However, previous studies have suggested that applying a combination of propensity-score matching and regression analysis, as done here, can succeed in replicating experimental impact estimates in certain contexts (Cook et al. 2008; Bifulco 2012; Furgeson et al. 2012; Tuttle et al. 2013; Fortson et al. 2015). This analytic approach for the propensity score matching model was implemented in Mathematica's analysis of impacts of KIPP charter schools (Tuttle et al. 2013 and 2015). As part of those reports, a variety of sensitivity tests were run to check the robustness of the model to alternatives to the main specifications, and the impacts were not sensitive to any of the changes in specification.

Measuring the Impact of High-Performing Campuses

Charter campus students were compared with their matched comparison group—students with similar baseline characteristics attending traditional public schools in feeder districts. This approach was used to estimate an impact model that regresses STAAR outcomes on a treatment indicator for whether or not a student attended a charter campus.

This model estimates the impact of charter school campuses on student STAAR outcomes using average differences between student treatment and comparison groups, producing estimates of impact for each charter school campus. To improve the precision of these estimates, baseline student characteristics were adjusted for in the regression model.

As with the PSM procedure, the baseline test score model covariates are the STAAR-Mathematics and Reading scores from the year prior to charter entry. For students in Grades 4 or 5 who entered the charter school campus in Grade 3 or prior, the student's Grade 3 STAAR scores were used as baseline test scores for matching. The baseline test scores for these students occur after they enter the charter school campus; therefore, the estimated impact for these students omits the effect the charter campus had on their performance prior to the baseline test.

The combination of PSM and Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression is designed to address initial selection into charters—that is, differences between charter students and comparison students at the time when they enter the charter campus. However, selection bias is a potential problem in student departures from charter campuses before completion of all grades. If students who leave charter campuses early tend to be those who perform academically worse than their peers, the analysis, including only persisting students, would overstate charter campus impacts.

To account for this attrition, early exits from charter school campuses are ignored. Any student who ever enrolled in a charter remains permanently in the charter treatment group regardless of whether the student remains in a charter school campus or transfers to another school. In other words, a student who is enrolled in a charter school in Grade 5 for the 2014–2015 school year but leaves the charter school campus after completing Grade 6 at the end of the 2015–2016 school year would remain in the treatment group for all the years in which he or she appears in the data (from 2014–2015 through 2016–2017, inclusive).

This approach resembles an intent-to-treat analysis conducted in an experimental context. By including all students observed attending a charter school campus, regardless of completing all grades, evaluators avoid overstating the effect of the charter school campus.

In fact, this method likely produces a conservative estimate of charter campuses' full impact on students who remain in the charter school campus. From the perspective of parents, students, or policymakers, this method appropriately accounts for the fact that not all students entering charter school campuses remain in these schools.

Selecting the Highest-Performing Campuses

Finally, the estimated impacts for each charter campus were used, identifying which campuses have a positive, negative, or statistically insignificant impact to rank the initial 100 high-quality schools provided by TEA.³⁷ This ranking is simply an ordering of a campus's impact estimate separated by the grade levels served (e.g., elementary, middle, high, and K–12 schools).

For instance, for middle school campuses, the estimated mathematics and reading impacts for each campus were averaged, then rank-ordered based on each campus's average score. Similarly, for high schools, STAAR-English I and STAAR-Algebra I EOC impact estimates were averaged and then rank-ordered based on this average impact. These campus impact estimates were used to identify campuses making the largest positive impact on student outcomes, becoming what this analysis refers to as high-performing campuses.

Elementary and K–12 campuses have a slightly more complicated impact estimate. For elementary and K–12 schools, there are two different models estimating impacts. The first model estimates impact for students *only* with baseline scores *prior* to entering the charter campus. Because these students generally transferred into the campuses at a later grade than most, this model is referred to as the transfer model.

The second model includes *all* students with available baseline scores in the model, even if those baseline scores occurred *after* the student entered the charter school campus. This model captures the additional growth students made following those baseline scores and is therefore called the growth model.

Most schools included in each model have positive impact estimates in both mathematics and reading. This is possible because these impact estimates are not relative to other schools in the model but instead based on comparisons with matched students at schools in feeder districts. Therefore, it is possible for most of the schools to show positive impacts.

³⁷ A high-quality charter school campus is one that has a current accreditation status of "Accredited." In addition, if evaluated under the standard procedures of the state accountability rating system, a high-quality charter school campus must have received the highest or second highest academic accountability rating for three of the last five years, with at least 75% of the campuses rated under the charter school campus also receiving the highest or second highest rating and no campus having an academically unacceptable rating in the most recent ratings. If evaluated under the alternative education accountability (AEA) procedures, a high-quality charter school campus must have received the highest or second highest rating for the past five of five years and all campuses must be rated academically acceptable. Additionally, at least 30% of the students in the following groups — African American, Hispanic, white, or classified as SPED, economically disadvantaged, English language learner, or at-risk — must have met the state student passing standard in the most recent reporting period for the charter school campus. No campus under the high-quality charter school campus label may be identified for federal interventions. The high-quality charter campus may also not be under any sanctions by the agency regarding compliance. In addition, performance on the Charter School Performance Framework will be included in the determination which includes an evaluation of academic, financial, and operational criteria. Statistical models were used to assess the performance of a sample of 100 high-quality campuses. Based on standardized test scores (i.e., STAAR-Reading, STAAR-Mathematics for Grades 3–8, and EOC exam scores for Grades 9–12). Campuses ranked in the top half of the 100 high-quality charter school campuses were categorized as high-performing for the purposes of this evaluation.

The overall performance for each campus was averaged across any impact average model it was included in, getting an overall average performance for each campus. Schools that fell in the top half of the overall average performance were classified as high-performing and became the subject of the analysis of high-performing campuses within this evaluation. One caveat to this high-performing analysis is that the list of these academically successful Texas charter campuses is likely not exhaustive. In short, there may be impactful high-performing charter campuses not included in the analysis group.

Analysis of Teacher Characteristics and Retention Patterns

In order to examine characteristics and retention patterns for teachers teaching at charter school start-up grantee campuses, the study first identified all teachers who taught at those schools in the 2017–18 or 2018–19 school years. In identifying teachers for the sample, this document followed the TEA definition for a classroom teacher as an educator who is employed by a school district and who, not less than an average of four hours each day, teaches in an academic instructional setting or a career and technology instructional setting, excluding teacher's aides or full-time administrators.

The study then compared characteristics of teachers teaching at charter school start-up grantee campuses to teachers teaching at campuses in the feeder districts for start-up grantee campuses, comparing average teacher characteristics such as advanced degree attainment, gender, race/ethnicity, age, experience teaching, tenure in the district, certification status, and route to certification. Additionally, in order to examine teacher mobility and retention, the study calculated both one-year and two-year mobility and retention. For two-year mobility and retention, the study started with teachers who taught in a charter school start-up grantee campus during the 2017–18 school year, and then linked the teacher data to where each teacher taught at the beginning of the 2019–20 school year. This allows for comparison of characteristics of teachers who left charter school start-up grantee campuses during this two-year period between 2017–18 and 2019–20 to those who remained, as well as an examination of where teachers who left both start-up grantee campuses and campuses in feeder districts. The study also calculated one-year mobility and retention, looking at where teachers who taught during the 2017–18 school year were at the beginning of the 2018–19 school year, and where teachers who taught during the 2018–19 school year were at the beginning of the 2019–20 school year. The analysis examined the percent of teachers from both charter school start-up grantee campuses and from campuses in feeder districts who transitioned to different roles in their same campus, left to teach at a different charter or traditional public campus, or left the teacher data altogether.

Analysis of Student Characteristics and Mobility Rates

In order to examine the characteristics of students who entered and exited charter school start-up grantee campuses, the study first restricted the sample to students attending start-up grantee campuses in 2017–18 or 2018–19 for at least two hours per day. It then compared the characteristics of students who remained at a start-up grantee campus for the entire school year to those who exited the campus during the school year (as measured by comparing the fall data to the student enrollment data for the final six weeks of the school year), examining the characteristics of the students and the type of campus they left to. The study conducted a similar comparison for students who entered a start-up grantee campus during the 2017–18 or 2018–19 school years.

The study also examined the characteristics of students who were enrolled in a start-up grantee campus at the end of 2017–18 but did not attend that same campus at the beginning of the 2019–20 school year and compared student characteristics for those leaving students to characteristics of students who remained at the same start-up grantee campus at the start of the 2019–20 school year. Because some

students did not have the option of remaining at the same campus, either because they were in Grade 12 and graduating, or because they were in the highest grade offered by their campus, those students are omitted from this comparison. The study also examined what type of campus the students who exited during the summer enrolled at to begin the 2019–20 school year.

Appendix B: Technical Appendix – Impact Analysis Methodology

Estimating Impacts of Charter School Start-up Grantee Campuses on Student Achievement

The analysis of impacts for charter school start-up grantee campuses uses a similar matched comparison group quasi-experimental design model as was used to estimate impacts for identifying high-quality charter campuses, as described in Appendix A. This model allows the impact estimates to vary across campuses, creating a separate impact estimate for each start-up grantee campus. In other words, this model estimates a statistical regression model including all campuses in a grade range, with separate impact estimates for each student outcome.

One change from the analysis in Appendix A is that the model is no longer considering students as attending a treatment campus for all the time after they entered the campus. The model now considers students as in the treatment group only for the time during which they actually attend the charter school start-up grantee campus. This approach is sometimes referred to as an as-treated approach, as opposed to the intent-to-treat approach used in Appendix A. One benefit of the as-treated approach is that it is easier to understand, as most people are used to evaluating campus impacts based on their impacts on students while those students are enrolled at the campus. This approach may also be perceived as more fair by campuses, as they are only being held responsible for students while those students are enrolled at the campus.

As a sensitivity test, all of the analytic models were run using both approaches, the intent-to-treat and the as-treated approach. The results were in all cases extremely similar across the two approaches, with correlations of at least 0.97 in all cases, and no cases where the overall average effects changed significance.

The statistical model used multiple imputation for treatment students missing one baseline test score, but not missing the baseline test score for the other subject. This imputation process involved estimating a model with baseline test scores prior to charter entry using those students in our sample who have non-missing scores on these tests. For students with missing values for a given test, we used that student's demographic characteristics and other non-missing test scores to generate a predicted value of the missing test score for that student. Baseline STAAR-Mathematics scores were imputed for 124 students, and 129 students for baseline STAAR-Reading scores.

To test whether our results are sensitive to this imputation strategy, campus effects were estimated for the statistical model only including students with complete baseline test score data without imputation. The results were almost identical using either approach, with a 0.98 correlation.

Many of the campuses in the charter school start-up grantee sample opened during the period of our analysis. Therefore, many students entered the campuses in grades above what would normally be considered the campus's lowest grade offered. For instance, for a typical middle school campus, a larger number of middle school students may have entered in Grade 7 rather than Grade 6, the first grade offered by the campus.

For middle school students, baseline test scores from prior to campus entry were used for both matching and control variables. Similarly, for high school students, STAAR-Mathematics and Reading

performance from prior to campus entry were used as baseline test scores and controls. Likewise, for elementary campuses, if students entered in Grades 4 or 5, their prior STAAR-Mathematics and STAAR-Reading scores were used, using these once again as both matching and control variables to measure impacts. Note also that, for the high school model, students in Grades 9 through 12 were included; students who took the Algebra I EOC exam in Grade 8 were not included in the analytic sample.

The basic form of the statistical regression model is:

$$y_{ijt} = \alpha + \beta * Treatment_{ijt} + \delta * CAMPUS_{ijt} + \gamma * X_{it} + \theta * Z_{it} + \varepsilon_{ijt}$$

where y_{ijt} is the outcome of interest for student i in campus j and year t , $Treatment_{ijt}$ is an indicator for the student attending treatment campus j in year t , $CAMPUS_{ijt}$ is a binary variable indicating that the student is either a treatment or a matched comparison student for campus j in year t , X_{it} is a vector of covariates of student i in year t , including baseline test scores and demographic variables, as listed below in Table B.1, Z_{it} is a vector of grade-by-year indicators, ε_{ijt} is a random error term that reflects the influence of unobserved factors on the outcome, and α , β , δ , γ , and θ are parameters or vectors of parameters to be estimated. The parameter β_j represents the estimated impact of the treatment (attending the charter school campus) for campus j .

To estimate separate impacts for each charter school campus, the model allows the impact to vary across sites. Separate models were run for 2017–18 effects, which included student outcome data for 2016–17 and 2017–18, and for 2018–19 effects, which included student outcome data for 2016–17, 2017–18, and 2018–19. Thus, the estimated campus effect is based on student performance over multiple years, for campuses that were open in multiple model years.

To improve the precision of the estimates, adjustments are made for baseline student characteristics in the regression model. The characteristics include baseline reading and mathematics scores, race, ethnicity, gender, poverty status, and other characteristics. See Table B.1 for a full list of covariates. Sensitivity analyses were conducted to assess the sensitivity of the model to the inclusion of various baseline covariates, as well as to estimate models with no covariates.

Table B.1: List of Covariates Included in OLS Model

| Included Covariate |
|---|
| Mathematics baseline test scores |
| Reading baseline test scores |
| Gender indicator variable |
| Set of race/ethnicity indicator variables |
| Special education status indicator variable |
| Free or reduced-price lunch status indicator variable |
| English Language Learner status indicator variable |
| Set of mathematics and reading imputation dummies indicating whether mathematics and reading baseline test scores are imputed |
| Indicator variable indicating whether student repeated grades in the baseline year |
| Indicator variables for student grade |
| Indicator variables for the grade and year of charter school entry |

The overall impact estimate is the simple average value of the site-specific estimates for the schools in the sample. To perform a robustness check of these estimates, the study computed estimates that weight the site-level impact estimates by the sample size in each site, accounting for the fact that impacts are more precisely estimated in sites with larger samples.

Methodology for Descriptive Analyses

The evaluation conducted descriptive analyses of the average STAAR-Mathematics and STAAR-Reading scores, separately for elementary and middle school campuses, comparing those average scores for students enrolled at charter school start-up grantee campuses, matched students enrolled at traditional public school campuses, and all students enrolled at traditional public campuses in feeder districts. These average scores are compared both in scale scores and in standard deviation units. The main average scores presented are the scores used as the outcome measure for the analysis in that year, either 2017–18 or 2018–19.

Also presented are the average baseline scores, which are the average of the baseline test scores for each student. For students enrolled at charter school start-up grantee campuses, this baseline score is the most recent score available for that student prior to their entering the start-up grantee campus. For matched students enrolled at traditional public school campuses, this baseline score is the score from the same school year as their matched start-up grantee student's baseline score. For the average baseline score of all students enrolled at traditional public school campuses in feeder districts, the baseline score is defined as the score from two years prior to the outcome score, as that is the most common gap length for start-up grantee students.

The evaluation also conducted descriptive analyses of indicators of school readiness for kindergarten students and early reading indicators for early elementary students. In order to use a regression-based approach to examine impacts, baseline test scores must be available for each student, to control for achievement levels prior to entering the start-up grantee campus. Because these indicators occur prior to grade 3, no baseline test score data is available for these students, so a regression-based impact analysis is not feasible.

These descriptive analyses present, for the 2017–18 and 2018–19 school years, the campus average values of these indicators for each charter school start-up grantee elementary campus. Also presented is the average value for these indicators for elementary schools in feeder districts, to provide context for interpreting the average values. The early reading indicator variable takes on values of 1, 2, or 3 in the PEIMS data. Following the PEIMS Data Standards, we coded students as eligible for accelerated reading instruction if their early reading variable took on a value of 1, and not eligible if their early reading indicator took on a value of 2 or 3.

Appendix C: CLASS Observation Protocol

Classroom observations were conducted at charter school start-up grantee campuses in fall 2017, fall 2018, and fall 2019 and at high-performing charter school campuses in fall 2018. This appendix provides an overview of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), which measures effective teacher-student interactions in Pre-K–12th grade, taking into account important developmental and contextual differences between students at different age levels.

Classroom Assessment Scoring System

CLASS is an observational tool that provides a common lens and language focused on what matters—the classroom interactions that boost student learning. It has been used extensively for both research and professional development purposes. Data from CLASS observations are used to support teachers’ unique professional development needs, set school-wide goals, and shape system-wide policy at the local, state, and national levels. Based on research from the University of Virginia’s Curry School of Education and studied in thousands of classrooms nationwide, the CLASS Observation Tool:

- Focuses on effective teaching
- Helps teachers recognize and understand the power of their interactions with students
- Aligns with professional development (PD) tools
- Works across age levels and subjects

CLASS dimensions are based on developmental theory and research suggesting that interactions between students and adults are the primary mechanism of student development and learning (Hamre & Pianta, 2015). At the broadest level, for each of the three CLASS instruments being used for this evaluation (K–3, Upper Elementary – Grades 4–6, and Secondary) interactions between teachers and students can be grouped into the following domains:

1. Emotional Support
2. Classroom Organization
3. Instructional Support
4. Student Engagement (for CLASS Upper Elementary and Secondary only)

This organizational structure has been validated in thousands of classrooms across the country.

CLASS Dimensions

Emotional Support Domain (CLASS Dimensions are the same for all 3 protocols)

- **Positive Climate:** The emotional connection, respect, and enjoyment demonstrated between teachers and students and among students.
- **Negative Climate:** The level of expressed negativity such as anger, hostility, or aggression exhibited by teachers and/or students in the classroom.
- **Teacher Sensitivity:** Teachers’ awareness of and level of responsiveness to students’ academic and emotional concerns.

- **Regard for Student Perspectives:** The degree to which teachers' interactions with students and classroom activities place an emphasis on students' interests, motivations, and points of view.

Classroom Organization Domain (CLASS Dimensions are the same for all 3 protocols)

- **Behavioral Management:** How effectively teachers monitor, prevent, and redirect behavior.
- **Productivity:** How well the classroom runs with respect to routines and the degree to which teachers organize activities and directions so that maximum time can be spent in learning activities.
- **Instructional Learning Formats:** How teachers facilitate activities and provide interesting materials so that students are engaged and learning opportunities are maximized.

Instructional Support Domain (Dimensions differ by protocol)

- **Concept Development (This Dimension is used for all 3 protocols):** How teachers use instructional discussions and activities to promote students' higher-order thinking skills in contrast to a focus on rote instruction.
- **Analysis & Problem Solving (This Dimension is only used in the CLASS Upper Elementary and Secondary Protocols):** Assesses the degree to which the teacher facilitates the use of higher-level thinking skills, such as analysis, problem-solving, reasoning, and creation through the application of knowledge and skills.
- **Quality of Feedback (This Dimension is used for all 3 protocols):** How teachers extend students' learning through their responses to students' ideas, comments, and work.
- **Language Modeling (This Dimension is used only in the CLASS K–3 protocol):** The extent to which teachers facilitate and encourage students' language through language-stimulation and language-facilitation techniques.
- **Instructional Dialogue (This Dimension is used only in the CLASS Upper Elementary protocol):** Captures purposeful use of dialogue—structured, cumulative questioning and discussion which guide and prompt students' understanding of content and language development.

Student Engagement Domain (This Domain is used only in the CLASS Upper Elementary and Secondary protocols)

- This scale is intended to capture the degree to which all students in the class are focused and participating in the learning activity presented or facilitated by the teacher. The difference between passive engagement and active engagement is of note to the rating.

The research team has chosen the CLASS protocol as the observation instrument for this study for a number of reasons, including:

- The CLASS tool provides a common lens for observers to provide consistent and reliable ratings across a wide range of classroom interactions directly related to student learning.
- CLASS dimensions are grounded in developmental theory and research.
- CLASS observation tools are nationally recognized and supported by rigorous training for observers by Teachstone CLASS content experts certified through a Trainer-of-Trainer model. All CLASS observers must be certified as reliable through rigorous online testing before they can utilize the protocol in classrooms.
- Each teacher will receive three class scores for each dimension based on 15–20-minute observation periods. Multiple scores will improve the reliability of the teacher-level scores.
- The use of the CLASS instrument is a cost-effective approach for the Public Charter School Start-Up Grant evaluation.

How CLASS Data was Used in the Evaluation

All observed classrooms received scores from 1 to 7 for each of the 10 CLASS dimensions. Each classroom received three scores, based on 15–20-minute observation periods for each dimension, which were compiled to create an average score per dimension. Dimension scores were aggregated to the domain level to create classroom scores for each related domain (e.g., Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, Instructional Support, and Student Engagement (for grades 4-12)). CLASS observation scores are based on detailed notes taken by researchers during the period of observation. (Pianta, La Paro & Hamre, 2015).

Appendix D: Principal Survey Instruments

This appendix includes the principal survey administered to all charter school principals (including those funded through the Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant) in spring 2018; and to principals at campuses funded through the Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant administered in spring 2019 and spring 2020. Only small, non-substantive changes (e.g., changes to years referenced in survey questions and related skip logic) were made to the spring 2019 and spring 2020 surveys to allow for comparability across years.

Charter School Principal Survey

Background Questions

1. Please complete this survey for [INSERT CAMPUS NAME, COUNTY DISTRICT CAMPUS NUMBER (CDCN)].
Are you currently the principal for this charter school campus?
 - Yes
 - No (If no, terminate survey and go to Thank You landing page.)
2. What is your highest level of educational attainment?
 - Associate degree
 - Bachelor's degree
 - Master's degree
 - PhD
 - EdD
 - Other (Please describe)
3. How many total years have you been a principal at this or any charter school campus?
 - OPEN-ENDED
4. How many years have you been a principal at this charter school campus?
 - OPEN-ENDED
5. Before you became a principal, how many total years of elementary or secondary teaching experience did you have?
 - OPEN-ENDED

Organizational-Level Practices

6. Grade levels served at this campus in 2017–18: (Select all that apply.)
 - Prekindergarten
 - Kindergarten
 - Grade 1
 - Grade 2
 - Grade 3
 - Grade 4
 - Grade 5

- Grade 6
 - Grade 7
 - Grade 8
 - Grade 9
 - Grade 10
 - Grade 11
 - Grade 12
 - Adult education
7. Is there a formal parent organization at your campus in 2017–18?
- Yes
 - No
8. Of the following methods for getting parents involved in their children’s education, which 5 were most effective during the 2017–18 school year? (Please rank from 1 to 5, where 1 is the most effective and 5 is the fifth most effective.)
- ___ Parent volunteer opportunities
 - ___ Regular email communications to all parents
 - ___ Active Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)
 - ___ Regular school day events for parents to interact with their children
 - ___ Parent-teacher conferences
 - ___ After-school events for parents to interact with their children
 - ___ Parent contracts with the campus
 - ___ Parent involvement in assisting children with their homework
 - ___ Parent signatures on weekly agendas/assignments
 - ___ System for parents to monitor their children’s attendance, grades, and assignments
 - ___ Regular individualized teacher-parent communications
 - ___ Other (Please specify.)
9. Of the following organizational practices related to executing your charter campus’s mission, which 5 were most important during the 2017–18 school year? (Please rank from 1 to 5, where 1 is the most important and 5 is the fifth most important.)
- ___ Focused attention of administrators and teachers around the mission
 - ___ Clarity in the educational philosophy instilled in campus staff and teachers
 - ___ Effective interventions with staff to change existing attitudes and behaviors
 - ___ Fit of teachers with school mission and educational philosophies
 - ___ Concentration on maximizing instructional time
 - ___ Creation of a youth culture at your charter school campus
 - ___ Hiring exemplary teachers to support the practices of other teachers at your charter school campus
 - ___ Design of the campus building
 - ___ Use of data to inform instruction
 - ___ The use of technology at your charter school campus

- Regular monitoring of instructional practices through classroom observations
- Other (Please specify.)

10. Does your campus have a class size limit for the 2017–18 school year (i.e., maximum number of students in the classroom), excluding electives such as band, PE, etc.?

- Yes
- No

11. (Display logic: only to respondents who choose yes for Q10.) If Yes, what is the maximum number of students that are allowed to be enrolled in a class at your campus during the 2017–18 school year? _____

12. **(For Campuses Opening in 2016–17 and 2017–18 Only, the survey system will know which campuses will see this question)** Of the following activities or new systems, which 5 required the greatest amount of your time during the 2017–18 school year? (Please rank from 1 to 5, where 1 is the most time-intensive and 5 is the fifth most time-intensive.)

- Building-related issues (e.g., design, construction, finance)
- Communications with parents
- Planning activities
- Developing and monitoring campus budget and expenditures
- Developing support systems for teachers to ensure high-quality instructional practices
- Determining technology needs
- Selecting rigorous curriculum
- Addressing student behavioral issues
- Ensuring the development of effective lesson plans
- Hiring high-quality teachers
- Student recruitment
- Other (Please specify.)

13. Up to this point in the 2017–18 school year, on average what percentage of time do you estimate that you spend on the following tasks? (Note: proportions of time must sum to 100%)

- a. Internal administrative tasks (e.g., human resource/personnel issues, regulations, reports, campus budget, etc.)
- b. Curriculum and teaching-related tasks (e.g., teaching, lesson preparation, classroom observations, mentoring teachers, etc.)
- c. Student interactions, including discipline and academic guidance
- d. Parent interactions, including formal and informal interactions
- e. Other (Please specify.)
- % adding up to 100

14. What are the key tenets of your charter school campus's mission?

--- OPEN ENDED RESPONSE

15. What organizational practices have you found to be most important in helping your campus run effectively?

--- OPEN ENDED RESPONSE

Instructional Practices

16. Of the following instructional practices, which 5 did you observe most frequently at your charter school campus during 2017–18? (Please rank from 1 to 5 where 1 is most frequent and 5 is fifth most frequent.)

- Establishing positive relationships between the teacher and student
- Teacher support for student autonomy and leadership
- Maximizing learning time
- Use of formative data in student assessments to guide instruction
- Establishment of clear learning targets for each lesson plan
- Use of hands-on activities in class with a variety of modalities
- Meaningful peer interactions
- Active facilitation of higher-order thinking by students
- Cumulative content-driven exchanges between teacher and students
- Allowing teachers flexibility in the use of curriculum and related lesson planning
- Effective scaffolding by teacher
- Effective use of technology in the classroom
- Other (Please specify.)

17. Of the following instructional practices that you have observed from your teachers during the 2017–18 school year, which 5 were most impactful? (Please rank from 1 to 5, where 1 is the most impactful and 5 is the fifth most impactful.)

- Establishing positive relationships between the teacher and student
- Teacher support for student autonomy and leadership
- Maximizing learning time
- Use of formative data in student assessments to guide instruction
- Establishment of clear learning targets for each lesson plan
- Use of hands-on activities in class with a variety of instructional strategies
- Meaningful peer interactions
- Active teacher facilitation of higher-order thinking by students
- Cumulative content-driven exchanges between teacher and students across lessons and units
- Effective scaffolding by teacher
- Allowing teachers flexibility in the use of curriculum and related lesson planning
- Effective use of technology in the classroom
- Other (Please specify.)

18. Of the following teacher supports, which 5 have you found to be most impactful in improving instructional practices at your charter school campus during the 2017–18 school year? (Please rank from 1 to 5 where 1 is most impactful and 5 is fifth most impactful.)

- Providing feedback to teachers based on walk-throughs or informal observations
- Providing feedback to teachers based on formal, scheduled observations
- Use of research-based rubrics (e.g., CLASS, Danielson) to give teachers useful feedback
- Use of instructional rounds where teachers have opportunities to observe other teachers in the classroom
- Use of professional learning communities (PLCs)
- Co-teaching opportunities
- Coaching support
- Providing dedicated planning time for teachers to collaborate
- Allowing teachers flexibility in the use of curriculum and related lesson planning
- Use of student achievement data to gauge the performance of teachers
- Review student performance data with teachers
- Other (Please specify.)

19. Please describe instructional practices and supports in place at your campus during the 2017–18 school year that you feel are most important to maintaining the highest quality of instruction possible.

--OPEN ENDED RESPONSE

Working with Educationally Disadvantaged Students

20. Of the following approaches, which 5 have you found to be most impactful in closing the achievement gaps for educationally disadvantaged students (identified as being at risk of dropping out of school) at your charter school campus during the 2017–18 school year? (Please rank from 1 to 5 where 1 is most impactful and 5 is the fifth most impactful.)

- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
- Social service supports
- Special education services
- Home visits by school counselors or teachers
- Strong teacher-student relationships and connections
- Small-group instruction in class
- Individualized instruction in class
- Differentiated in-class instruction
- Strategies to improve student attendance
- Targeted pull-out instruction by interventionist
- In-school instructional or tutoring labs
- Out-of-school learning opportunities
- Online learning tools for math and/or ELA
- Collaboration between teachers
- Other (Please specify.)

21. Describe the methods you have found to be most effective in closing achievement gaps for educationally disadvantaged students (identified as being at risk of dropping out of school) at your charter school campus during the 2017–18 school year.

--- OPEN ENDED RESPONSE

Working with Low-Performing Students

22. Of the following instructional practices, which 5 have you found to be most impactful in closing the achievement gap for low-performing students (identified as being in the bottom 10% in math or reading) at your charter school campus during the 2017–18 school year? (Please rank from 1 to 5, where 1 is most impactful and 5 is the fifth most impactful.)

- Communications with parents regarding student performance
- Small-group instruction in class
- Individualized instruction in class
- Differentiated in-class instruction
- Flexible grouping strategies in class
- Strategies to improve student attendance
- Targeted pull-out instruction by interventionist
- In-school instructional or tutoring labs
- Online learning tools for math and/or ELA
- Before or after school tutoring or enrichment programs
- Summer school or summer instructional sessions
- Collaboration between teachers
- A unique use of technology to address student needs
- Other (Please specify.)

23. During the 2017–18 school year, please indicate if students are assigned or tracked into any of the following classes (e.g., below grade, on-grade, above grade) based upon their CURRENT LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT (e.g., test scores, prior grade-level performance) as opposed to by age alone.

- Reading/English Language Arts (Y/N)
- Mathematics (Y/N)
- Science (Y/N)
- Social Studies (Y/N)

24. Describe one approach you have found particularly effective in closing achievement gaps for low-performing students at your charter school campus during the 2017–18 school year. Why do you believe it worked exceptionally well?

--- OPEN ENDED RESPONSE

Student Discipline

25. Of the following approaches, which 5 have you found to be most impactful in maintaining positive student-to-teacher and student-to-student interactions at your charter school campus in 2017–18? (Please rank from 1 to 5 where 1 is most impactful and 5 is fifth most impactful.)

- PBIS
- Clear behavioral expectations
- Removal of disruptive students from the classroom

- Policy of no in-school or out-of-school suspensions
- Development of strong teacher-student relationships
- Use of contracts with parents regarding expectations and responsibilities
- Use of contracts with students regarding expectations and responsibilities
- Effective communications with parents
- Effective student engagement in the classroom
- Proactive steps to curb misbehavior in the classroom
- Strong anti-bullying policies
- Other (Please specify.)

26. Did your campus encourage parents to sign a code of conduct, handbook, compact, or contract outlining campus expectations for the 2017–18 school year?

- Yes (Go to Question #27.)
- No (Skip to Question #28.)

27. [IF YES to Question #26] In which of the following areas are parents encouraged to agree to campus expectations? (Select all that apply.)

- a. Attendance at parent meetings, conferences, and open houses
- b. Parent attendance at other campus events
- c. Child school attendance/punctuality
- d. Participation in fundraising activities
- e. Participation in the school's parent/teacher organization
- f. Assistance and supervision in completion of homework
- g. Support of campus discipline procedures
- h. Support of campus uniform policy
- i. Other (Please describe.)
- j.

28. Did your campus encourage students to sign a code of conduct, handbook, compact, or contract outlining campus expectations for the 2017–18 school year?

- Yes (Go to Question #29.)
- No (Skip to Question #30.)

29. [IF YES to Question 28] In which of the following areas are students encouraged to agree to campus expectations? (Select all that apply.)

- a. Daily attendance and punctuality
- b. Responsible and acceptable personal behavior
- c. Following campus and classroom rules
- d. Uniform and grooming policies
- e. Preparation for class (having appropriate materials)
- f. Completion of homework
- g. Respecting the rights of others (students, staff, other adults)
- h. Other (Please describe.)

30. Prior to (or during) the 2017–18 school year, have staff on this campus trained in PBIS?
- Yes
 - No

Teacher Recruitment and Retention

31. When did your campus administration begin recruiting teachers for the 2017–18 school year?
- Dropdown with month/year listed from earlier than May 2016, May 2016 through August 2017.
 - I did not need to recruit teachers for the 2017–18 school year.

32. **(Ask Only if Respondent DID NOT Answer I didn't need to recruit teachers for the 2017–18 school year for Q31)** When hiring new teachers for your charter school campus for the 2017–18 school year, which of the following were most important to you? (Please rank from 1 to 5 where 1 is most important and 5 is fifth most important.)

- Teacher fit with the mission of the charter school campus
- Teacher certification
- Prior experience working with the teacher
- Education level
- Number of years of teaching experience
- Passion for teaching
- Prior charter school teaching experience
- Prior school district teaching experience
- Content expertise
- Teacher fit with educational philosophy of the school
- Desire to work with at-risk population
- Strong demonstrated pedagogical skills
- Ability of teacher to adapt unstructured curriculum into effective lesson plans
- Other (Please describe.)

33. **(Ask Only if Respondent DID NOT Answer I didn't need to recruit teachers for the 2017–18 school year for Q31)** Of the following teacher recruitment methods, which 5 have you found to be most effective in attracting high-quality teachers to your campus for the 2017–18 school year? (Rank from 1 to 5, where 1 is most effective and 5 is the fifth most effective.)

- Current teachers recruiting colleagues
- Word of mouth about the school
- Online advertisements
- Job fairs
- Billboard advertisements
- Recruitment services (e.g., Indeed, Zip Recruiter)
- CMO or school district resources
- Social media (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn)
- Other (Please describe.)

34. Of the following criteria, which 5 will carry the greatest weight when deciding whether to continue a teacher's employment from 2017–18 to the next year? (Rank from 1 to 5, where 1 carries the greatest weight and 5 carries the fifth-greatest weight.)
- Student performance
 - Student engagement
 - Classroom management
 - Parent satisfaction with teacher performance
 - Instructional effectiveness
 - Collaboration with other teachers
 - Attendance
 - Cultural fit with campus
 - Other (Please describe.)
35. Approximately what percentage of teachers were asked to return to your campus between 2016–17 and 2017–18?
- 25% or less
 - Between 25% and 50%
 - Between 50% and 75%
 - Between 75% and 90%
 - More than 90%, but less than 100%
 - 100% of teachers
 - 2017–18 is the first year of operation for this campus
36. Approximately what percentage of teachers returned to your campus between 2016–17 and 2017–18?
- 25% or less
 - Between 26% to 50%
 - Between 51% to 75%
 - Between 76% to 90%
 - More than 90%, but less than 100%
 - 100% of teachers
 - Not Applicable—Our campus just began serving students in 2017–18
37. For teachers who were **not** renewed between 2016–17 and 2017–18, how many years, on average, did they work at your campus?
- One year
 - 2 to 3 years
 - 4 to 5 years
 - 6 to 10 years
 - More than 10 Years
 - Not Applicable — Our campus just began serving students in 2017–18, so all teachers are new to the campus

38. In preparation for the 2017–18 school year, which of the following did your campus require of teacher applicants during the hiring process? (Select all that apply.)

- Written or online application
- Resume
- Proof of certification
- Reference list
- Interview with hiring principal
- Interview with hiring committee chair
- Demonstration/sample performance lesson with students
- Demonstration/sample performance lesson with adults
- Sample lesson plans/teaching portfolio
- Other (Please specify.) Of the following approaches, which 5 have been most effective to successfully retain high-quality teachers? (Rank from 1 to 5, where 1 is most effective and 5 is the fifth most effective).
- Classroom assistance (e.g., educational aides)
- Flexibility in lesson planning
- Technology in the classroom
- Effective curriculum and supplemental materials
- Smaller class sizes
- Nonperformance-based differentiated pay for teachers
- Incentive pay based on student and/or school performance metrics
- Dedicated planning time
- Structured PLCs
- Regular feedback on instructional practices
- Opportunities to participate in instructional rounds where teachers can observe other classrooms
- Other (Please describe.)

39. If you recruited teachers for the 2017–18 school year, what methods were most effective in **recruiting** high-quality educators to your campus?

--- OPEN ENDED RESPONSE

40. If your campus was open in 2016–17, what methods were most effective in **retaining** high-quality educators between the 2016–17 and 2017–18 school years?

--- OPEN ENDED RESPONSE

Student Recruitment and Retention

41. For the 2017–18 school year, of the following student recruitment methods, which 5 have you found to be most effective in attracting students to enroll at your campus? (Rank from 1 to 5, where 1 is most effective and 5 is the fifth most effective.)

- Enrollment fairs
- Public facing advertisements (e.g. billboards)
- Open houses where information about the campus is presented
- Published information about campus in community newsletters
- Word of mouth from parents of currently enrolled students
- Principal presentations at local events (e.g., Rotary Club)

- Posted and/or distributed flyers about the campus in area neighborhoods
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.)
- Charter school campus website
- Other (Please describe.)

42. What methods were most effective in **recruiting** students for the 2017–18 school year?
 --- OPEN ENDED RESPONSE

43. **(Only for campuses serving students in 2016–17 and 2017–18)** Considering retention between the 2016–17 and 2017–18 school years, of the following approaches for retaining students at your campus, which 5 have you found to be most effective? (Rank from 1 to 5, where 1 is most effective and 5 is the fifth most effective.)

- Effective communications between the campus leadership and parents
- Effective communications between teachers and parents
- Student-centered instruction
- Building meaningful relationships between teachers and students
- Demonstrated academic growth of students
- Rigorous curriculum
- Use of multiple instructional approaches to meet students' academic needs
- Effective strategies to meeting students' socio-emotional needs
- Establishment of a safe and collaborative environment at the campus
- Location of the campus
- Technology available for students at the campus
- Extracurricular activities and clubs available to students
- Other (Please describe.)
- Other (Please describe.)
- Not Applicable — Our campus just began serving students in 2017–18

44. If your campus was open in 2016–17, what methods were most effective in **retaining** students between the 2016–17 and 2017–18 school years?
 --- OPEN ENDED RESPONSE

School Climate

45. Indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements related to the 2017–18 school year? (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree).

- a. Teachers at this campus trust each other.
- b. Teachers at this campus trust me as their principal.
- c. My campus has an inclusive working environment.
- d. There is a culture of professionalism at my campus.
- e. High value is placed on teamwork and collaboration at my campus.
- f. Staff morale is high at my campus.

46. Consider the 2017–18 school year culture and climate at your campus. From the following list of indicators of positive school climate, which 5 are the most important for your

campus? (Please rank from 1 to 5, where 1 is the most important aspect to maintain a positive school climate and 5 is the fifth most important.)

- Campus staff share a common set of beliefs about schooling/learning
- Mutual respect for colleagues' ideas
- Culture of shared success
- Opportunities for teachers to collaborate
- Development of a family atmosphere
- Academic growth of students
- Socio-emotional growth of students
- Genuine care for students
- Adequate planning time to develop lesson plans
- Culture of respect between students and teachers
- Culture of respect among students (e.g., anti-bullying culture)
- Flexibility in lesson design and delivery
- Other (Please describe.)

47. What effective approaches have you used at your campus to create a positive climate in 2017–18?

--- OPEN ENDED RESPONSE

Final Thoughts

48. What are the three most important things that have made your charter school campus effective in 2017–18?

--- OPEN ENDED RESPONSE

Appendix E: Principal Interview and Teacher Focus Group Protocols

This appendix includes principal interview protocols and teacher focus group protocols that were utilized during site visits to charter schools funded through the Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant in fall 2017, 2018, and 2019, and during site visits to high-performing charter schools in spring 2018. Only small, non-substantive changes were made to the interview and focus group protocols used in fall 2017, 2018 and 2019 to allow for comparability across years.

Principal Interview Questions – Start-Up Charter Schools (Fall 2017, 2018, and 2019)

Introductions and Organizational-level practices

1. How long have you been in the field of education? Where were you before and how did you come to this charter school?
2. What is the mission of your charter school? What steps do you take to ensure that your charter school stays on mission?
3. Could you describe the composition of your campus leadership team? What is the primary role of the leadership team?
4. What do you do to get parents involved in their child's education at this charter school?
5. What planning activities have you found to be most important in getting your charter school started?
6. What organizational practices have you found to be most important in helping your school run efficiently?
7. **(If part of CMO or District)** How does your charter management organization or school district help to support your start-up activities? Of these activities, what have you found to be most helpful?
8. What challenges have you faced thus far in getting your charter school up and running?
9. **(Ask if challenges are reported in Q8)** How have you overcome those challenges?
10. In what ways has TEA supported your charter school start-up activities? What has been helpful in terms of these supports?

Instructional-level Practices

11. **(Campus in Years 2 or 3)** After your first year of operation, how would you describe the quality of instruction at your school? What adjustments (if any) did you make regarding quality of instruction in your second year of serving students?
12. **(Campuses in Year 1)** While you have just begun serving students this fall, how would you describe the quality of instruction at your school? What adjustments (if any) do you plan to make regarding teaching and learning at your school?
13. What methods for providing the highest quality of instruction at your school are you finding to be most effective?
14. Does your school follow a set curriculum? If yes, how did you decide on this curriculum?
 - a. **If yes**, in what ways are teachers able to modify or make adaptations to any aspect of the curriculum?
 - b. **If yes**, what do you find particularly effective about this curriculum?

15. Has your school established professional learning communities (PLCs)?
 - a. **If yes**, is time set aside during the school day for teachers to participate in PLCs?
 - b. **If yes**, how are PLCs benefitting your campus?
 - c. **If no**, are you planning to establish PLCs at your school?
16. Does your school use instructional rounds?
 - a. **If yes**, how often do teachers participate in instructional rounds?
 - b. **If yes**, how are instructional rounds a benefit to your campus?
 - c. **If no**, are you planning to implement instructional rounds at your school? If so, when?
17. Do your teachers have access to formal coaching support?
18. **(Campus in Year 2 or 3)** To what extent do you tailor professional development (PD) to the individualized needs of the teacher? Please describe your process for making this happen.
(Campus in Year 1) To what extent will you tailor professional development (PD) to the individualized needs of the teacher? Please describe your process for making this happen.

Global Question Related to Student Challenges

19. What are the biggest challenges that face students enrolled at your school?

Educationally disadvantaged students

20. What services does your charter school offer to support students who are educationally disadvantaged (i.e., considered at risk of dropping out of school)?
21. **(Campus in Year 2 or 3)** What methods have you found to be most effective in closing the achievement gap for educationally disadvantaged students at this charter school?
22. **(Campus in Year 1)** What methods do you anticipate having the greatest impact on closing the achievement gap for educationally disadvantaged students at this charter school?

Lowest-performing students

23. What data are used to determine which students are the lowest-performing and may need additional supports?
24. In what ways does your school support the lowest-performing students?
25. How do you monitor the progress of lowest-performing students?
26. **(Campus in Year 2 or 3)** What methods have you found to be most effective in closing the achievement gap for low-performing students?
27. **(Campus in Year 1)** What methods do you anticipate having the greatest impact on closing the achievement gap for low-performing students?

Student discipline

28. Does your charter school encourage students and/or parents to sign a contract with the school?
 - a. What are the major tenets of these contracts?
 - b. What occurs when a student or parent fails to meet the terms of the contract?
29. **(Campus in Year 2 or 3)** What approaches have been most effective at reducing student behavioral issues at your school?
30. **(Campus in Year 1)** What approaches do you anticipate will have the biggest impact on reducing student behavioral issues at your school?

Student recruitment/retention

31. What is your target population for student recruitment? What methods of student recruitment have you found to be most effective?
32. How do parents and/or students learn about your school? What methods do you use to disseminate information about your school?
33. Are there any transportation services provided by your charter school available to the students? If yes, please explain how those services are provided?
34. **(Campus in Year 2 or 3)** Have recruitment practices evolved from your first to second year of operations? If so how?
35. **(Campus in Year 2 or 3)** What steps are you taking in your second year to ensure high rates of student retention?
36. **(Campus in Year 2 or 3)** What barriers or challenges have you encountered with regard to student retention?
37. **(Campus in Year 1)** What barriers or challenges have you encountered, or do you expect to encounter in your first year with respect to student retention?
38. Is enrollment at this school at full capacity? Is there a waiting list, or are you still recruiting more students?
 - a. **[If there is a waiting list]** How do you handle enrollment from the waiting list? Do you employ a first come, first serve approach, or is there a lottery system in place?
(If there is a lottery system in place)
 - b. Is there a sibling exemption in the lottery policy?
 - c. Are there any other exemptions to the lottery policy?
39. **(Campus in Year 2 or 3)** With regard to retaining your student population, what methods have you found to be most effective?
40. **(Campus in Year 1)** What do you need to have in place to ensure high student retention rates at your school?

Teacher recruitment/retention

41. What methods do you use to recruit potential teachers?
42. What methods have been most effective in recruiting highly-qualified educators to your charter school?
43. What qualifications and skills do you look for when recruiting teachers?
44. **(Campus in Year 2 or 3)** What criteria do you use to determine if a teacher is performing, at, above, or below the expected level?
(Campus in Year 1) What criteria will you use to determine if a teacher is performing, at, above, or below the expected level?
45. **(Campus in Year 2 or 3)** What steps are involved in bringing a teacher's performance up to expectations?
(Campus in Year 1) What steps will be involved in bringing a teacher's performance up to expectations?

46. **(Campus in Year 2 or 3)** What rewards or bonuses, if any, are available to high-performing teachers and other staff?
(Campus in Year 1) What rewards or bonuses, if any, will be available to high-performing teachers and other staff?
47. What methods do you use to retain highly qualified teachers at your charter school?
48. **(Campus in Year 2 or 3)** What methods have been most effective in retaining highly-qualified educators at your charter school?
49. **(Campus in Year 1)** What methods do you anticipate having the biggest impact on teacher retention at your charter school?

School climate

50. How would you characterize the school climate and teaching conditions at your school? Why do you feel that way?
51. What is your sense of the staff perception of school climate?
52. What is your sense of the overall perception of teaching conditions at your school? (*Interviewer note: adequate resources, planning time, curriculum*)
53. How would you describe staff morale?
54. What factors do you think play a part in creating the current conditions?

Closing Questions

55. What specific things do you think will make your charter school successful this year, and in years to come?
56. What guidance would you like from TEA or other high-performing charter schools to help you improve the quality of education for the students you serve?

Principal Interview Questions – High Performing Charter Schools (Spring 2018)

Introductions and Organizational-level practices

1. Please tell me a little about your background:
 - a. How long have you been the principal at this charter school, and what attracted you to the position?
 - b. Where did you work prior to becoming principal of this charter school?
 - c. How long have you been in the field of education?
2. What is the mission of your charter school?
 - a. What steps do you take to ensure that your charter school stays on mission?
3. What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing charter schools in Texas, and what has your school done to overcome these challenges?
4. Could you describe the composition of your campus leadership team?
 - a. What is the primary role of the leadership team?
5. What do you do to get parents involved in their child's education at this charter school?
6. What organizational practices have you found to be most important in helping your school run efficiently?
7. **(If part of CMO or District)** How does your charter management organization or school district help to support your school?
 - a. Of these activities, what have you found to be most helpful?

Instructional-level practices

8. Since you have been in a leadership role at this charter school, how would you describe the quality of instruction at your school?
 - a. What adjustments (if any) have you made regarding quality of instruction during your time as principal of this school?
9. What methods for improving the quality of instruction at your school are you finding to be most effective?
10. Does your school follow a set curriculum?
 - a. **If yes:** How did you decide on this curriculum?
 - b. **If yes:** In what ways are teachers able to modify or make adaptations to any aspect of the curriculum?
 - c. **If yes:** What do you find particularly effective about this curriculum?
11. Has your school established professional learning communities (PLCs)?
 - a. **If yes,** is time set aside during the school day for teachers to participate in PLCs?
 - b. **If yes,** how are PLCs benefitting your campus?
 - c. **If no,** are you planning to establish PLCs at your school? If so, when?
12. Does your school use instructional rounds?
 - a. **If yes,** how often do teachers participate in instructional rounds?
 - b. **If yes,** how are instructional rounds a benefit to your campus?
 - c. **If no,** are you planning to implement instructional rounds at your school? If so, when?
13. Do your teachers have access to formal coaching support?

14. To what extent do you tailor professional development (PD) to the individualized needs of the teacher? Please describe your process for making this happen.

Global Question Related to Student Challenges

15. What are the biggest challenges that face students enrolled at your school?

Educationally disadvantaged students

16. What services does your charter school offer to support students who are educationally disadvantaged (i.e., considered at risk of dropping out of school)?
17. What methods have you found to be most effective in closing the achievement gap for educationally disadvantaged students at this charter school?

Lowest-performing students

18. What data are used to determine which students are the lowest performing and may need additional supports?
19. In what ways does your school support the lowest performing students?
20. What methods have you found to be most effective in closing the achievement gap for low-performing students?
21. How do you monitor progress of lowest performing students?

Student discipline

22. Does your charter school encourage students and/or parents to sign a contract with the school?
 - a. What are the major tenets of these contracts?
 - b. What occurs when a student or parent fails to meet the terms of the contract?
23. What approaches have been most effective at reducing student behavioral issues at your school?

Student recruitment/retention

24. What is your target population for student recruitment?
 - a. What methods of student recruitment have you found to be most effective?
25. How do parents and/or students learn about your school?
 - a. What methods do you use to disseminate information about your school?
26. Have recruitment practices evolved during your tenure as principal at this school?
27. Are there any transportation services provided by your charter school available to the students? If yes, please explain how those services are provided.
28. What steps are you taking to ensure high rates of student retention?
29. With regard to retaining your student population, what methods have you found to be most effective?
30. What barriers or challenges have you encountered with regard to student retention?
31. Is enrollment at this school at full capacity? Is there a waiting list, or are you still recruiting more students?
 - a. [If there is a waiting list]: How do you handle enrollment from the waiting list? Do you employ a first come, first serve approach, or is there a lottery system in place?
 - b. [If there is a lottery system in place]: Is there a sibling exemption in the lottery policy?

- c. Are there any other exemptions to the lottery policy?

Teacher recruitment/retention

32. What methods do you use to recruit potential teachers?
33. What methods have been most effective in recruiting highly-qualified educators to your charter school?
34. What qualifications and skills do you look for when recruiting teachers?
35. What criteria do you use to determine if a teacher is performing at, above, or below the expected level?
36. What steps are involved in bringing a teacher's performance up to expectations?
37. What rewards or bonuses, if any, are available to high-performing teachers and other staff?
38. What methods do you use to retain highly effective teachers at your charter school?
39. What methods have been most effective in retaining highly effective educators at your charter school?
40. What methods have had the biggest impact on teacher retention at your charter school?

School climate

41. How would you characterize the school climate and teaching conditions at your school? Why do you feel that way?
42. What is your sense of the overall staff perception of school climate?
43. What is your sense of the overall staff perception of teaching conditions at your school?
44. How would you describe staff morale?
45. What factors do you think play a part in creating the current conditions?

Closing Questions

46. ***Your school has been identified as a high performing charter school.*** What specific things do you think make your charter school successful?
47. What advice would you give to new start-up charter schools related to best practices in the following areas:
 - a. Start-up planning
 - b. Operational effectiveness
 - c. Instructional quality
 - d. Student recruitment and retention
 - e. Teacher recruitment and retention
 - f. Closing the achievement gap for educationally disadvantaged and persistently low-performing students?

Teacher Focus Group Questions – Start-Up Charter Schools

Introductions and Organizational-level practices

1. Let's take a few minutes for introductions. Please tell me:
 - a. Your name
 - b. What grades and subjects you teach this year.

Note for interviewer: Remind participants to state their name before providing an answer (to provide clarity during transcription/analysis. If need be, reiterate elements of confidentiality statement)

2. **(Ask each teacher to answer this question; follow-up on any questions the teacher does not answer)** Please describe what type of school you worked at before this (e.g., local ISD, another charter, working in industry, etc.), how you were recruited into your position at this school, and what interested you about this school or position?

Note for interviewer: Remind participants that they are now free to jump in and add to the conversation in any way, or any time; this is now supposed to be more conversational/discussion-based

3. In what ways were you involved in the planning process for getting this school off the ground?
4. What organizational practices have you found to be most important in getting this charter school off the ground?

Instructional-level practices

5. In what ways does the leadership at this school help support your lesson planning efforts?
6. In what ways does the leadership at this school help you to be a more effective teacher? That is, what types of supports are offered to you to help improve your craft as a teacher?
7. From an instructional perspective, what do you think is happening at this charter school that will make students academically successful?
8. Please describe the ways you support each other as teachers in terms of improving instructional effectiveness at this school. **Probes** (if no responses by teachers, probes may include PLCs, instructional rounds, departmental meetings, grade-level meetings, etc.)
9. **[Campus in Year 2 or 3]** How frequently do you attend professional development (PD) sessions? What kind of PD sessions do you attend? How helpful are the PD sessions you attend?
[Campus in Year 1] How frequently will you attend professional development (PD) sessions? What kind of PD sessions do you expect to attend? How helpful are the PD sessions you attend?
10. **[Campus in Year 2 or 3]** Please describe how teacher performance is evaluated at this school?
[Campus in Year 1] Please describe how teacher performance will be evaluated at this school?
 - a. **[Campus in Year 2 or 3]** How often are teacher classroom observations conducted? How is feedback provided to teachers?
[Campus in Year 1] How often will teacher classroom observations be conducted? How will feedback be provided to teachers?
 - b. **[Campus in Year 2 or 3]** What are the consequences (if any) for teachers who are not meeting expectations?
 - c. **[Campus in Year 1]** What will be the consequences (if any) for teachers who are not meeting expectations?

- d. **[Campus in Year 2 or 3]** What steps are involved in bringing a teacher's performance up to expectations?
[Campus in Year 1] What steps will be involved in bringing a teacher's performance up to expectations?

Generic Question Related to Challenges with Student Population

11. What are the biggest challenges that face students enrolled at your school?

Educationally disadvantaged and low-performing students

12. How do you tailor your instruction to support educationally disadvantaged (i.e., students who have been identified as being at risk of dropping out of school) or your lowest-performing students?
13. What do you do differently for these low-performing students (i.e., students in the bottom 10% in reading and math) to improve their academic results?

Student discipline

14. Please describe your general approach to managing student behaviors in your classroom.
15. Which classroom management approaches have been most effective?
16. In what ways do school leaders support you with disciplinary issues?

Student recruitment/retention

17. What role, if any, do teachers at your charter school play in the student recruitment process? If you do play a role, what approaches to student recruitment have you found to be most effective?
18. **[Campus in Year 2 or 3]** As a teacher, what things do you do to help promote student retention at your charter school?
[Campus in Year 1] As a teacher, what things will you do to help promote student retention at your charter school?
19. **[Campus in Year 2 or 3]** What factors do you think are most important in getting students to return to your school each year?
[Campus in Year 1] What factors do you think will be most important in getting students to return to your school each year?

School climate

20. How would you characterize the climate of your school? Why do you feel that way?
21. How would you characterize the teaching conditions at this school? Why do you feel that way?
22. What factors influence your decision to remain at this school? What factors would cause you to consider leaving your position at this school?

Closing Question(s)

23. What advice would you like to receive, or do you wish you had received about best practices with regard to:
a. Lesson planning?
b. Instructional quality?
c. Recruiting and retaining students?

Teacher Focus Group Questions – High-performing charter schools

Introductions and Organizational-level practices

1. Let's take a few minutes for introductions. Please tell me:
 - a. Your name
 - b. What grades and subjects you teach this year
 - c. How long you have been at this charter school
2. **(Ask each teacher to answer this question)** Please describe what type of school you worked at before this (e.g., local ISD, another charter, working in industry, etc.), how you were recruited into your position at this school, and what interested you about this school or position?
3. *Your school has been identified as a high-performing charter school.* What do you think your school is doing that separates it from other charter schools across the state?
4. What organizational practices have you found to be most important to the success of this charter school?

Instructional-level practices

5. In what ways does the leadership at this school help support your lesson planning efforts?
6. In what ways does the leadership at this school help you to be a more effective teacher? That is, what types of supports are offered to you to help improve your craft as a teacher?
7. From an instructional perspective, what do you think is happening at this charter school that has or will make students academically successful?
8. Please describe the ways you support each other as teachers in terms of improving instructional effectiveness at this school. **Probes** (if no responses by teachers, probes may include PLCs, instructional rounds, departmental meetings, grade-level meetings, etc.)
9. How frequently do you attend professional development (PD) sessions?
 - a. What kind of PD sessions do you attend?
 - b. How helpful are the PD sessions you attend?
10. Please describe how teacher performance is evaluated at this school.
 - a. How often are teacher classroom observations conducted? How is feedback provided to teachers?
 - b. What are the consequences (if any) for teachers who are not meeting expectations?
 - c. What steps are involved in bringing a teacher's performance up to expectations?

Global Question Related to Student Challenges

11. What are the biggest challenges that face students enrolled at your school?

Educationally disadvantaged and low-performing students

12. How do you tailor your instruction to support educationally disadvantaged (i.e., students who have been identified as being at risk of dropping out of school) or your lowest-performing students?
13. What do you do differently for these low-performing students (i.e., students in the bottom 10% in reading and math) to improve their academic results?

Student discipline

14. Please describe your general approach to managing student behaviors in your classroom.

15. Which classroom management approaches have been most effective?
16. In what ways do school leaders support you with disciplinary issues?

Student recruitment/retention

17. What role, if any, do teachers at your charter school play in the student recruitment process?
 - a. **If teachers play a role:** What approaches to student recruitment have you found to be most effective?
18. As a teacher, what things do you do to help promote student retention at your charter school?
19. What factors do you think are most important in getting students to return to your school each year?

School climate

20. How would you characterize the climate of your school? Why do you feel that way?
21. How would you characterize the teaching conditions at this school? Why do you feel that way?
22. What factors influence your decision to remain at this school?
 - a. What factors would cause you to consider leaving your position at this school?

Closing Questions

23. What advice would you give to new Start-Up Charter School instructors about best practices with regard to:
 - a. Operational effectiveness
 - b. Lesson planning
 - c. Instructional quality
 - d. Recruiting and retaining students
 - e. Recruiting/retaining high-quality teachers?

Appendix F: Impact Analysis Tables

Tables F.1 and F.2 show, for 2017–18 and 2018–19 respectively, the regression coefficients for the models estimated for the three different grade ranges, with the first three columns showing the results from the three mathematics regressions, and the last three columns for the reading regressions.

Table F.1. Regression Coefficients for Impact Models of Charter School Start-up Grantee Campuses, 2017–18

| Variable | Elem Schools, STAAR ¹ -Mathematics | Middle Schools, STAAR-Mathematics | K–12 Schools, Algebra I EOC | Elem Schools, STAAR-Reading | Middle Schools, STAAR-Reading | K–12 Schools, English I EOC |
|------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Baseline mathematics z-score | .633* (.017) | .629* (.016) | .483* (.036) | .209* (.015) | .194* (.013) | .206* (.026) |
| Baseline reading z-score | .180* (.016) | .181* (.014) | .081* (.032) | .574* (.016) | .577* (.016) | .525* (.031) |
| Female | -.024 (.020) | .020 (.018) | .091* (.040) | .051* (.019) | .102* (.016) | .245* (.038) |
| Economically disadvantaged | -.056* (.024) | -.079* (.022) | -.159* (.048) | -.080* (.023) | -.057* (.019) | -.081* (.040) |
| ELs ² | -.001 (.026) | -.001 (.025) | -.011 (.059) | -.113* (.024) | -.146* (.021) | -.138* (.051) |
| SPED ³ | -.127* (.039) | -.096* (.030) | -.116 (.068) | -.223* (.038) | -.239* (.029) | -.150* (.057) |
| African American | -.072 (.037) | -.111* (.032) | .040 (.066) | -.017 (.035) | -.048 (.029) | -.146* (.064) |
| Hispanic | -.023 (.034) | -.050 (.030) | .087 (.060) | .013 (.031) | .034 (.026) | -.090 (.060) |
| Other race | .158* (.045) | .075 (.039) | .210 (.109) | .092* (.039) | .048 (.034) | .101 (.081) |
| Number of observations | 0.61 | 0.61 | 0.52 | 0.59 | 0.57 | 0.50 |
| Adjusted R-squared | 3,426 | 3,790 | 496 | 3,428 | 4,162 | 580 |

Notes. Robust standard errors in parenthesis. * indicates statistically significant where $p < 0.05$. Test scores are standardized with a statewide mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. They are presented in z-score units. Baseline and outcome tests are from statewide assessments collected by TEA. No baseline differences are significant at the 0.05 level, two-tailed test. Reported coefficients are from regressions of the relevant outcome variable on a treatment indicator and other covariates and adjusting for students' baseline test scores in reading and mathematics and students' demographic characteristics. All regressions use robust standards errors and the student is the unit of assignment and unit of analysis.

¹ State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

² English Learners (EL)

³ Special Education (SPED)

Table F.2. Regression Coefficients for Impact Models of Charter School Start-up Grantee Campuses, 2018–19

| Variable | Elem Schools, STAAR ¹ -Math | Middle Schools, STAAR-Math | K–12 Schools, Algebra I EOC | Elem Schools, STAAR-Reading | Middle Schools, STAAR-Reading | K–12 Schools, English I EOC |
|------------------------------|--|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Baseline mathematics z-score | .596* (.014) | .607* (.011) | .466* (.023) | .216* (.013) | .200* (.010) | .242* (.016) |
| Baseline reading z-score | .204* (.013) | .193* (.010) | .130* (.022) | .565* (.014) | .570* (.012) | .463* (.017) |
| Female | -.010 (.016) | -.008 (.013) | .123* (.027) | .082* (.015) | .105* (.013) | .214* (.022) |
| Economically disadvantaged | -.087* (.019) | -.068* (.016) | -.018 (.033) | -.081* (.019) | -.068* (.015) | -.090* (.026) |
| ELs ² | -.003 (.021) | -.030 (.019) | .043 (.038) | -.100* (.021) | -.175* (.017) | -.125* (.031) |
| SPED ³ | -.095* (.029) | -.170* (.022) | -.201* (.042) | -.131* (.029) | -.253* (.023) | -.296* (.043) |
| African American | -.064* (.028) | -.101* (.024) | .028 (.044) | -.062* (.027) | -.031 (.022) | -.117* (.038) |
| Hispanic | -.033 (.025) | -.037 (.023) | .094* (.041) | -.004* (.024) | .025 (.021) | -.083* (.038) |
| Other race | .193* (.036) | .165* (.032) | .226* (.071) | .130* (.030) | .037 (.028) | .045 (.050) |
| | | | | | | |
| Number of observations | 6,046 | 7,330 | 1,302 | 6,120 | 8,024 | 1,616 |
| Adjusted R-squared | 0.59 | 0.60 | 0.55 | 0.60 | 0.58 | 0.51 |

Notes. Robust standard errors in parenthesis. * indicates statistically significant where $p < 0.05$. Test scores are standardized with a statewide mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. They are presented in z-score units. Baseline and outcome tests are from statewide assessments collected by TEA. No baseline differences are significant at the 0.05 level, two-tailed test. Reported coefficients are from regressions of the relevant outcome variable on a treatment indicator and other covariates and adjusting for students' baseline test scores in reading and mathematics and students' demographic characteristics. All regressions use robust standards errors and the student is the unit of assignment and unit of analysis.

¹ State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

² English Learners (EL)

³ Special Education (SPED)

Tables F.3 and F.4 show, for 2017–18 and 2018–19 respectively, the mathematics and reading score outcomes for three different grade ranges. The first four rows show the elementary school results, for the four K–6 start-up grantee schools. The next six rows show the middle school results for the charter school start-up grantee schools starting in Grade 6. Both models use STAAR test scores as outcomes. The final row shows the results for the high school EOC model, for the one school with enough students to be included (the 6–10 school had too few students with EOC scores).

Table F.3. Results of Impact Analysis of Charter School Start-up Grantee Campuses, 2017–18

| School Name | Grade range | STAAR ¹ - Mathematics Impact estimate | STAAR- Reading impact estimate | Number of treatment students |
|--|-------------|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Elementary school results, STAAR test outcomes</i> | | | | |
| CAMPUS A | K–7 | 0.13 | 0.13 | 130 |
| CAMPUS B | K–6 | 0.05 | 0.09 | 279 |
| CAMPUS C | K–7 | 0.03 | -0.04 | 209 |
| CAMPUS D | K–7 | -0.03 | -0.06 | 178 |
| CAMPUS E | PK–4 | 0.45* | -0.02 | 72 |
| CAMPUS F | K–5 | 0.23* | 0.28* | 171 |
| CAMPUS G | PK–6 | 0.03 | 0.09 | 12 |
| CAMPUS H | PK–6 | -0.06 | 0.03 | 34 |
| CAMPUS I | K–5 | -0.15 | -0.05 | 215 |
| CAMPUS J | PK–11 | -0.37* | -0.07 | 57 |
| <i>Middle school results, STAAR test outcomes</i> | | | | |
| CAMPUS K | 6–12 | 0.37* | 0.09 | 430 |
| CAMPUS L | 6–9 | 0.04 | 0.29* | 186 |
| CAMPUS M | 6–8 | -0.14 | 0.01 | 74 |
| CAMPUS N | 6–8 | -0.33* | -0.15 | 117 |
| CAMPUS O | 6–11 | -0.35* | -0.25* | 64 |
| CAMPUS P | 6–7 | 0.26* | 0.39* | 78 |
| CAMPUS Q | 6–12 | 0.24* | 0.21* | 166 |
| CAMPUS R | 6–12 | 0.01 | 0.03 | 207 |
| CAMPUS S | 6–8 | -0.14 | -0.01 | 447 |
| <i>K–12 school results, EOC² test outcomes</i> | | | | |
| CAMPUS T | 6–12 | 0.05 | 0.00 | 145 |
| CAMPUS U | 6–12 | 0.35* | 0.13 | 28 |
| CAMPUS V | 6–12 | 0.18* | -0.04 | 69 |

Notes. * indicates statistically significant where $p < 0.05$. Test scores are standardized with a statewide mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. They are presented in z-score units. Baseline and outcome tests are from statewide assessments collected by TEA. No baseline differences are significant at the 0.05 level, two-tailed test. Reported impacts are from regressions of the relevant outcome variable on a treatment indicator and other covariates and adjusting for students' baseline test scores in reading and mathematics and students' demographic characteristics. All regressions use robust standard errors and the student is the unit of assignment and unit of analysis. Data shown in this table include imputed values for baseline variables but not for outcome variables.

¹ State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

² End-of-course (EOC)

Table F.4. Results of Impact Analysis of Charter School Start-up Grantee Campuses, 2018–19

| School Name | Grade range | STAAR ¹ - Mathematics Impact estimate | STAAR- Reading impact estimate | Number of treatment students |
|--|-------------|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Elementary school results, STAAR test outcomes</i> | | | | |
| CAMPUS A | K–7 | 0.10 | 0.11 | 180 |
| CAMPUS B | K–6 | 0.05 | 0.13 | 298 |
| CAMPUS C | K–7 | -0.06 | 0.02 | 295 |
| CAMPUS D | K–7 | -0.10 | -0.08 | 214 |
| CAMPUS E | PK–4 | 0.26* | -0.08 | 92 |
| CAMPUS F | K–5 | 0.11 | 0.12 | 217 |
| CAMPUS G | PK–6 | 0.06 | 0.14 | 20 |
| CAMPUS H | PK–6 | -0.08 | -0.06 | 70 |
| CAMPUS I | K–5 | -0.09 | -0.08 | 242 |
| CAMPUS J | PK–11 | -0.41* | 0.01 | 107 |
| CAMPUS Y | PK–5 | -0.16* | 0.07 | 36 |
| CAMPUS Z | K–8 | -0.29* | -0.23* | 92 |
| <i>Middle school results, STAAR test outcomes</i> | | | | |
| CAMPUS K | 6–12 | 0.38* | 0.08 | 569 |
| CAMPUS L | 6–9 | 0.10 | 0.27* | 347 |
| CAMPUS M | 6–8 | -0.20* | 0.11 | 137 |
| CAMPUS N | 6–8 | -0.25* | -0.09 | 151 |
| CAMPUS O | 6–11 | -0.28* | -0.21 | 92 |
| CAMPUS P | 6–7 | 0.24* | 0.23* | 200 |
| CAMPUS Q | 6–12 | 0.16* | 0.17* | 253 |
| CAMPUS R | 6–12 | -0.02 | -0.02 | 297 |
| CAMPUS S | 6–8 | -0.22* | -0.09 | 686 |
| CAMPUS AA | 5–7 | -0.06 | 0.02 | 63 |
| CAMPUS AB | 6–11 | -0.31* | -0.05 | 230 |
| CAMPUS AC | 5–8 | -0.32* | -0.27* | 117 |
| <i>K–12 school results, EOC² test outcomes</i> | | | | |
| CAMPUS T | 6–12 | 0.06 | 0.03 | 268 |
| CAMPUS U | 6–12 | 0.24* | 0.03 | 92 |
| CAMPUS V | 6–12 | 0.04 | 0.10 | 145 |
| CAMPUS W | 6–11 | -0.09 | -0.08 | 63 |

Notes. * indicates statistically significant where $p < 0.05$. Test scores are standardized with a statewide mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. They are presented in z-score units. Baseline and outcome tests are from statewide assessments collected by TEA. No baseline differences are significant at the 0.05 level, two-tailed test. Reported impacts are from regressions of the relevant outcome variable on a treatment indicator and other covariates and adjusting for students' baseline test scores in reading and mathematics and students' demographic characteristics. All regressions use robust standard errors and the student is the unit of assignment and unit of analysis. Data shown in this table include imputed values for baseline variables but not for outcome variables.

¹ State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

² End-of-course (EOC)

Tables F.5 and F.6 show, for 2017–18 and 2018–19 respectively, a descriptive look at data on early reading indicators and Kindergarten readiness indicators for charter school start-up grantee campuses with elementary grades. Because no baseline data is available for students on these outcomes, a regression-based impact analysis is not feasible.

Table F.5. Kindergarten Readiness and Early Reading Indicators for Charter School Start-up Grantee Campuses, 2017–18

| School Name | Kindergarten readiness | Number of students | Accelerated reading instruction eligibility | Number of students |
|--|------------------------|--------------------|---|--------------------|
| <i>Elementary charter school start-up grantee schools</i> | | | | |
| CAMPUS A | 55% | 22 | 47% | 126 |
| CAMPUS B | 57% | 102 | 41% | 332 |
| CAMPUS C | 60% | 65 | 42% | 220 |
| CAMPUS D | 0% | 86 | 26% | 255 |
| CAMPUS E | 76% | 71 | 38% | 248 |
| CAMPUS F | 38% | 477 | 50% | 202 |
| CAMPUS G | 34% | 58 | 59% | 157 |
| CAMPUS H | 56% | 85 | 47% | 277 |
| CAMPUS I | 66% | 101 | 39% | 323 |
| CAMPUS J | 74% | 50 | 28% | 184 |
| <i>Elementary schools in feeder¹ districts</i> | | | | |
| Overall feeder sample | 63% | 325,846 | 37% | 719,381 |

¹ Feeder district is defined by where the students attending the charter school would have attended had they remained in traditional public schools. For this evaluation, campus feeders were defined if at least five students enrolled in the charter school start-up grantee campus. Matched students were selected from feeder districts.

Table F.6. Kindergarten Readiness and Early Reading Indicators for Charter School Start-up Grantee Campuses, 2018–19

| School Name | Kindergarten readiness | Number of students | Accelerated reading instruction eligibility | Number of students |
|--|------------------------|--------------------|---|--------------------|
| <i>Elementary charter school start-up grantee schools</i> | | | | |
| CAMPUS A | 48% | 27 | 48% | 110 |
| CAMPUS B | 63% | 105 | 13% | 322 |
| CAMPUS C | 63% | 54 | 41% | 234 |
| CAMPUS D | 95% | 76 | 23% | 270 |
| CAMPUS E | 77% | 77 | 8% | 218 |
| CAMPUS F | 72% | 351 | 47% | 209 |
| CAMPUS G | 54% | 59 | 48% | 184 |
| CAMPUS H | 37% | 59 | 67% | 239 |
| CAMPUS I | 68% | 102 | 20% | 325 |
| CAMPUS J | 67% | 61 | 29% | 196 |
| <i>Elementary schools in feeder¹ districts</i> | | | | |
| Overall feeder sample | 64% | 402,783 | 36% | 834,819 |

¹ Feeder district is defined by where the students attending the charter school would have attended had they remained in traditional public schools. For this evaluation, campus feeders were defined if at least five students enrolled in the charter school start-up grantee campus. Matched students were selected from feeder districts.

In addition to estimating charter school campus impacts among all students, the study also examined whether impacts differ for different student groups. To estimate student group impacts, the treatment group indicator is interacted with an indicator of whether a student is a member of the relevant student group under consideration. The impact estimate for that student group is the sum of the estimated coefficient on the treatment variable and the estimated coefficient on the interaction term.

Tables F.7 through F.14 show the results of the different student group analyses. For each student group and model, the first column shows the number of students in that student group, followed by the mathematics and reading impacts for that student group. In cases where there are fewer than 20 students in a student group at a school, impacts for that student group at that school are set to missing.

For elementary school STAAR-Mathematics results, the average student group effects are 0.04 standard deviation units for African American students and -0.06 standard deviation units for Hispanic students. This means that African American students at charter school start-up grantee elementary campuses performed slightly better on STAAR-Mathematics exams than African American students at matched comparison students, while Hispanic students at start-up grantee elementary campuses did slightly worse than their matched comparison counterparts, approximately equivalent to the difference between scoring at the 38th percentile compared to the 35th percentile. For elementary schools in 2018–19, students in feeder school districts had a STAAR-Mathematics achievement gap of 0.52 standard deviations between the average test scores of African American/Hispanic students and white students, so the average student group effects are 8% of the race/ethnicity gap for African American students and 12% for Hispanic students.

For elementary school STAAR-Reading results, the average student group effects are 0.07 standard deviation units for African American students and 0.03 standard deviation units for Hispanic students, so both student groups at charter school start-up grantee campuses did slightly better than students from the same student group in the matched comparison sample, with the larger effect being approximately equivalent to the difference between scoring at the 40th percentile compared to the 43rd percentile. For elementary schools in 2018–19, students in feeder school districts had a STAAR-Reading achievement gap of 0.60 standard deviations between the average test scores of African American/Hispanic students and white students, so the average student group effects are 12% of the race/ethnicity gap for African American students and 5% for Hispanic students.

For middle school STAAR-Mathematics results, the average student group effects are -0.08 standard deviation units for African American students and -0.06 standard deviation units for Hispanic students. This means that both African American and Hispanic students at start-up middle school campuses performed slightly worse on STAAR-Mathematics exams than their peers in the same student group in the matched comparison sample, with the larger effect being approximately equivalent to the difference between scoring at the 39th percentile compared to the 35th percentile. For middle schools in 2018–19, students in feeder school districts had a STAAR-Mathematics achievement gap of 0.55 standard deviations between the average test scores of African/American/Hispanic students and white students, so the average student group effects are 15% of the race/ethnicity gap for African American students and 11% for Hispanic students.

For middle school STAAR-Reading results, the average student group effects are 0.02 standard deviation units for African American students and 0.06 standard deviation units for Hispanic students. This means that both African American and Hispanic students at start-up middle school campuses performed slightly better on STAAR-Reading exams than their peers in the same student group in the matched comparison sample, with the larger effect being approximately equivalent to the difference between scoring at the 41st percentile compared to start-up grantee campus students scoring at the 44th percentile. For middle schools in 2018–19, students in feeder school districts had a STAAR-Reading achievement gap of 0.62 standard deviations between the average test scores of African American/Hispanic students and white students, so the average student group effects are 3% of the race/ethnicity gap for African American students and 10% for Hispanic students.

The evaluation conducted a similar analysis of the student group results for economically disadvantaged students. For elementary schools, the average student group effects are a STAAR-Mathematics effect of -0.06 standard deviation units for economically disadvantaged students, and of 0.01 standard deviation units for STAAR-Reading. This means that economically disadvantaged students in charter school start-up grantee elementary schools did slightly worse on STAAR-Mathematics exams, approximately equivalent to the difference between scoring at the 38th percentile compared to the 35th percentile, and about the same on STAAR-Reading exams when compared to their peers in the same student group in the matched comparison sample. For elementary schools in 2018–19, students in feeder school districts had a STAAR-Mathematics achievement gap of 0.55 standard deviations and a STAAR-Reading achievement gap of 0.50 standard deviations between the average test scores of economically disadvantaged students and not economically disadvantaged students, so the average student group effects are 11% of the economic disadvantage gap for STAAR-Mathematics and 2% for STAAR-Reading. For middle schools, the average student group effects are a STAAR-Mathematics effect of -0.03 standard deviation units for economically disadvantaged students, and of 0.07 standard deviation units for STAAR-Reading. This means that economically disadvantaged students in charter school start-up grantee

middle schools did slightly worse on STAAR-Mathematics exams and slightly better on STAAR-Reading exams when compared to their peers in the same student group in the matched comparison sample, with the larger effect being approximately equivalent to the difference between scoring at the 41st percentile compared to start-up grantee campus students scoring at the 45th percentile. For elementary schools in 2018–19, students in feeder school districts had a STAAR-Mathematics achievement gap of 0.53 standard deviations and a STAAR-Reading achievement gap of 0.48 standard deviations between the average test scores of economically disadvantaged students and not economically disadvantaged students, so the average group effects are 6% of the economic disadvantage gap for STAAR-Mathematics and 14% for STAAR-Reading.

Comparing student group results across subjects, we see that the student group results for STAAR-Mathematics are correlated with those for STAAR-Reading. For elementary schools, these correlations range from 0.50 to 0.95 in 2017–18 and from 0.35 to 0.80 in 2018–19. Middle school results tended to be more positively correlated across subjects, with correlations ranging from 0.50 to 0.89 in 2017–18 and 0.63 to 0.89 in 2018–19. These correlations are generally consistent with the correlations across subjects for the overall results, which range from 0.4 to 0.8, and indicate that campuses that are performing well for a student group in one subject tend to also perform well for that group in the other subject.

Similarly, we can compare student group results between 2017–18 and 2018–19, examining how similar those results are over time. As a point of comparison, the overall results for each subject are highly correlated over time, with correlations greater than 0.90 for middle schools in both subjects and for elementary school STAAR-Mathematics, and a correlation of 0.76 for STAAR-Reading for elementary schools. For elementary schools, the student group results are highly correlated over time for both subjects, with correlations over time ranging from 0.76 to 0.95 for STAAR-Mathematics, and from 0.60 to 0.89 for STAAR-Reading. Student group correlations are also very high for middle schools, with STAAR-Mathematics correlations ranging from 0.93 to 0.97, and from 0.63 to 0.96 for STAAR-Reading.

Table F.7. Results of Impact Analysis of At-Risk and Low-Performing Student Groups at Charter School Start-up Grantee Campuses, 2017–18

| School Name | Number of at-risk students | Mathematics impact, at-risk students | Reading impact, at-risk students | Number of low-performing students | Mathematics impact, low-performing students | Reading impact, low-performing students |
|--|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| <i>Elementary school results, STAAR¹ test outcomes</i> | | | | | | |
| CAMPUS A | 91 | 0.11 | 0.11 | 118 | 0.20 | 0.15 |
| CAMPUS B | 309 | 0.13 | 0.15 | 282 | 0.13 | 0.13 |
| CAMPUS C | 145 | -0.04 | -0.04 | 194 | -0.02 | -0.07 |
| CAMPUS D | 93 | -0.05 | -0.16 | 99 | -0.09 | -0.08 |
| CAMPUS E | 30 | 0.39* | -0.04 | 30 | 0.31* | -0.13 |
| CAMPUS F | 121 | 0.22* | 0.24* | 121 | 0.26* | 0.38* |
| CAMPUS G | 10 | -- | -- | 11 | -- | -- |
| CAMPUS H | 31 | -0.09 | 0.03 | 25 | -0.09 | 0.05 |
| CAMPUS I | 122 | -0.24* | -0.04 | 124 | -0.13 | -0.07 |
| CAMPUS J | 27 | -0.36* | -0.10 | 27 | -0.27* | -0.08 |
| <i>Middle school results, STAAR test outcomes</i> | | | | | | |
| CAMPUS K | 313 | 0.34* | 0.15 | 218 | 0.28* | 0.13 |
| CAMPUS L | 187 | 0.12 | 0.27* | 146 | 0.09 | 0.22* |
| CAMPUS M | 44 | -0.04 | -0.04 | 56 | -0.14 | 0.03 |
| CAMPUS N | 85 | -0.38* | -0.19 | 111 | -0.32* | -0.20 |
| CAMPUS O | 61 | -0.29* | -0.24* | 65 | -0.31* | -0.23* |
| CAMPUS P | 53 | 0.28* | 0.42* | 53 | 0.23* | 0.44* |
| CAMPUS Q | 112 | 0.18 | 0.24* | 107 | 0.18 | 0.22* |
| CAMPUS R | 144 | 0.05 | 0.07 | 167 | 0.11 | 0.05 |
| CAMPUS S | 275 | -0.18 | -0.04 | 286 | -0.19 | 0.01 |

Notes. * indicates statistically significant where $p < 0.05$. Test scores are standardized with a statewide mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. They are presented in z-score units. Baseline and outcome tests are from statewide assessments collected by TEA. No baseline differences are significant at the 0.05 level, two-tailed test. Reported impacts are from regressions of the relevant outcome variable on a treatment indicator and other covariates and adjusting for students' baseline test scores in reading and mathematics and students' demographic characteristics. All regressions use robust standards errors and the student is the unit of assignment and unit of analysis. Data shown in this table include imputed values for baseline variables but not for outcome variables. Blank cells are cases where impacts are set to missing for schools with fewer than 20 students in the model for that student group.

¹ State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

Table F.8. Results of Impact Analysis of African American and Hispanic Student Groups at Charter School Start-up Grantee Campuses, 2017–18

| School Name | Number of African American students | Mathematics impact, African American students | Reading impact, African American students | Number of Hispanic students | Mathematics impact, Hispanic students | Reading impact, Hispanic students |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|---|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Elementary school results, STAAR¹ test outcomes</i> | | | | | | |
| CAMPUS A | 114 | 0.18 | 0.20 | 63 | -0.07 | 0.08 |
| CAMPUS B | 10 | -- | -- | 495 | 0.11 | 0.12 |
| CAMPUS C | 116 | 0.05 | -0.02 | 162 | 0.00 | -0.04 |
| CAMPUS D | 12 | -- | -- | 50 | -0.04 | -0.06 |
| CAMPUS E | 14 | -- | -- | 10 | -- | -- |
| CAMPUS F | 77 | 0.22* | 0.31* | 58 | 0.31* | 0.33* |
| CAMPUS G | 4 | -- | -- | 6 | -- | -- |
| CAMPUS H | 0 | -- | -- | 32 | -0.10 | 0.08 |
| CAMPUS I | 47 | -0.09 | -0.07 | 103 | -0.17 | -0.01 |
| CAMPUS J | 1 | -- | -- | 52 | -0.43* | -0.09 |
| <i>Middle school results, STAAR test outcomes</i> | | | | | | |
| CAMPUS K | 231 | 0.43* | 0.26* | 146 | 0.29* | 0.13 |
| CAMPUS L | 35 | -0.16 | 0.23* | 170 | 0.07 | 0.28* |
| CAMPUS M | 31 | -0.16 | -0.07 | 45 | -0.28* | 0.00 |
| CAMPUS N | 113 | -0.35* | -0.19 | 27 | -0.34* | -0.10 |
| CAMPUS O | 2 | -- | -- | 21 | -0.60* | -0.50* |
| CAMPUS P | 5 | -- | -- | 65 | 0.23* | 0.38* |
| CAMPUS Q | 0 | -- | -- | 198 | 0.26* | 0.23* |
| CAMPUS R | 14 | -- | -- | 174 | 0.00 | 0.05 |
| CAMPUS S | 151 | -0.15 | -0.02 | 133 | -0.09 | 0.09 |

Notes. * indicates statistically significant where $p < 0.05$. Test scores are standardized with a statewide mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. They are presented in z-score units. Baseline and outcome tests are from statewide assessments collected by TEA. No baseline differences are significant at the 0.05 level, two-tailed test. Reported impacts are from regressions of the relevant outcome variable on a treatment indicator and other covariates and adjusting for students' baseline test scores in reading and math and students' demographic characteristics. All regressions use robust standards errors and the student is the unit of assignment and unit of analysis. Data shown in this table include imputed values for baseline variables but not for outcome variables. Blank cells are cases where impacts are set to missing for schools with fewer than 20 students in the model for that student group.

¹ State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

Table F.9. Results of Impact Analysis of Female and Economically Disadvantaged Student Groups at Charter School Start-up Grantee Campuses, 2017–18

| School Name | Number of female students | Mathematics impact, female | Reading impact, female | Number of economically disadvantaged students | Mathematics impact, economically disadvantaged students | Reading impact, economically disadvantaged students |
|--|---------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|---|---|---|
| <i>Elementary school results, STAAR¹ test outcomes</i> | | | | | | |
| CAMPUS A | 101 | 0.16 | 0.17 | 155 | 0.15 | 0.17 |
| CAMPUS B | 238 | 0.18 | 0.11 | 402 | 0.13 | 0.12 |
| CAMPUS C | 188 | 0.10 | 0.03 | 230 | 0.07 | 0.00 |
| CAMPUS D | 143 | -0.10 | -0.03 | 42 | -0.04 | -0.08 |
| CAMPUS E | 38 | 0.61* | 0.03 | 19 | -- | -- |
| CAMPUS F | 73 | 0.19 | 0.34* | 149 | 0.23* | 0.25* |
| CAMPUS G | 8 | -- | -- | 10 | -- | -- |
| CAMPUS H | 10 | -- | -- | 33 | -0.09 | 0.01 |
| CAMPUS I | 117 | -0.28* | -0.12 | 148 | -0.16 | -0.02 |
| CAMPUS J | 26 | -0.40* | -0.11 | 31 | -0.41* | -0.09 |
| <i>Middle school results, STAAR test outcomes</i> | | | | | | |
| CAMPUS K | 353 | 0.34* | 0.08 | 319 | 0.34* | 0.18 |
| CAMPUS L | 128 | -0.02 | 0.22* | 194 | 0.03 | 0.28* |
| CAMPUS M | 44 | -0.10 | 0.06 | 47 | -0.19 | 0.08 |
| CAMPUS N | 72 | -0.34* | -0.15 | 106 | -0.34* | -0.18 |
| CAMPUS O | 48 | -0.32* | -0.21* | 59 | -0.27* | -0.17 |
| CAMPUS P | 36 | 0.16 | 0.41* | 64 | 0.24* | 0.42* |
| CAMPUS Q | 91 | 0.20 | 0.14 | 183 | 0.24* | 0.22* |
| CAMPUS R | 134 | 0.00 | 0.04 | 182 | -0.01 | 0.01 |
| CAMPUS S | 225 | -0.12 | -0.02 | 350 | -0.14 | 0.03 |

Notes. * indicates statistically significant where $p < 0.05$. Test scores are standardized with a statewide mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. They are presented in z-score units. Baseline and outcome tests are from statewide assessments collected by TEA. No baseline differences are significant at the 0.05 level, two-tailed test. Reported impacts are from regressions of the relevant outcome variable on a treatment indicator and other covariates and adjusting for students' baseline test scores in reading and mathematics and students' demographic characteristics. All regressions use robust standards errors and the student is the unit of assignment and unit of analysis. Data shown in this table include imputed values for baseline variables but not for outcome variables. Blank cells are cases where impacts are set to missing for schools with fewer than 20 students in the model for that student group.

¹ State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

Table F.10. Results of Impact Analysis of EL¹ and SPED² Student Groups at Charter School Start-up Grantee Campuses, 2017–18

| School Name | Number of EL | Mathematics impact, EL | Reading impact, EL | Number of SPED students | Mathematics impact, SPED students | Reading impact, SPED students |
|--|--------------|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Elementary school results, STAAR³ test outcomes</i> | | | | | | |
| CAMPUS A | 75 | 0.19 | 0.04 | 12 | -- | -- |
| CAMPUS B | 177 | 0.06 | 0.00 | 43 | 0.07 | 0.20 |
| CAMPUS C | 69 | -0.08 | -0.04 | 17 | -- | -- |
| CAMPUS D | 5 | -- | -- | 32 | -0.11 | -0.12 |
| CAMPUS E | 17 | -- | -- | 6 | -- | -- |
| CAMPUS F | 34 | 0.36* | 0.29* | 14 | -- | -- |
| CAMPUS G | 1 | -- | -- | 1 | -- | -- |
| CAMPUS H | 8 | -- | -- | 1 | -- | -- |
| CAMPUS I | 77 | -0.34* | -0.08 | 9 | -- | -- |
| CAMPUS J | 8 | -- | -- | 4 | -- | -- |
| <i>Middle school results, STAAR test outcomes</i> | | | | | | |
| CAMPUS K | 103 | 0.25* | 0.10 | 37 | 0.13 | 0.05 |
| CAMPUS L | 111 | 0.04 | 0.26* | 29 | 0.22* | 0.10 |
| CAMPUS M | 12 | -- | -- | 16 | -- | -- |
| CAMPUS N | 9 | -- | -- | 20 | -0.33* | -0.14 |
| CAMPUS O | 2 | -- | -- | 18 | -- | -- |
| CAMPUS P | 7 | -- | -- | 6 | -- | -- |
| CAMPUS Q | 54 | 0.21* | 0.10 | 11 | -- | -- |
| CAMPUS R | 54 | -0.05 | 0.07 | 25 | 0.13 | 0.04 |
| CAMPUS S | 55 | -0.26 | -0.04 | 33 | -0.14 | 0.13 |

Notes. * indicates statistically significant where $p < 0.05$. Test scores are standardized with a statewide mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. They are presented in z-score units. Baseline and outcome tests are from statewide assessments collected by TEA. No baseline differences are significant at the 0.05 level, two-tailed test. Reported impacts are from regressions of the relevant outcome variable on a treatment indicator and other covariates and adjusting for students' baseline test scores in reading and mathematics and students' demographic characteristics. All regressions use robust standard errors and the student is the unit of assignment and unit of analysis. Data shown in this table include imputed values for baseline variables but not for outcome variables. Blank cells are cases where impacts are set to missing for schools with fewer than 20 students in the model for that student group.

¹ English Learners (EL)

² Special Education (SPED)

³ State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

Table F.11. Results of Impact Analysis of At-Risk and Low-Performing Student Groups at Charter School Start-up Grantee Campuses, 2018–19

| School Name | Number of at-risk students | Mathematics impact, at-risk students | Reading impact, at-risk students | Number of low-performing students | Mathematics impact, low-performing students | Reading impact, low-performing students |
|--|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| <i>Elementary school results, STAAR¹ test outcomes</i> | | | | | | |
| CAMPUS A | 176 | 0.10 | 0.14 | 210 | 0.13 | 0.17 |
| CAMPUS B | 450 | 0.26* | 0.24* | 434 | 0.25* | 0.20 |
| CAMPUS C | 252 | -0.09 | 0.06 | 350 | -0.07 | -0.02 |
| CAMPUS D | 167 | -0.18 | -0.15 | 175 | -0.23 | -0.11 |
| CAMPUS E | 88 | 0.08 | -0.17 | 70 | -0.03 | -0.23 |
| CAMPUS F | 264 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 278 | 0.09 | 0.13 |
| CAMPUS G | 29 | -0.17 | -0.07 | 27 | -0.18 | -0.02 |
| CAMPUS H | 92 | -0.09 | -0.04 | 79 | -0.12 | 0.00 |
| CAMPUS I | 241 | -0.11 | -0.08 | 264 | -0.09 | -0.10 |
| CAMPUS J | 86 | -0.33* | 0.04 | 84 | -0.31* | 0.00 |
| CAMPUS Y | 23 | -0.16 | -0.05 | 20 | -0.15 | 0.06 |
| CAMPUS Z | 44 | -0.32* | -0.20 | 46 | -0.40* | -0.27* |
| <i>Middle school results, STAAR test outcomes</i> | | | | | | |
| CAMPUS K | 480 | 0.41* | 0.21* | 320 | 0.33* | 0.16 |
| CAMPUS L | 442 | 0.17 | 0.28* | 304 | 0.18 | 0.24* |
| CAMPUS M | 123 | -0.16 | 0.11 | 127 | -0.13 | 0.10 |
| CAMPUS N | 184 | -0.26* | -0.10 | 201 | -0.26* | -0.11 |
| CAMPUS O | 114 | -0.26* | -0.18 | 109 | -0.27* | -0.19 |
| CAMPUS P | 169 | 0.18 | 0.15 | 176 | 0.26* | 0.19 |
| CAMPUS Q | 240 | 0.13 | 0.19 | 208 | 0.18 | 0.23* |
| CAMPUS R | 272 | 0.04 | 0.02 | 313 | 0.08 | 0.02 |
| CAMPUS S | 598 | -0.27 | -0.14 | 579 | -0.25* | -0.09 |
| CAMPUS AA | 57 | 0.02 | 0.06 | 41 | -0.01 | 0.05 |
| CAMPUS AB | 114 | -0.25* | -0.04 | 153 | -0.19 | -0.05 |
| CAMPUS AC | 90 | -0.26* | -0.21* | 93 | -0.27* | -0.22* |

Notes. * indicates statistically significant where $p < 0.05$. Test scores are standardized with a statewide mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. They are presented in z-score units. Baseline and outcome tests are from statewide assessments collected by TEA. No baseline differences are significant at the 0.05 level, two-tailed test. Reported impacts are from regressions of the relevant outcome variable on a treatment indicator and other covariates and adjusting for students' baseline test scores in reading and mathematics and students' demographic characteristics. All regressions use robust standard errors and the student is the unit of assignment and unit of analysis. Data shown in this table include imputed values for baseline variables but not for outcome variables. *Blank cells are cases where* impacts are set to missing for schools with fewer than 20 students in the model for that student group.

¹ State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

Table F.12. Results of Impact Analysis of African American and Hispanic Student Groups at Charter School Start-up Grantee Campuses, 2018–19

| School Name | Number of African American students | Mathematics impact, African American students | Reading impact, African American students | Number of Hispanic students | Mathematics impact, Hispanic students | Reading impact, Hispanic students |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|---|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Elementary school results, STAAR¹ test outcomes</i> | | | | | | |
| CAMPUS A | 201 | 0.12 | 0.20 | 120 | -0.06 | 0.07 |
| CAMPUS B | 15 | -- | -- | 760 | 0.21* | 0.20 |
| CAMPUS C | 206 | 0.00 | 0.06 | 293 | -0.06 | 0.01 |
| CAMPUS D | 27 | -0.38* | -0.09 | 91 | -0.21* | -0.14 |
| CAMPUS E | 34 | 0.10 | -0.24* | 25 | 0.26* | 0.20 |
| CAMPUS F | 182 | 0.13 | 0.16 | 124 | 0.09 | 0.12 |
| CAMPUS G | 8 | -- | -- | 19 | -- | -- |
| CAMPUS H | 0 | -- | -- | 98 | -0.08 | -0.03 |
| CAMPUS I | 104 | -0.01 | 0.04 | 222 | -0.10 | -0.06 |
| CAMPUS J | 4 | -- | -- | 141 | -0.44* | 0.01 |
| CAMPUS Y | 3 | -- | -- | 33 | -0.11 | 0.09 |
| CAMPUS Z | 10 | -- | -- | 40 | -0.34* | -0.36* |
| <i>Middle school results, STAAR test outcomes</i> | | | | | | |
| CAMPUS K | 357 | 0.46* | 0.22* | 214 | 0.32* | 0.13 |
| CAMPUS L | 79 | 0.07 | 0.22* | 384 | 0.14 | 0.29* |
| CAMPUS M | 69 | -0.19 | 0.08 | 100 | -0.26* | 0.06 |
| CAMPUS N | 201 | -0.26* | -0.14 | 52 | -0.23* | 0.11 |
| CAMPUS O | 2 | -- | -- | 32 | -0.56* | -0.38* |
| CAMPUS P | 12 | -- | -- | 239 | 0.22* | 0.21* |
| CAMPUS Q | 0 | -- | -- | 422 | 0.16 | 0.18 |
| CAMPUS R | 29 | 0.10 | 0.00 | 331 | -0.01 | 0.01 |
| CAMPUS S | 348 | -0.20 | -0.13 | 277 | -0.19 | -0.02 |
| CAMPUS AA | 17 | -- | -- | 45 | -0.05 | 0.00 |
| CAMPUS AB | 104 | -0.28* | -0.02 | 66 | -0.28* | -0.03 |
| CAMPUS AC | 112 | -0.30* | -0.26* | 3 | -- | -- |

Notes: * indicates statistically significant where $p < 0.05$. Test scores are standardized with a statewide mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. They are presented in z-score units. Baseline and outcome tests are from statewide assessments collected by TEA. No baseline differences are significant at the 0.05 level, two-tailed test. Reported impacts are from regressions of the relevant outcome variable on a treatment indicator and other covariates and adjusting for students' baseline test scores in reading and mathematics and students' demographic characteristics. All regressions use robust standard errors and the student is the unit of assignment and unit of analysis. Data shown in this table include imputed values for baseline variables but not for outcome variables. *Blank cells are cases where impacts are set to missing for schools with fewer than 20 students in the model for that student group.*

¹ State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

Table F.13. Results of Impact Analysis of Female and Economically Disadvantaged Student Groups at Charter School Start-up Grantee Campuses, 2018–19

| School Name | Number of female students | Mathematics impact, female | Reading impact, female | Number of economically disadvantaged students | Mathematics impact, economically disadvantaged students | Reading impact, economically disadvantaged students |
|--|---------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|---|---|---|
| <i>Elementary school results, STAAR¹ test outcomes</i> | | | | | | |
| CAMPUS A | 182 | 0.14 | 0.16 | 287 | 0.11 | 0.17 |
| CAMPUS B | 363 | 0.27* | 0.18 | 614 | 0.23* | 0.19 |
| CAMPUS C | 322 | 0.01 | 0.03 | 421 | -0.02 | 0.04 |
| CAMPUS D | 249 | -0.21* | -0.08 | 68 | -0.08 | -0.06 |
| CAMPUS E | 87 | 0.17 | -0.08 | 46 | -0.05 | -0.19 |
| CAMPUS F | 168 | 0.00 | 0.13 | 338 | 0.07 | 0.08 |
| CAMPUS G | 20 | -0.28* | -0.19 | 28 | -0.18 | -0.17 |
| CAMPUS H | 38 | 0.06 | -0.02 | 100 | -0.10 | -0.05 |
| CAMPUS I | 248 | -0.12 | -0.11 | 320 | -0.08 | -0.05 |
| CAMPUS J | 80 | -0.43* | -0.02 | 91 | -0.47* | -0.15 |
| CAMPUS Y | 13 | | | 36 | -0.16 | 0.07 |
| CAMPUS Z | 45 | -0.33* | -0.24* | 41 | -0.42* | -0.26* |
| <i>Middle school results, STAAR test outcomes</i> | | | | | | |
| CAMPUS K | 535 | 0.36* | 0.08 | 500 | 0.38* | 0.16 |
| CAMPUS L | 275 | 0.09 | 0.30* | 441 | 0.12 | 0.26* |
| CAMPUS M | 92 | -0.18 | 0.05 | 117 | -0.19 | 0.14 |
| CAMPUS N | 130 | -0.23* | -0.04 | 204 | -0.24* | -0.07 |
| CAMPUS O | 81 | -0.28* | -0.21* | 106 | -0.21* | -0.14 |
| CAMPUS P | 125 | 0.24* | 0.25* | 223 | 0.21* | 0.17 |
| CAMPUS Q | 197 | 0.12 | 0.16 | 392 | 0.15 | 0.17 |
| CAMPUS R | 275 | 0.00 | -0.01 | 369 | -0.03 | -0.04 |
| CAMPUS S | 472 | -0.20 | -0.10 | 759 | -0.22* | -0.07 |
| CAMPUS AA | 30 | -0.03 | -0.02 | 56 | -0.02 | 0.03 |
| CAMPUS AB | 79 | -0.36* | -0.03 | 154 | -0.32* | -0.02 |
| CAMPUS AC | 73 | -0.36* | -0.31* | 106 | -0.34* | -0.29* |

Notes. * indicates statistically significant where $p < 0.05$. Test scores are standardized with a statewide mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. They are presented in z-score units. Baseline and outcome tests are from statewide assessments collected by TEA. No baseline differences are significant at the 0.05 level, two-tailed test. Reported impacts are from regressions of the relevant outcome variable on a treatment indicator and other covariates and adjusting for students' baseline test scores in reading and mathematics and students' demographic characteristics. All regressions use robust standard errors and the student is the unit of assignment and unit of analysis. Data shown in this table include imputed values for baseline variables but not for outcome variables. Blank cells are cases where impacts are set to missing for schools with fewer than 20 students in the model for that student group.

¹ State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

Table F.14. Results of Impact Analysis of EL¹ and SPED² Student Groups at Charter School Start-up Grantee Campuses, 2018–19

| School Name | Number of EL | Mathematics impact, EL | Reading impact, EL | Number of SPED students | Mathematics impact, SPED students | Reading impact, SPED students |
|--|--------------|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Elementary school results, STAAR³ test outcomes</i> | | | | | | |
| CAMPUS A | 136 | 0.18 | 0.12 | 22 | 0.13 | 0.28* |
| CAMPUS B | 277 | 0.19 | 0.08 | 69 | 0.12 | 0.13 |
| CAMPUS C | 126 | -0.15 | 0.07 | 33 | -0.16 | -0.06 |
| CAMPUS D | 12 | -- | -- | 57 | -0.30* | -0.18 |
| CAMPUS E | 35 | -0.08 | -0.23* | 17 | -- | -- |
| CAMPUS F | 73 | 0.15 | 0.12 | 32 | 0.09 | -0.10 |
| CAMPUS G | 3 | -- | -- | 3 | -- | -- |
| CAMPUS H | 25 | -0.15 | 0.03 | 6 | -- | -- |
| CAMPUS I | 162 | -0.21* | -0.12 | 21 | -0.31* | 0.08 |
| CAMPUS J | 20 | -0.57* | -0.12 | 14 | -- | -- |
| CAMPUS Y | 3 | -- | -- | 1 | -- | -- |
| CAMPUS Z | 13 | -- | -- | 7 | -- | -- |
| <i>Middle school results, STAAR test outcomes</i> | | | | | | |
| CAMPUS K | 162 | 0.29* | 0.12 | 55 | 0.22* | 0.06 |
| CAMPUS L | 253 | 0.12 | 0.27* | 47 | 0.27* | 0.18 |
| CAMPUS M | 34 | -0.19 | -0.01 | 38 | -0.15 | 0.13 |
| CAMPUS N | 18 | -- | -- | 34 | -0.20 | -0.12 |
| CAMPUS O | 3 | -- | -- | 31 | -0.13 | -0.08 |
| CAMPUS P | 24 | 0.25* | 0.25 | 29 | 0.10 | 0.13 |
| CAMPUS Q | 127 | 0.09 | 0.14 | 26 | 0.21* | 0.03 |
| CAMPUS R | 115 | 0.01 | 0.06 | 45 | 0.10 | 0.03 |
| CAMPUS S | 120 | -0.4*0 | -0.15 | 75 | -0.14 | -0.04 |
| CAMPUS AA | 39 | -0.03 | 0.02 | 3 | -- | -- |
| CAMPUS AB | 10 | -- | -- | 10 | -- | -- |
| CAMPUS AC | 0 | -- | -- | 10 | -- | -- |

Notes. * indicates statistically significant where $p < 0.05$. Test scores are standardized with a statewide mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. They are presented in z-score units. Baseline and outcome tests are from statewide assessments collected by TEA. No baseline differences are significant at the 0.05 level, two-tailed test. Reported impacts are from regressions of the relevant outcome variable on a treatment indicator and other covariates and adjusting for students' baseline test scores in reading and mathematics and students' demographic characteristics. All regressions use robust standard errors and the student is the unit of assignment and unit of analysis. Data shown in this table include imputed values for baseline variables but not for outcome variables. Blank cells are cases where impacts are set to missing for schools with fewer than 20 students in the model for that student group.

¹ English Learners (EL)

² Special Education (SPED)

³ State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)