



Digging into the Data on Colorado Charter Schools

An in-depth look at
graduation rates for
students of color





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**We believe sound fiscal and economic research
is essential to uphold Colorado's economy,
vitality, future, and individual opportunity.**



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Agenda

- Charter Schools in Colorado
- Review of the Research
- Graduation Rates Analysis
- Postsecondary Access and Success
- Charter Network Spotlight
- Questions

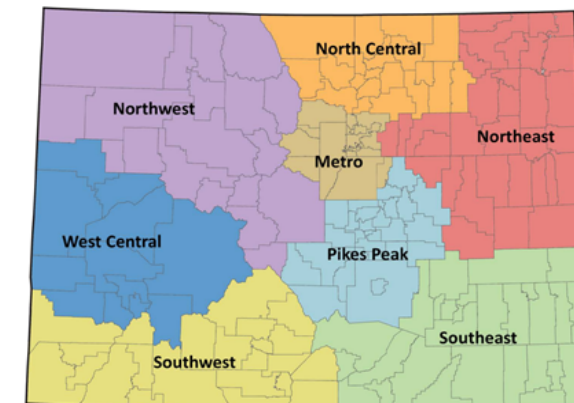
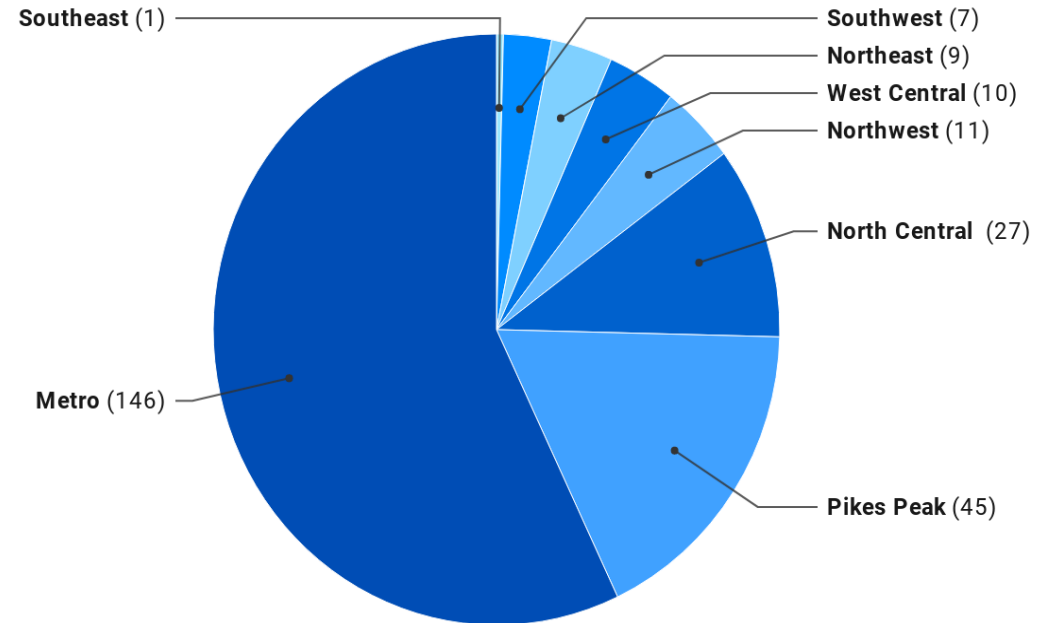
Charter Schools in Colorado

Charter Schools in Colorado

Charter schools are tuition-free, public schools that have the flexibility to be more innovative and are held accountable for student achievement

- Charter schools operate under a charter, or contract, between the school and its authorizer
- Charter schools operate in all regions of Colorado serving students in grades PreK through 12

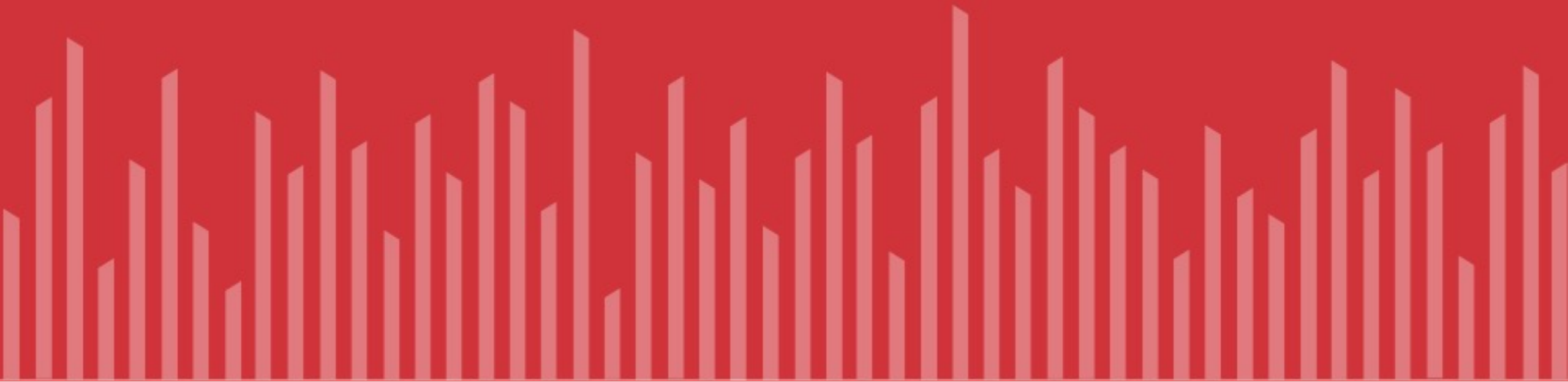
Number of Charter Schools by Region, 2018-19



Source: Colorado Department of Education

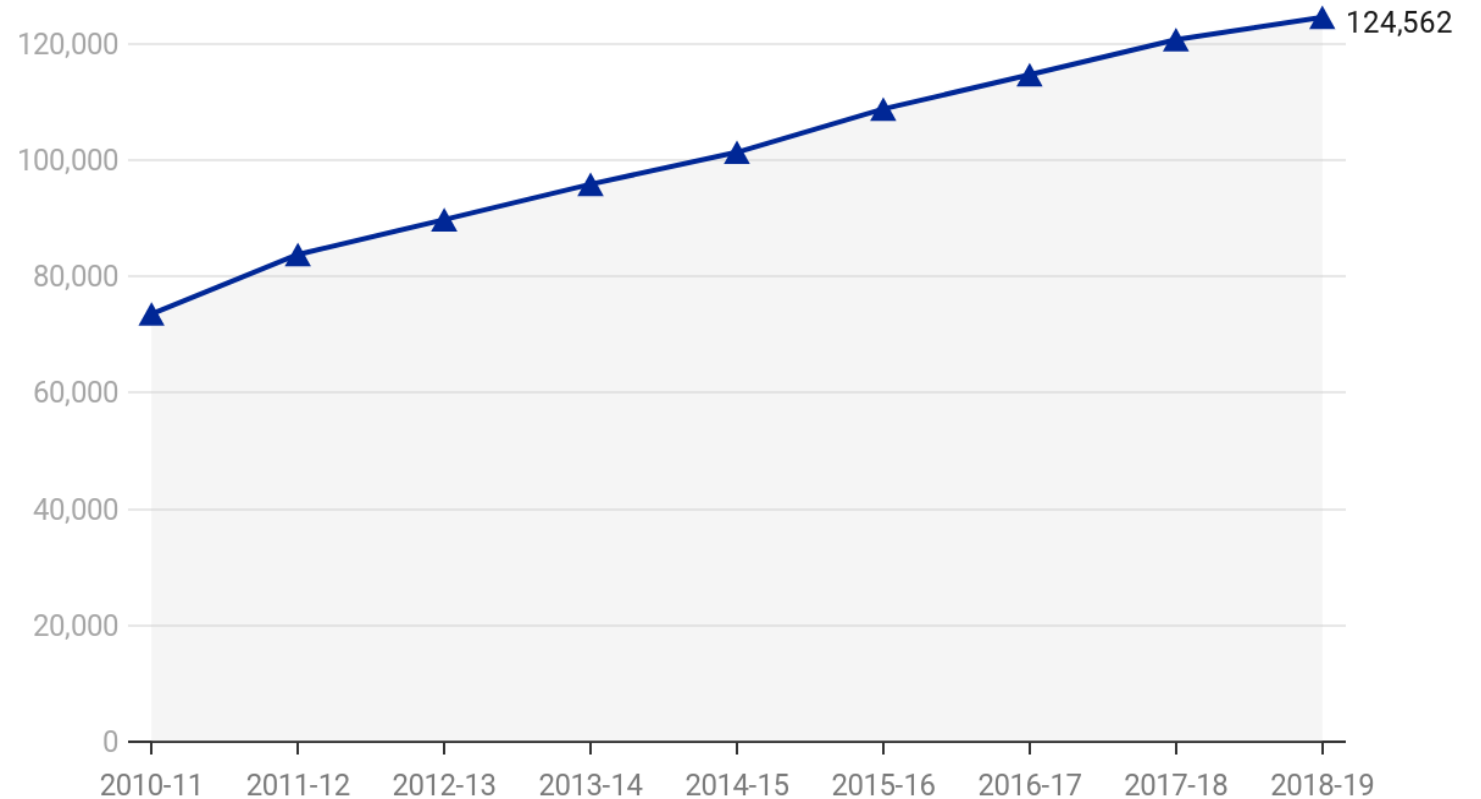
“In authorizing charter schools, it is the intent of the general assembly to create a legitimate avenue for parents, teachers, and community members to... take responsible risks and create new and innovative, research-based ways of educating all children within the public education system.”

**- 1993 Charter Schools Act
(CRS 22-30.5-102)**



Charter School Enrollment Trends

- Enrollment in Colorado charter schools has increased year over year from 2010-11 to 2018-19
- For the last three years, enrollment in district-run schools has decreased while charter school enrollment has continued to increase



Charter School Enrollment Over Time

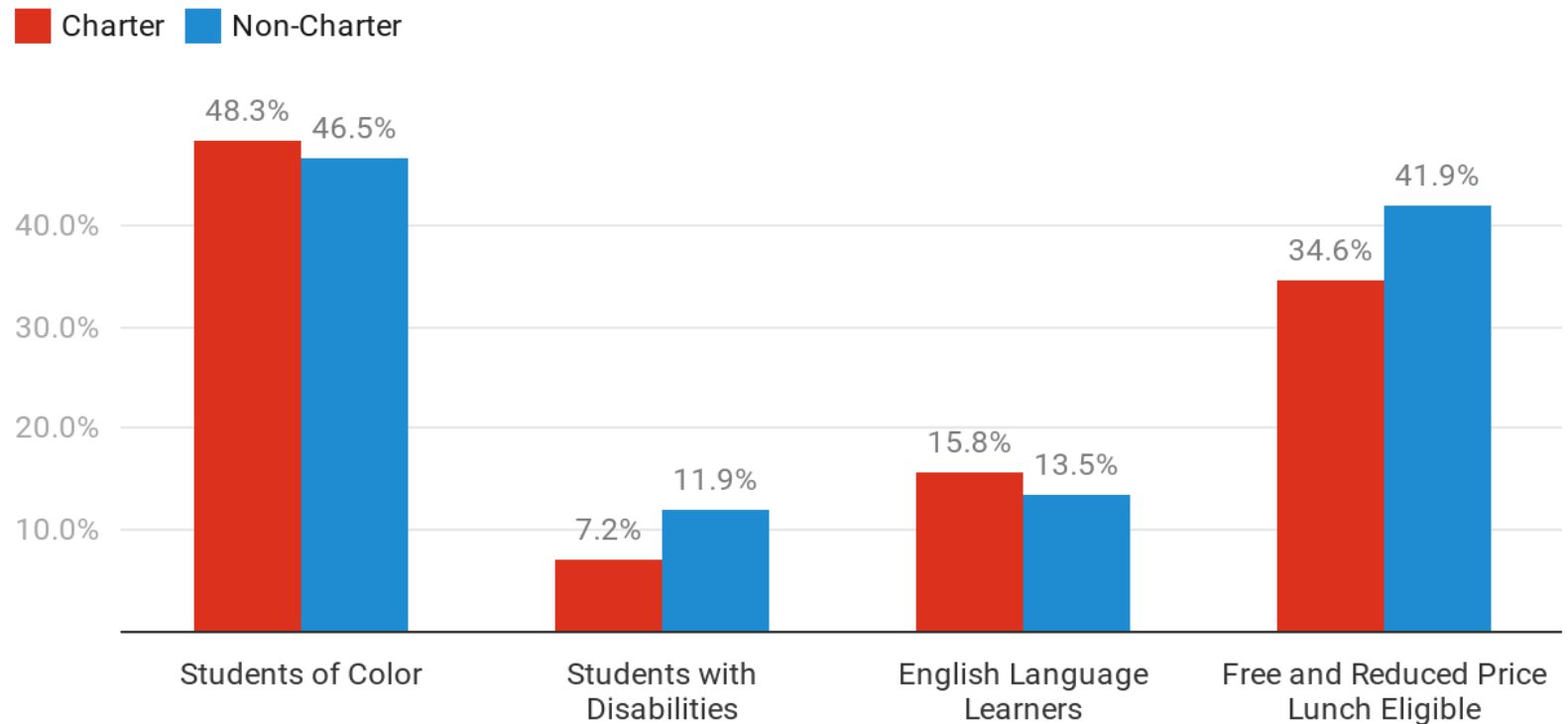
Source: Colorado Department of Education

Characteristics of Students at Charter Schools

Colorado charter schools serve:

↑ Higher percentage of students of color and English language learners

↓ Lower percentage of students with disabilities and students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch



Enrollment by Student Characteristics, 2018-19

Source: Colorado Department of Education

Review of the Research

Research on Student Outcomes at Charter Schools

Research has produced mixed findings but generally indicates that charter schools see greater success in many urban areas, particularly for students of color

- **National:** Study of 41 urban areas found academic growth experienced by low-income Black students in charter schools equaled 59 days of additional learning in math and 44 days of additional learning in reading as compared to their peers in non-charter schools (CREDO, 2015)
- **Denver:** Black students attending charter schools in Denver saw stronger growth in reading than their peers in district-run schools (CREDO, 2019)
- **Boston:** Charter schools close the achievement gap entirely between white and Black students in reading and math at the high school level and at the middle school level for math (Abdulkadiroglu, et al., 2011)
- **NYC:** Harlem charter schools in New York City have closed the Black-white achievement gap at the elementary level in reading and math and at the middle school level for math (Dobbie and Fryer, 2011)

Research on the Effect of Charter Schools on District-Run Schools

Cream Skimming

- Multiple research studies have found no evidence to support claims that charter schools cream the best students from district-run schools when analyzing test score data
- Similarly, researchers have found little evidence to support claims that charter schools push out low-performing students

(Zimmerman, Buddin, Smith & Duffy, 2019)

Research on the Effect of Charter Schools on District-Run Schools (Cont.)

Academic impacts

- In a dozen studies, researchers have found no significant impact of charter schools on the performance of district-run schools or they have found small positive effects
- In large urban districts, higher levels of charter school enrollment of Black and Hispanic students result in higher levels of academic performance for all Black and Hispanic students -- including those in non-charter schools (Griffith, 2019)

Financial impacts

- Charter school students draw funding away from district-run schools when they transfer over
- Impacts will vary based on the local context and the levels of charter enrollment

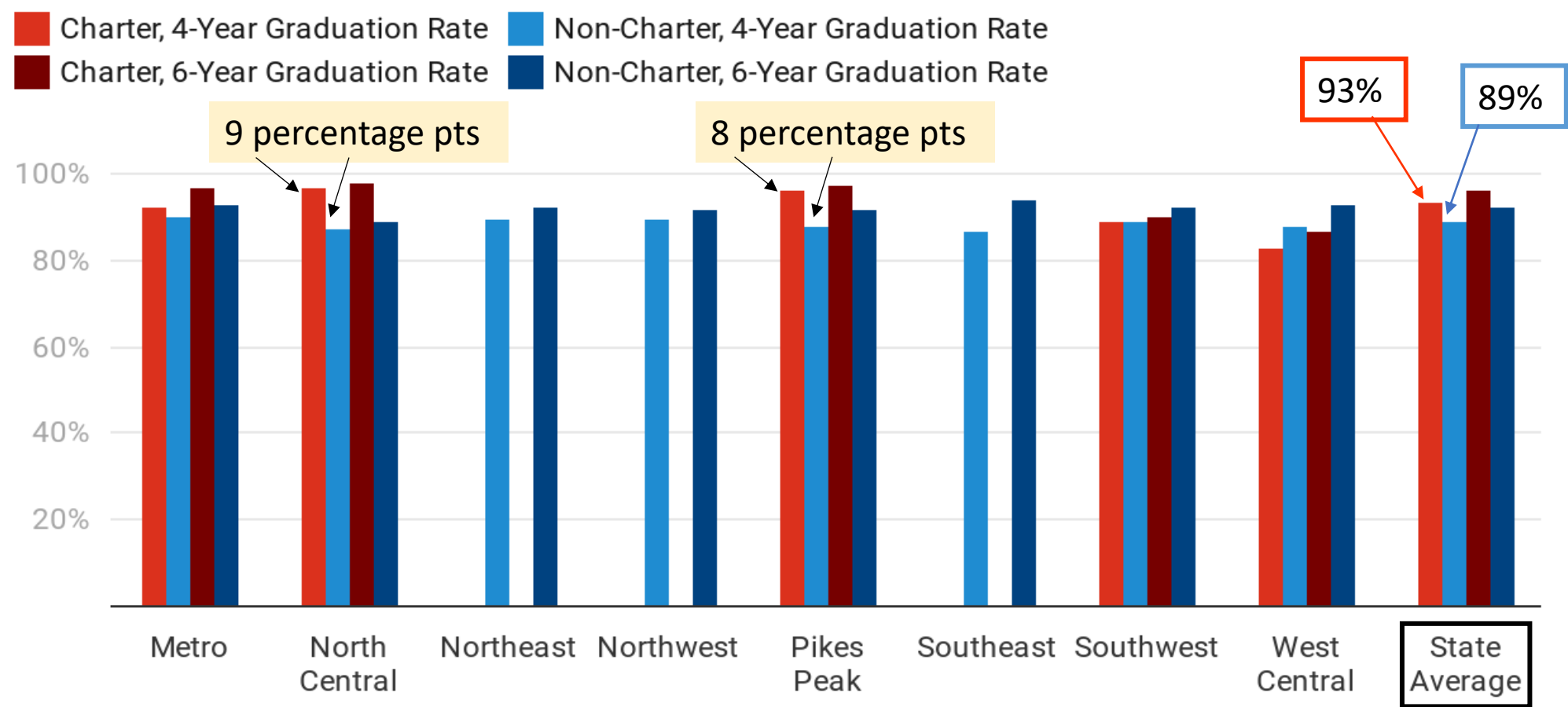
“It appears that charter schools need not represent a zero-sum game. Instead, most of the research implies that charter schools do no harm to students in district schools and may even promote improved outcomes for all students.”

- Brian Gill, Senior Fellow,
Mathematica, 2016



Graduation Rates at Colorado Charter Schools

Charter and Non-Charter School Graduation Rates by Region, 2019



Source: Analysis of data obtained from the Colorado Department of Education.

■ Charter ■ Non-Charter

Black or African American Students



Hispanic or Latino Students



White Students



Other Race/Ethnicity



Graduation Rates by Race and Ethnicity, 2019

Source: Analysis of data obtained from the Colorado Department of Education.

Colorado Graduation Rates for Students of Color

- Black and Hispanic students graduate at higher rates at charter schools than district-run schools
- Considering the 6-year graduation rate, Black students at charter schools graduate at a higher rate (95%) than white students at non-charter schools (93%)

Colorado Graduation Rates for Students of Color

Comparing charter schools that serve high proportions of students of color with non-charter schools that have similarly diverse populations, charter schools see higher graduation rates for their students of color.

Graduation Rates for Students of Color at Charter and Non-Charter Schools with over 70% Students of Color, 2019



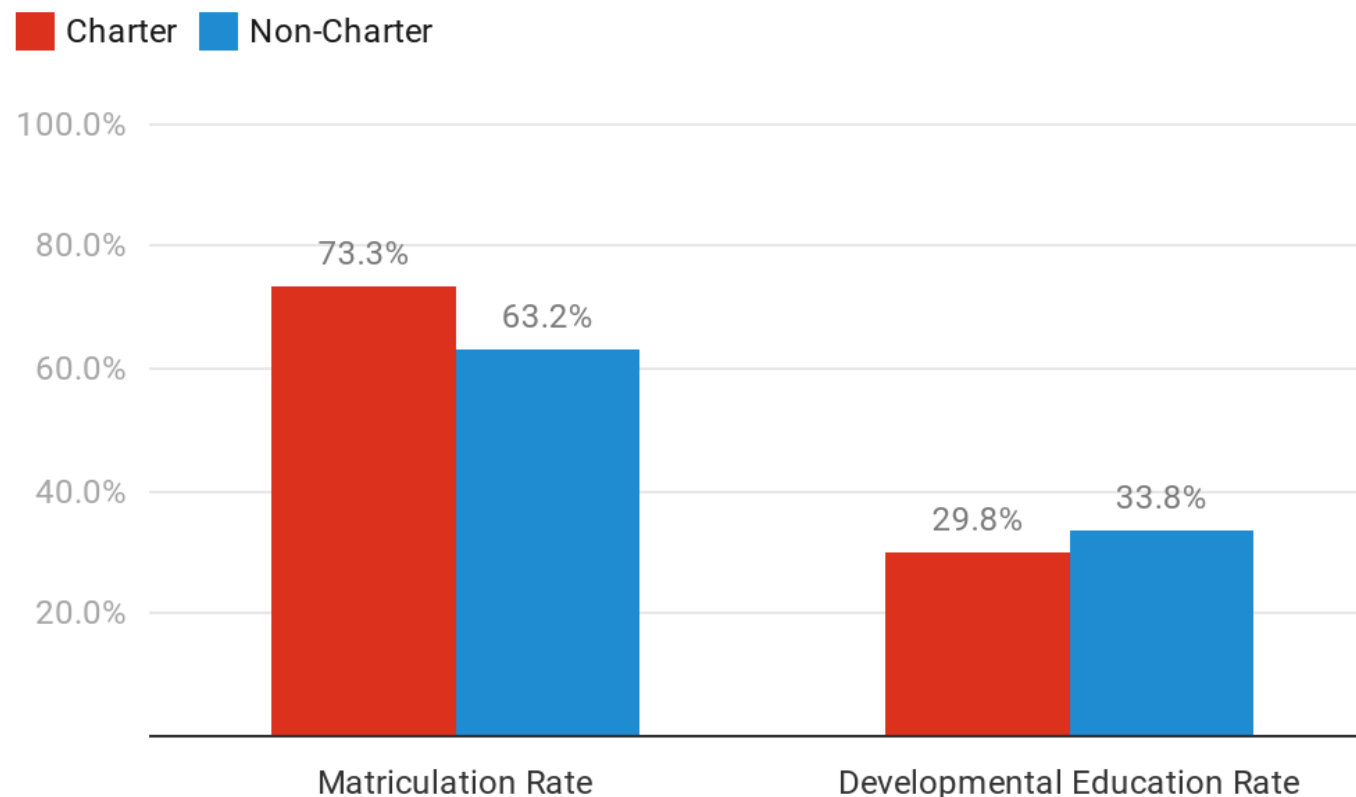
Source: Analysis of data obtained from the Colorado Department of Education.

Postsecondary Access & Readiness

Colorado charter schools:

↑ Higher percentage of students matriculating to college (by 10 percentage points)

↓ Lower percentage of students needing remedial or developmental education (by 4 percentage points)



Charter and Non-Charter School Postsecondary Matriculation and Readiness

Source: Matriculation rates data are from the Colorado Department of Education for the high school graduating class of 2018. Developmental education rates data are from the Colorado Department of Higher Education for the graduating class of 2017.

Spotlight: DSST Public Schools

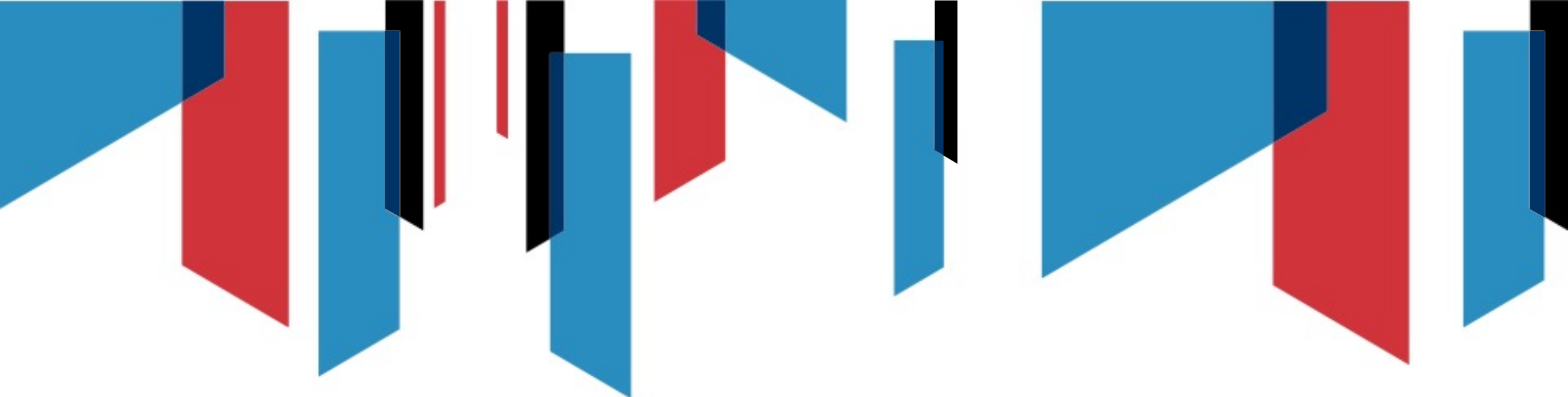
Charter network, DSST Public Schools, compared with traditional, brick and mortar high schools in Denver Public Schools:

- ↑ Higher percentage of students of color (85% at DSST vs. 75% for DPS)
- ↔ Similar 4-year graduation rates (86% DSST vs. 87% DPS)
- ↑ Significantly higher percentage matriculating to college (83% DSST vs. 64% DPS)
- ↓ Significantly lower percentage of students needing remedial or developmental education (19% DSST vs. 44% DPS)

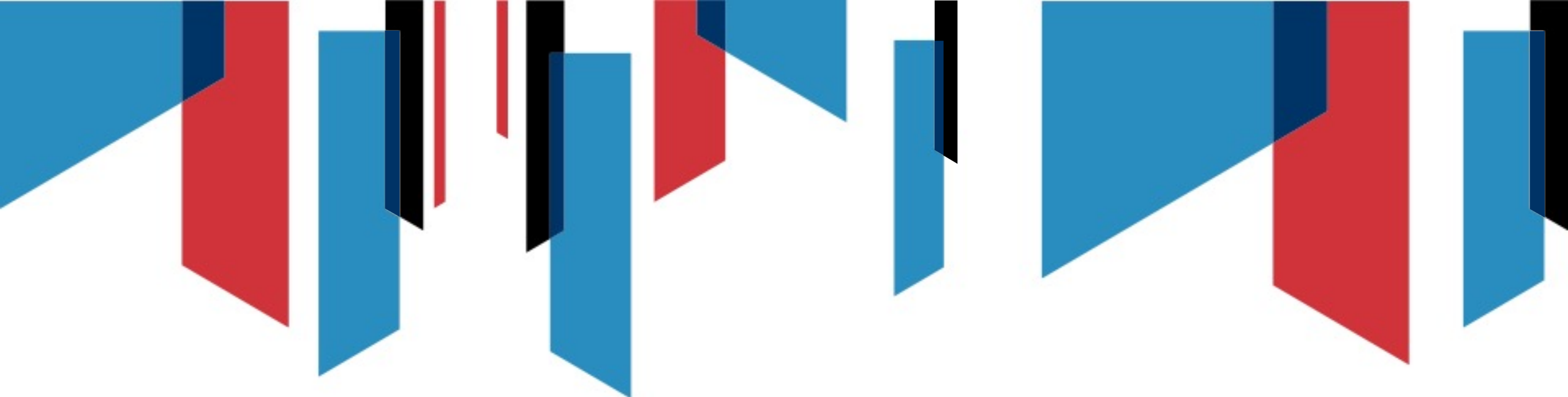
Mission Statement

DSST Public Schools transform urban public education by eliminating educational inequity and preparing all students for success in college and the 21st century.

Source: Analysis of data obtained from the Colorado Department of Education.



Thank You



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