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NEWS

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**CAL STATE L.A. STUDY REVEALS
CALIFORNIA'S LOW-INCOME STUDENTS ARE SHOWING
GREATER IMPROVEMENT IN CHARTER SCHOOLS**

*Study Analyzes Student Achievement in Public Schools Serving
Low Socio-Economic Status (Low-SES) Students*

Los Angeles, CA - March 11, 2002 -- A **California State University, Los Angeles** study reveals that **low-income, at-risk students are showing greater improvements in California's charter schools than in their non-charter counterparts.**

The study, by Cal State L.A. education faculty members—professor Simeon P. Slovacek, and associate professor Antony J. Kunnan—and doctoral student Hae-Jin Kim, analyzes three years of California's Academic Performance Index (API) data (1999, 2000, and 2001) for charter and non-charter schools, along with various charter school characteristics.

“Because socioeconomic status (SES) has a strong correlation with student performance on standardized tests,” says Slovacek, the faculty made comparisons “focusing on charter and non-charter schools serving free or reduced lunch-eligible students--that is, low-SES students.”

In general, the study shows that student achievement in California's low-income charter schools is improving at a faster rate than in similar non-charter schools. This trend is even more pronounced for schools that serve higher percentages of low-SES students.

Along with the student achievement gains, the study shows that charter schools are serving a greater concentration of low-income students than non-charter schools.

Drs. Slovacek and Kunnan will be available to discuss the study this Monday March 11—the day the study is released.

Study findings were as follows:

1. California charter schools are doing a better job of improving the academic performance, as measured by API, of California's most at-risk students--those who are low-income--than non-charter California public schools.
2. Student achievement, as measured by API, in California's low-income charter schools is, on average, improving at a faster rate than in similar non-charter schools.
 - a) When 2001 API scores were compared with 1999 API scores for California schools that reported serving 50% or more free or reduced lunch-eligible students, the charter schools' (N=41) API means improved more (22.6%) than the non-charter schools' (N=3136) API means, which improved 19.4%.
 - b) The difference was more pronounced for the very high poverty schools that reported serving 75% or more free or reduced lunch-eligible students. Charter schools' scores improved 28.1% (N=25) while non-charter scores improved 23.8% (N=1549). It appears that charter schools are doing an effective job of improving the academic performance of low-income students.
3. Charter schools are serving a greater concentration of low-income students.
 - a) In 2001, the percentage of charter schools reporting both three years of API scores and meals, who served students where 75% or more are low-SES students, is estimated at 27.2% vs. 23.04% for non-charter schools in California.
4. Smaller schools tend to outperform larger schools in terms of student achievement growth. In other words, size matters.
 - a) Charter schools lost approximately 4.5 API points for every increase of 100 students in school enrollment size.
 - b) Non-charter schools lost an average of 5.8 API points for each additional 100 students.
5. Socioeconomic status continues to influence student performance on standardized tests.
 - a) Each percentage point of the student body that was considered low-SES (free or reduced lunch) resulted in a 1.2 point decline in charter schools' API scores.
 - b) Each percentage point of the student body that was considered low-SES (free or reduced lunch) resulted in a 2.6 point decline in non-charter schools' API scores.
6. Factors also influencing API performance included percentage of teachers on emergency credentials, high mobility rates, and high percentages of English language learners.
7. Charter schools are overcoming the well-documented challenges faced by start-up schools, including the lack of facilities funding (estimated to be over \$1,000 per student). Historically, non-charter schools receive significant facilities funds and support.

About the Study:

This report presents the findings of an analysis of the Academic Performance Index scores (API) based on the Stanford Achievement Tests (SAT 9) taken in spring 1999, 2000, and 2001. It focuses on charter schools in the state of California who serve students from low-socioeconomic status (SES) families. The research was conducted by Simeon P. Slovacek and Antony J. Kunnan, faculty members in the Charter College of Education at California State University, Los Angeles. Both are evaluators with PERC – the Program Evaluation and Research Collaborative.

About the Authors:

Simeon P. Slovacek, Ph.D., is a professor in the Charter College of Education, California State University, Los Angeles. He earned his masters and doctorate from Cornell University in the fields of educational research and evaluation methodology. He also serves as principal evaluator in the Program Evaluation and Research Collaborative. His research and publication interests are in the areas of school reform as well as educational assessment, research and evaluation methodology. He has been instrumental in restructuring K-12 schools through the Accelerated Schools project, the Los Angeles Annenberg Metropolitan Project (LAAMP), and other education reform efforts. Professor Slovacek is on the California list of approved evaluators for the State’s Immediate Interventions for Under-performing Schools program.

Antony J. Kunnan, Ph.D., is associate professor of education at California State University, Los Angeles. He earned his Ph.D. from UCLA in applied linguistics and his M.A. and B.A. from Bangalore University, India. Professor Kunnan has wide-ranging experience in dealing with training and testing programs. He has received funding and managed projects that have been funded by local, state, national and international agencies. As a world-renowned expert in English language testing, he serves as a consultant to the Educational Testing Service in Princeton, NJ, and to the University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate. He is currently the U.S. consultant who is conducting Pre-Service (Level 3) evaluation of all IELP-II programs at Egyptian Universities.

Hae-Jin Kim, M.A., is an Ed.D. candidate in the field of Second Language Assessment at Teachers College, Columbia University. She received her B.A. in Linguistics from UCLA and M.A. in applied linguistics from Teachers College, Columbia University. She is currently engaged in an internship on program evaluation and language assessment under the direction of Professor Slovacek and Professor Kunnan at Cal State University, Los Angeles.

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