

A LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF SCHOOL PRACTICES AND STUDENTS'  
CHARACTERISTICS THAT INFLUENCE STUDENTS' MATHEMATICS AND  
READING PERFORMANCE OF ARIZONA CHARTER MIDDLE SCHOOLS (245  
pp.)

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In 1995, Arizona legislators passed laws specifically to implement charter schools in Arizona. Approving 15 year charters (i.e., contracts), allowing charter schools to cross school district boundaries, and requiring the charter schools to administer the state assessment are three of the many charter school statutes written into law. In 2010, those initial charters are expiring. The variation in school practices that occur between charter schools is great as reported by researchers nationwide. This difference does not stop at the borders of Arizona; some Arizona charter schools are labeled as excelling in performance while others are labeled as underperforming. There is limited research of Arizona charter schools and the variance that exists among them.

There were two purposes for this dissertation. The first purpose was to analyze the influence of school practices and student characteristics on charter middle school students' mathematics and reading performance at grade 8. The second purpose was to assess those influences over time (i.e., 2007-2009). The assessment used was Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) which remained stable during this span of time.

Multiple imputations were performed for missing data. Hierarchical linear cross-classified random effects modeling (HLM/CCREM) was used to assess the data

while taking student mobility into consideration. The results showed that the effect of teacher experience influenced lower achieving students, that teachers teaching out of their area of expertise had a negative effect on mathematics and reading achievement of students, and attending a charter school that was converted from a traditional public school has an advantage in Arizona. An indicator of whether a student was attending a charter school in 2006 (prior to the time period of this study) was added to the model and showed that students scored higher in mathematics and reading if they also attend a charter school in 2006. All factors assessed in this study were accounted for even if they didn't remain in the model due to fit statistics. These results will contribute to the field of education by providing empirical evidence of the effects of charter school practices on student achievement.