



# I Don't Think the Data Say What You Think They Say

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1994	113	500	50,000	PD	4	4	0	N	N	N	G	WC	Y	Y
1996	83	147	50,000	S	7	7	0	N	N	N	G	G	N	Y
1999	53			R	5	5	1	N					Y	
1999	53	100		M	2	2	0	N					Y	
2000	9			M	2	2	0	N					N	
2001	43		120,000	S	7	7	0	N		N			Y	Y
2001	127			S	7	7	0	N	N	N			Y	Y
2001	11	247		P	3	3	0	N	N	Y	G	C	N	Y
2003	21	50	1,500	M	2	2	0	Y	Y	N	A	A	Y	Y
2003	100	230	462	F	1	1	0	Y	N	N	A	A	Y	Y
2005	291		300,000	F	1	1	1	N	Y	N	G	WC	N	
2005	953		1,000,000	R	5	5	1	N	N	Y	G	G	Y	Y
2006	345	289	2,130,594	R	5	5	1	N	N	N	A	A	N	
2006	73	400	30,000	S	7	7	0	N	N	N			Y	Y
2008	162	47	3,000	R	5	5	1	N		N	G	G	Y	Y
2008	224	425	25,000	R	5	5	1	N		N	M	A	Y	Y
2009	19	135	36,000	S	7	7	0	N	N	N			Y	Y
2010	21	500	250,000	M	2	2	0	N	Y	N	G	G	N	Y
2010	347	755	4,000,000	P	3	3	1	N		Y	G	G	N	Y
2011	102	100		R	5	5	1	N	N	N				Y
2013	60	200	50,000	P	3	3	0	N	Y	N	G	WC		
2013	242	168	1,500	F	1	1	0	Y	N	N	A	A	Y	Y
2013	36	39		R	5	5	1	Y	N	Y	G	G		Y
2013	115	110	500,000	R	5	5	1	N	N	Y	G	WC		Y
2014	32	26		R	5	5	1	N	N	N	G	WC		N

By: James V. Shuls

Much to the consternation of public education officials, the State Board of Education voted to remove the commissioner of education, Margie Vandeven, from her position last Friday. The vote came after a failed attempt to remove the commissioner just a couple of weeks ago. The five members of the board who voted to oust Vandeven were all appointed by Gov. Eric Greitens. This post, however, is not about the maneuvering of the governor to assemble a board that would take this action. This post is about bad evidence.

When it became clear that the governor was attempting to remove Vandeven, public educators rallied to her cause. Some defended Vandeven as a competent and well-regarded public servant. Others, however, sought to attack charter schools. They presumed that the whole ordeal wasn't about Vandeven, but about putting someone in place who would work to expand school choice in Missouri. Several public school administrators tweeted the below graphic. One wrote, "More tax dollars could soon be siphoned to these ineffective schools if @GovGreitensMO gets his way."

The claim that this chart shows anything meaningful about charter school effectiveness would be amusing if it wasn't being vigorously advanced by numerous individuals who should know better. Take a look to see what I mean. The table shows a comparison of public school districts performance on the Annual Performance Review with individual charter schools. There are two *huge problems* with this. First, we are comparing whole school districts with individual schools. Second, it compares districts with schools that serve entirely different types of students. Charter schools in Missouri are only in Saint Louis and Kansas City. It is hardly fair to compare their

performance to the Rockwood or Nixa School Districts that serve much more affluent students.

## 2017 Public School vs. Charter School Performance in Missouri

Percent of APR Points Earned	Public School Districts	N=518	Percent of APR Points Earned	Charter School District	N=34
90-100%	326	62.9%	90-100%	6	17.7%
80-89.9%	159	30.7%	80-89.9%	6	17.7%
70-79.9%	26	5.0%	70-79.9%	6	17.7%
60-69.9%	7	1.4%	60-69.9%	8	23.5%
50-59.9%	0	0%	50-59.9%	5	14.7%
40-49.9%	0	0%	40-49.9%	2	5.9%
30-39.9%	0	0%	30-39.9%	1	2.9%

*Note: The public school district that educated Governor Greitens (Parkway C-2) received 98.6% of possible APR points in 2017.*

*Note: Four charter schools/districts didn't receive any APR score in 2017: Citizens of the World, Hawthorn Leadership School for Girls, La Salle Charter School, and The Biome.*

Source: <https://mcids.dese.mo.gov/quickfacts/State%20Accountability/Missouri%202017%20APR%20Summary%20By%20Districts.xls>

A better comparison would be to compare charter school performance to the performance of individual schools in Saint Louis and Kansas City. I've done that below. As expected, the comparison is much more favorable for charter schools. In total, 58% of Missouri charter schools scored above 70% on the APR. Meanwhile, just 45% of public schools in Saint Louis and Kansas City scored in that range. Interestingly, 13 of the 16 traditional public schools in the top category were magnet schools, as were 6 of the 11 in the next category. These are hardly traditional schools. Neither traditional schools nor charter schools are allowed to have admissions requirements, but magnets can. Some magnet schools require students to take admissions tests and score at a certain level before they can be admitted.

Percent of APR Points Earned	Traditional Public Schools	N = 103	Percent of APR Points Earned	Charter Public Schools	N = 56
90 – 100%	16*	16%	90 – 100%	11	20%
80 – 89.9%	11**	11%	80 – 89.9%	7	13%
70 – 79.9%	19	18%	70 – 79.9%	14	25%
60 – 69.9%	18	17%	60 – 69.9%	10	18%
50 – 59.9%	24	23%	50 – 59.9%	6	11%
40 – 49.9%	9	9%	40 – 49.9%	3	5%
< 39.9%	6	6%	< 39.9%	5	9%

Notes

*4 with no score*

*14 with no score*

\*13 of the 16 schools are magnet schools

\*\* 6 of the 11 are magnet schools

Given this more accurate context, charter schools appear to be outperforming their traditional public school counterparts. Yet, even this comparison tells us little about the effectiveness of the schools themselves. For that, we'd need a more sophisticated analysis. Fortunately for us, the

Center for Research on Educational Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford University conducted such a comparison. Using a matching design, in which they compare charter students to similar students in district schools, [they found](#) Missouri's charter schools outperformed the district schools in reading and math.

It is understandable for public school officials to defend Margie Vandeven or even for them to oppose charter schools. However, it is not acceptable for them to build their case on misleading data. Let's have a productive dialogue about public education and school choice in Missouri, and let's have that conversation by looking at what the evidence actually says.

## About the Author



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