

Study finds means to improve charter school quality

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Young students at Harriet Tubman Charter School in the Algiers neighborhood of New Orleans work on homework in class. (Photo from the Cowen Institute)

As the Orleans Parish School Board becomes solely responsible for opening, renewing, and closing charter schools in New Orleans, a recent study offers insight into how the OPSB can more efficiently make decisions about the future of the city's charter schools.

In a new report from the [Education Research Alliance for New Orleans](#), authors Whitney Bross and Douglas N. Harris find that the charter application review process can help authorizers identify high-performing charters if they gather more

information about potential charter operators than the charter application alone can offer. The study has important implications as controversy about charter schools grows and as policymakers nationally try to improve charter performance.

“It’s important that the only factor predicting both charter approval and renewal is a school’s rating from Louisiana’s independent evaluator,” said Harris. During the years studied, the state almost always followed recommendations of the evaluator, the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA), which were informed by a great deal of data beyond formal charter applications, including interviews and site visits.

Authorizers have much more information when making renewal decisions of existing charters because they can consider the school’s actual performance, and the study’s authors find that Louisiana’s state authorizer, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), based its renewal decisions on school performance. According to Bross, “The School Performance Score and students’ achievement growth were the strongest predictors of renewal.”

While this research focuses on how well authorizers choose charter operators, the Education Research Alliance for New Orleans has a forthcoming study analyzing the effects that closure and school takeover have on students.

Read the full report [here](#).