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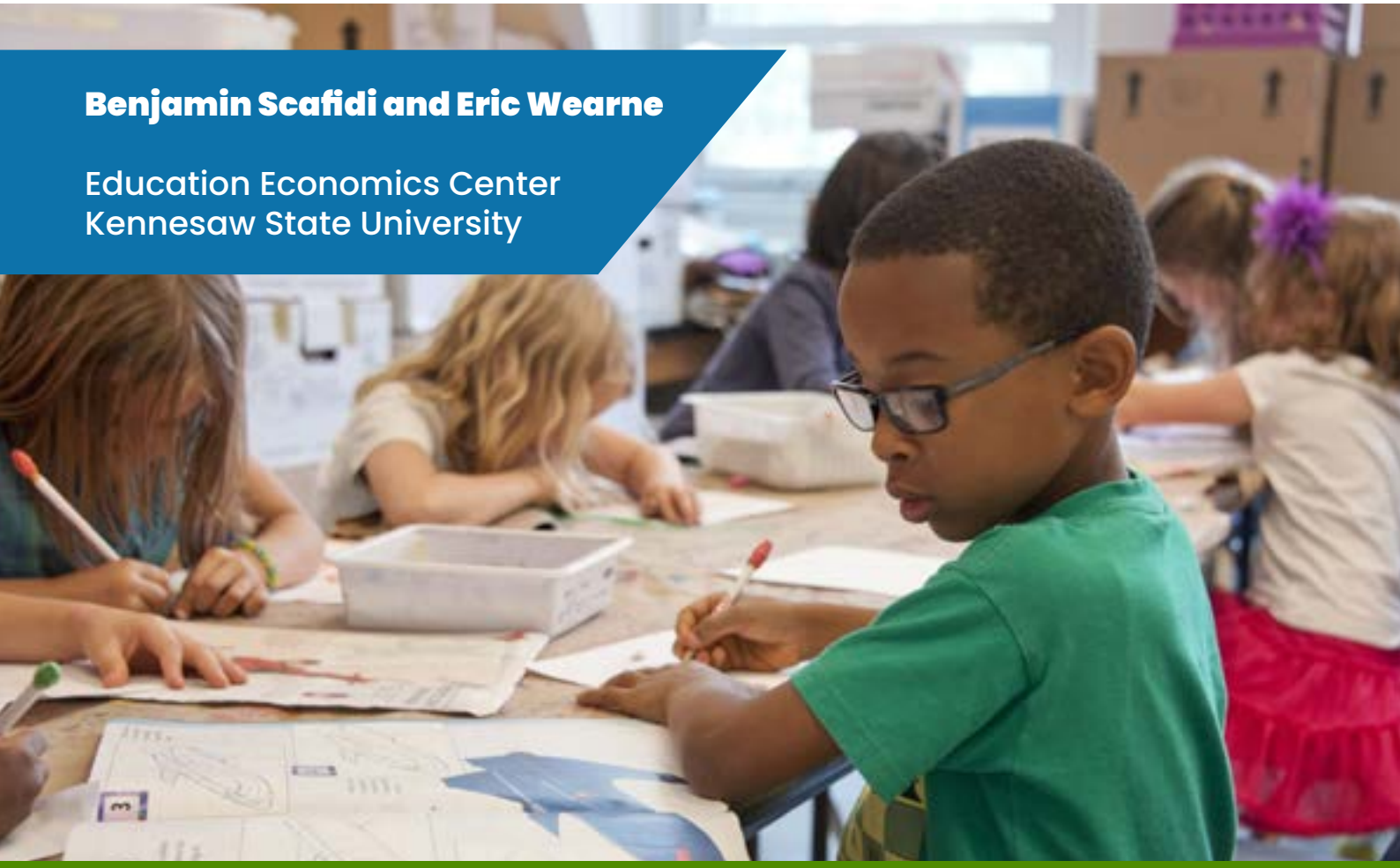

ECER 2022

EFI CHARTER SCHOOL ECOSYSTEM RANKINGS

DECEMBER 2021

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PREFACE

This is an updated version of our June 2021 EFI Concept Paper, *Inputs or Outcomes? Ranking State Charter School Ecosystems*, http://efinstitute.org/charter-school-ecosystems/.

The charter school access data used in our June 2021 Concept Paper were from the 2013-14 academic year and the charter outcome data were generally up through 2010-11 - a few states had outcome data available up through 2013. The purpose of the initial report was to engage the education policy community (parents, researchers, policymakers, advocates) with regards to radically changing how we think about ranking states with respect to charter schools. In our June 2021 paper we were revisiting the question: Which states should the education policy community consider as models when making charter school policies? The two best-known and most widely used prior efforts to address this question **focus on policy inputs only**. In other words, neither of their ranking schemes account for how charter schools actually perform or how many students have access to charter schools in each state.

To create the Beta version of the EFI Charter Ecosystem Rankings (ECER Beta) in our June 2021 report, we used data on how well states provide *access* to charter schools and how well they promote student *outcomes*. By focusing on access and outcomes (as opposed to policy inputs), we produced a significantly different ranking than the leading prior efforts.

This new ECER, ECER 2022, is the most **updated** and **comprehensive ranking** of state charter school ecosystems

Our ECER Beta was almost universally praised from the education policy community.[1] Below is a slice of the feedback we received:

- "Like all education policy reform proposals, school rankings should focus on benefits to children. To that end, EFI's charter ecosystem rankings succeed where many other ranking systems have failed. By measuring access and outcomes, EFI has provided policymakers a direct tool to gauge how well their charter school laws are serving kids and families." *[State Policy Network member organization]*

- "States can have a charter law that looks great on paper but doesn't do a whole lot of good for parents and students. A new paper from the Educational Freedom Institute (EFI) takes a fresh approach." *[Thomas B. Fordham Institute]*

- "This report makes an important contribution to our understanding of education choice. It points the way to a better system of measuring charter public school success, based on how many students can access them and how well they help students learn. Charter schools in (our state), for one, would get a fairer shake, letting people better see the value these options bring to students and families." *[SPN member organization]*

- "I like it. I've long lamented the NACSA and NAPCS rankings for being completely detached from meaningful criteria." *[A state charter school association]*

Given the feedback we received, EFI and the authors decided to update the ECER (where ECER is pronounced eck-er) with newly available and more recent data. This new ECER, ECER 2022, is the most updated and comprehensive ranking of state charter school ecosystems; and states at the top of the ECER should be considered models for other states to emulate with respect to charter school policy.

1 While we did not hear from any, surely opponents of charter schools did not like our June 2021 report as well as not liking prior efforts to rank states. Among those open to charter schools, we received almost universal support for the ECER Beta.

To create the 2022 EFI Charter Ecosystem Rankings (ECER 2022), the statewide charter school data used in this report were the most recent available: 2018-19 for the charter school access measures and up through 2017-18 for charter school outcome measures. Since we are using newer data in this report and have slightly modified our approach to measuring charter school access and outcomes, the ECER 2022 yields significantly different rankings for a handful of states, as some states had tremendous growth in charter school access in recent years - so they moved up the rankings. Some states did not have much change in charter school access between 2013-14 and 2018-19 - so they moved down the rankings as other states experienced growth. Some states improved their charter performance significantly, while others had almost no improvement - which also impacted their rankings.

Readers should **not denigrate** the charter **schools** in states **ranked lower** in the ECER 2022. The ECER 2022 is a **ranking of state charter ecosystems**.

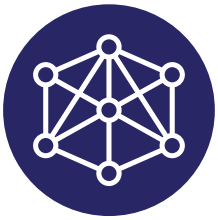
Changes in the rankings of a few states, from using data that are 5-7 years more recent, suggest that the ECER should be periodically updated to reflect changes in charter school success across states. By updating the ECER, the education policy community will know which states to look toward in order to design the "best" charter school policies, where "best" is defined by the ECER as providing the most access and the best outcomes for students.

Finally, readers should not denigrate the charter schools in states ranked lower in the ECER 2022. The ECER 2022 is a ranking of state charter ecosystems. Instead, parents, advocates, other residents, and policymakers in states ranked low should look to policies in the top ranked ECER 2022 states and emulate charter policies from those states - if their policy goal is to promote charter school access and academic success for students. Future work by the Educational Freedom Institute will look to the top ECER 2022 states and analyze whether there are commonalities in laws, regulations, policies, and cultures across those top states (listed below) with respect to charter schools.

Top Ranked States, ECER 2022

- Washington, DC
- Arizona
- Louisiana
- Oklahoma

1. INTRODUCTION



Outside of biological realms, ecosystems are "any system or network of interconnecting and interacting parts."[i] In each state that permits charter schools, there is a charter school ecosystem that is comprised of governing laws and regulations along with the actors in the charter school space - charter school boards, leaders, educators, education service providers (ESPs), charter network operators (CNOs), and families. Each of these "parts" of a state's charter school ecosystem work together to provide K-12 educations to students in charters. That is, each of the parts is needed for charter schools to even exist at all.

Laws and regulations determine what is permissible for families and charter schools - and they also yield incentives for each. Some laws and regulations make it easier for charter schools to be created and for parents to have more choice, some provide incentives for charter schools to be effective, while other laws and regulations hinder the accessibility and success of charters. Relevant laws and regulations that impact the actors in charter school ecosystems include statutes and regulation regarding flexibility, accountability, governance, funding, personnel, authorizing, etc.

Charter governing boards, charter school heads and educators, ESPs, and CNOs that work within each state's legal and regulatory framework directly impact the quality and diversity of educational and social offerings available to families in the charter school space. Families have the final say as to whether their children are educated in the charter sector and in which charter school. Of course, families are constrained by legal and regulatory environments and the effectiveness and creativity of the charter schools present in their communities. Finally, families also have the final say with respect to how engaged they choose to be in their children's charter schools and in their overall education. How involved parents choose to be is, in part, also a function of laws and regulations and the effectiveness of charter schools themselves.

Each of these parts - from state and local regulations and laws to charter school leaders and educators to charter school families - work together in state charter school ecosystems with the goal of providing children access to the best possible educational and social experiences during their K-12 education, to as many children whose families wish to choose a charter school.

The goal of this paper is to use readily accessible information to construct a ranking of state charter school ecosystems. Here, state charter school ecosystems are ranked according to their outcomes for students; specifically, states are ranked on the accessibility and academic performance of their charter schools. We call our state rankings: The *EFI Charter Ecosystem Rankings* (ECER - pronounced eck-er for short).

In a famous quote from his 1932 dissenting opinion in *New State Ice Co. v. Liebmann*, Justice Louis Brandeis said, "a single courageous State may, if its citizens choose, serve as a laboratory; and try novel social and economic experiments without risk to the rest of the country."

Over 40 states have served as laboratories for charter schools. State charter school ecosystems vary widely across the country, with some states making it relatively easy to start charters; some states limiting the number of charters; some states aggressively closing charters deemed as low performing, some providing more flexibility for leaders and educators, etc. By ranking state charter school ecosystems in terms of their impacts on outcomes - in terms of both accessibility and value-added learning gains for students, we direct families, charter school advocates, voters, and policymakers to the best charter school states - **best in in terms of their outcomes for students**. Policymakers may then emulate the legal and regulatory structures in the highest performing states and design charter school laws and policies that have proven to be successful in practice.

It is our hope that **state policymakers** and **charter school advocates** will be more likely to seek to **mimic** the **state policies** that have actually produced the best **outcomes** for students

Our approach is in stark contrast to the methodologies used by the National Association of Charter Authorizers (NACSA, 2015) and the National Association for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS, 2016, 2020) to rank states based on their policies.[ii] Both NACSA and NAPCS judge states - not based on outcomes for students - but based on each state's fidelity to arrays of charter policies created by experts. As discussed below, NAPCS (2016) comes closest to our approach, but NAPCS has produced annual rankings like its 2020 report and has not updated its 2016 report since that time. That said, the approach in NAPCS 2016 is based, in part, on state fidelity to policies deemed as wise by experts - and not solely based on outcomes for students, as our approach does.

The state ranking that we construct in this paper points state policymakers, voters, researchers, and charter advocates to the states that have the "best" charter ecosystems - in terms of the best actual outcomes for students.

It is our hope that state policymakers and charter school advocates will be more likely to seek to mimic the state policies that have actually produced the best outcomes for students - and not just pick policies that "sound good" to experts. We also hope that NACSA, NAPCS, and others adopt the ECER in order to point policymakers and the charter school community to the policies in the highest performing ECER states and away from policies adopted in the lowest performing states - whatever those policies may be.

The rest of this concept paper is organized as follows. Section II describes the NACSA "State Policy Score" rankings and the NAPCS "Ranking of State Public Charter School Laws" and "Health of the Movement" reports that are based largely on policy inputs, while Section III describes our methodology to rank state charter school ecosystems based on charter school outcomes for students. Section IV presents an updated version of the EFI Charter Ecosystem Rankings, which we term as ECER 2022. In Section V, we discuss what state-level data are available for projects of this kind and offer suggestions for updating these rankings in future years. An appendix shows the

We believe that **approaches** used in the **analyses** and **rankings** by NACSA and NAPCS **have it backwards**.

differences between the ECER 2022 rankings, ECER Beta, NACSA's ranking of states based on "State Policy Scores," the NAPCS rankings based on "21 Essential Components," and NAPCS's "Health of the Charter Public School Movement" rankings. The appendix shows that both the NACSA and NAPCS rankings of states often point policymakers, advocates, and others to states that have poor charter school accessibility and/or performance. In addition, some states with relatively high charter school accessibility and performance are deemed as having poor charter school policies by NACSA and NAPCS.

We believe that approaches used in the analyses and rankings by NACSA and NAPCS have it backwards. Those reports are based largely or entirely on inputs and judgements by experts, regardless of actual results. **Policies or laws that experts deem as "good" are not the goal of charter school movement. The goal of the charter school movement is to have high performing charter schools available to every family who wants one for their children**. As such, laws and regulations should be chosen that serve families and students best in terms of the accessibility and performance of charter schools. This report allows readers to clearly see which states are best in terms of charter school access and success - and it is these states that have laws and regulations that are, therefore, worth emulating.

2. NACSA & NAPCS RANKINGS

"STATE POLICY SCORES"; RANKINGS OF "STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL LAWS" AND "HEALTH OF THE CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL MOVEMENT"

In 2015, the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) issued a report, "*On the Road to Better Accessibility, Autonomy, and Accountability: State Policy Analysis 2015*."[iii] Table 1, on page 9, of their report provides a ranking of each state's "charter school policy." Specifically, states are ranked according to their adherence to eight policies that NACSA deems wise and appropriate. Thus, NACSA is ranking state charter school ecosystems based on their policy inputs. According to NACSA's 2015 report,

> This is not a rating of the quality of the charter schools in each state, for state laws are only one factor affecting school quality. It is also not a rating of the actions of the authorizers in each state, for authorizers often develop practices that work around weaknesses or vagaries in state law. Rather, this is a publication that presents policies that **NACSA believes** would strengthen every state charter school law based on experience (emphasis added).

NACSA's analysis is based on eight specific policies, four related to "authorizer quality" and four related to "school quality." These eight policies are analyzed for each state on a rubric and the resulting scores produce NACSA's rankings. These eight policies are:

Authorizer Quality

1. **Who Authorizes (alternative authorizer):** every charter school can be authorized by at least one body other than the local school district

2. **Authorizer Standards:** the state endorses national professional standards for quality charter school authorizing

3. **Authorizer Evaluations:** a state entity can evaluate authorizers on their practices or the performance of their charter schools - regularly or as needed

4. **Authorizer Sanctions:** authorizers face consequences if they have poor practices or a high proportion of persistently failing schools

School Quality

5. **Reports on Performance:** every authorizer publishes an annual report on the academic performance of the charter schools it oversees

6. **Performance Management and Replication:** every charter school is bound by a charter contract and a set of performance expectations; high-performing charter schools are encouraged to replicate

7. **Renewal Standard:** authorizers can close charter schools that don't meet their academic performance expectations

8. **Default Closure:** charter schools that perform below a certain minimum threshold are closed[iv]

Scoring on the NACSA rubric is calculated as follows:

- A state with no relevant policy receives 0 on that measure.
- Partial policies receive 1 or 2 points, depending on their quality.
- Policies that mirror NACSA's recommendations receive 3 points.
- Three of the eight policies are higher priorities and receive double "weighting."
- Five policies can produce 3 points each, and the three higher priority policies are worth 6 points each.
- The resulting rubric provides a total of 33 points.[v]

In 2015, NACSA's rating produced the following results:

Table 1. NACSA 2015 Charter School State Policy Analysis Rankings

State	Rank	State	Rank	State	Rank
Indiana	1	DC	16	California	31
Nevada	1	Maine	16	Pennsylvania	31
Ohio	3	Arizona	18	Colorado	33
Alabama	4	Florida	18	Michigan	34
Texas	5	Idaho	20	Utah	35
Minnesota	6	Connecticut	21	New York	36
Mississippi	6	Massachusetts	21	Oregon	37
Missouri	8	New Mexico	21	Iowa	38
South Carolina	8	North Carolina	21	Alaska	39
Louisiana	10	Wisconsin	21	Wyoming	39
Oklahoma	10	Illinois	26	Maryland	41
Delaware	12	New Jersey	27	Virginia	42
Hawaii	12	Rhode Island	27	Kansas	43
Georgia	14	Arkansas	29	Washington*	33/NA
Tennessee	14	New Hampshire	29		

*Washington technically scored 33 – a perfect score, which would have tied the state for 1st place – but was placed at the end of the table in the NACSA report due to a legal dispute at the time.[vi]

The National Association for Public Charter Schools **(NAPCS)** also produces its own, separate annual **charter school law rankings**, titled "Measuring Up to the Model: A Ranking of State Public Charter School Laws,"[vii] using a similar methodology to NACSA. NAPCS's rankings are based on "21 essential components of a strong charter school law." Similar to NACSA, this ranking system is scored based on a rubric allotting points for how well each state's charter school laws meet NAPCS's 21 essential components.[viii] These "essential components" include, for example, "Adequate Authorizer Funding," "Comprehensive Charter School Monitoring and Data Collection Processes," and "Full-time Virtual Charter School Provisions," among others. This approach, like the one used by NACSA, focuses on inputs rather than results.

According to NAPCS, "It is important to note that **our primary focus was to assess whether and how state laws and regulations addressed the National Alliance model law**, not whether and how practices in the state addressed it...the purpose of the analyses is to encourage state laws and regulations to require best practices and guarantee charter school rights and freedoms so that state charter school movements will benefit from a supportive legal and policy environment (emphasis added)."

NAPCS has produced these rankings for 11 years; its most recent rankings were published in 2020, with some revisions to their methodology. The 2020 results are reported below.

Table 2. NAPCS 2020 Charter School Law Ranking

State	Rank	State	Rank	State	Rank
Indiana	1	Georgia	16	Hawaii	31
Colorado	2	Idaho	17	West Virginia	32
Washington	3	New York	18	Oregon	33
Minnesota	4	South Carolina	19	New Jersey	34
Alabama	5	California	20	Pennsylvania	35
Mississippi	6	Utah	21	Connecticut	36
Florida	7	Oklahoma	22	Illinois	37
Louisiana	8	Ohio	23	Rhode Island	38
Maine	9	Tennessee	24	Wisconsin	39
DC	10	New Mexico	25	Virginia	40
Nevada	11	New Hampshire	26	Iowa	41
Massachusetts	12	Missouri	27	Wyoming	42
Arizona	13	Michigan	28	Alaska	43
North Carolina	14	Texas	29	Kansas	44
Delaware	15	Arkansas	30	Maryland	45

Rather than focusing on state laws, the **HOM rankings** use **data** that come from **actual charter schools**

In 2014 and 2016, NAPCS published its "Health of the Charter Public School Movement" (HOM) rankings. NAPCS calls this report a "companion" to its Charter School Law Rankings. And, in fact, the HOM rankings are much more based on outputs than the model charter law reports. Rather than focusing on state laws, which may or may not be producing any actual charter schools, the HOM rankings use data that come from actual charter schools. To be included in the 2016 rankings, a state had to meet three criteria:

- Charter schools had to serve at least 2 percent of its public school students in 2014-15;
- The state participated in CREDO's National Charter School Study 2013; and
- The state had a state accountability system in place that categorized all public schools on the basis of performance in 2012-13 and 2013-14.

18 states met these criteria in 2016, resulting in the following rankings:

Table 3. NAPCS 2016 Health of the Movement Rankings

State	Rank	State	Rank	State	Rank
DC	1	Arizona	7	Ohio	13
Indiana	2	Rhode Island	8	Georgia	14
Michigan	3	Colorado	9	Pennsylvania	15
Massachusetts	4	Missouri	10	New Mexico	16
Louisiana	5	Texas	11	Utah	17
Florida	6	Nevada	12	Oregon	18

The HOM includes 13 indicators used to calculate its state scores, grouped into Growth, Innovation, and Quality:

GROWTH

1. Public school share
2. Public school student share
3. Students by race and ethnicity
4. Students in special populations (i.e., free and reduced-price lunch status, special education status, and English learner status)
5. Schools by geographic distribution
6. Communities with more than 10 percent of students in charter public schools
7. New charter public schools opened over the past five years
8. Charter public schools closed over the past five years

INNOVATION

9. Percentage of charter schools with an identified special focus

QUALITY

10. Additional days of learning in reading
11. Additional days of learning in math
12. Percentage point change within top categories in state accountability system
13. Percentage point change within bottom categories in state accountability system

The **HOM ranking**, however, still **includes** several value judgements in its indicators, such as **awarding points** for student characteristics and **school focus**.

This is a much more outcomes-based approach than NAPCS's public charter school law rankings, a fact which NAPCS itself recognizes. The HOM ranking, however, still includes several value judgements in its indicators, such as awarding points for student characteristics and school focus. For example, in its discussion of its indicators, the HOM report states that, "It is preferable for charter public schools to serve a slightly higher percentage of historically underserved students (i.e., free and reduced-price lunch students, special education students, and English learner students) than traditional public schools." Similarly, when measuring "Schools by geographic distribution," the report notes that, "It is preferable for charter public schools to serve a slightly higher percentage of historically underserved students (i.e., nonsuburban) than traditional public schools." The same sort of judgement is true in HOM's inclusion of "innovation," and a decision that "It is preferable to have a small and consistent percentage of schools close" each year, but also that "...the percentage should not be too high...." These all may or may not be important aspects of charter schools, but their inclusion in an index of quality are certainly value judgements that go beyond straightforward discussions of access and outcomes. Several of these indicators still place some weight on inputs, or on qualitative aspects that the NAPCS report believes should be weighed more heavily.

It is noteworthy that Washington, DC is ranked 10th in NAPCS (2020), while DC is ranked first in its HOM rankings. Since it is more outcome-based, their older HOM rankings are clearly a better guide to charter school policy than the NAPCS annual charter school law rankings

These **prior efforts** at **ranking states** based on their charter school policies **devised** their **rankings systems** solely or largely on **policy inputs**

In 1759, in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments,* Adam Smith wrote critically of such a focus on prescriptive processes and inputs:

> The man of system, on the contrary, is apt to be very wise in his own conceit; and is often so enamoured with the supposed beauty of his own ideal plan of government, that he cannot suffer the smallest deviation from any part of it. He goes on to establish it completely and in all its parts, without any regard either to the great interests, or to the strong prejudices which may oppose it.
>
> He seems to imagine that he can arrange the different members of a great society with as much ease as the hand arranges the different pieces upon a chess-board. He does not consider that the pieces upon the chess-board have no other principle of motion besides that which the hand impresses upon them; but that, in the great chess-board of human society, every single piece has a principle of motion of its own, altogether different from that which the legislature might chuse to impress upon it. If those two principles coincide and act in the same direction, the game of human society will go on easily and harmoniously, and is very likely to be happy and successful. If they are opposite or different, the game will go on miserably, and the society must be at all times in the highest degree of disorder.

These prior efforts at ranking states based on their charter school policies devised their rankings systems solely or largely on policy inputs. In the roughly two and a half centuries since Adam Smith more formally founded the discipline of economics, economists have been analyzing outcomes of policy. This report endeavors to follow in this tradition and evaluate the effectiveness of charter school ecosystems in each state based on their outcomes.

3. OUR APPROACH TO RANKING STATE CHARTER SCHOOL ECOSYSTEMS – ECER 2022

As detailed in the previous section, NACSA has ranked states based on their fidelity to eight charter school policies, and NAPCS annual reports ranked states based on 21 "essential components" of state charter school law, and in older work NAPCS also used 13 indicators on the "health of the movement."

Our approach to ranking state charter school ecosystems is very different than NACSA and NAPCS. These prior efforts ranked states based on having charter school policies that experts deemed as wise. Some of these prior rankings are based solely on judgement, and an older effort takes some performance into account. Our approach ranks states based solely on outcomes for students. The two outcomes that we use are accessibility and learning gains for students. Thus, states with charter schools that are more available to students and states with charter schools that produce greater learning gains for students are ranked higher using our approach. States that do not have much accessibility to charter schools and/or have charters that produce smaller learning gains for students are ranked lower.

Outcome Measures in the Initial ECER (Beta) Report

In our previous (June 2021) version of these rankings, we included two access outcomes and two performance outcomes. A 2016 report released by the Hamilton Project and the Brookings Institution[ix] compiled publicly available data from the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data to calculate two components of statewide accessibility to charter schools: (1) the percent of students enrolled in charter schools; and (2) the percent of students who live in a ZIP code that contains a charter school. The data used for their report was from the 2013-14 academic year. We included both measures from 2013-14 as reported in Hamilton/Brookings report as components in our ECER Beta. Hamilton/Brookings included virtual charter school enrollment in their overall enrollment measure, but not in their ZIP code measure. We followed this approach in our previous report as well as this update, as these two measures get at two somewhat different types of access – the availability of any charter school to students, including virtual charter schools, and the actual availability of physical schools in the widest geographic area of a state. In this update of the ECER we have added another measure of access, which we discuss below.

To measure performance outcomes in the original ECER Beta rankings, we used statewide estimates of these gains from a series of CREDO reports.[x] Most of the estimates we used are from CREDO's 2013 National Charter School Study.[xi] The state-specific estimates of value-added learning gains for charter schools in CREDO 2013 come from data up through the 2010-11 academic year, which are based on data that is at least ten years old. For 12 states, CREDO used subsequent data in state-level reports. However, for most of these 12 states, the data remain many years old. Another issue is that CREDO was only able to obtain data from 30 states. To be clear, the methodological approach in the CREDO studies has critics,[xii] but their effort was nothing short of herculean in terms of data collection and analysis. We are thankful to have been able to access their statewide value-added measures for charter schools in the initial report. We use a different, newer data source for these updated rankings, which we discuss in the next section.

Our Updated Methodology Used to Create the ECER 2022

Ultimately, we have **seven outcome components** in this updated version of the *EFI Charter Ecosystem Rankings - ECER 2022*. The three accessibility outcomes that determine the rankings are: (1) the percent of public school students in each state who are enrolled in charter schools; (2) the percent of public school students in each state who reside in a ZIP code with a charter school, and (3) the increase in the percentage of charter school students from the prior year. The two performance outcomes are: (4) a cohort-based measure of Math and Reading achievement growth, and (5) a value-added measure of Math and Reading achievement. To weigh performance outcomes more than access outcomes, we double-weight the two performance outcomes in order to have a total of seven components in ECER 2022 - the three access measures and double-weights of the two performance measures to get a total of seven. We discuss each of these components in turn.

Access Measures from the 2018-19 Academic Year

(1) The percent of public school students in each state who are enrolled in charter schools

This first accessibility measure ranks all states in terms of their share of public school students who attend charter public schools. We deem this component of our ranking as an accessibility measure, because as charter schools become more accessible, then more students are able to attend them. However, it is also a quality measure. A long research literature suggests that families choose schools for their children for a variety of reasons, including safety, preparation for college, curricular and non-curricular offerings, etc.[xiii] In addition, students have different needs and interests, and to the extent that charter schools increase the diversity of academic and other offerings, more families will choose them. Thus, states with a larger proportion of students choosing charter schools clearly measures charter schools being more accessible to

students, but it also measures an aspect of charter school quality. As an example, charter schools could be very close to where many students reside in a given state, but if they are not of high quality, then their enrollments will be relatively low.

A given state may have a **few large charter schools** in densely populated **urban areas**. However, these charters would **not be accessible** to many students who live in **faraway suburban** or **rural areas**

(2) The percent of public school students in each state who reside in a ZIP code with a charter school

Our second component is a pure, albeit incomplete, measure of accessibility. This second component is the percent of public school students who reside in the same ZIP code as a charter school. There is no perfect measure of accessibility given commuting patterns, traffic, etc. Thus, having a charter school located in a given ZIP code may not mean the charter school is necessarily easily accessible to all students in the ZIP code. Second, a charter school in an adjacent ZIP code may be very accessible for some students. For these two reasons, this measure of accessibility is direct, but it is not a perfect measure of accessibility. Having the first measure of accessibility, described above, helps capture true accessibility as well. However, we believe this second measure of accessibility should be a component of ranking states as well, because it gets at the statewide geographic diversity of charter schools. For example, a given state may have a few large charter schools in densely populated urban areas. However, these charters would not be accessible to many students who live in faraway suburban or rural areas.

For the reasons discussed in the previous subsection, we believe both of these accessibility measures need to influence the ranking of state charter school ecosystems, as they measure slightly different aspects of accessibility. In addition, the first component also captures aspects of charter school quality that are not measured by the value-added learning gains defined by test scores - which are described in the next subsection.

(3) The increase in the percentage of charter school students from the prior year

In this updated report, we include a third measure of access: growth in the percent of students enrolled in charter schools. Specifically, we include the percentage of student enrollment growth from academic year 2018 to academic year 2019. We use growth in the percentage of students enrolled, rather than the number of schools, as using schools as this access measure would more harshly penalize states with large charter sectors to begin with.

This third access measure is important because it is a proxy of where access trends in states are headed in the near future. A given state may have a smaller charter sector today, but perhaps newly enacted favorable laws and/or regulations portend significant growth in the near future. Thus, the annual growth in the percentage of charter school students in the most recent year available is our proxy for the trend in future charter accessibility.

The data used to compute each of these three access measures is the ElSi data retrieval tool at the National Center for Education Statistics, https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/ and covers the 2018-19 academic year.

Performance Measures up through the 2017-18 Academic Year

While gains in test scores are far from a perfect measure of school effectiveness, they are the measure that is available for charter schools in most states. In this report, we use "cohort" and "value-added" learning gains using data obtained from the Stanford Educational Opportunity Project.[xiv] Researchers at Stanford compiled and standardized math and reading test score data by state for every student (except virtual school students) in grades 3 through 8 over 8 years, from 2008-09 through 2017-18. We describe both of these measures of charter school performance below.

For each state, **we aggregated all school-level cohort measures** for all charter schools together into a **single number** for each state

(4) Cohort learning gains for charter school students in grades 3-8 in Math and Reading

This "cohort" measure, considers changes in average test scores within each grade/subject, from one year to the next. For example, last year's 3rd grade reading scores are compared against this year's 3rd grade reading scores. Stanford researchers then aggregated all grades and both subjects to obtain a single "cohort" measure of changes in average test scores for each brick-and-mortar public school in each state. Thus, virtual charter schools are excluded by the Stanford researchers. For each state, we aggregated all school-level cohort measures for all charter schools together into a single number for each state.

Next, we took this single measure of cohort growth for charter schools in each state and regressed them on all student characteristics in the Stanford database - percent of students eligible for a free lunch, reduced lunch, percent African-American, percent Latino, percent Asian, percent another nonwhite race, percent disabled, and percent limited-English proficient. The regression also contained indicator variables for each state, where the coefficients on these indicator variables yield estimates of the performance of charter schools in each state in terms of cohort growth, controlling for these student characteristics.

For each state, this single number - the estimated coefficient on each state indicator variable - represents the average cohort learning gains for its brick-and-mortar charter sector, controlling for these student characteristics.

For each state, **this** single **number** represents the **average** value-added **learning gains** for its brick-and-mortar charter sector, controlling for these student characteristics.

(5) Value-added learning gains for charter school students in grades 3-8 in Math and Reading

This "value-added" measure considers changes in average test scores for a given grade/subject as compared to the prior grade from one year to the next.[xv] For example, last year's 3rd grade reading scores are compared against this year's 4th grade reading scores. Stanford researchers then aggregated all grades and both subjects to obtain a single "value-added" measure of changes in average test scores for each brick-and-mortar public school in each state. Like the cohort measure, virtual charter schools are excluded. For each state, we aggregated all school-level value-added measures for all charter schools together into a single number for each state.[xvi]

Using the same approach as above, we took this single measure of value-added growth for charter schools in each state and regressed them on all student characteristics in the Stanford database. The regression also contained indicator variables for each state, where the coefficients on these indicator variables yield estimates of the performance of charter schools in each state in terms of value-added growth, controlling for these student characteristics.

For each state, this single number - the estimated coefficient on each state indicator variable - represents the average value-added learning gains for its brick-and-mortar charter sector, controlling for these student characteristics.

One of the benefits of using this dataset is that we expect Stanford will keep updating it. Of course, these data are not ideal for our purpose (e.g. does not include other subjects or virtual charter schools and does not disaggregate test scores by subgroup at the school-level); nevertheless, we are grateful to the Stanford Educational Opportunity Project for its colossal efforts at putting these data together and making them available to the research community! Without their great effort, there would be no ECER 2022, as it would be prohibitively expensive in terms of time in order to compute such outcome data.

Creating an Index Score for Each State

There are various ways to combine these seven state-level components into a single index score for each state. A single index score - one for each state - is needed in order to create an overall ranking of state charter school ecosystems using information from all components.

The Seven Sub-Components of Our Enhanced EFI State Charter Ecosystem Rankings

While the beta version of the *EFI State Charter Ecosystem Rankings* contained four components, our updated version includes the following seven components - three measures of accessibility and two measures of performance-where the latter two are double-weighted to total seven. Table 4 lists each of these components.

Table 4. Components that will be used in the proposed final version of the EFI Charter Ecosystem Rankings

Accessibility	% of students attending a charter school
Accessibility	% of students residing in a zip code with a charter school
Accessibility	% increase in charter school students from the prior year
Performance	Cohort leaning gains for all charter students (times 2)
Performance	Value-added leaning gains for all charter students (times 2)

For each of the seven components, each state can be ranked from 1 to 35, with 1 representing the highest performing state and 35 representing the state with the lowest performance.

If a given state had been the **best performer** on **each component**, then that state would receive an **index score of "7"** as this state was the best in each of the components

To obtain our rankings, we first ranked the states in our dataset on each of the access and performance measures. Next, we **summed the rankings of each of the five components, and counted the performance measures twice** to create an index score of charter school success in each state. As an example, if a given state had been the best performer on each component - the highest percent of charter school students in the nation; the highest percent of students in the nation residing in a ZIP code with a charter; the highest growth in the percentage of students enrolled in charter schools in the nation; the highest cohort learning gains in Reading and Mathematics in the nation; and the highest value-added learning gains in Reading and Mathematics in the nation - then that state would receive an index score of "7" – 1+1+1+(1x2)+(1x2) – as this state was the best in each of the components.

No state actually ranked as the best performer on each of the components, so this example merely demonstrates how we created the index scores for each state.

The next five tables show how each state ranked on each of the five components, listed from the best performer to the lowest performer. We are only able to rank 35 states, including Washington, DC, because some states do not have charter schools and some did not have the proper test score data to allow the Stanford researchers to estimate cohort and value-added learning gains for charter schools.

Tables 5, 6, and 7 show the state rankings for the accessibility measures. These accessibility measures will be used to create a single index score for each state and ultimately the *EFI Charter Ecosystem Rankings*.

While these rankings in Tables 5, 6, and 7 are similar among the first two accessibility measures, they are not exactly the same. The rankings produced by the third accessibility measure are significantly different than the first two measures. Therefore, including each of the three rankings adds information about accessibility, as opposed to using only one or two of these rankings.

As an example, Oklahoma had the largest growth in percent of public school students enrolled in charter schools - table 7. However, Oklahoma ranked 22nd in percent of students in charter schools (table 5) and 26th in percent of ZIP codes with a charter school (table 6). These rankings indicate that Oklahoma students do not have good access to charter schools today, but that appears to be changing given some recent change in the state.

In terms of the present, Washington, DC and Arizona rank first and second in the percent of public school students enrolled in charter schools and 6th and second in the percent of ZIP codes that have a charter school, respectively. Future work will analyze what laws and policies are present in states that rank the highest on access - and performance outcomes as well.

Table 5. Ranking of Percent of Students Enrolled in Charter Schools (from highest to lowest)

State	Rank	State	Rank	State	Rank
DC	1	Idaho	13	Wisconsin	25
Arizona	2	North Carolina	14	Massachusetts	26
Colorado	3	Arkansas	15	Indiana	27
Louisiana	4	Minnesota	15	South Carolina	27
Delaware	5	Rhode Island	15	Tennessee	29
Utah	6	Hawaii	18	Georgia	30
Florida	7	Ohio	18	New Jersey	30
California	8	Texas	18	Illinois	32
Nevada	8	Oregon	21	Maryland	33
Michigan	10	New York	22	Missouri	34
Pennsylvania	11	Oklahoma	22	Connecticut	35
New Mexico	12	Alaska	24		

Table 6. Ranking of Percent of Students with Charter Schools in Their Zip Code (from highest to lowest)

State	Rank	State	Rank	State	Rank
Nevada	1	Maryland	13	Minnesota	25
Arizona	2	Ohio	14	Oklahoma	26
Missouri	3	Wisconsin	15	Tennessee	27
Delaware	4	Hawaii	16	North Carolina	28
Oregon	5	New Jersey	17	Michigan	29
DC	6	Indiana	18	Idaho	30
New York	7	Connecticut	19	Rhode Island	31
Florida	8	Colorado	20	Illinois	31
California	9	Alaska	21	South Carolina	33
New Mexico	10	Massachusetts	22	Utah	34
Pennsylvania	11	Arkansas	23	Texas	35
Louisiana	12	Georgia	24		

Table 7. Ranking of Growth in Percent of Students Enrolled in Charter Schools (from highest to lowest)

State	Rank	State	Rank	State	Rank
Oklahoma	1	Louisiana	13	Connecticut	25
Nevada	2	Arkansas	14	New Mexico	26
Idaho	3	New Jersey	15	Wisconsin	27
North Carolina	4	New York	16	Maryland	28
Arizona	5	Delaware	17	DC	29
Tennessee	6	Minnesota	18	Michigan	30
Rhode Island	7	California	19	Illinois	31
South Carolina	8	Pennsylvania	20	Missouri	32
Texas	9	Massachusetts	21	Alaska	33
Florida	10	Hawaii	22	Ohio	34
Indiana	11	Colorado	23	Georgia	35
Oregon	11	Utah	24		

Tables 8 and 9 show the rankings of learning gains in charter schools on the cohort and value-added measures, respectively, and these rankings will be combined with the accessibility rankings in Tables 5, 6, and 7 to create a single index score for each state and ultimately the EFI Charter Ecosystem Rankings (ECER 2022).

As shown in table 8, charter school students in New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Washington, DC experienced the largest cohort learning gains up through 2018. Please recall that these cohort learning gains measure, for example, how this year's 5th graders scored as compared to last year's 5th graders on state Reading and Math exams - and that these are the most recent data that are accessible.

In terms of value-added learning gains, table 9 shows that Alaska, Oklahoma, Washington, DC, Tennessee, and Missouri produced the highest gains for their charter school students, where value-added gains compare, for example, test scores for this year's 5th graders as compared to last year's 4th graders. As discussed in the prior section, both the cohort and value-added learning gains are conditional on observable student characteristics that were present in the Stanford database.

Considering the two performance metrics together, charter schools in Washington, DC and Oklahoma produced the largest learning gains - relative to their peers in in other states. Both states rank 2nd or 3rd on both performance measures.

Table 8. Ranking of Charter School "Cohort" Test Scores (from highest to lowest)

State	Rank	State	Rank	State	Rank
New Jersey	1	Illinois	12	North Carolina	21
Rhode Island	2	Nevada	14	Ohio	21
DC	3	Georgia	14	New Mexico	27
Oklahoma	3	Wisconsin	16	Pennsylvania	28
Louisiana	5	California	17	Arkansas	29
New York	5	Missouri	17	Minnesota	30
Indiana	5	Michigan	17	Texas	31
Florida	8	Alaska	20	Massachusetts	31
South Carolina	9	Utah	20	Hawaii	33
Tennessee	10	Delaware	21	Maryland	33
Connecticut	10	Oregon	21	Colorado	35
Arizona	12	Idaho	21		

Table 9. Ranking of Charter School "Value-added" Test Scores (from highest to lowest)

State	Rank	State	Rank	State	Rank
Alaska	1	Illinois	13	Arkansas	25
Oklahoma	2	California	13	Nevada	26
DC	3	Michigan	13	Georgia	26
Tennessee	4	Connecticut	16	Hawaii	26
Missouri	4	South Carolina	17	Ohio	29
Texas	6	New Jersey	18	Indiana	30
Idaho	7	Utah	19	Pennsylvania	30
Wisconsin	8	Minnesota	19	North Carolina	32
Louisiana	9	Rhode Island	20	Maryland	33
Arizona	9	New Mexico	20	Colorado	34
Delaware	9	New York	23	Florida	35
Oregon	9	Massachusetts	23		

Combining Access and Performance Rankings to Create the ECER 2022

The rankings of each of these five components from the tables above are added together (with the performance measures doubled) to create an index score for each state. These index scores are reported alphabetically by state in Table 10.

Table 10. ECER 2022 Raw Index Scores*

* Index Score equals the sum of the rankings in tables 5-9, where the rankings in Tables 8 & 9 are doubled.

State	EFI Raw Score TOTAL	State	EFI Raw Score TOTAL	State	EFI Raw Score TOTAL
Alaska	120	Illinois	144	North Carolina	152
Arizona	51	Indiana	126	Ohio	166
Arkansas	160	Louisiana	57	Oklahoma	59
California	96	Maryland	206	Oregon	97
Colorado	184	Massachusetts	177	Pennsylvania	158
Connecticut	131	Michigan	129	Rhode Island	97
DC	48	Minnesota	156	South Carolina	120
Delaware	86	Missouri	111	Tennessee	90
Florida	111	Nevada	91	Texas	136
Georgia	169	New Jersey	100	Utah	142
Hawaii	174	New Mexico	142	Wisconsin	115
Idaho	102	New York	101		

There is **no obviously "correct" way** to **preserve** the **cardinality** of the various rankings to create an **overall index** number for each state - because the **components measure** such **different things**

Our home state of Georgia has an index score of 169. This index score was generated as follows:

169 = 30 + 24 + 35 + 14(x2) + 26(x2), where Georgia was ranked

- 30th in charter school enrollment percentage (Table 5)
- 24th in percent of students living in a ZIP code with a charter school (Table 6)
- 35th in percent increase in charter school enrollment (Table 7)
- 14th in cohort learning gains (Table 8), and
- 26th in value-added learning gains (Table 9).

This approach to aggregating the rankings across components uses only the ordinal nature of the rankings and therefore does not use the cardinality of the rankings. There is no obviously "correct" way to preserve the cardinality of the various rankings to create an overall index number for each state - because the components measure such different things. For example, how should one compare a 5-percentage point difference in charter school enrollment between two states with a 4-day difference in learning gains in Reading between the states? We hope this example demonstrates that any approach to using the cardinality of the rankings would be arbitrary - and this is why we choose to use only the ordinal nature of the rankings to create the *EFI Charter Ecosystem Rankings* (ECER 2022).

4. THE EFI CHARTER ECOSYSTEM RANKINGS (ECER 2022)

ECER 2022 incorporates three measures of access, and two measures of performance, where the access measures are inspired by the Hamilton/Brookings "Who Has Access to Charter Schools?" report,[xvii] and the Stanford Educational Opportunity Project's student-level cohort and value-added test score data are used as our performance measures for charter schools.[xviii]

This updated version of the ECER based on these measures are reported in Table 11. Table 11 is the ordinal ranking of states using the ECER 2022 raw index scores from table 10.

Table 11. The EFI Ranking of State Charter School Ecosystems

State	EFI Raw Score TOTAL	State	EFI Raw Score TOTAL	State	EFI Raw Score TOTAL
DC	1	Idaho	13	Illinois	25
Arizona	2	Florida	14	North Carolina	26
Louisiana	3	Missouri	14	Minnesota	27
Oklahoma	4	Wisconsin	16	Pennsylvania	28
Delaware	5	Alaska	17	Arkansas	29
Tennessee	6	South Carolina	17	Ohio	30
Nevada	7	Indiana	19	Georgia	31
California	8	Michigan	20	Hawaii	32
Oregon	9	Connecticut	21	Massachusetts	33
Rhode Island	9	Texas	22	Colorado	34
New Jersey	11	New Mexico	23	Maryland	35
New York	12	Utah	23		

Discussion of the EFI Charter Ecosystem Rankings

In ECER 2022, Washington DC, Arizona, Louisiana, and Oklahoma are the four highest ranking states, and each has a combined index score below 60. The first three of these states generally rank very high in all measures of accessibility and performance. Although it ranks lower on two access measures, Oklahoma ranks very high on performance and ranked the highest in terms of growth in the percent of public school students enrolled in charter schools.

At the other end of the table, Maryland ranked 13th for ZIP code access, but no better than 28th on any other access or performance measure.

The ECER 2022 rankings should be used by parents, researchers, policymakers, and advocates to see which states have charter school laws and policies worth emulating. Clearly, DC and Arizona - the top two states in ECER 2022 - have the best access and performance in their charter sectors. Other states should look to DC and Arizona when making charter school policy. Future work will analyze charter school laws and policies in these top four states to make recommendations to the charter school policy community.

Next, we discuss what the ECER 2022 rankings are not. Specifically, the ECER 2022 rankings do not tell parents that the charter school their child attends in Maryland is bad in some way (Maryland was ranked lowest in ECER 2022). Parents will choose a given charter school for their children if the entire package - the educational and social environment at the charter school - is better for their children than the traditional public school for which they are zoned. Parents consider all their educational options and choose the best one for their children. Thus, readers should not consider charter schools in lower ranking states as somehow being necessarily “bad” schools.

ECER 2022 is a ranking of state charter school *ecosystems*. States that are lower ranked have charter ecosystems that are not conducive to providing the best access and student outcomes in their charter sectors overall. States that are ranked lower in ECER 2022 should not denigrate existing charters - instead, they should seek to mimic the laws, regulations, policies, and culture of the charter sectors in the highest ranked states - DC, Arizona, Louisiana, and Oklahoma.

Differences between the NACSA, NAPCS, and ECER 2022 Rankings

The Appendix to this report includes a side-by-side view of the NACSA, NAPCS, and ECER 2022 and ECER Beta rankings. One striking and illustrative difference among the models is the fact that both the 2020 NAPCS report and the 2015 NACSA report place Indiana first in the nation (with NACSA in fact giving Indiana a perfect score in its analysis), while in the ECER 2022 analysis Indiana places 19th out of 35 states. In our ECER analysis, Indiana ranks 27th in the percent of students actually enrolled in charter schools. Indiana placed first in the 2015 NACSA analysis, despite enrolling only 4 percent of public school students in charter schools in that analysis. The state was ranked 5th by ECER 2022 in learning gains by cohort, but 30th on the value-added measure.

Colorado is a state whose rankings vary quite a bit across these reports as well. The state places 33rd (out of 44) in NACSA's 2015 rankings of charter school policies. They place 9th (out of 18) in NAPCS's 2016 Health of the Movement Rankings, and 2nd-best overall (out of 45) in NAPCS's 2020 charter school law rankings. ECER 2022 places Colorado second-to-last overall. Colorado is 3rd overall for the percentage of students enrolled in charter schools, but those schools are not geographically very accessible; the state places 23rd for the percentage of students who live in a ZIP code with a charter school. In terms of performance, Colorado finishes next-to-last in value-added learning gains, and last overall in cohort learning gains.

Clearly both the **NACSA** and **NAPCS** rankings are **promoting states** that do **not provide access** to charter schools for students **in the real world**

Multiple other differences exist. On NACSA's 2015 ranking for example, Alabama placed fourth in the country, while having 0 charter schools and 0 charter school students. NACSA noted that in 2015 Alabama "passed a new charter law in 2015 that is based on best practices in charter school policy" for context. Mississippi ranked 6th, with a then-five-year-old charter school law, a single authorizer, and 0 open charter schools. Arizona placed 18th in the same analysis, with 15% of their public school students enrolled in charter schools, the highest percentage in the country, except for the District of Columbia, which finished two places ahead of Arizona and enrolled 44% of their students in charter schools. Clearly both the NACSA and NAPCS rankings are promoting states that do not provide access to charter schools for students in the real world.

Washington State is another interesting case. The state places 30th (last) in the ECER Beta rankings due to low access and only fair performance. NACSA noted but ultimately excluded Washington from its rankings, as at the time the state's charter school law was in the process of being held unconstitutional. Before that ruling, NACSA gave Washington's charter school law a perfect score, tying it for 1st place in their rankings. NAPCS placed the new Washington State law at 3rd-best in the nation in its 2020 report, though at the time the state only had 8 charter schools. (Alabama, Mississippi, and Washington do not appear in the ECER rankings because of their lack of or very modest number of charter school students in the Stanford Educational Opportunity Project data).

The NAPCS Health of the Movement rankings are closer to the ECER 2022 rankings. That said, that NAPCS report speculates on why its preferred laws and policies may or may not be reflected in the growth and academic success of the charter schools it examines. It is likely that identical laws and policies may see more or less success in different states, for a variety of reasons. ECER 2022 makes no prejudgment about why or how particular laws or policies work, but only measures whether the laws and policies that exist in the states are producing growing numbers of charter schools, which are accessible to families, and which are showing academic success.

ECER 2022's top four states – DC, Arizona, Louisiana, and Oklahoma – are very different places politically, geographically, and in many other ways. Similarly, ECER 2022's four lowest-ranked states – Hawaii, Massachusetts, Colorado, and Maryland – differ from each other in significant ways as well. Their charter school environments vary a great deal, when measured by outcomes. The ECER rankings simply suggest that policymakers and the charter school community should seek to emulate the laws and regulations in places like the District of Columbia and Arizona, as appropriate, as opposed to Colorado or Maryland - if the goals are more access and better outcomes for students.

Differences between the ECER Initial and ECER Updated Rankings

The changes we made in this new ECER, ECER 2022, caused some states to fall in the rankings and others to rise. These changes in the rankings were due to two factors: (a) the use of newer data in the ECER 2022 as compared to ECER Beta and (b) adjustments to our access and outcome metrics.

Although we adjusted both the access and outcome measures, the first two access measures remained the same (with newer data, of course), and we added the growth in percent of charter school students as a third access metric. The replacement of the older CREDO performance data with the newer and more complete Stanford Educational Opportunity Project data likely caused most of the differences. Michigan fell several places, and Colorado especially saw a steep drop, mostly due to the use of the more complete and updated Stanford performance data. On the other hand, that new performance data caused Arizona to rise to 2nd in the updated rankings. The updated ECER rankings include more states than the initial rankings (35 vs 30), with some states dropping out for lack of data (Washington), and others making their first appearance in these new rankings (Oklahoma).

Evaluating Charter School Ecosystems in a Straightforward and Clear Manner – ECER 2022

As Adam Smith addressed the problem of judging policies based on inputs (as opposed to outputs) in 1789, economist Thomas Sowell addressed it in our own time, writing:

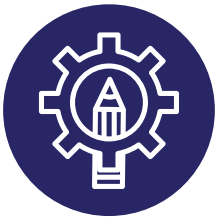
> "The real question is not which policy or system would work best ideally, but which has in fact produced better results with far from ideal human beings. Even with the more modest task of evaluating different policies within a given system, the real question is not which policy sounds more plausible, or which would work best if people behaved ideally, but which policy in fact turns out to produce better results with actual people, behaving as they actually do."[xix]

Rather than serving as a menu of theoretical "best practices," or a list of experts' policy preferences, the ECER 2022 strives to measure a state's charter school ecosystem by asking two straightforward questions:

- "How much access do students have to charters schools?"
- "What evidence do we have that the education students are getting at those charter schools is any good?"

Though states with relatively large numbers of students in charter schools, and in charter schools which are scoring well, may not have policies that echo some person's or some group's "best practices" or theoretical white papers, it is possible with widely accessible data, if a bit imperfectly, to measure the size and performance of states' charter school sectors and to compare them to each other. States' records on actually creating charter schools vary quite a bit; those charter schools' records of performance vary quite a bit as well. Policymakers and anyone else interested in improving student outcomes should look to states that rank high on the ECER 2022 and mimic their policies.

5. FUTURE WORK



Using the methods as we have in this paper, the *EFI Charter Ecosystem Rankings* (ECER) could be updated periodically. All of the access measures in this report could be updated annually. The Stanford Education Opportunity Project produces relatively recent test score results data, though COVID-affected school years will likely make this difficult for a few years beginning with the 2019-20 school year.

The ECER rankings are likely to change over time - and changes in the rankings should be expected, as state charter school sectors emerge, mature, and change. Nevada, for example, ranks first overall for the percent of students living in a ZIP code with a charter school, and 2nd for the percent increase of charter schools in the state, but the state nearly enacted a two-year ban on new charter schools in 2019.[xx] As another example, Baude, et al. found in an analysis of Texas charter schools that over the course of the decade they studied, worse-performing charter schools closed, and more effective ones both increased their enrollment and reduced their attrition. New charter schools also appeared to be higher-quality than the charter schools that had closed: "Over time," they find, "many low-performing schools closed, and the average effectiveness of new market entrants and schools remaining open throughout the decade rose."[xxi]

Thus, as charter policies change in some states, as charter sectors in some states mature, and as charter sectors are only allowed to stagnate in some states, state ECER rankings will change over time. In addition, there are two reasons to periodically update the ECER that are particular to both the accessibility and outcome data.

Accessibility

In future work, it is possible to replicate the two measures of accessibility from the Hamilton/Brookings report and the growth of each state's charter sector using the most recent year available from the Common Core of Data (CCD). At the time this report went to press, the CCD is available for the 2019-20 academic year. It is important to use contemporary data on accessibility when ranking state charter ecosystems for at least two reasons. First, the charter sector has been growing rapidly since the first charter school opened almost thirty years ago. Second, changes in state and local laws and regulations may have led to increases or declines in charter school accessibility, with a time lag. Thus, to allow policymakers, advocates, and others to assess which states have charter school policies worth emulating, they need the most recent information possible on accessibility.

Outcomes

The databases available from the Educational Opportunity Project (EOP) at Stanford University provide the most contemporary and comprehensive information on charter school performance. Specifically, the analyses done by the EOP can be compiled to create statewide averages of cohort and value-added learning gain estimates for charter school students, though, as noted above, data for the COVID-afflicted school years may be affected in different ways across states. As the EOP updates their school-level outcome data, and as testing pauses and opt-outs due to COVID enter the rear-view mirror, the ECER outcome metrics can be updated, as the relative performance of charter sectors across states will likely change as state charter laws, policies, and customs change.

Given that the data required to calculate both components of charter school accessibility are publicly available, it is possible to use them in future ranking of states.

APPENDIX

Comparing ECER 2022 to Prior Efforts to Rank States

Below, the ECER 2022, NACSA, and NAPCS rankings are listed side-by-side for comparison. Differences between the ECER 2022 rankings and the NACSA and NAPCS rankings of the District of Columbia, Indiana, Colorado, and others, have been noted above. There are other differences as well. Alabama and Mississippi, for example, which both score highly in the NACSA and NAPCS rankings, are not included in the ECER rankings. These two states are not included in the Stanford Educational Opportunity Project data – because those states have had so few charter schools to evaluate over the past decade or more. States like New York and New Jersey rank higher on the ECER 2022 index compared to the others, both perhaps because ECER 2022, unlike the other ranking systems, takes performance into account, and both New York and New Jersey ranked in the top 5 for cohort learning gains (with New Jersey placing 1st).

Table 12. ECER, NACSA (2015), NAPCS Charter School Law (2020), and NAPCS Health of the Movement (2016) Rankings

Ranking	ECER Beta	ECER 2022	NACSA	NAPCS (2020)	NAPCS (2016)
1	DC	DC	Indiana	Indiana	DC
2	Michigan	Arizona	Nevada	Colorado	Indiana
3	Rhode Island	Louisiana	Ohio	Washington	Michigan
4	Louisiana	Oklahoma	Alabama	Minnesota	Massachusetts
5	Idaho	Delaware	Texas	Alabama	Louisiana
6	Colorado	Tennessee	Minnesota	Mississippi	Florida
7	New Mexico	Nevada	Mississippi	Florida	Arizona
8	Florida	California	Missouri	Louisiana	Rhode Island
9	California	Oregon	South Carolina	Maine	Colorado
10	Texas	Rhode Island	Louisiana	DC	Missouri
11	New York	New Jersey	Oklahoma	Nevada	Texas
12	Massachusetts	New York	Delaware	Massachusetts	Nevada
13	Arizona	Idaho	Hawaii	Arizona	Ohio
14	Minnesota	Florida	Georgia	North Carolina	Georgia
15	Utah	Missouri	Tennessee	Delaware	Pennsylvania
16	Tennessee	Wisconsin	DC	Georgia	New Mexico
17	New Jersey	Alaska	Maine	Idaho	Utah
18	North Carolina	South Carolina	Arizona	New York	Oregon
19	Indiana	Indiana	Florida	South Carolina	
20	Ohio	Michigan	Idaho	California	
21	Maryland	Connecticut	Connecticut	Utah	
22	Pennsylvania	Texas	Massachusetts	Oklahoma	
23	Illinois	New Mexico	New Mexico	Ohio	
24	Georgia	Utah	North Carolina	Tennessee	
25	Missouri	Illinois	Wisconsin	New Mexico	

Ranking	ECER Beta	ECER 2022	NACSA	NAPCS (2020)	NAPCS (2016)
26	Oregon	North Carolina	Illinois	New Hampshire	
27	Arkansas	Minnesota	New Jersey	Missouri	
28	Nevada	Pennsylvania	Rhode Island	Michigan	
29	South Carolina	Arkansas	Arkansas	Texas	
30	Washington	Ohio	New Hampshire	Arkansas	
31		Georgia	California	Hawaii	
32		Hawaii	Pennsylvania	West Virginia	
33		Massachusetts	Colorado	Oregon	
34		Colorado	Michigan	New Jersey	
35		Maryland	Utah	Pennsylvania	
36			New York	Connecticut	
37			Oregon	Illinois	
38			Iowa	Rhode Island	
39			Alaska	Wisconsin	
40			Wyoming	Virginia	
41			Maryland	Iowa	
42			Virginia	Wyoming	
43			Kansas	Alaska	
44			Washington*	Kansas	
45				Maryland	

*Washington technically scored 33 – a perfect score, which would have tied the state for 1st place – but was placed at the end of the table in the NACSA report due to a legal dispute at the time.

ENDNOTES

i https://www.dictionary.com/browse/ecosystem .

ii NACSA "State Policy Analysis 2015": https://www.qualitycharters.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/NACSA_State_Policy_Analysis_2015.pdf
NAPCS "The Health of the Public Charter School Movement: A State by State Analysis 2016": http://www.publiccharters.org/sites/default/files/migrated/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Health-of-the-Movement_2016.pdf
NAPCS "Ranking of State Pubic Charter School Laws 2020:" https://www.publiccharters.org/sites/default/files/documents/2020-01/2020_model_law_ranking_report-single-draft2%20%281%29.pdf

iii https://www.qualitycharters.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/NACSA_State_Policy_Analysis_2015.pdf .

iv https://www.qualitycharters.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/NACSA_State_Policy_Analysis_2015.pdf p. 5.

v ibid p. 122.

vi See pp. 13 and 117 of the NACSA report: https://www.qualitycharters.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/NACSA_State_Policy_Analysis_2015.pdf

vii https://www.publiccharters.org/sites/default/files/documents/2020-01/2020_model_law_ranking_report-single-draft2%20%281%29.pdf p. 8.

viii ibid p. 102

ix Schanzenbach, et al., 2016. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Read-the-full-paper.pdf

x https://credo.stanford.edu/studies/charter-school-studies

xi https://credo.stanford.edu/publications/national-charter-school-study

xii See, for example, the back and forth between Caroline Hoxby and CREDO here: https://credo.stanford.edu/publications/credo-hoxby-debate .

xiii See, for example, Kelly and Scafidi (2013), http://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/More-Than-Scores.pdf .

xiv Fahle, E. M., Chavez, B., Kalogrides, D., Shear, B. R., Reardon, S. F., & Ho, A. D. (2021). Stanford Education Data Archive: Technical Documentation (Version 4.1). Retrieved from http://purl.stanford.edu/db586ns4974. A description of these data and their documentation can be retrieved from: https://edopportunity.org/ .

xv A true "value-added" measure would follow the same students across years. The measure we are describing is similar, but close for discussion purposes. More information on the Stanford EOP's methods may be found here: https://edopportunity.org/methods/

xvi For both performance measures, we aggregated data for individual charter schools in each state using a weighted average, where each school was weighted by the number of tests taken.

xvii https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Read-the-full-paper.pdf

xviii https://edopportunity.org/

xix Sowell, T. (2008). Applied economics: Thinking beyond stage one. Hachette UK.

xx https://www.rgj.com/story/news/politics/2019/04/04/proposed-charter-school-moratorium-stirs-debate/3369581002/

xxi Baude, P. L., Casey, M., Hanushek, E. A., Phelan, G. R., & Rivkin, S. G. (2020). The evolution of charter school quality. Economica, 87(345), 158-189.

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