

## Frequently Asked Questions

### EMO/CMO/Charter School Review

1. *What is an Education Management Organization (EMO)?*

According to Miron and Urschel (2009), an EMO, is an “organization or firm that manages schools that receive public funds, including district and charter public schools. A contract details the terms under which executive authority to run one or more schools is given to an EMO, usually in return for a commitment to produce measurable outcomes within a given time frame.”

2. *What is a Charter Management Organization (CMO)?*

According to the National Resource Center on Charter School Finance and Governance (NRC), a “CMO is a non-profit organization that creates a group of schools with a shared educational vision and mission.” The CMO provides administrative support to the individual schools.

3. *Are independent charter schools different than charter schools that are part of CMOs?*

According to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools Web site, the majority (77.8%) of charters schools in the United States in 2009-2010 are freestanding, having been started by educators, parents, activists, and others. Freestanding charters have the full responsibility of running a school, including the administration, finances, curricula, instruction, teacher hiring, evaluation, reporting, etc. This myriad of tasks can be challenging for a freestanding school without the benefit of a larger organization behind it. As a result, EMOs and CMOs have sprung up since charters began appearing in 1991. These organizations serve the basic purpose of providing centralized support to a group of schools. They provide the administrative support to hire, evaluate, and provide professional development for the teaching staff, while fulfilling reporting and financial oversight responsibilities.

4. *How were studies selected for inclusion in this review?*

The following criteria were used to guide the selection of research for this review:

- Publication after 2004
- Research reports include a description of methodology
- Studies span multiple states and match students and schools to similar students and schools
- When possible, studies include charter schools that use lottery systems for accepting applicants.
- Studies are listed in The U.S. Department of Education What Works Clearinghouse

[http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/search/?output=xml\\_no\\_dtd&client=wwc&site=wwc&q=Charter+Schools](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/search/?output=xml_no_dtd&client=wwc&site=wwc&q=Charter+Schools)).

5. *Are EMOs, CMOs or charter schools more effective than Traditional Public Schools (TPSs) in raising student achievement?*  
Taken in its totality, the research on charter schools' effectiveness in raising student achievement in comparison to TPSs is inconclusive. Some studies demonstrated that charters did better than TPSs. Others demonstrated they were not as successful as TPSs. Still others found no difference.
6. *Are charter schools effective at elementary, middle, and/or high school?*  
There are more studies supporting successful middle school charters (see question 8). Few studies reported results specifically about elementary schools and high schools and results are mixed.
7. *Are charter schools better at raising achievement in reading/language arts and/or mathematics?*  
As with overall achievement, the results of studies comparing reading/language arts and mathematics achievement support the conclusion that research is not definitive. There are almost equal numbers of studies finding better, worse, or no differences between charter schools and TPSs.
8. *Which management organizations are successful?*  
The most positive findings about any management organization were about the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) at middle schools where four studies reported positive impacts on student achievement.
9. *How do I know if an EMO, CMO, or independent charter school matches what is identified through my needs assessment?*  
Unfortunately, no research was identified that directly answers this question.
10. *I have heard that the longer students attend a charter school the better they do academically. Is this true?*  
A number of studies found that during the first year, student achievement declined. Some of these same studies found that after the initial decline test scores improved in subsequent years. However, Gill et al (2005) questioned whether the increases would compensate for the first year decline. This concern suggests that subsequent gains must be considered in comparison to potential first-year declines.