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CHARTER SCHOOL ENROLLMENT GROWS AS OVERALL PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT DECLINES STATEWIDE

Popularity of charter schools in Florida increases -- enrollment now exceeds 104,000

FLORIDA – For ten consecutive years, enrollment in Florida public charter schools has steadily increased. This school year (2007-2008), statewide student enrollment in charter schools grew to 104,267.

Although statewide enrollment figures for public schools have taken a dip, enrollment at the state's public charter schools had continued to grow since their inception in 1996. Florida currently has 359 public charter schools serving the second largest public charter school enrollment in the nation. These figures, released by the Florida Department of Education in December 2007, are based on the number of full-time students that have been reported to DOE by the public schools districts.

"The increased enrollment in charter schools is a testament to parental choice in public education and the great work charter schools are doing in our state," said Micheal Kooi, executive director of the Florida Consortium of Public Charter Schools, the state's charter school association. "It is evident that charter schools are meeting the education need of families, particularly in under-served communities."

A report released by the National Alliance of Public Charter Schools in November 2006 shows that Hispanic student in charter schools are increasingly outperforming their non-charter counterparts on national and state tests and exceeding learning gains of non-charter students despite starting off behind. The study found that Hispanic charter school students, while starting out further behind, exceed the learning gains of non-charter students on a norm-referenced reading test. It also found that they match the learning gains of non-charter students in three other areas.

Charter schools are tuition-free public schools created on the basis of an agreement or charter between the school and their sponsor. Charter schools have expanded freedom to develop curriculum in return for a commitment to meet higher standards of financial and academic accountability.

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