



**INDEPENDENT
JOURNAL REVIEW**

Data Shows That Secretary Of Education Nominee Betsy DeVos Improved Education In Detroit

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Betsy DeVos was selected by Donald Trump to be Secretary of Education based on her long record as an advocate of school choice, both nationally and in her home state of Michigan.

But according to the *New York Times*, DeVos has done great “damage” to public education in her state. She has “bent Detroit to her will on charter schools” and defended policies that led to “the biggest education reform disaster in the country” wherein “half of charters perform as well as or worse than public schools.”

As they say on Twitter: big, if true.

After all, whenever a Republican signals support for school choice, you can count on teachers’ unions and their Democratic allies to scream that Republicans are out to “destroy public education.” But if DeVos’ school choice policies helped create charter schools that performed worse than the worst-in-the-nation Detroit public schools, then we would have good reason to fear that this time it’s actually not hollow rhetoric.

Good thing, then, that it’s false.

Every study on Detroit’s schools tells us the exact opposite from what the *New York Times* would have its readers believe.

To set the record straight, the Cato Institute’s Jason Bedrick and I aggregated every study comparing charters to district schools in Detroit at [Education Next](#). I’d encourage those curious about the methodological details to visit their site, but for here I’ll just show you the graphs – they speak well enough for themselves.

Study One: [Stanford’s Center for Research on Educational Outcomes](#)

According to Stanford University researchers, more than half of charter schools in Detroit outperform public schools, and less than ten percent under-perform. Their [study](#) of Michigan’s charter sector concludes that

the typical student in Michigan charter schools gains more learning in a year than his [traditional public school (TPS)] counterparts, amounting to about two months of

additional gains in reading and math. These positive patterns are even more pronounced in Detroit, where historically student academic performance has been poor.

In a follow up study, the researchers conclude that Detroit sets an example “of school-level and system-level commitments to quality that can serve as models to other communities.”

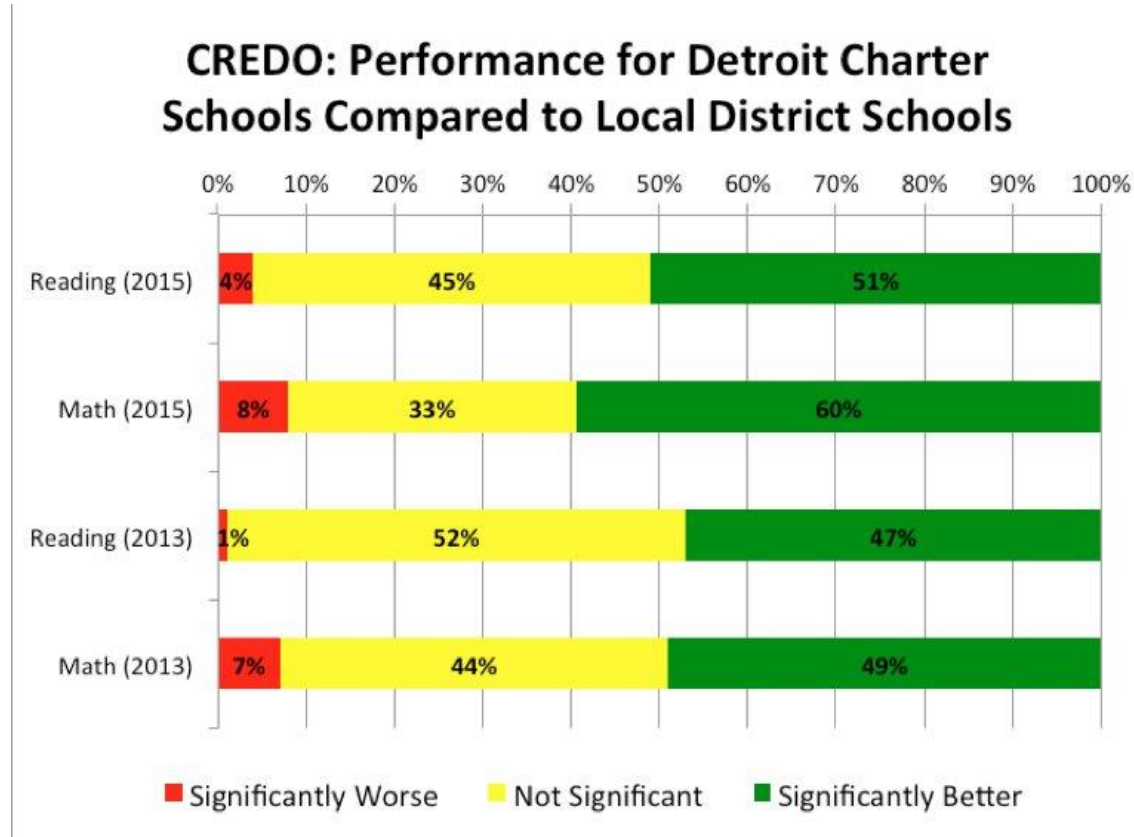


Image credit: Education Next

Study Two: The Mackinac Center

The Mackinac Center, a center-right public policy think tank based in Michigan, grades schools by predicting a school's economic performance based on students' demographic background and seeing how the schools stack up in reality. As you can see, charters get much better grades - especially when we take out selective admissions public schools that truly don't belong in the mix.

Mackinac: A-F Grades for Detroit Charter and District Schools



Image credit: Education Next

Study Three: Excellent Schools Detroit

Excellent Schools Detroit, a local education non-profit, grades schools on test scores and school climate surveys. Again, the results are unmistakable. Charter schools are consistently better than district schools in Detroit.

Don't get me wrong – this doesn't mean that they're good. Detroit's public schools are just about the worst in the country. Being better than the worst isn't a mark of great distinction. But they are better, which is the opposite of what the *New York Times* and the mainstream media would have you believe.

Excellent Schools Detroit: Grades for Detroit Charter and District Schools

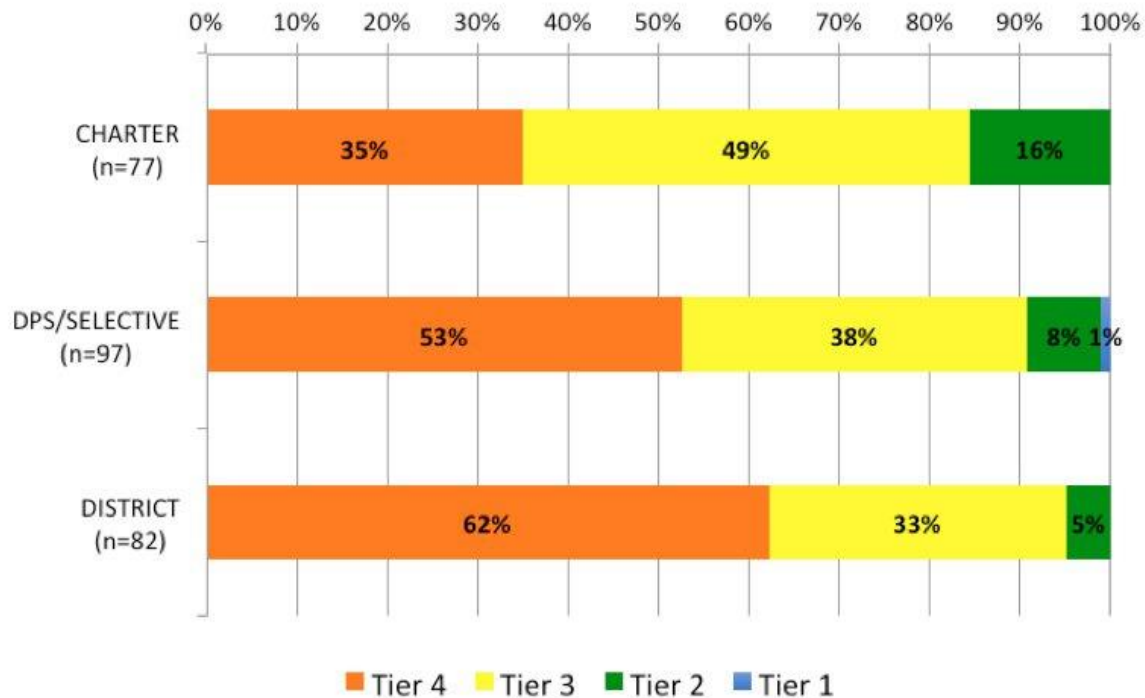


Image credit: Education Next

DeVos' reforms might not have worked miracles. She certainly did not make Detroit schools great again. But her reforms have given more and better options to poor students stuck in perpetually failing schools. That's a noble, honorable record for a Secretary of Education. And it's less than noble or honorable for the media to slander it.