**Report on the Performance of Schools in the District**

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In the following report, data is analyzed to assess the academic performances of students at schools in the district for the academic year 2022-23. Math and reading scores for attending students were tabulated. Students were deemed to have passed if they achieved a %70 + in both math and reading tests. Performance trends could then be extrapolated to determine a course of action moving forward.

The report looks at data covering 39,170 students attending 15 schools across the district for the year 2022-23. The school board’s budget for the aforementioned academic year is $24,649,428.00. During that year, the average math score was 78.9 and the average reading score was 81.9. Of the total student population, 74.9% passed math and 85.8% passed reading. However, only 65.1% of the student population achieved passing marks in both math and reading. As such, it is concerning to note that some one third of the student population are not achieving satisfactory results in math and reading exams.

There are two types of schools within the district: district schools governed by a district school board and charter schools governed by individual charters. Of the 15 schools in the district, 7 are district schools and 8 are charter schools.

According to the percentage of students with overall passing scores, the top five schools in terms of performance are charter schools whereas the bottom five schools are all district schools. Moreover, the majority of charter schools cost less per student when compared to district schools. Only 1 of the 8 charter schools – Thomas High School – spends more than $630 on each student. In contrast, only 1 of the 7 district schools – Bailey High School spends less than $630 per student, with the rest all costing between $630 and $680 per attending student.

Perhaps counter-intuitively, the schools that spent less per student performed better across all reading and math metrics than the higher costing schools. However, the data suggests further factors in play. All the district schools in question fall under the “large” size category with a student population of 2000-5000, whereas charter schools mostly fall under the 1000 to 2000 student size category of medium. In fact, two charter schools – Holden High School and Pena High School, both have populations of less than 1000 students. Consequently, an analysis of math and reading performances reflects higher scores among small and medium sized schools relative to large schools. This is especially the case with the percentage of students passing math. Whereas some 93.5% of students at small (< 1000 students) and medium (1000 to 2000 students) schools achieved passing math scores, only 69.9% of students at large schools did the same. Reading scores showed a similar trend downward albeit not to the same degree.

Pedagogical science studies have shown repeatedly the relationship between low student-to-teacher ratios and academic growth. This is especially true in math and science, where one on one time with the teacher is key in reinforcing class lessons. It is therefore not surprising to note that the smaller charter schools, despite spending less per student, are demonstrating higher math and readings cores on average (83.47 and 83.89) as opposed to average scores at the larger district schools (76.95 and 80.96).

Furthermore, a much higher proportion of students are passing math and reading at charter schools (90.43%) compared to students at district schools. Students at the latter schools are suffering with poor math performances in particular, with only 66.55% of students achieving a 70+ score in math. This data further reinforces the disparity in academics between smaller charter schools and larger district schools.

However, this report does come with several caveats. Firstly, charter schools are governed by their individual charters. Although most municipal and provincial/state laws tend to prohibit charter schools from formally limiting admissions via entry exams, many charter schools tend to avoid these restrictions by requiring a lengthy application process that would discourage prospective families.

In contrast, district schools all follow laws requiring the provision of public education to all children in a given district. Academic performance scores thus reflect a broad cross-section of the district’s population whereas charter schools may be less representative of the broader population of the city.

It is true that district schools tend to spend on average more per student than charter schools. Despite such spending, however, academic performances lag. There are several factors here worth examining. Firstly, data is needed to assess class sizes in particular. How many students are there in a given class? What is the student to teacher ratio? What after-school care activities are offered?

These questions also matter due to the social and class dynamics that would affect students at a critical time in their development. A study of the family income status of students at each school would provide a valuable insight into these factors. Prior studies by pedagogical and social work academics have shown that charter schools tend to serve a more affluent population relative to district schools. As such, charter school students may find it easier to access resources such as after-school tutoring that would thus improve academic performance. Meanwhile, district school students may be experiencing more precarious home environments with a lower socio-economic background. Such factors would thus impede studying at home and provide further obstacles to the success of the students.

Nevertheless, the current data does offer some insight. Given the success of the top 5 schools in the district, it would be productive to review their policies to determine what common grounds exist that have encouraged the success. Concurrently, a thorough review of the bottom 5 schools is warranted to determine if any shared policies and practices may be causing poor academic performances among students. In conclusion, further study is required to determine what, if any, correlation exists between student academic performance and the student’s socio-economic/family conditions. A study on class sizes and teacher employment data may be useful as well. Finally, the academic metrics themselves should be analyzed further as standardized examination has demonstrated significant weakness and an inability to take into account alternative pedagogical models of success.