

DATA BRIEF: Human Services Involvement of Home-Schooled and Cyber Charter School-Enrolled Students in PPS

While home-schooling is a well-established concept and practice, the growth of cyber charter schools in Pennsylvania can be traced back only to 2000, with the chartering of the PA Cyber Charter School. By 2012, there were 12 cyber charter schools operating in Pennsylvania.

Any Pennsylvania child can be home-schooled or can enroll in a public cyber charter school. Cyber charter school education typically occurs in the home, online and/or through more traditional textbook-based lessons, and the curriculum is established and controlled by the school. This is in contrast to home schooling, in which parents have significantly more autonomy and flexibility in curriculum selection and design. Standardized testing and graduation requirements of the home school district apply to both.

Of the 27,606 students enrolled in Pittsburgh Public Schools at the end of the 2011-2012 school year, 797 (three percent) were enrolled in a cyber charter school and 172 (less than one percent) were home-schooled. Demographic information comparing these students to the general district population follows:

Gender

The gender breakdown of students enrolled in cyber charter schools aligned to that of the general district population (51 percent female and 49 percent male). Males were over-represented among home-schooled students (58 percent male and 42 percent female).

Race

The racial breakdowns of cyber charter school-enrolled students and home-schooled students did not align to district rates. While the percentage of white students was larger and the percentage of African American students was smaller for both groups, the disparity was greater for home-schooled students. The table below shows the comparison.

Racial Breakdown by School Type, School Year 2011-2012

	PITTSBURGH PUBLIC SCHOOLS	CYBER CHARTER SCHOOL	HOME SCHOOL
African American	55%	32%	17%
White	35%	59%	76%
Multi-Racial	6%	5%	6%
Asian	3%	2%	N/A
Hispanic	2%	2%	1%

Human Services Involvement

Home-schooled students had very little involvement in human services, and the percentage of involvement by cyber charter school-enrolled students was less than that of all students in Pittsburgh Public Schools. The greatest differences were in prior child welfare involvement (28 percent district-wide, compared to 13 percent of students in cyber charter schools and one percent of home-schooled students) and prior mental health involvement (17 percent district-wide, 11 percent cyber charter school-enrolled students and two percent home-schooled students). An analysis of referrals to the child welfare system during the years 2009 through 2011 showed that 16 percent of students district-wide, eight percent of cyber charter school students and only one home-schooled student were referred.