



Myth vs. Fact

The Truth About Personalized Learning and Non-Classroom Based Public Charter Schools

Personalized Learning public charter schools' classification as non-classroom based is a misnomer as many schools provide in-person learning. Instead of using traditional classroom-based seat time to account for student attendance, Personalized Learning student attendance is based on engagement in and completion of teacher assigned state-aligned curriculum. Unfortunately, the term "non-classroom based" has led to deep misunderstanding, false perceptions, and misinformation about how these public charter schools work and the success they have in educating nearly 200,000 K-12 students throughout the state. As a result, state policies are being enacted that harm thousands of disadvantaged public school students and could deny them an educational program where they can succeed.

Below are the FACTS and TRUTH about Personalized Learning and non-classroom based public charter schools.



Myth: All non-classroom based public charter schools provide online education only.

Fact: The majority of the 310 non-classroom based public charter schools in California deliver learning in multiple education settings. According to a recent report from the California Charter Schools Association (CCSA), a very small percentage, 9% of the total non-classroom based public charter schools (NCBs) in the state, provide online education only.

Many non-classroom based public charter schools provide Personalized Learning in which students receive a tailored blend of both synchronous and asynchronous learning through in-person instruction at resource centers and school campuses, distance learning, independent study, home study, community-based learning, internships and CTE pathways.



Myth: Non-classroom based public charter schools are cheaper to run and need less money than traditional schools.

Fact: California law defines non-classroom based as any school in which more than 20% of total instruction is provided outside of a classroom. Most Personalized Learning public charter schools operate physical school facilities where they provide in-person learning as well as meals for enrolled students. Many students come to these resource centers and school campuses several days a week to fulfill their learning assignments under the direct supervision of a credentialed teacher.

Individualizing learning for each student is more costly than a one-size-fits-all model that uses the same textbook, pacing, environment, and education delivery for all students. Most Personalized Learning public charter schools support a variety of choices and options in curriculum, courses, programs, pathways, activities, and other instructional support services to tailor a personalized plan for every student. Despite this, state policies unjustifiably exclude ALL non-classroom based charter schools from all state facility subsidy programs, from most of the recent Federal learning loss funds, and from pandemic related school site reopening funds.

Myth: Non-classroom based public charter schools do not operate facilities for in-person learning.

Fact: Most Personalized Learning public charter schools, as well as many other non-classroom based public charter schools, operate resource center facilities and school campuses where they provide traditional classes; science, computer, and math labs; special education and special needs services; English language development programs; CTE programs, testing and assessment programs; tutoring; counseling services; resource libraries, and more.



A SNAPSHOT OF APLUS+ MEMBER SCHOOL FACILITIES AND STUDENTS

190+

Total number of APLUS+ members' resource centers and school campuses

1.7+ million

Total square footage of learning space



57,000+

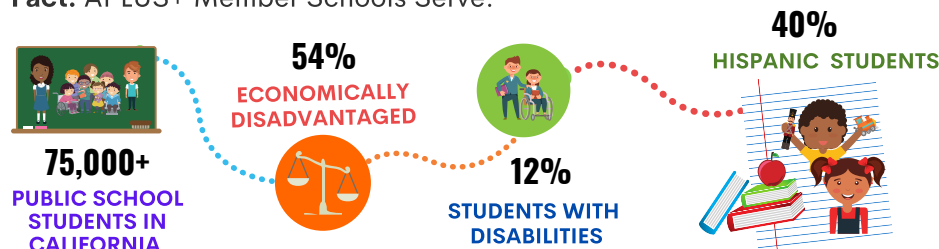
Total number of students accessing facilities for one or more learning activities

75%

Total percentage of students accessing APLUS+ member school facilities

Myth: Charter schools attract the cream of the crop and only enroll wealthy and academic proficient students.

Fact: APLUS+ Member Schools Serve:



The state designation of socio-economically disadvantaged students means they are eligible for free or reduced lunch, are foster youth, homeless, migrant, or their parent does not have a high school diploma.

In full compliance with admissions law, APLUS+ Personalized Learning public charter schools and other non-classroom based charter schools do not pick and choose which students to admit.

Myth: Students at Personalized Learning public charter schools have lower academic performance than students at traditional schools.

Fact: Many Personalized Learning public charters that are part of the APLUS+ network of schools meet or exceed California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) state standards, especially for disadvantaged student demographics such as homeless students, those with disabilities or low socio-economic status.

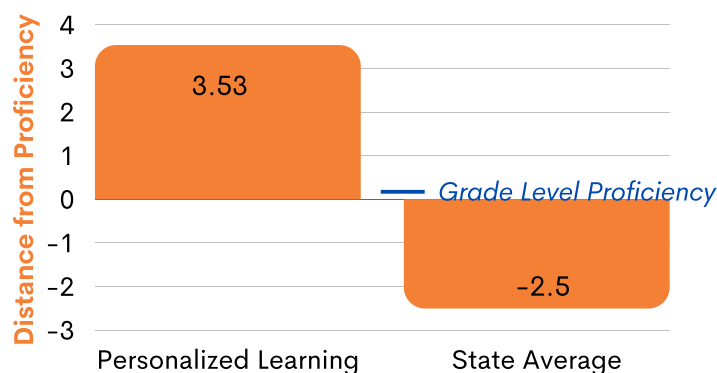
ACCORDING TO RESEARCH FROM THE RAND CORPORATION

“Students in schools using Personalized Learning strategies made greater academic progress over the course of two years than a comparison group of students with similar academic performance and from schools with similar demographic profiles.”

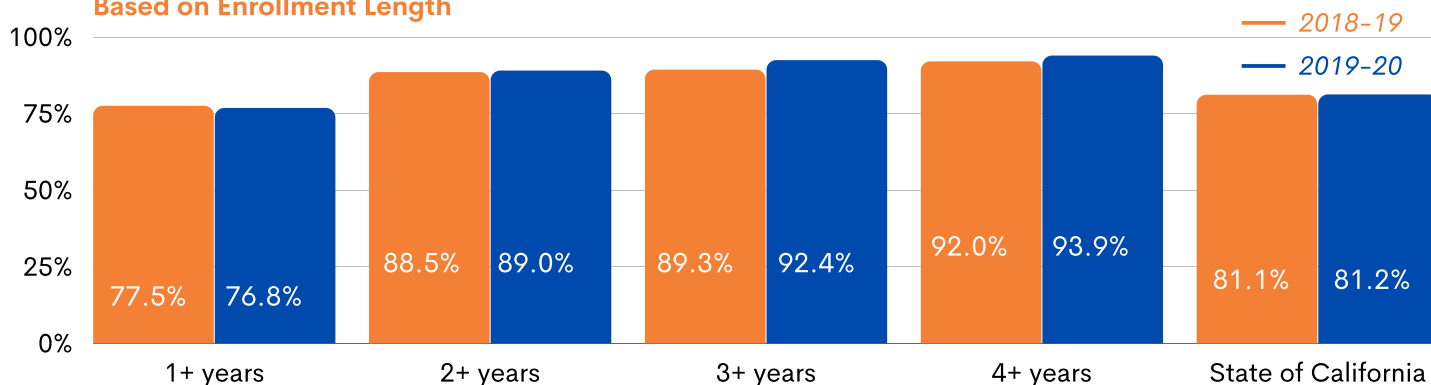
“Personalized Learning students surpassed national norms after two years. In both mathematics and reading, cumulative growth over the past two years is evident. Students started significantly below national norms, gained ground after one academic year, placing them above national norms at the end of the two years.”

APLUS+ research has consistently shown that the longer students stay in a Personalized Learning environment the better their academic results. After two years at an APLUS+ Personalized Learning school students test above grade level proficiency.

2018-2019 English Language Arts (ELA) Test Results



2019 and 2020 APLUS+ High School Graduation Rates for Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Students Based on Enrollment Length



Also, about one third (32%) of all NCBs in the state are classified as Dashboard Alternative Status Schools (DASS), which is a designation given by the CA Department of Education to schools that serve a high proportion of students with multiple expulsions, are chronically absent, high school dropouts, adults, or teen parents. This is much higher than the proportion of site-based charter schools that are DASS (only 4%). The state has a separate set of criteria for DASS schools so comparing all NCBs to traditional public schools is not an accurate comparison.

Myth: If students currently enrolled in non-classroom based public charter schools return to traditional schools they will perform better.

Fact: Many students currently enrolled in non-classroom based public charter schools were having difficulty functioning at traditional schools. Tens of thousands of students are choosing Personalized Learning public charter schools and other non-classroom based charters because they have fallen far below grade level proficiency in Math and English Language Arts, are credit deficient, have failing grades, are experiencing socio-emotional challenges, dropped out, were expelled, were bullied, or experienced other traumatic circumstances. Many of these students and their parents, in opting for a new learning process that is a better match for their needs, do not desire to return to traditional classroom based learning at this time. Additionally, it is highly likely that many NCB students will decline in performance if they return to a rigid classroom-only model as they will encounter the same issues and challenges that drove them to a Personalized Learning model and away from traditional brick-and-mortar education.



Myth: Personalized Learning means students can choose content or activities that are not aligned with state standards.

Fact: Personalized Learning public charter schools adhere to the same state standards as every other public school in California. The standards-aligned curriculum is assigned by each student's credentialed teacher and designed to meet or exceed common core state standards. Students who attend Personalized Learning public charter schools take the CAASPP test each year that is administered in all public schools throughout the state. In addition, most Personalized Learning public charter schools administer nationally rated individualized assessments that are aligned with California standards to determine each student's academic growth and proficiency within each school year.

Myth: Independent study students are not supervised by credentialed teachers.

Fact: According to the California Department of Education, "independent study students work independently, according to a written agreement and under the general supervision of a credentialed teacher or teachers. While independent study students follow the district-adopted curriculum and meet the district graduation requirements, independent study offers flexibility to meet individual student needs, interests, and styles of learning."

APLUS+ member schools are in full compliance with independent study law, and ensure that all enrolled students are assigned to and supervised by a credentialed teacher. To help raise the standards of quality across the entire independent study sector, the APLUS+ network supports having even stronger guidelines, expectations, and school policies for independent study teacher responsibilities and student/teacher relationships codified into state law.



Myth: Non-classroom based public charter schools consistently misuse public funds.

Fact: Unfortunately, the actions of two bad actors have marred the image and reputation of high quality non-classroom based public charter schools. Over the past two years, California passed several reforms - AB 1505, AB 1507, and SB 126 - all of which address the claims about corruption.

Also, under California law, non-classroom based public charter schools are required to meet instructional cost ratios. For example, if a non-classroom based charter school spends less than 80% of its budget on instructional support, less than 40% of its budget on certificated teacher salaries and benefits, or if their student-to-teacher ratio exceeds 25:1, their funding is reduced.

The APLUS+ Personalized Learning Network Association and its 85 member schools have stood on a solid foundation of integrity, accountability, and academic excellence for 19 years, and APLUS+ requires that its member schools pledge to these high standards annually as a condition of membership.