

# Charter Schools in New Jersey

## Interim Report

# Charter Landscape

- **Expand Options and Encourage Innovation**

- Charters provide families—especially low-income families—with much-needed alternatives within public education.
- The charter sector provides a supportive environment for innovative programs
- We recently approved 23 new charters, including a number in struggling districts as well as the first virtual charters.
- This fall, we will have nearly 100 charters across the state, making NJDOE the nation's 4<sup>th</sup> largest charter authorizer

- **Accountability**

- But not all charters are high-performing—and that's our standard. “Just better than the nearby neighborhood school” is not good enough.
- We will continue to support charter school expansion, but it will always be with an eye on quality. We will not hesitate to close charters failing to live up to their promise.
- We recently placed two charters on probation.

# Charter Performance: Initial Data

- **Charters and Districts**

- Charter advantage across Abbotts:

- In LAL, 79 percent of charters outperformed their home districts
    - In math, 69 percent of charters outperformed their home districts

- Newark

- 7 of 9 charters outperformed district
    - Several charters outperformed the state average

- Camden: 4 of 4 charters outperformed district

- But this is high level data, requiring much deeper analysis

- <http://www.nj.gov/education/chartsch/expectations.pdf>

# Ongoing Analysis

- While these data are directionally informative, we will continue to pursue deeper analysis to understand:
  - Charter performance for all student groups;
  - The reasons why some charters out / under perform their home districts
- We will expand the quantity and quality of data that is on the internet about all schools, including charters, to encourage thoughtful analysis and transparency.
- In the very near future, we will commission an independent analysis of all this data to further inform our charter policies

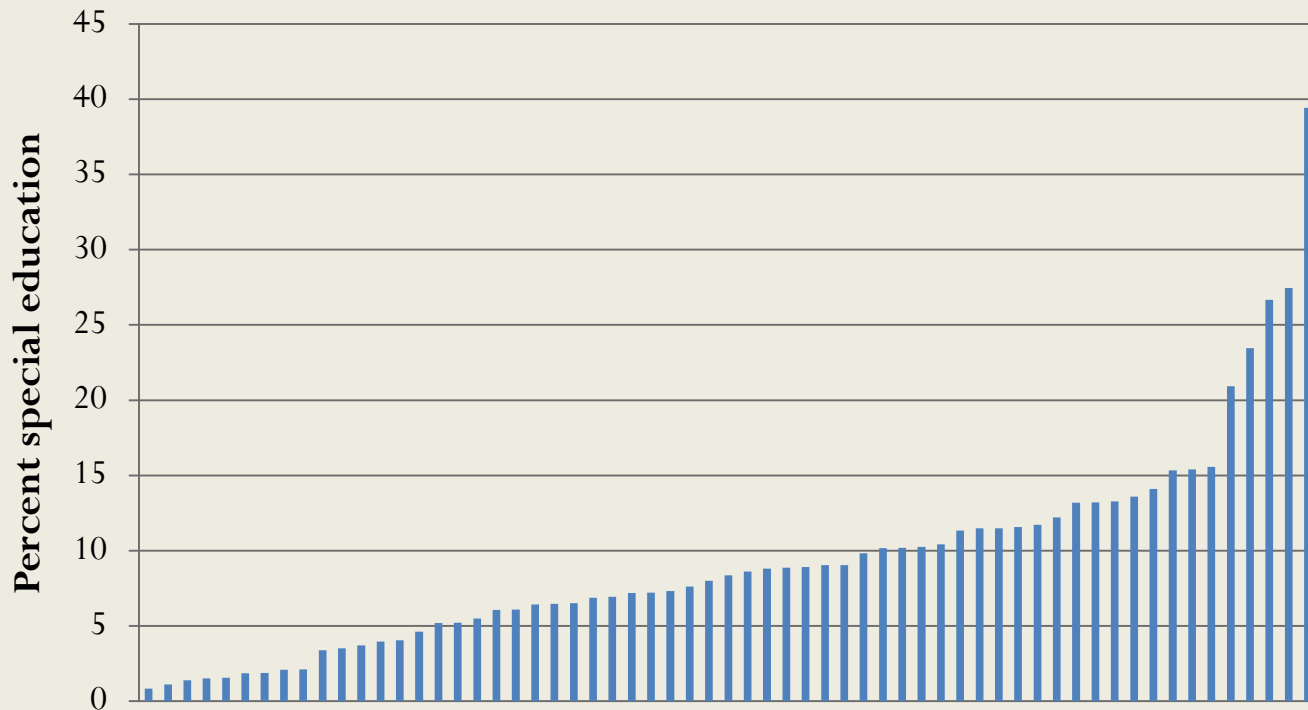
# Special Education

- On average, charters serve a smaller number of students with disabilities than traditional public schools
  - District public school average: 15.87%
  - Charter public school average: 8.24%
- Although lower, this figure dispels the myth that charters aren't serving special needs children
- As of October 2009, more than 1,700 students with disabilities were attending charters.
- New Jersey's special education classification rate consistently ranks among the nation's highest
  - In Camden, 30% of district 8<sup>th</sup> grade test takers are identified as students with disabilities

# Special Education

- It is also important to note the variation in classification percentages within the charter sector.

**Charter Schools and Special Education**



# Special Education

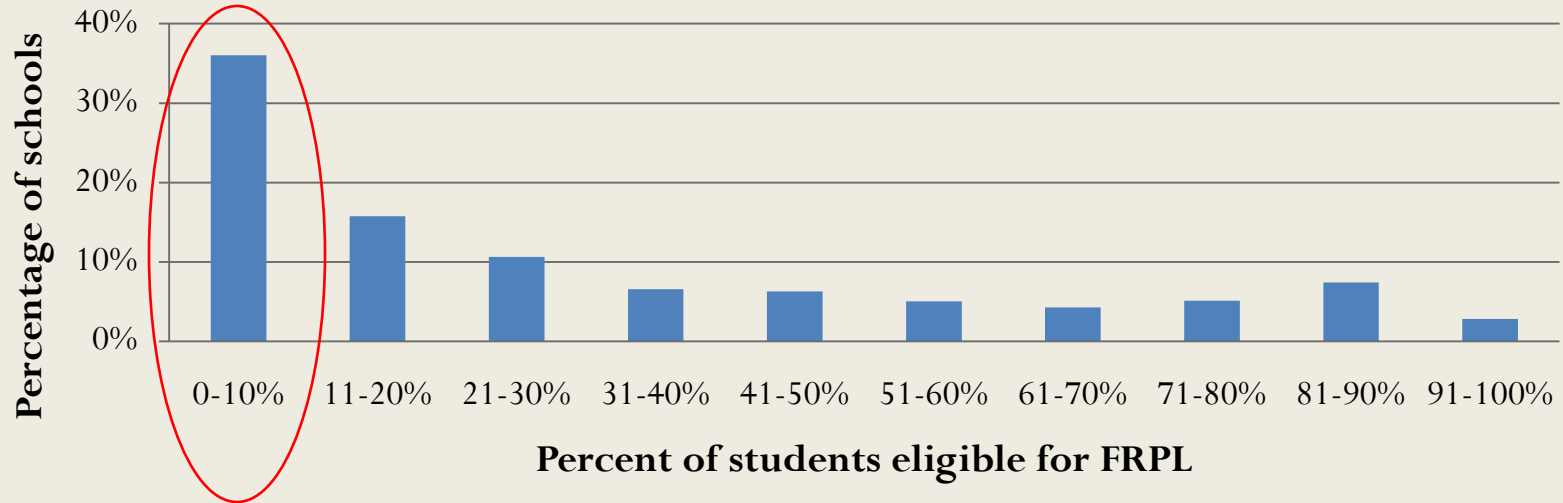
- Do charters push out special education students?
  - Some charter schools may directly or indirectly indicate to families of students with disabilities that they are not able to address the individual needs of the students.
- Other possible explanations:
  - Parents of some special education students with intensive needs are satisfied with the specialized services their children receive
  - Charters might successfully educate students in their general education programs and not need to refer students for special education
  - Some parents of students with disabilities are reluctant to send their children to new programs that do not have a history of serving students with disabilities.
  - Charters currently serve fewer high grades, and in some urban district schools, special education classifications grow each year

# Free and Reduced-price Lunch

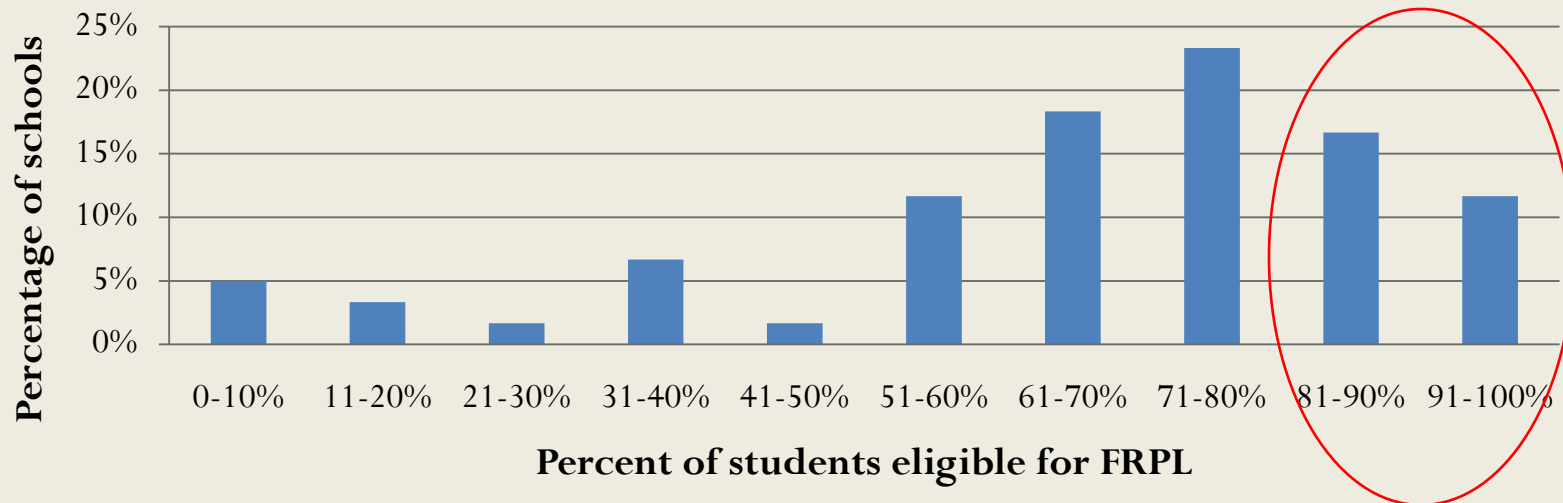
- The state aid formula does not distinguish between “free” and “reduced”-price lunch count.
- New Jersey combines free and reduced for federal AYP determination purposes
- All students in both these categories are generally used by researchers throughout the country as a good enough proxy for “economically disadvantaged”
- And most important, research shows that concentration of poverty in schools creates unique challenges, and most charters in NJ cross a threshold of concentrated poverty that makes these distinctions meaningless



## District Schools, FRPL

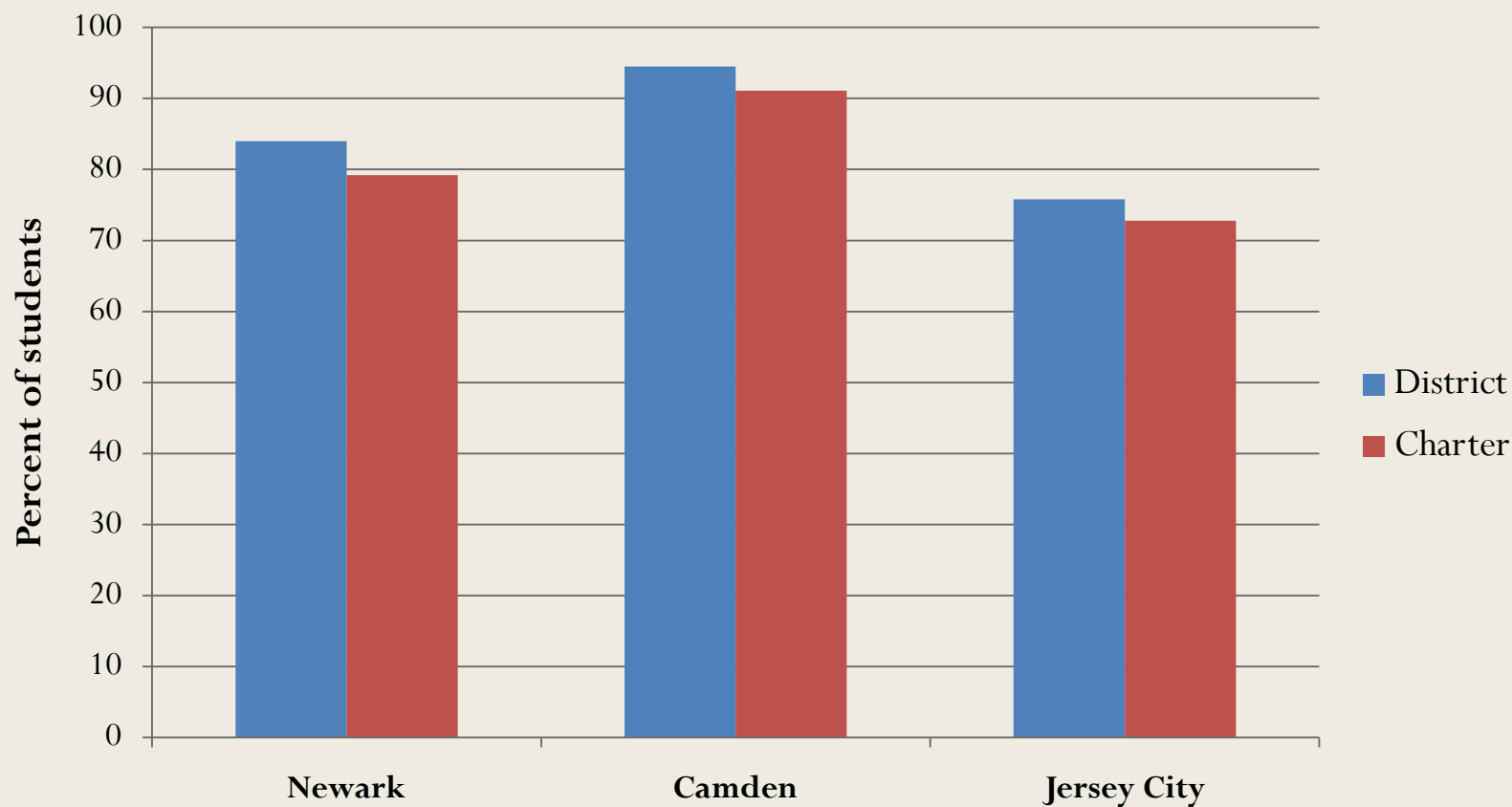


## Charter Schools, FRPL



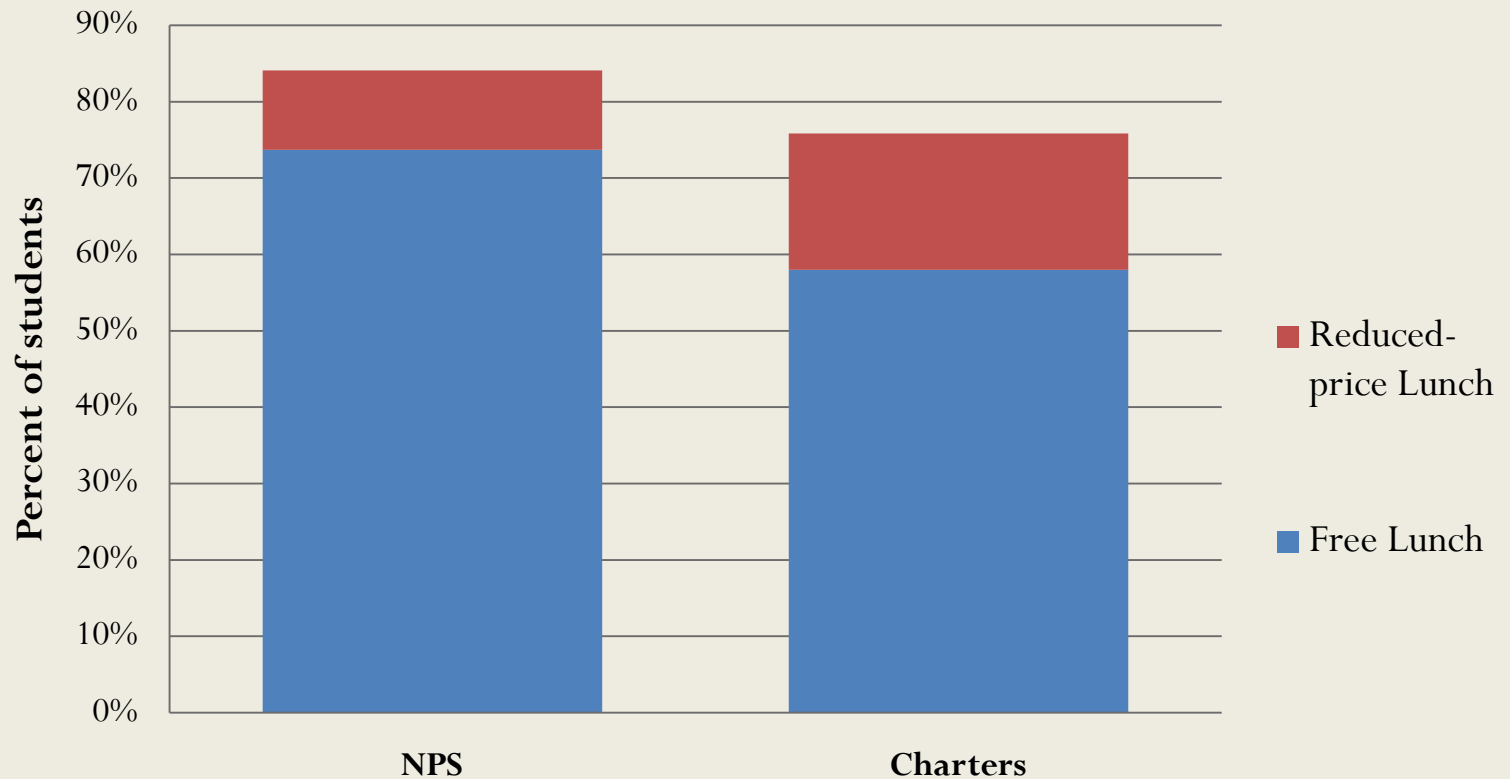
# Urban Student Poverty, by Sector

## Economically Disadvantaged, 8th Grade



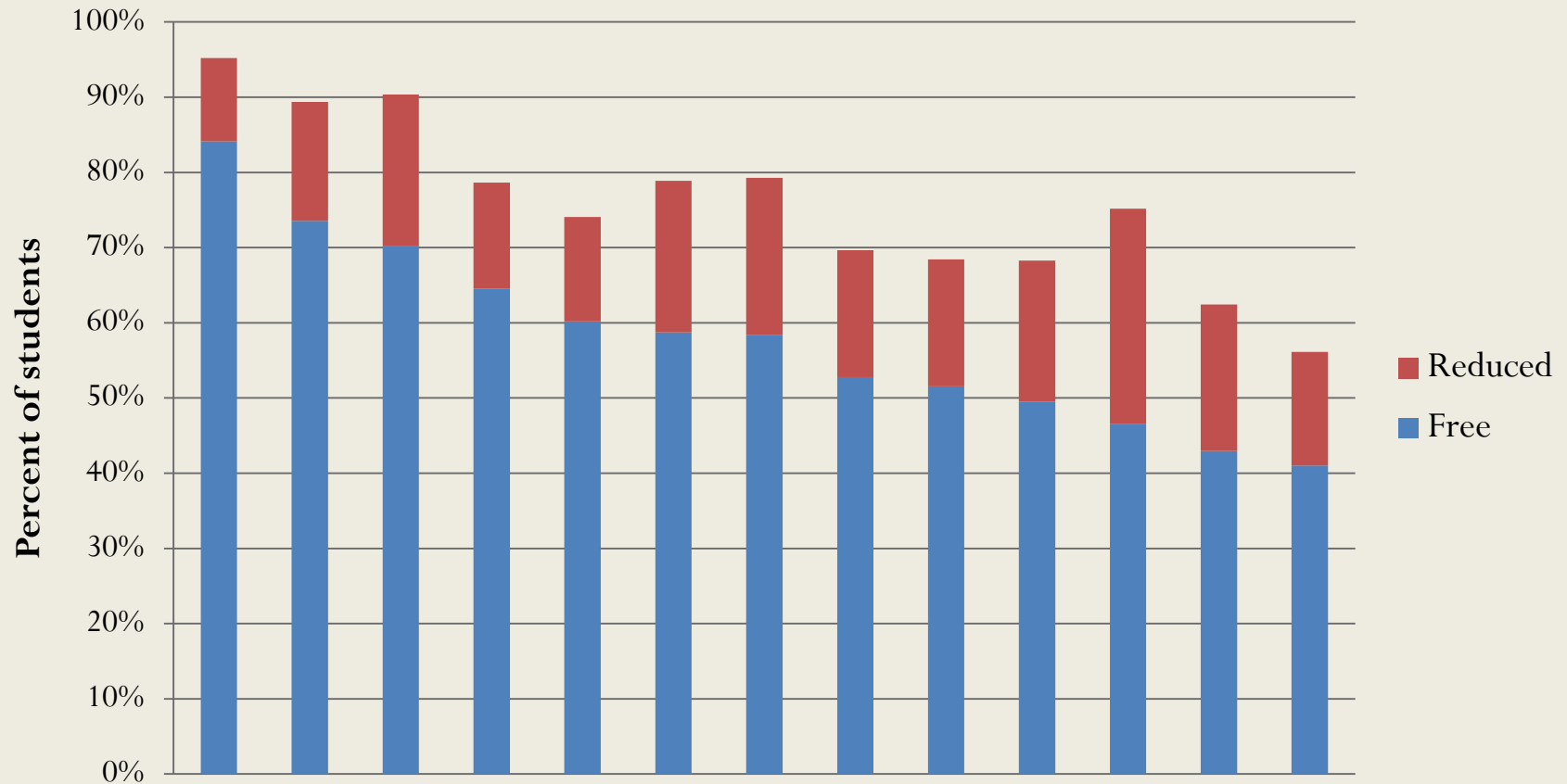
# Free vs. Reduced-price Lunch

## Newark Student Poverty



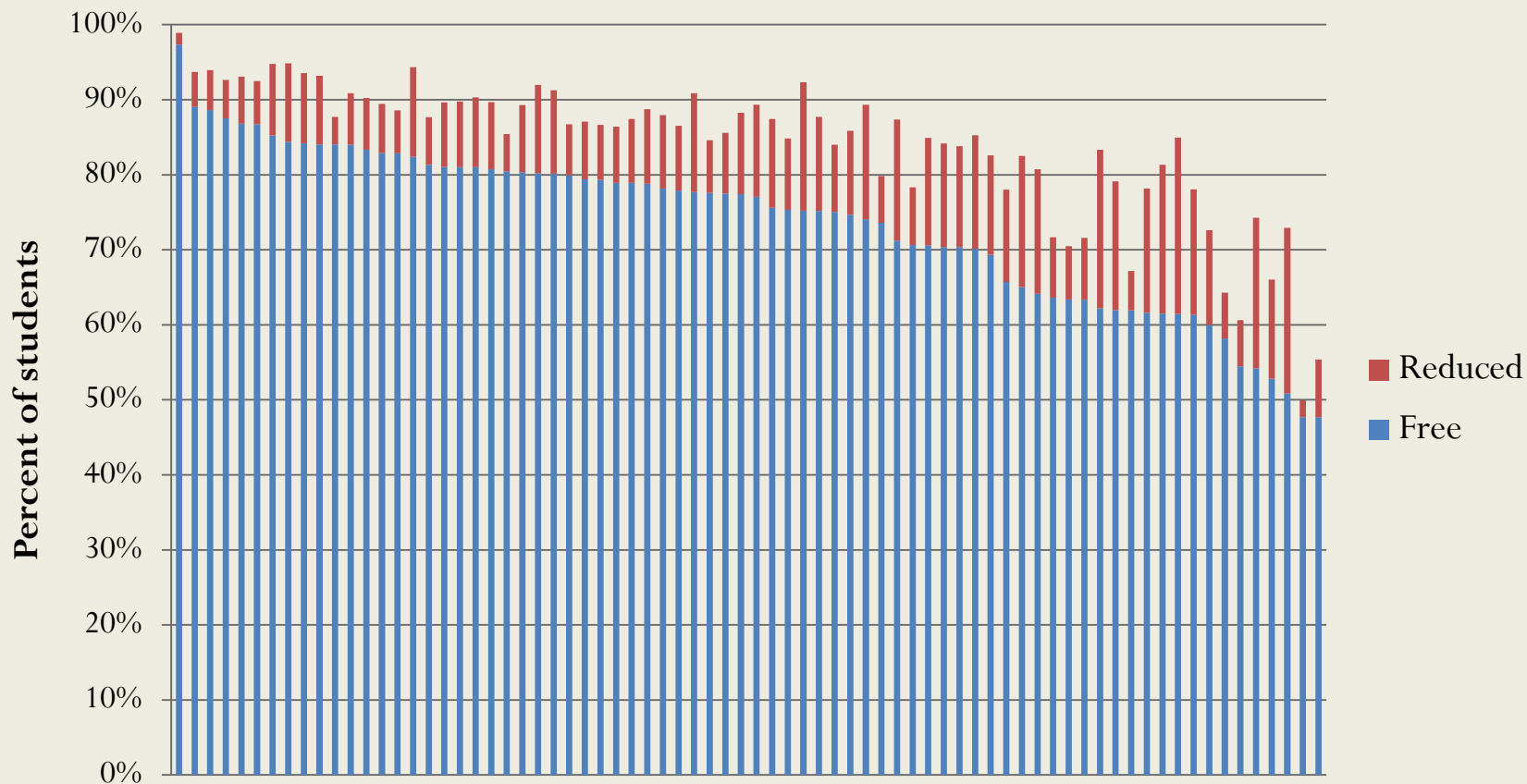
# Free vs. Reduced-price Lunch

## Newark Student Poverty, Charters



# Free vs. Reduced-price Lunch

## Newark Student Poverty, NPS

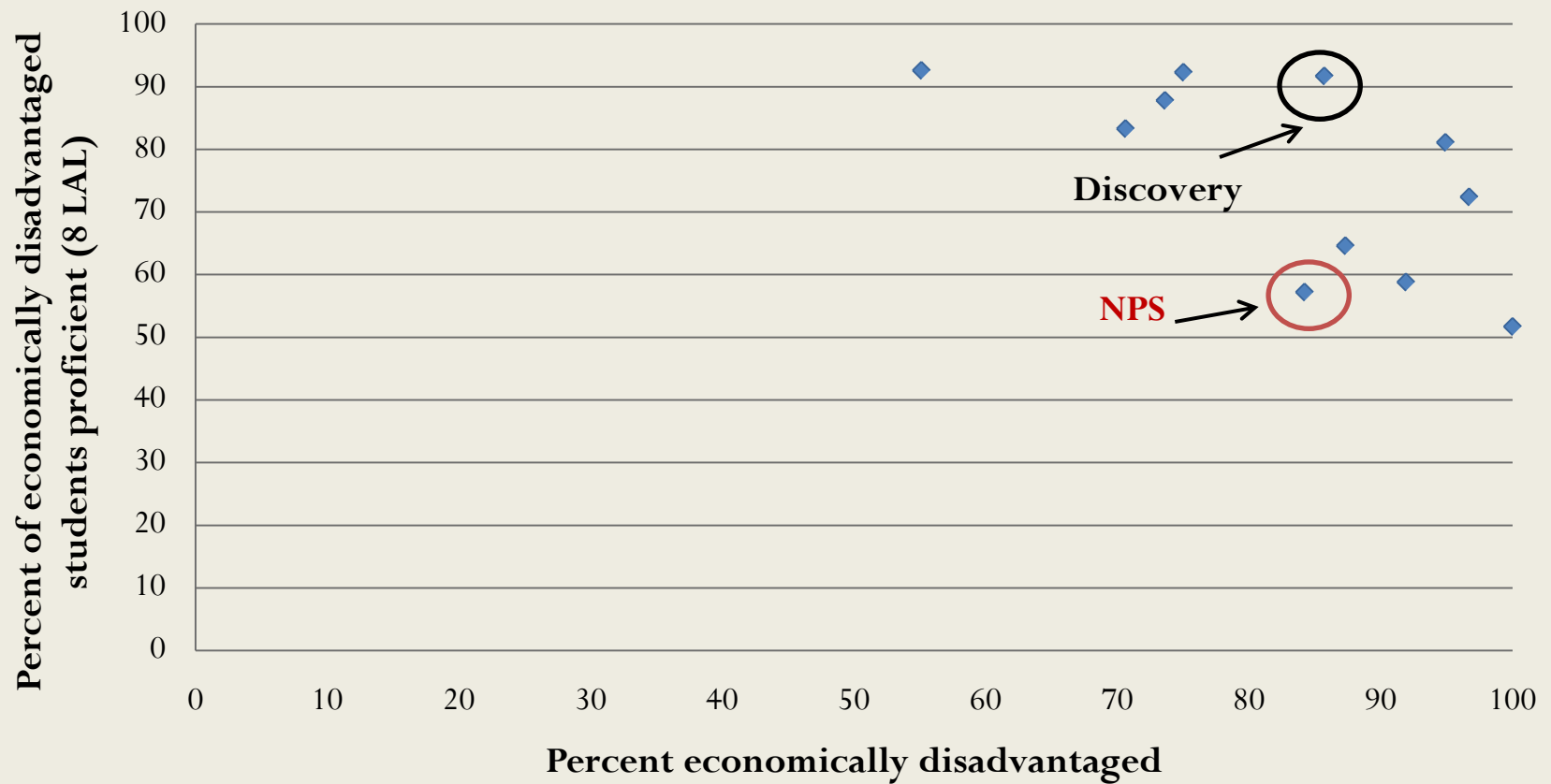


# Charter Performance: Follow-up Data

- Removed special education and ELL from comparison
  - Still a charter advantage: more charters outscored their local districts statewide.
  - The charter advantage appears to grow in higher grades

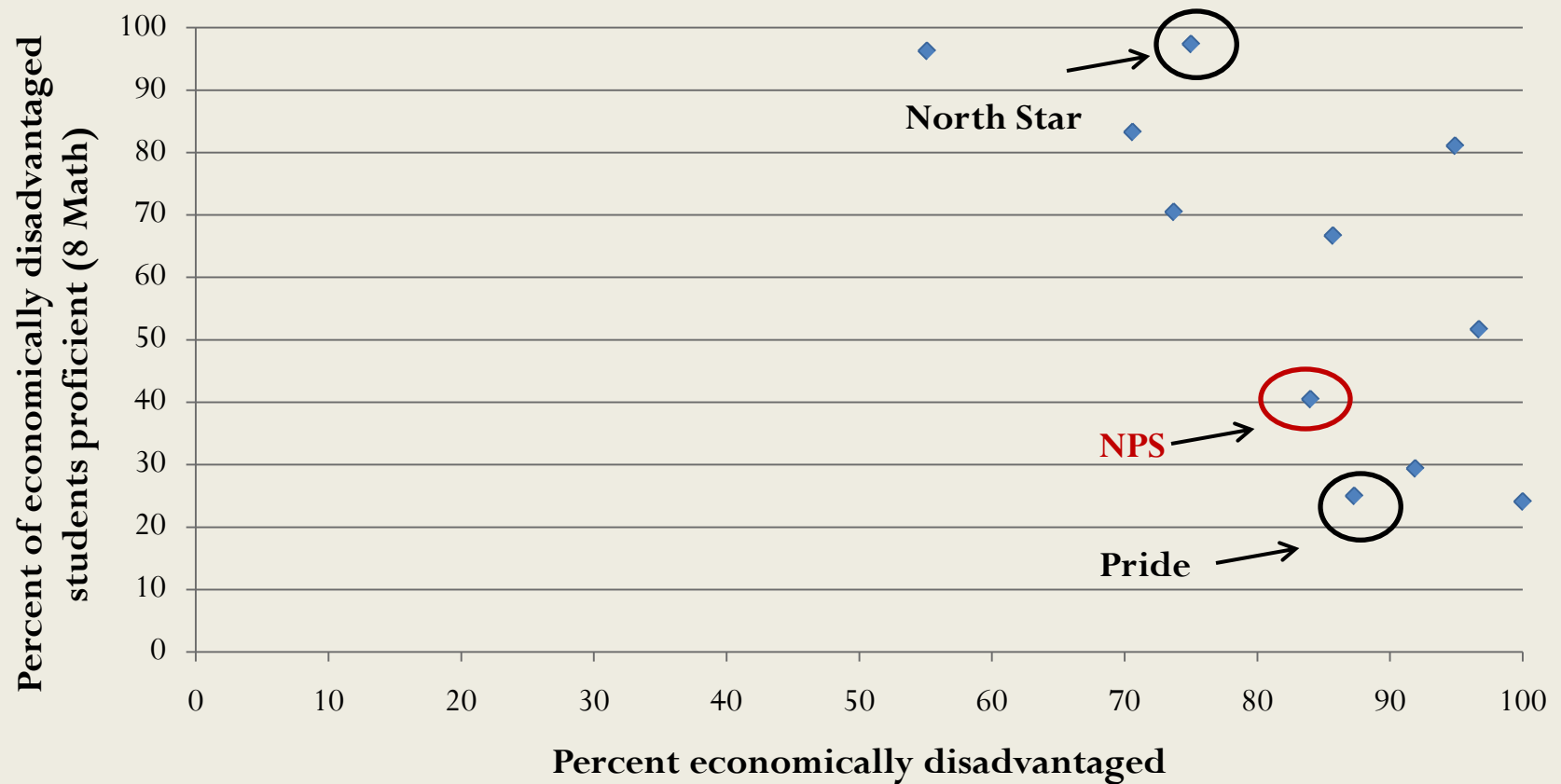
# Student Performance

## Newark, District v. Charters



# Student Performance

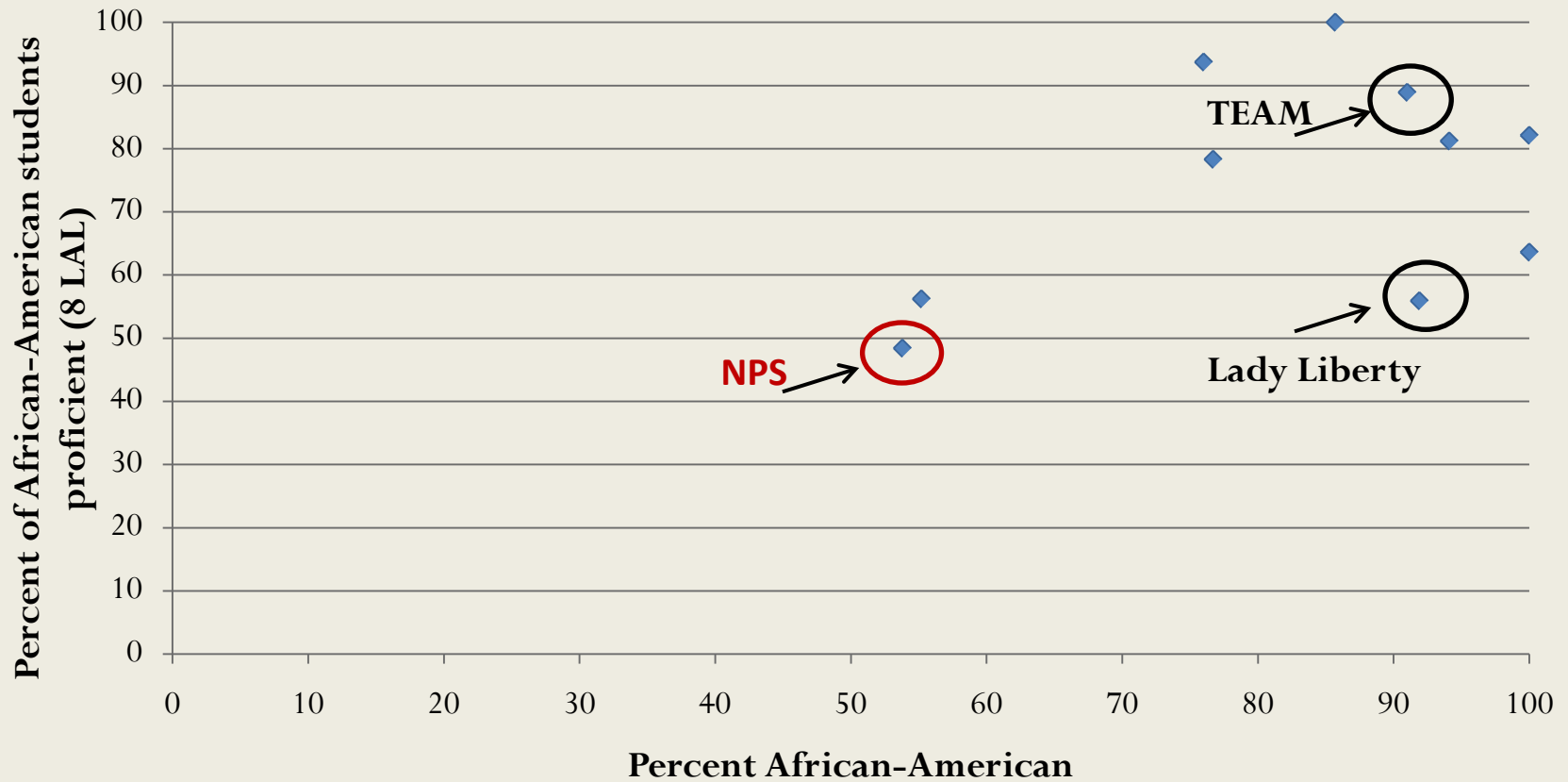
## Newark, District vs. Charter





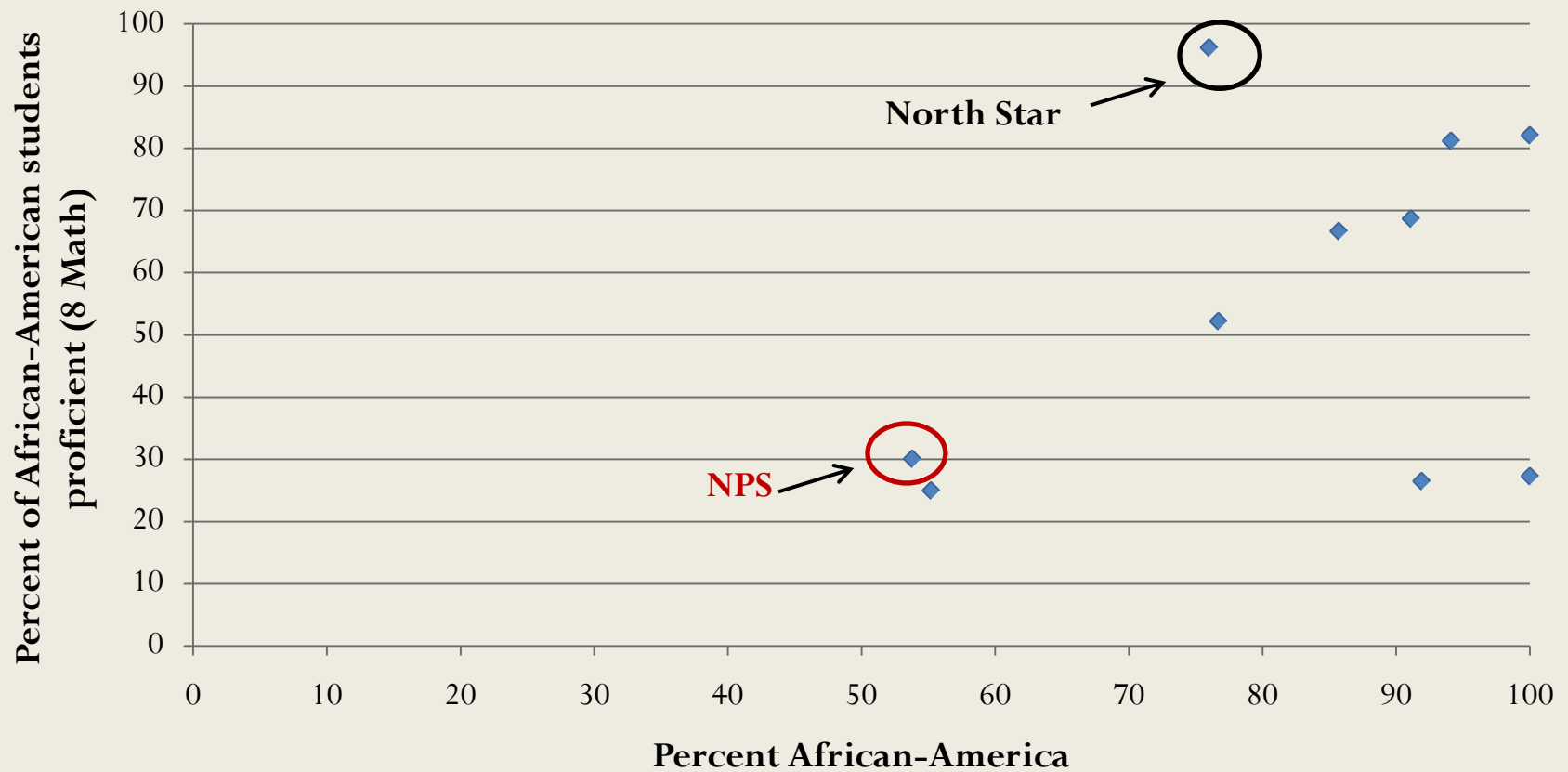
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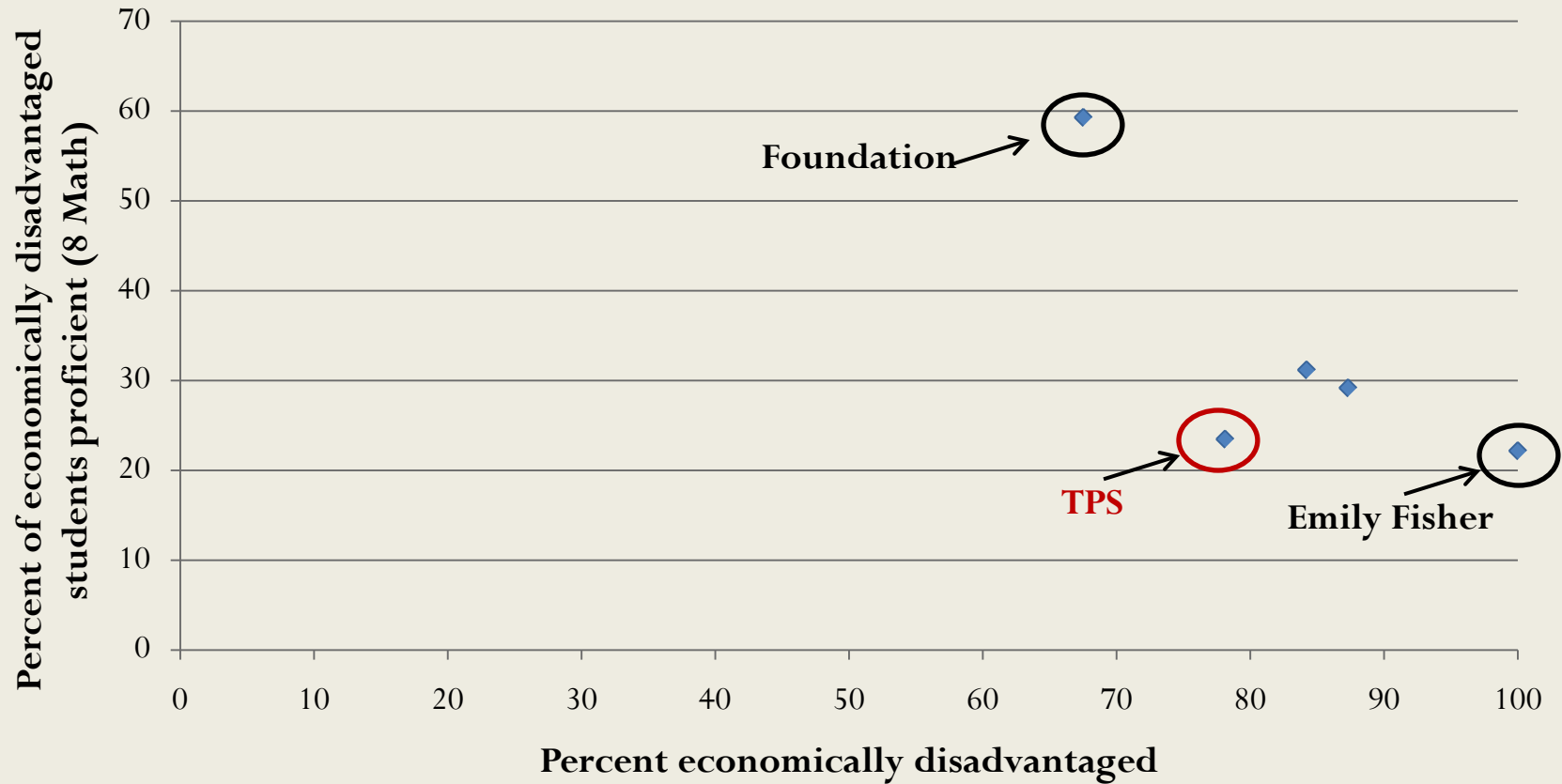
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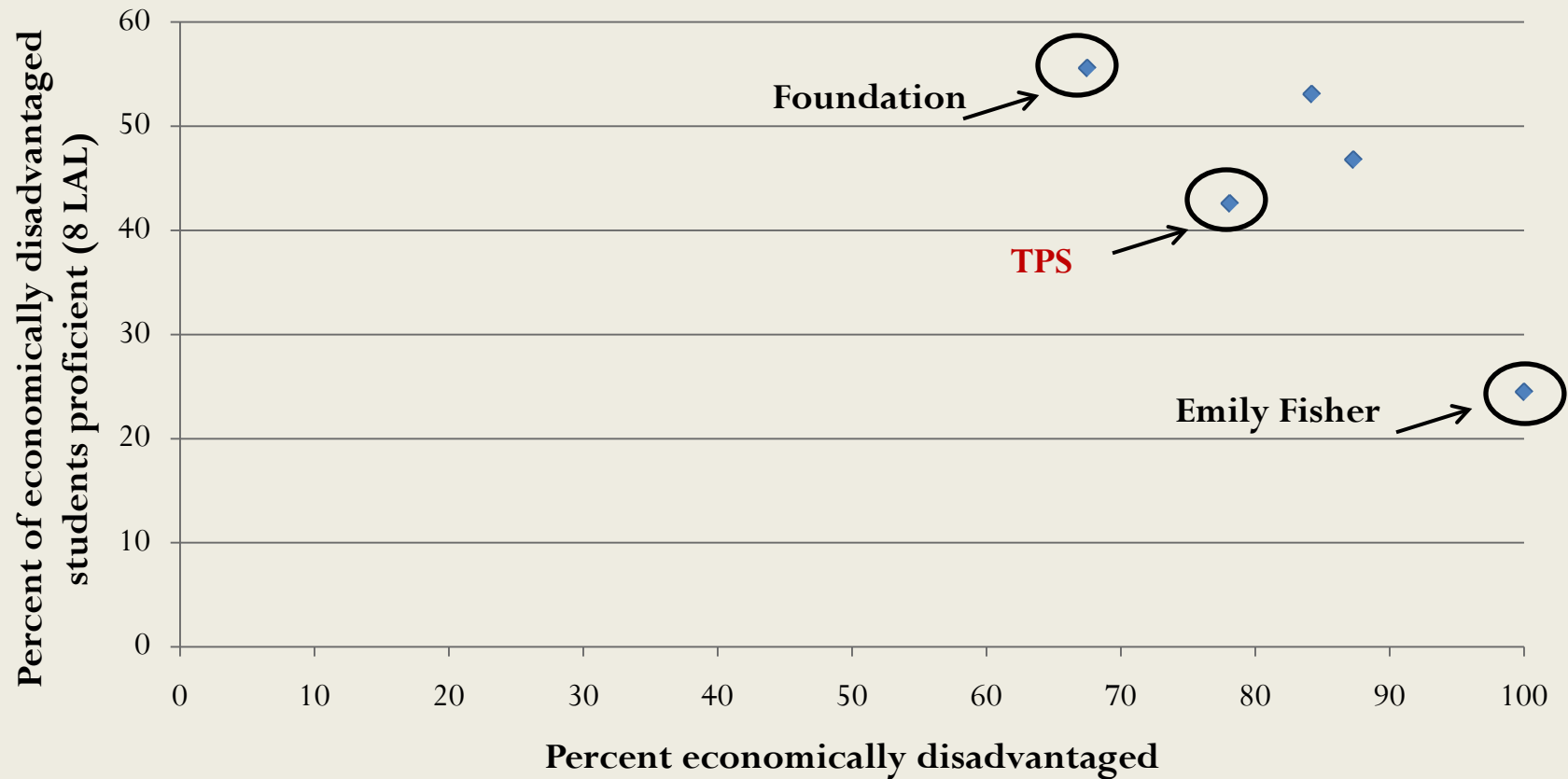
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## Trenton, District vs. Charters



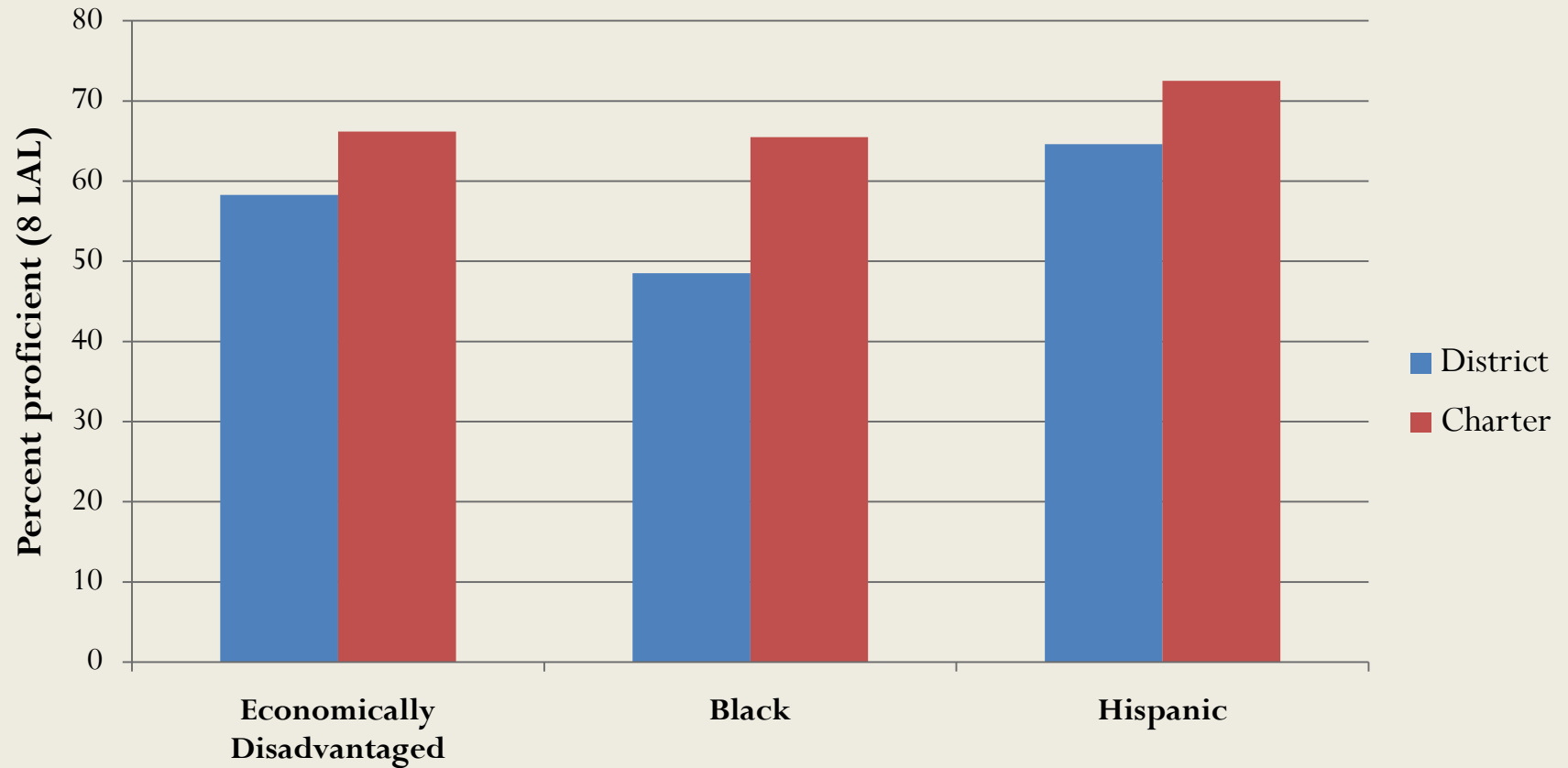
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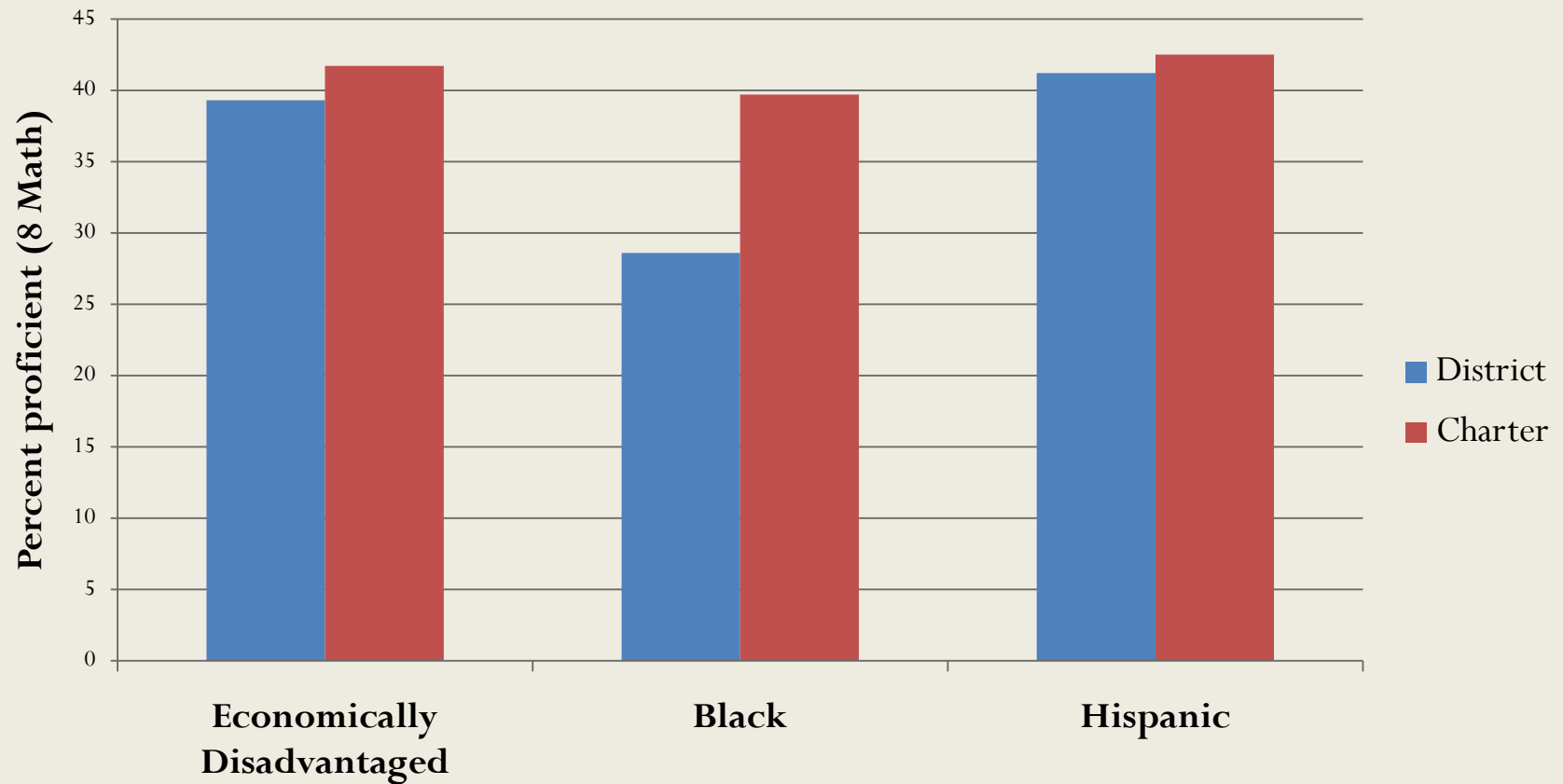
# Student Performance

## Jersey City



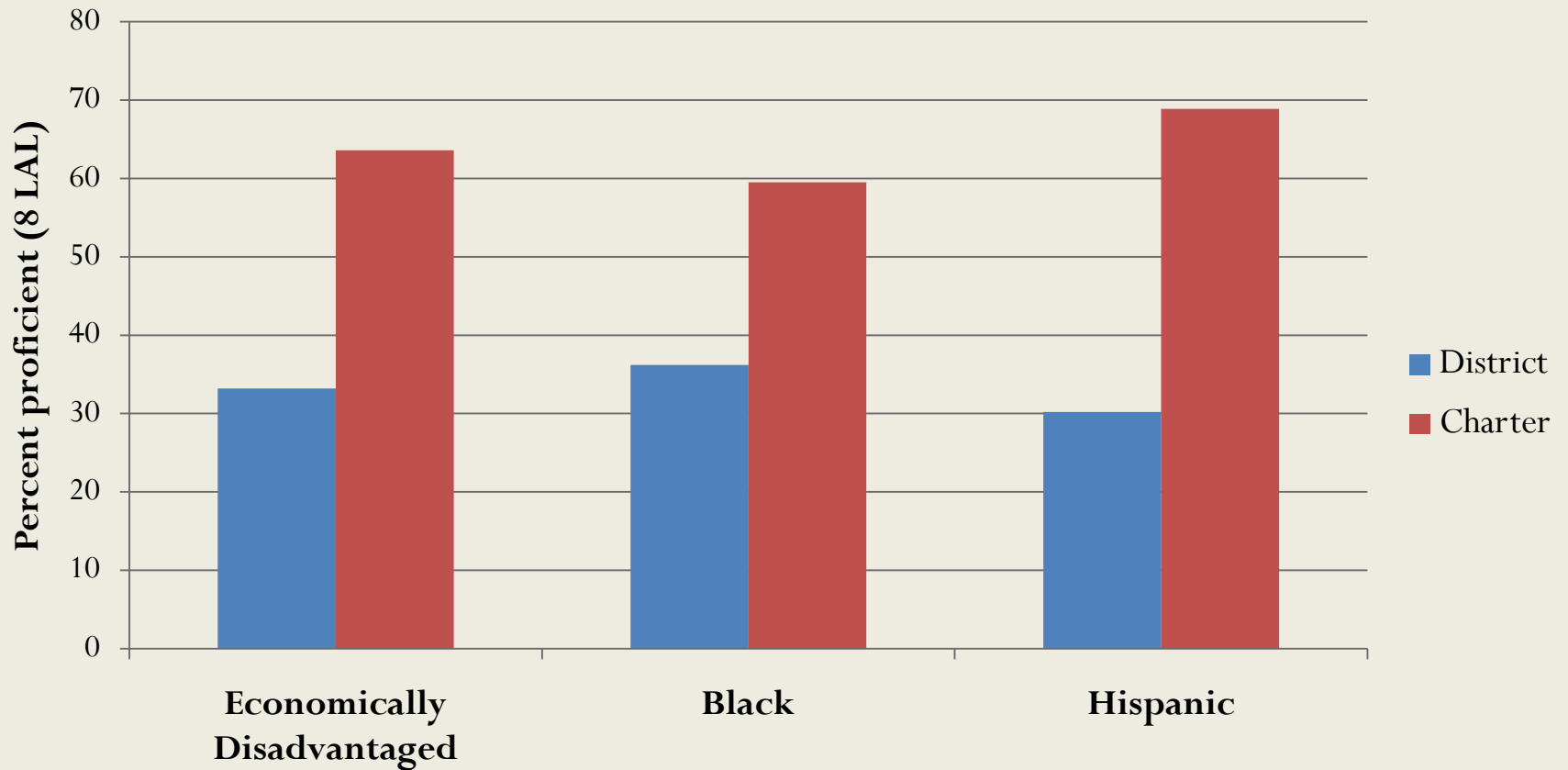
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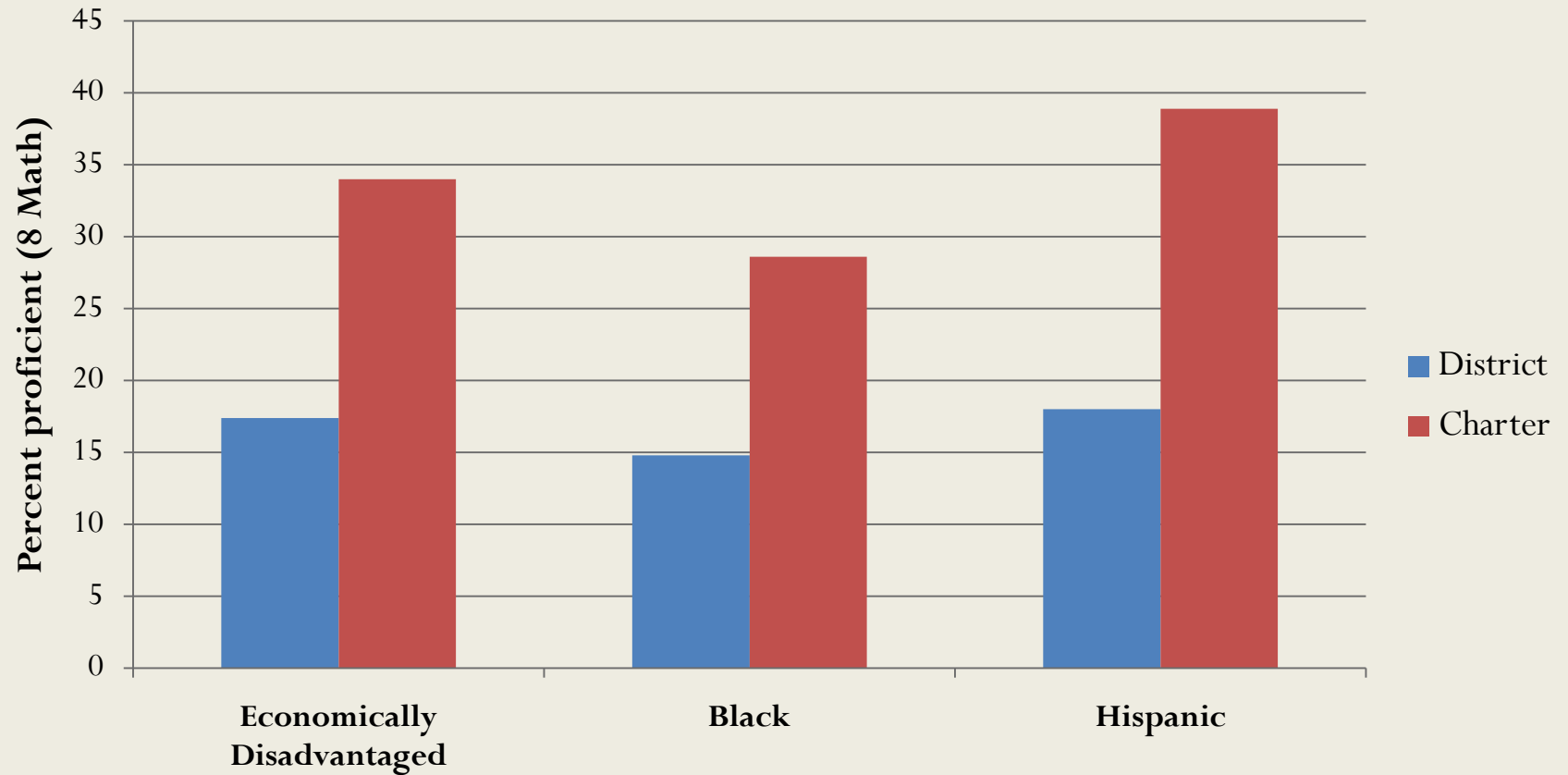
# Student Performance

## Camden



# Student Performance

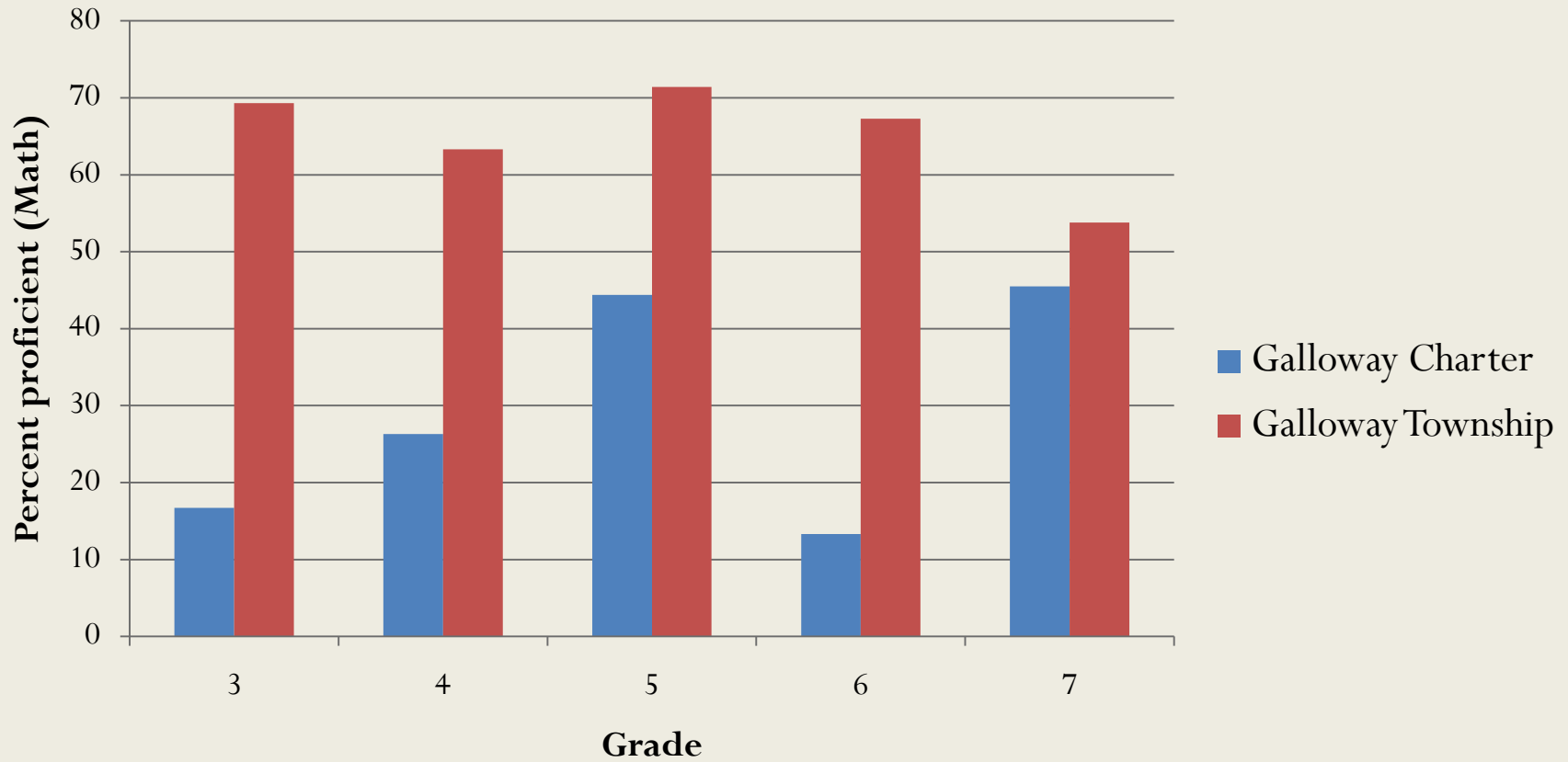
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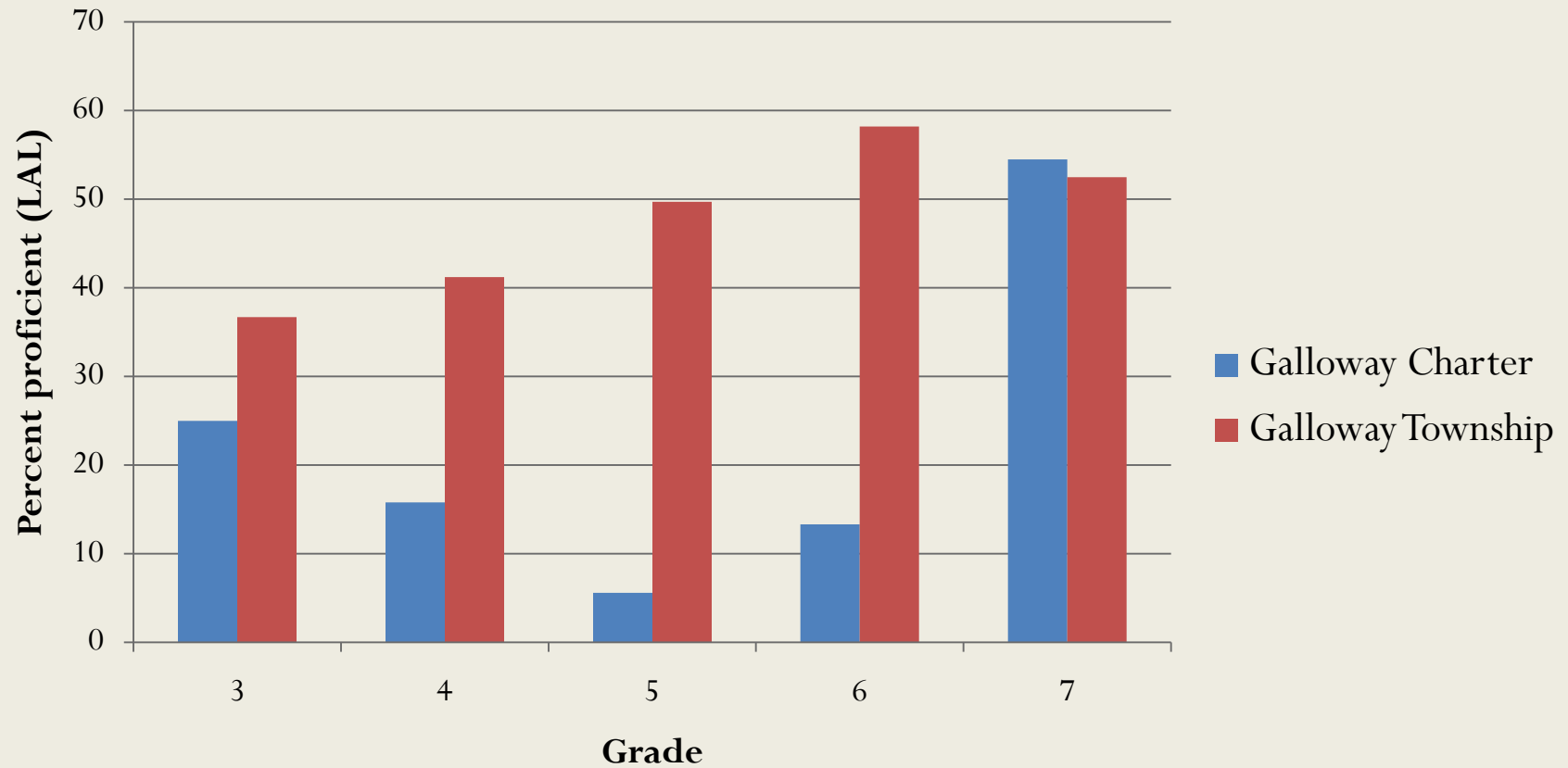
# Student Performance

## Economically Disadvantaged



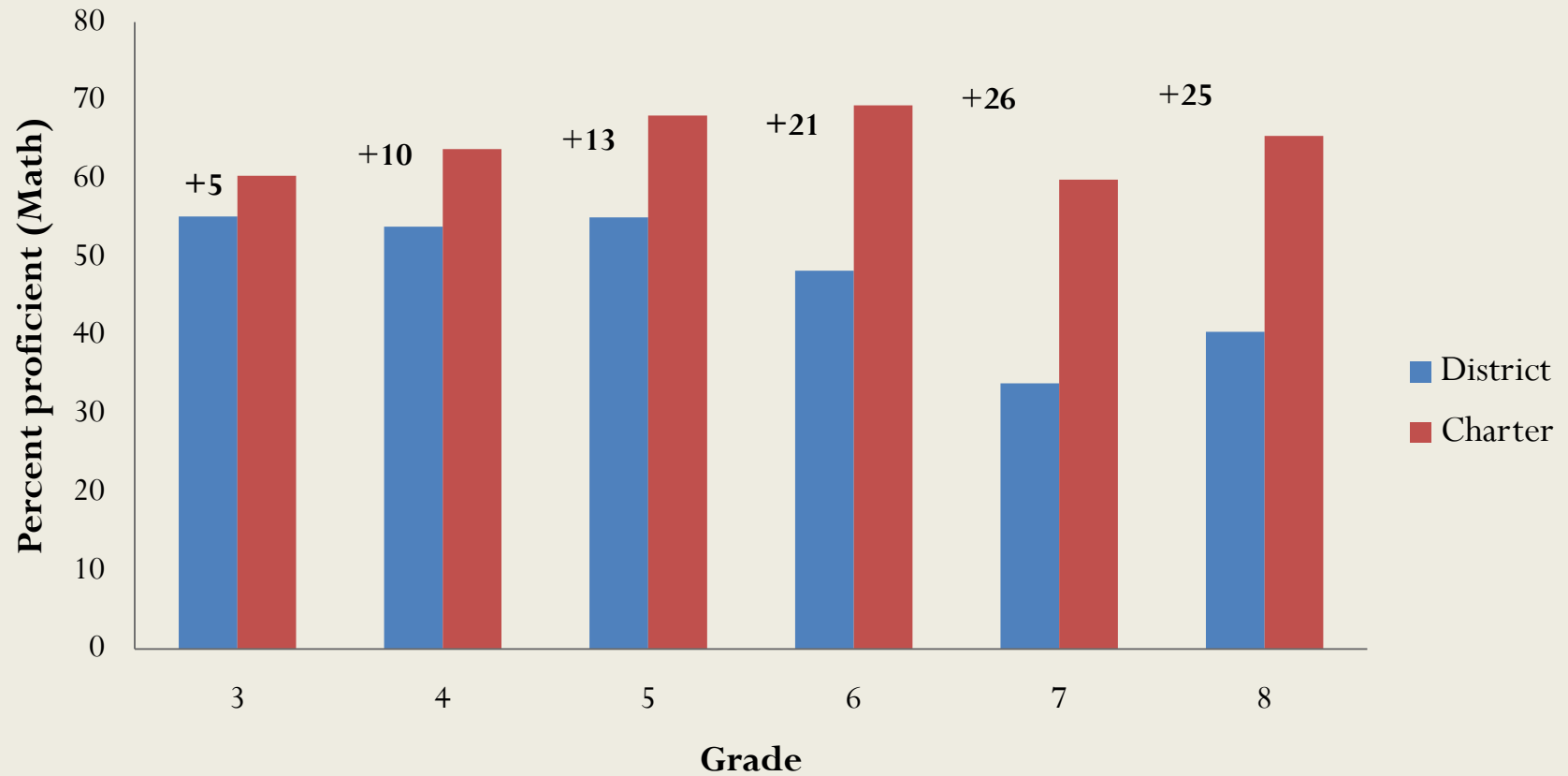
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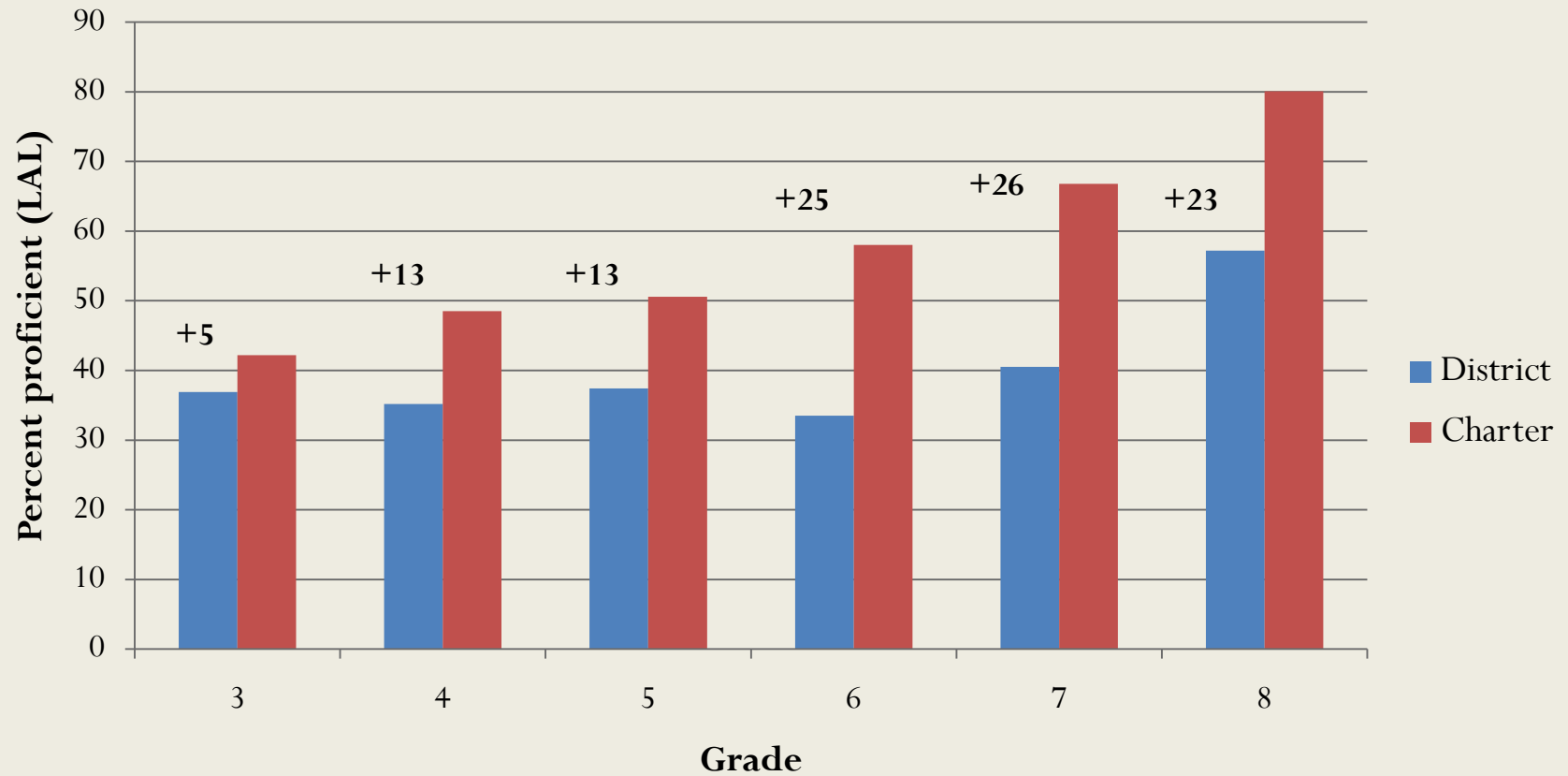
# Charter Advantage Grows

Newark, Economically Disadvantaged



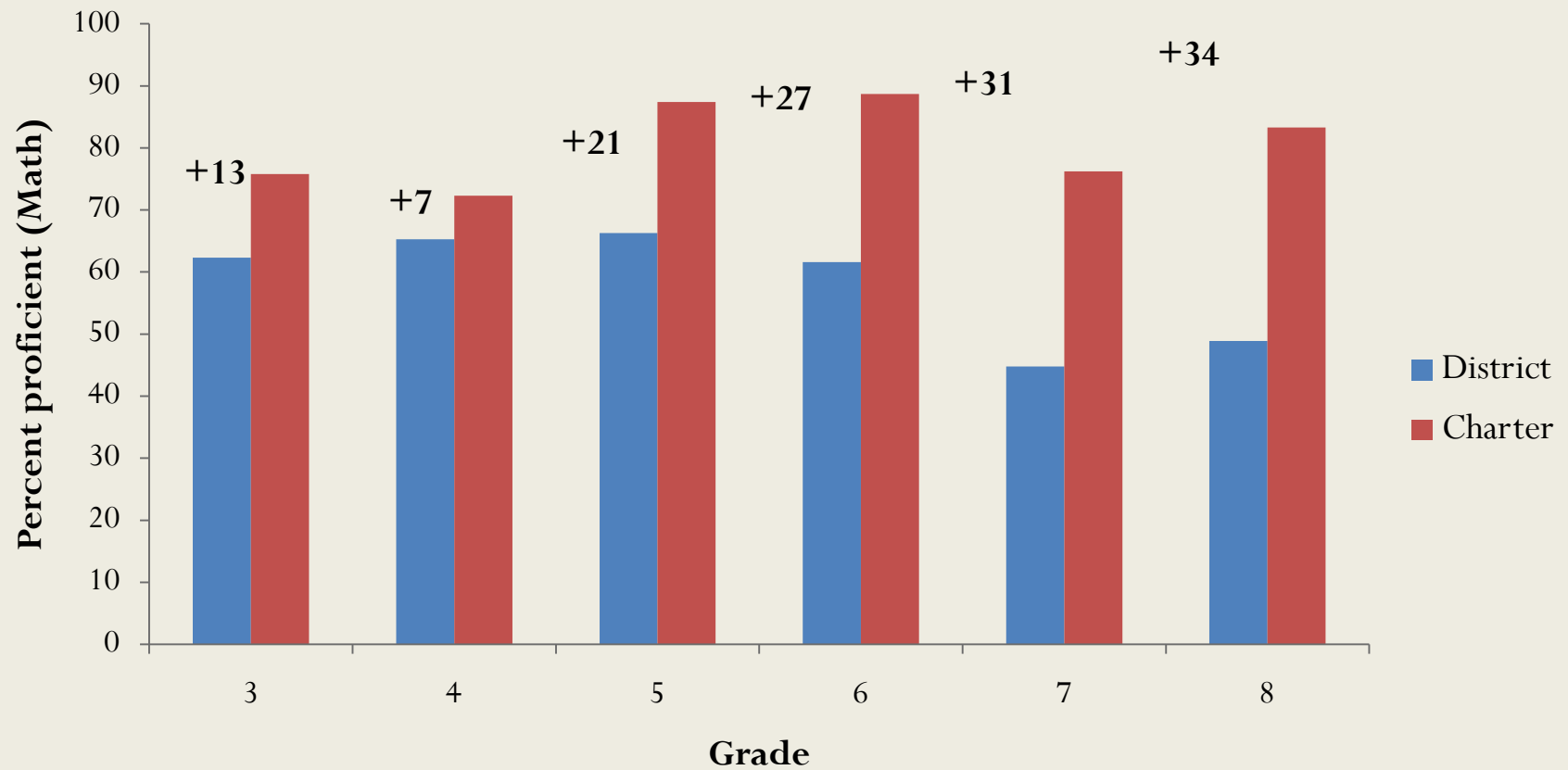
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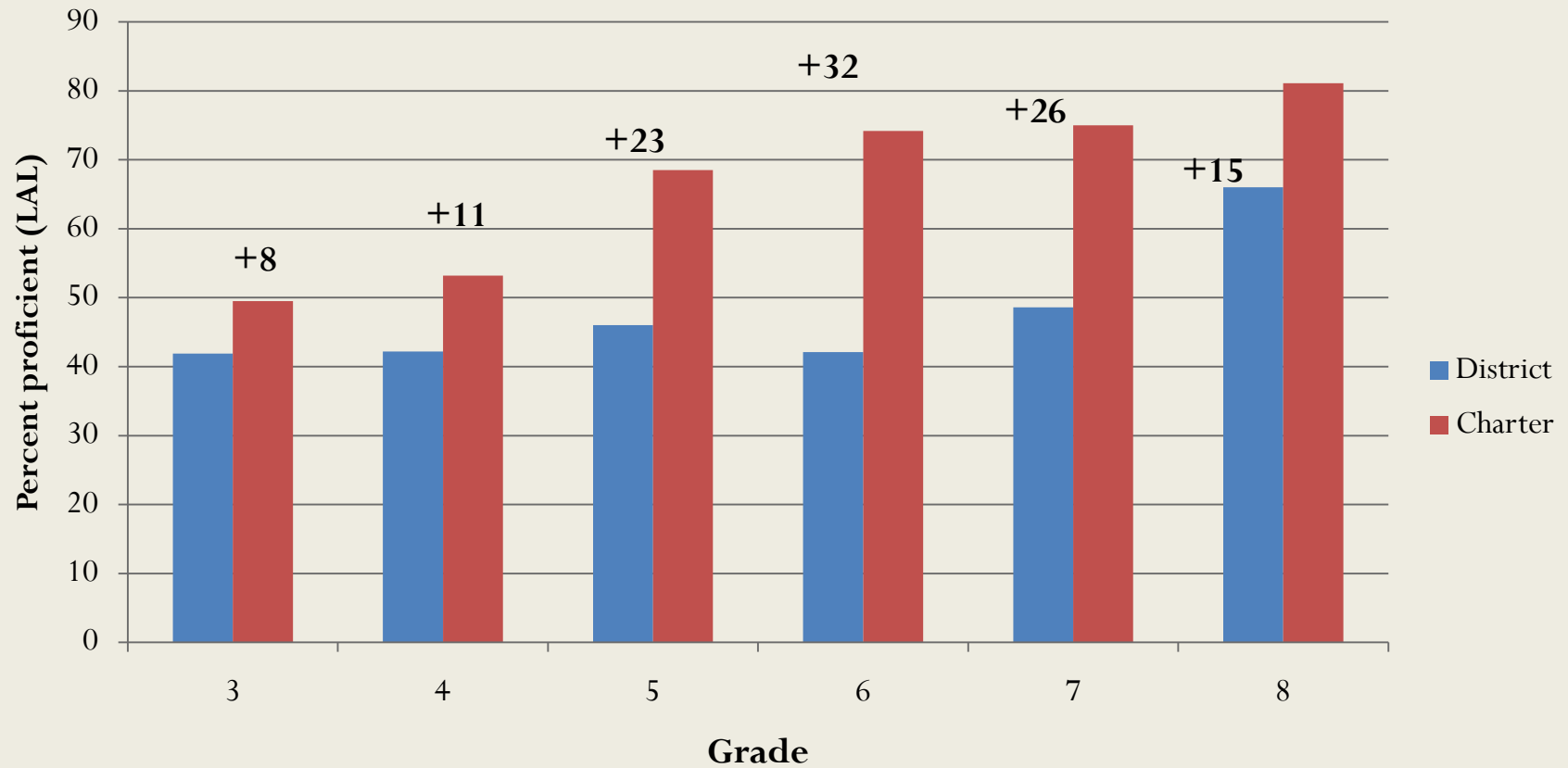
# Charter Advantage Grows

## Newark, Hispanic



# Charter Advantage Grows

## Newark, Hispanic



# Next Steps

- Continue internal research
- Increase transparency – expand the quantity of data available online
- Commission independent researchers to conduct deeper analysis
- Restructure charter schools office to improve services, accountability and support