

## KC district, charters failing too many kids

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Kansas City School District officials should carefully study a critical new report showing that nearly 85 percent of students in the district are in schools performing below state standards.

The study, funded by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, targeted five ZIP codes where the majority of the students live in a dead zone of underperforming schools.

In addition, the study said the majority of charter school students in Kansas City attend schools that fail to meet even half of the state standards.

The report, produced by a Chicago-based research agency for nonprofits known as IFF, examined data for the 2008-2009 school year, when the Kansas City district had 61 schools. Since then the district has closed nearly half its schools, laid off 1,000 employees to save about \$50 million and concentrated resources on the remaining schools.

The district, led by Superintendent John Covington and a more focused school board, is on the right track. Many of the closed schools were

underperforming. School officials appropriately have said they plan to continue to update data in the IFF report to drive academic performance higher, especially at schools in the ZIP codes of greatest need—64110, 64124, 64127, 64128 and 64130.

Still, the district's consolidation plan has faced challenges. The resignation of key personnel in Covington's leadership team hasn't helped.

The study recommended that charter schools be part of an integrated education reform effort. That sounds good on paper but will require overcoming a longstanding adversarial relationship between the charters and the school district.

As the report correctly said, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and charter school sponsors should develop a strategy to close underperforming charter schools. The district's dramatic actions this year to improve academic performance should be matched by the charters to benefit all children in Kansas City.

With the study in hand, it's clear where help is most needed. Now it's up to the district and the community to make improvements an urgent mission.

To see the IFF study, go to [www.kauffman.org](http://www.kauffman.org).