

# **Inside Online Charter Schools**

A Report of the National Study of  
Online Charter Schools

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**Media Call and Webinar**

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# **Online charter school sector is young and understudied**

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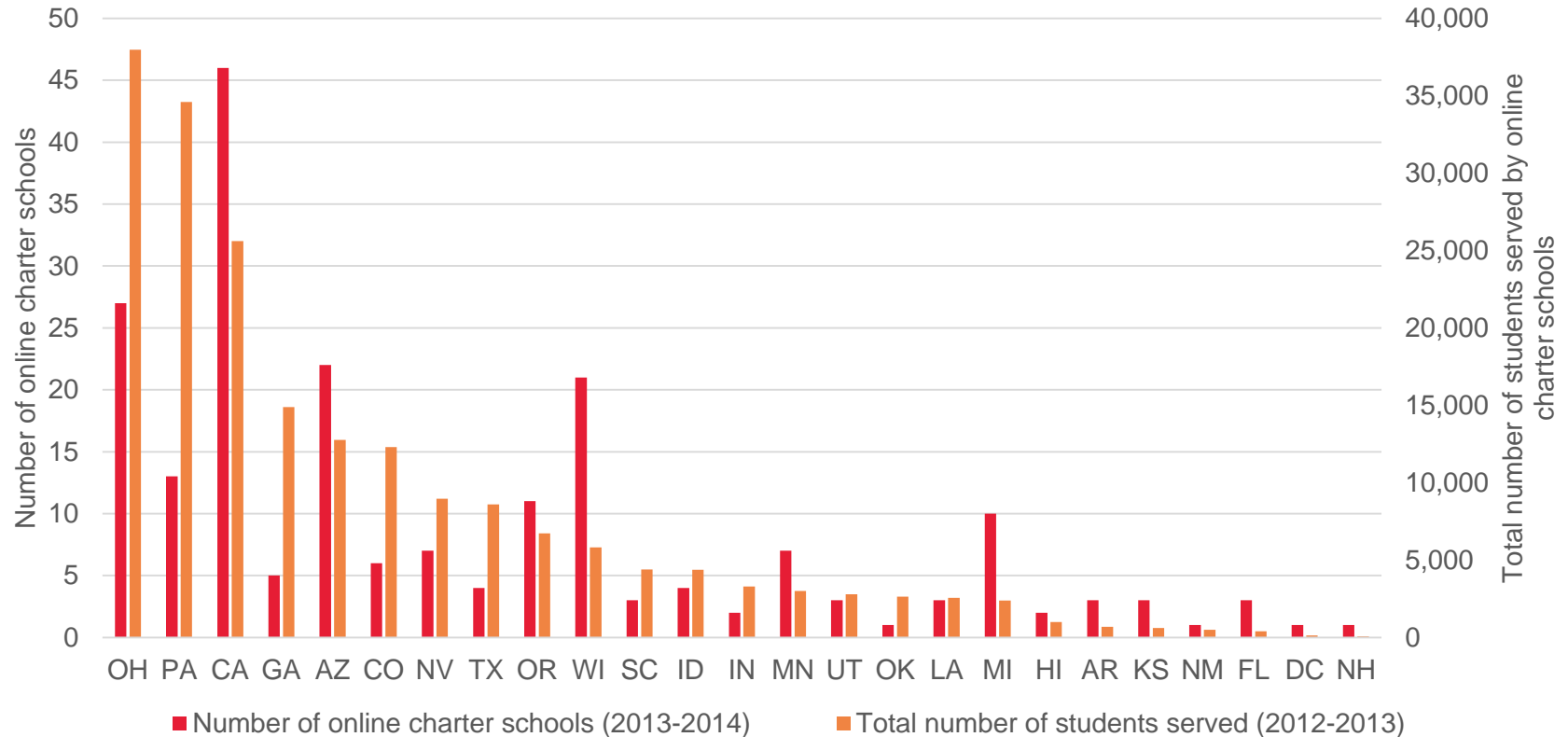
- **Instructional approach is innovative, consistent with one of the purposes of charter laws**
- **Critics have questioned effectiveness of online charters**
- **Few rigorous studies of operations or effects**
- **We present results from the first national study of operations of online charter schools**

# **Principal survey responses illuminate operations of online charter schools across the country**

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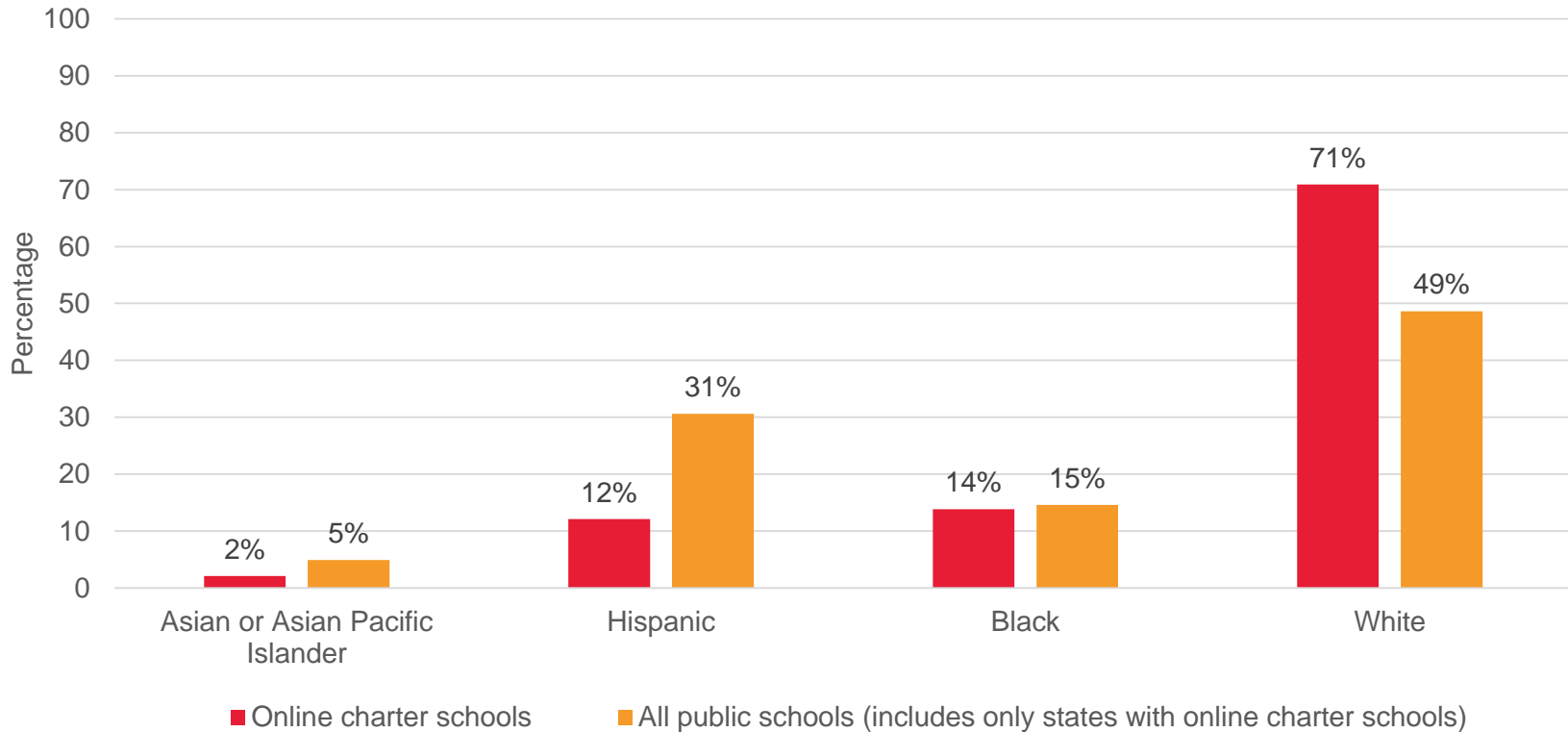
- **Sought to survey principals in all online charters, which are:**
  - **Public charter schools**
  - **Serving *full-time* students**
  - **Delivering instruction entirely online**
- **Received responses from 68 percent of schools**
- **Survey findings supplemented with data from public sources (U.S. Department of Education)**

# About 200 online charter schools are operating, serving 200k students



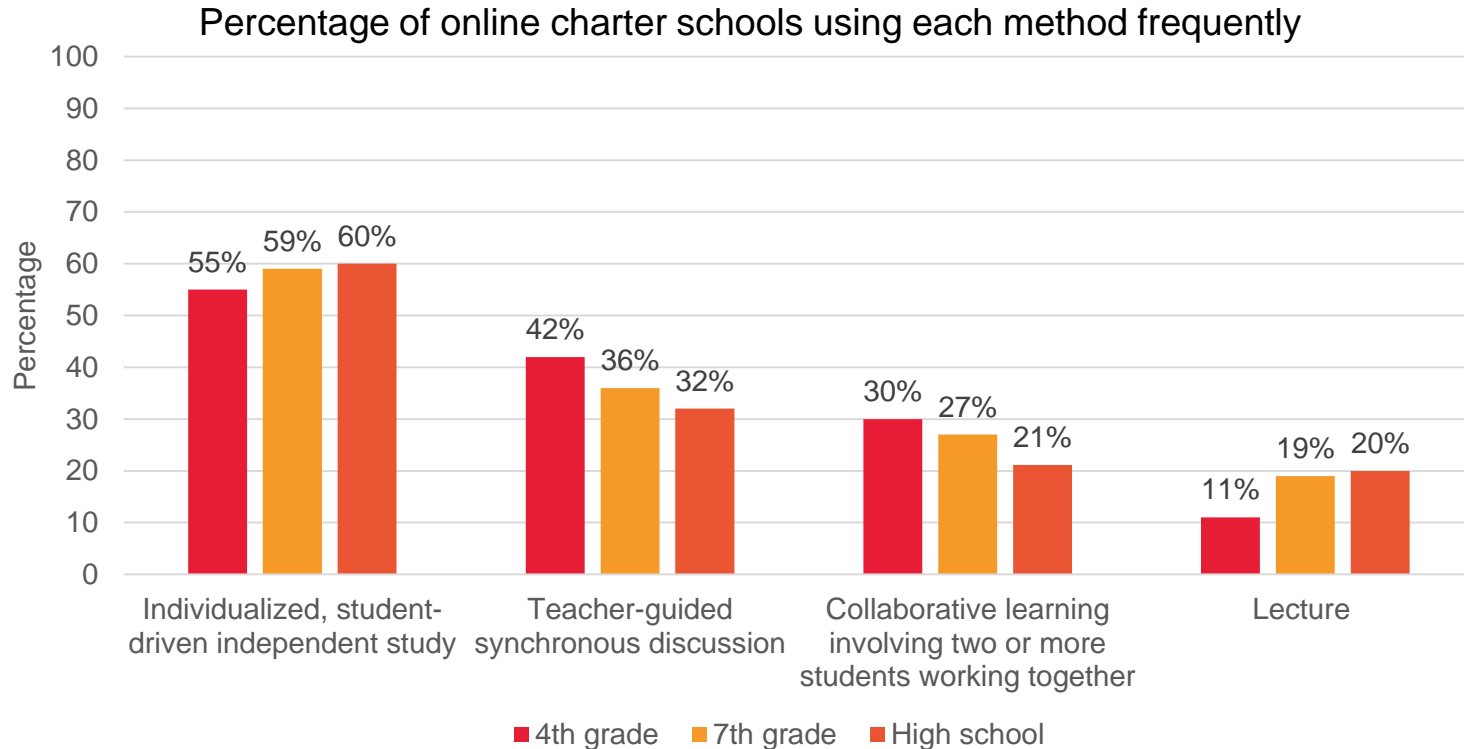
- More than half serve elementary and middle grades as well as high school
- Sector dominated by a few schools serving >1000 students each
- 57 percent of schools are affiliated with management organizations

# White students overrepresented, Hispanic students underrepresented



- English learners very underrepresented (0.4 percent)
- Students with disabilities represented in similar numbers as in conventional public schools (14 percent)

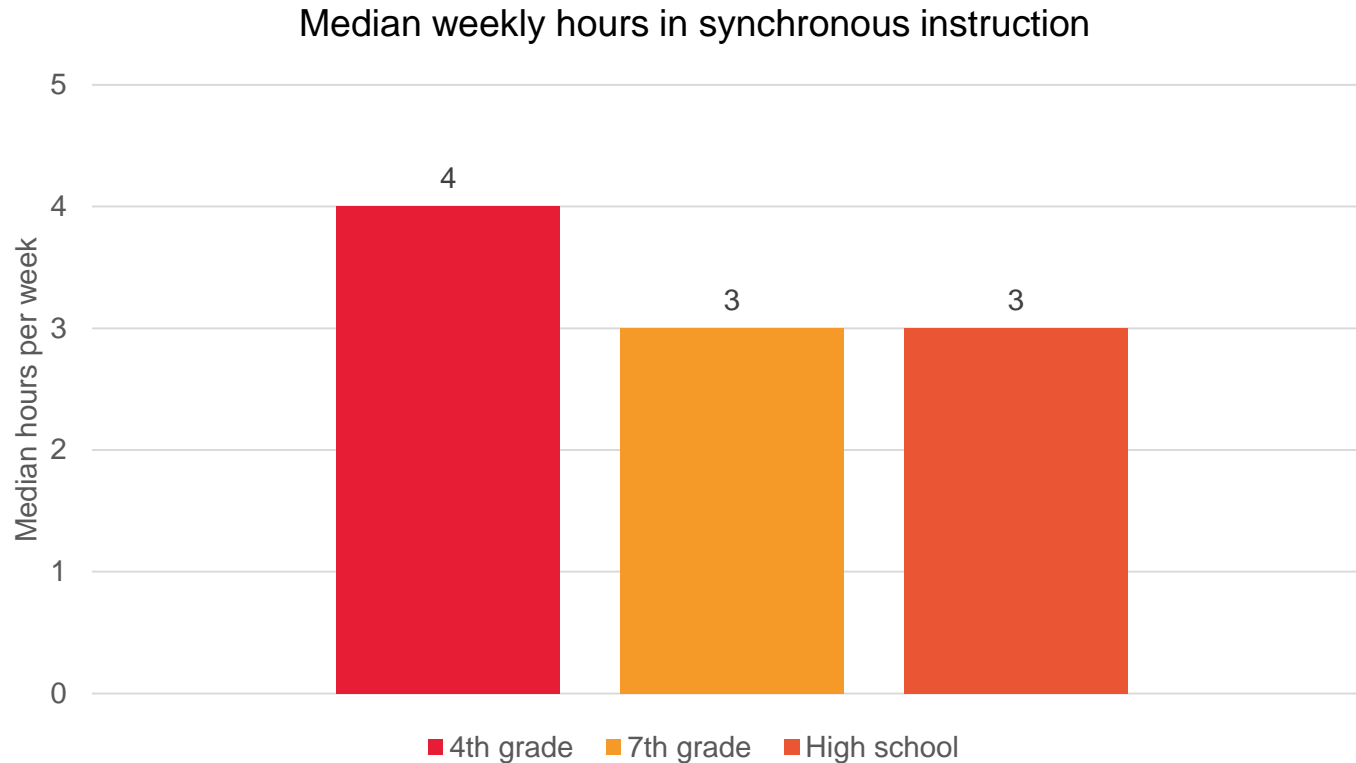
# Independent study is most-frequently-used instructional approach



- One-third of schools rely exclusively on self-paced courses
- Very few online schools use lectures frequently at any grade level

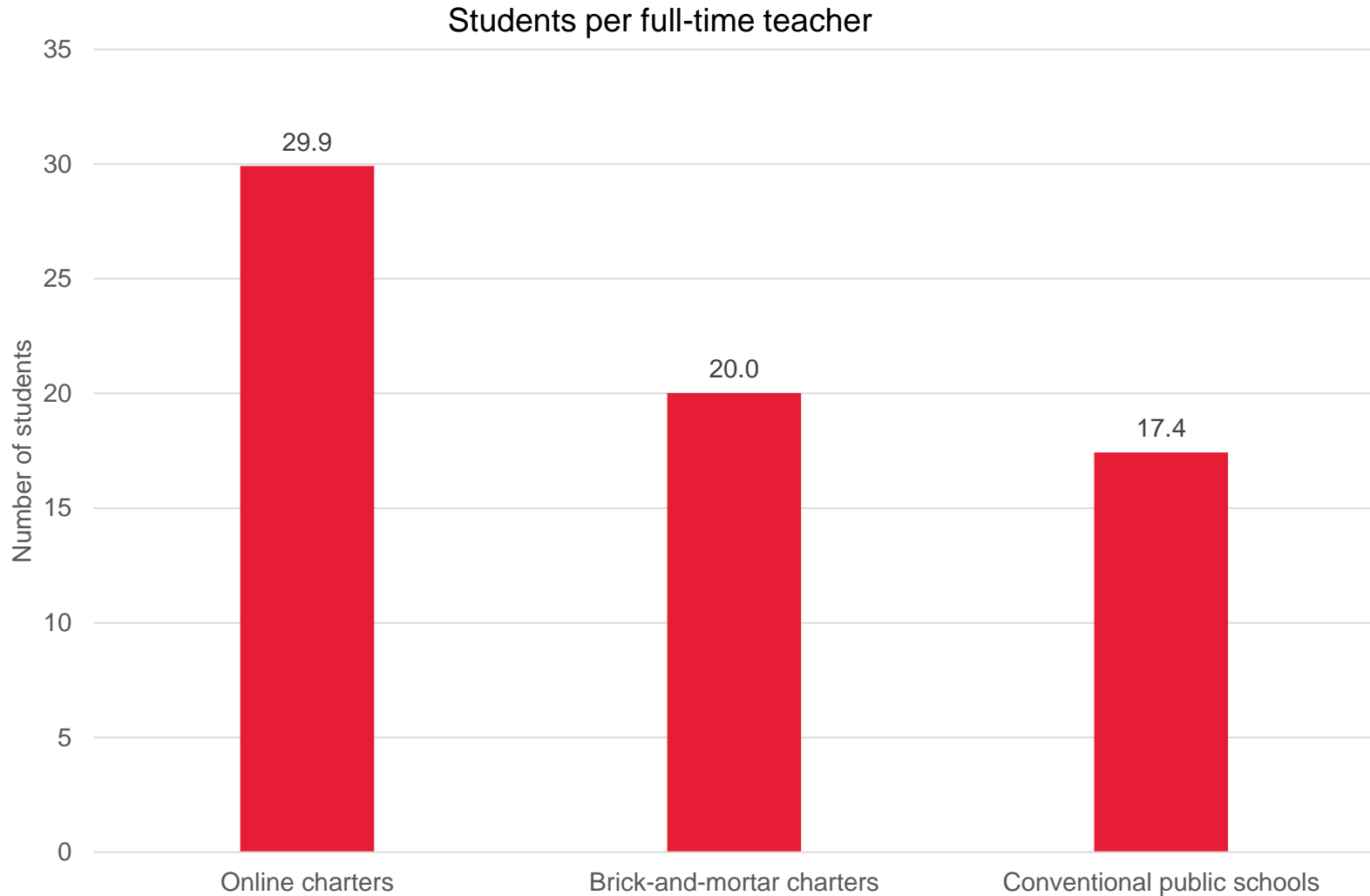
# Students in typical online charter schools receive 3 to 6 hours per week of synchronous (live) instructional time

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- Time for median *student* (as opposed to median *school*) is 5 hours in elementary and middle grades, 6 hours in high school
- One-on-one instructional support time is 45-60 minutes per week

# Online charter schools have substantially higher student-teacher ratios than other public schools



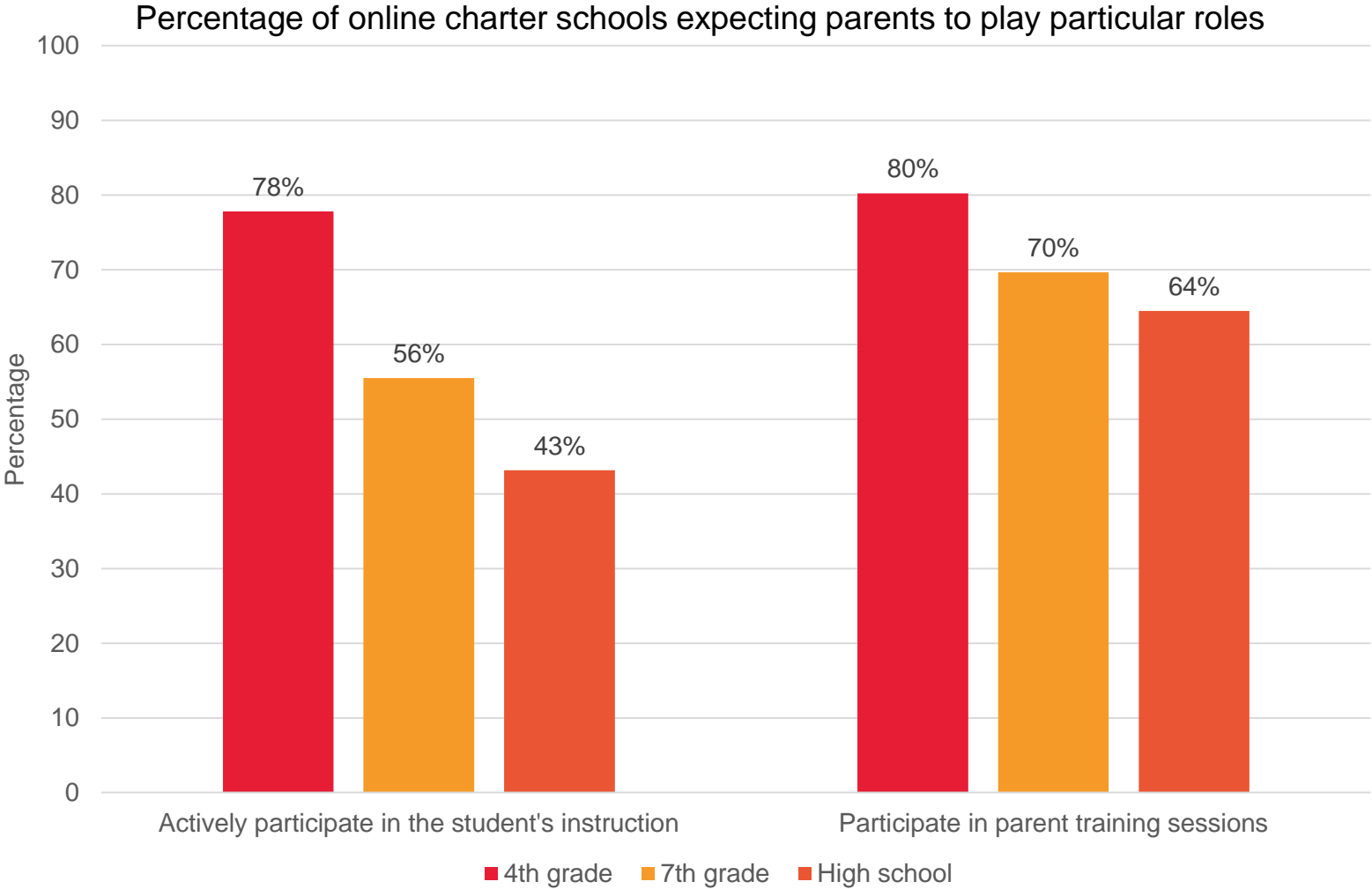


# Student engagement is the biggest challenge facing online charter schools

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	Percentage of principals identifying issue as one of the greatest challenges
Student engagement	33
School/CMO/district/state administration	13
Public perception	11
Parent engagement	11
Finding and analyzing meaningful data	10
Being located remotely from students	7
Accountability systems	7
Funding	7
Finding quality teachers	4
Student recruitment and retention	3

# Most online charter schools have substantial expectations of parents



# Key conclusions

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- **Online schooling creates both constraints and opportunities for delivering instruction**
- **Independent study is the dominant mode of learning, with much less synchronous (live) instructional time than in conventional schools**
- **Online charter schools expect much of parents**
- **Parental support may be necessary to keep students engaged—the biggest challenge for online charters**
  - **Challenge of student engagement is inherent in online instruction**
  - **But lean staffing and limited live contact hours may exacerbate the challenge and make it difficult to solve**

# For More Information

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- Read the [full report](#) and the [fact sheet](#)
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