

The School District of Philadelphia (SDP)

Report on Survey Data from Cohort 1 Redesign Schools

This brief summarizes selected findings from a study conducted by the Office of Research & Evaluation (ORE), which focused on two-year trends in District-wide survey data for four schools. These four schools are part of the School Redesign Initiative (SRI), an initiative that supports schools in the development and implementation of strategies aimed at school-wide improvement. The Cohort 1 SRI schools include one middle school (Tilden) and three elementary schools (Arthur, Carnell, and Jenks Arts & Sciences).

Study Overview

As part of the SDP's District-wide survey program, ORE administers surveys to students, parents/guardians, and teachers at District and Charter schools in the spring of each school year. The surveys are designed to measure five key topics (or "constructs") related to school improvement: Climate, Instruction, Leadership, Professional Capacity, and Parent/Guardian Community Ties. In this brief, two constructs (Climate and Instruction) and their corresponding sub-constructs are examined. Due to low parent/guardian response rates, the study focuses on student and teacher survey feedback.

Two primary research questions were:

1. What are the trends in survey response rates over the past two years at SRI schools? How do these rates compare to overall response rates across the District?
2. What are the two-year trends for student and teacher responses at SRI schools to survey items relating to Climate? What are the two-year trends for student and teacher responses at SRI schools to survey items relating to Instruction?

Why is this study important to SDP?

The redesign plans for all four SRI schools included strategies that align to the five constructs measured on the District-wide surveys. Therefore, the trends in the data over the past two years are a useful tool for tracking changes and progress toward goals for the SRI schools that cannot be measured by other administrative data (e.g. student attendance, suspensions, and academic performance). In addition, the District-wide surveys provide information from multiple perspectives, which can help inform improvement efforts.

School Redesign Initiative (SRI)

In the summer of 2014, SDP launched the School Redesign Initiative, an opportunity for teams of teachers, administrators, parents, and community members to develop and submit comprehensive proposals for redesigning their schools. After a multi-step application process, four schools each received \$30,000 to put their plan into action.

Cohort 1 SRI Schools

- Four schools, diverse in size and location: Tilden, Arthur, Carnell, and Jenks Arts & Sciences (A&S).
- Student populations at each of the four schools are predominantly Black and Hispanic/Latino and three of the schools have over 60% of students receiving free lunch.
- Two of the schools have substantial English learner populations (18% at Carnell and 14% at Tilden).
- While over 10% of students at all schools in the District have disabilities, Arthur has the largest population among the SRI schools, with almost a quarter of students having a disability.

Findings

Overall trends in response rates over the past two years:

- All four SRI schools saw increases in their **student response rates** in 2015-2016 and had student response rates above the overall District and Charter average (50%). Approximately 90% of students at both Carnell and Jenks A&S completed the survey in 2015-2016.
- While all four SRI schools also increased their **parent/guardian response rates** in 2015-2016, they remained low at three of the four schools. Arthur had the highest parent/guardian response rate at 29%, which was more than double the District and Charter average of 13%, (still a low survey response rate).
- Similar to the overall District and Charter trend, **teacher response rates** at two of the four SRI schools decreased in 2015-2016 (Arthur and Tilden). The two schools with increased teacher response rates (Carnell and Jenks A&S) were also above the 2015-2016 District and Charter average (51%).

Two-year trends in student and teacher responses to Climate and Instruction questions:

- **Students** at two of the four SRI schools (Tilden and Carnell) indicated low percentages of positive responses on the Safety/Building Conditions sub-construct (32% and 43%, respectively).
- **Teachers** at three of the four SRI schools reported fewer challenges at all levels (External, School-level, and Classroom level) in 2015-2016 compared to 2014-2015. The one exception was at Jenks A&S, where there was a six-percentage point decrease in teachers selecting the most positive responses regarding External challenges, meaning a perceived increase in External challenges.
- Overall, Tilden **teachers'** responses show the most positive change across years for all three levels of Challenges. However, Jenks A&S had the largest percentage of teachers responding most positively for all Challenge sub-constructs in both school years.
- Two of the four schools saw a change in the percentage of **students** responding most positively to Instruction related questions. There was an eight-percentage point increase at Arthur and a two-percentage point decrease at Jenks A&S.
- For both school years, **students** at Tilden were the least likely (47%) to answer most positively to Instruction related questions (versus 58% at Jenks A&S, 65% at Carnell, and 66% at Arthur).
- Responses from SRI **teachers** indicated a clear difference in the percentage of most positive responses between the two Instructional sub-constructs. While the percentage of teachers at all four schools selecting the most positive response to questions relating to the Teaching and Learning sub-construct ranged from 76-83% in 2015-2016, the range of most positive responses for questions in the Student Engagement construct was much lower, ranging from 37-48%.

Conclusion

After one year of implementation, the available survey data provides no indication of any strong performance trends across the SRI schools or across stakeholders. This is not unexpected during the early phases of implementation. That said, higher survey response rates are needed to best use survey data to monitor and inform the implementation of the school redesign plans. With higher response rates in the future, trends in Climate and Instruction data can be compared across stakeholder groups as well as across years.