

The School District of Philadelphia (SDP) Year 2 Report On Transformation Schools

This brief summarizes selected findings from a study conducted by the Office of Research & Evaluation (ORE), which examined student outcomes for students enrolled in the two Transformation Schools after two years of operation. The full report is available upon request.

Why this Study

Blaine and Kelley are District neighborhood schools located in North Philadelphia that primarily serve high poverty students in grades K-8. Historically, both schools have performed below District average for all subjects measured in the PSSA (math, reading, science, and writing), and in the 2012-2013 school year (SY), they each experienced an increase in student enrollment due to nearby school closures. In order to address these challenges through the Transformation School Funding opportunity, the principal and a team of staff and teachers at each school developed a School Transformation Plan, which outline several core strategies for increasing academic performance over a five-year period, with an emphasis on building capacity in the first three years to allow for sustained changes. This study investigates the progress made towards meeting the goals outlined by each school's Transformation plan.

What We Studied

This study examined Transformation School student outcomes after their second year of operation. When possible, researchers used school level data for other K-8 schools in the same Learning Network as Blaine and Kelley, Neighborhood Network 4 (NN4), as a point of comparison. Three primary research questions were the focus of this evaluation:

- 1.) From baseline (2013-2014) to the end of Year 2 (2015-2016), how does school-level climate data (attendance and suspensions) for Blaine and Kelley compare to that of other K-8 elementary schools in Neighborhood Network 4?
- 2.) From baseline to the end of Year 2, how does school-level academic achievement data for Blaine and Kelley compare to that of other K-8 elementary schools in Neighborhood Network 4?
- 3.) How does student and teacher District-wide survey feedback from the Transformation schools compare to other schools in Neighborhood Network 4? What are the year-to-year trends?

Findings

- After two years, neither school saw improvements in average daily attendance (ADA). However, a higher percentage of Blaine and Kelley students attended 95% or more of enrolled days in 2015-2016 compared to those at the other NN4 schools (38%, 37% and 35%, respectively). At Kelley, there was an improvement in this metric from the baseline year (26%) to the 2015-2016 SY (37%).

Transformation Schools

In 2013, the Philadelphia School Partnership (PSP) offered funding to District schools interested in implementing a turnaround plan to dramatically increase student achievement.

From the ten schools that applied, PSP awarded James G. Blaine (Blaine) and William D. Kelley (Kelley) funding to support the development and implementation of their "transformation plans," which aim to increase academic outcomes by enhancing school climate, updating curriculum and instruction, and implementing a professional development plan that focuses on the recruitment and training of mission-aligned teachers.

Transformation Schools Student Demographics

In the 2015-16 SY, Transformation School students were (n=892):*

Black	92%
Hispanic/Latino	2%
Other	5%
White	1%
Female	48%
Male	52%
Special Education	19%
ELL	<1%

*Only students enrolled for at least 10 days, based on last school of record.

- In 2015-2016, both Blaine and Kelley had more suspensions compared to the other NN4 schools (171, 241 and 162, respectively) and a greater percentage of students with at least one suspension compared to the other NN4 schools (17%, 23% and 13%, respectively).
- At both schools, there were decreases in the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on the reading/ELA (from 25% to 14% at Blaine and 23% to 16% at Kelley) and math (from 28% to 5% at Blaine and 31% to 5% at Kelley) PSSAs after two years. At Kelley, there was an increase in the number of students scoring proficient on the science PSSA (16% to 29%).
- With the exception of Blaine science PSSA scores, the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on the ELA, math, and science PSSAs in 2015-2016 was about the same or better compared to the average across the NN4 schools. The percent proficient or advanced on ELA ranged from 13% (NN4 average) to 16% (Kelley average). For math, the percentage at both Transformation schools was 5%, compared to 6% at the NN4 schools.
- Compared to the other NN4 schools, there was a smaller percentage of K-2 students at Blaine and Kelley requiring strategic (Tier 2) or intensive (Tier 3) reading interventions.

	Blaine	Kelley	Other NN4 Schools
Grade K	44% in Tiers 2 & 3	50% in Tiers 2 & 3	53% in Tiers 2 & 3
Grade 1	55% in Tiers 2 & 3	73% in Tiers 2 & 3	76% in Tiers 2 & 3
Grade 2	68% in Tiers 2 & 3	55% in Tiers 2 & 3	74% in Tiers 2 & 3
Grade 3	75% in Tiers 2 & 3	78% in Tiers 2 & 3	76% in Tiers 2 & 3

- A larger percentage of K-2 students at Blaine and at Kelley made at least one year of reading growth compared to the NN4 schools (77%, 72% and 56%, respectively).

Student and teacher survey responses about climate, instruction, and leadership varied

Survey Construct Scores ^{&}	Blaine		Kelley	
	Did the Metric Change From 2014-2015 to 2015-2016	How Does Blaine 2015-2016 Data Compare to Other NN4 K-8 Schools [*]	Did the Metric Change From 2014-2015 to 2015-2016	How Does Kelley 2015-2016 Data Compare to Other NN4 K-8 Schools [*]
Student Survey Climate Score	Yes, decreased	Worse than NN4 K-8 schools	N/A [^]	N/A
Teacher Survey Climate Score	No change	Better than NN4 K-8 schools	No change	The same as NN4 K-8 schools
Student Survey Instruction Score	Yes, decreased	Worse than NN4 K-8 schools	N/A	N/A
Teacher Survey Instruction Score	Yes, increased	The same as NN4 K-8 schools	No change	Worse than NN4 K-8 schools
Teacher Survey Leadership Score	Yes, decreased	Better than NN4 K-8 schools	Yes, decreased	Worse than NN4 K-8 schools

[&]Scores are based on the percentage of respondents selecting the most positive response. Selecting the most positive response refers to respondents who chose the most positive answer to that question.

^{*}Differences must be greater than 1 percentage point.

[^]N/A means that the response rate was not high enough for answers to be reported.

Conclusion

After two years, there are some improvements and some declines at each of the two Transformation schools. The largest success appears to be in the movement of students out of Tier 2 and 3 reading levels, but the trend is not consistent across grades. An additional year of data will be useful in identifying trends across years, as well as any relationship between survey data and student outcomes.