

This analysis explores changes in student mobility before and after school turnaround efforts in the School District of Philadelphia's (SDP) Promise Academies and Renaissance Charter Schools. Specifically, it looks at the within-year student retention and mobility rates one year prior to turnaround and one year into turnaround for Promise Academies and Renaissance Charter Schools.

Background

The School District of Philadelphia's Renaissance Schools Initiative was first implemented in 2010-2011. The initiative intended to spur dramatic improvements in student performance over a short period of time by providing additional resources, changes in staffing, increased attention and other strategies designed to improve persistently low-performing schools. The initiative consists of two models:

Promise Academies, which remain District managed, but undergo changes in leadership and teaching staff, as well as receive additional funding and support; and

Renaissance Charter Schools, which remain neighborhood schools, but are managed by charter providers with relative autonomy from the District.

Since 2010-2011, twenty schools have been converted to Renaissance Charters, and fifteen schools have become Promise Academies (three of the fifteen have since closed).

Student retention and student mobility are important issues for all schools. Research has demonstrated that mobility "compromises effective student learning" and high rates of mobility are associated with a range of negative academic and social outcomes (Hanushek, Kain & Rivkin, 2003). Despite its importance, there is limited research on student mobility and its effects, and in particular, the impact of school turnaround initiatives on student mobility. Findings from comparative school studies have lamented the lack of research on outcomes other than student achievement, such as mobility, persistence, and attendance rates. It has been noted that student mobility is not studied directly but is treated instead as a control variable in analyses that focus solely on achievement (Finch, Lapsley, and Baker-Boudissa, 2009).

Methods

The within-year retention rate captures the students who are enrolled in a school on September 30 of the school year and still enrolled at the same school on May 31 of the same school year. Students are excluded from the calculations for reasons of death, incapacitation, or enrollment in a foster or group home outside of Philadelphia. The analysis looks at a sample of students which includes all 3rd, 7th, and 9th graders.

Findings

Overall, there is a significant increase in the within-year retention rate in both Renaissance Charter Schools and Promise Academies one year after turnaround. The increase was greater for Renaissance Charter Schools than for Promise Academies. The student retention rate one year prior to turnaround for schools that became Renaissance Charter Schools was 83.0%. For the same group of schools

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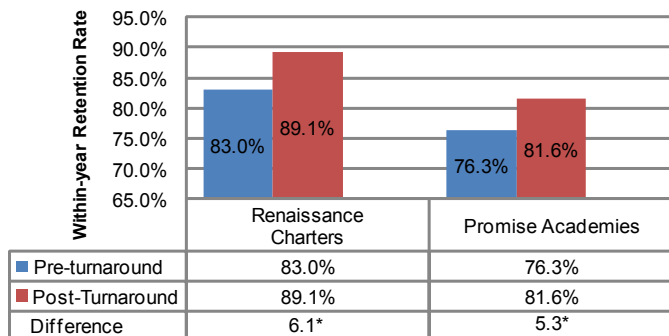
Key Findings

- Overall, there is an improvement in within-year student retention in the year after turnaround in both Renaissance Charter Schools and Promise Academies. The improvement is greater in Renaissance Charter schools than in Promise Academies.
- These gains are significant across all examined grades in Renaissance Charter Schools, but only for grade 9 in Promise Academies.
- Increases in student retention experienced in the year after turnaround were maintained through 2012-2013.

Renaissance Schools Initiative

A look at student retention and mobility in Renaissance Initiative Schools

Figure 1. Within-year Retention Rate from Year Preceding Turnaround to 1 Year into Turnaround in Renaissance Charter Schools and Promise Academies

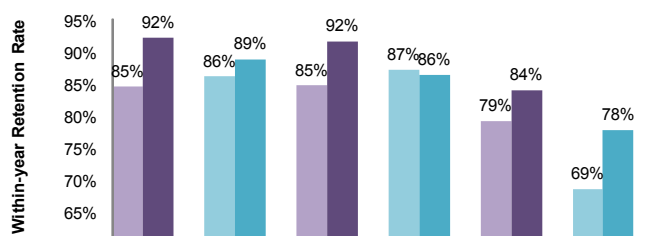


*Indicates that difference is significant at $p < .05$.

one year after turnaround, the student retention rate was 89.1%. This represents a statistically significant increase of 6.1 percentage points. Similarly, for schools that would become Promise Academies, the student retention in the year before turnaround was 76.3%. After one year as Promise Academies, the student retention rate increased to 81.6%. This represents a statistically significant increase of 5.3 percentage points. See Figure 1.

Further analysis explored whether these overall changes impacted students equally at each grade level. In Renaissance Charter Schools, each grade examined (3, 7, and 9) showed a statistically significant increase in within-year student retention one year after turnaround. Schools that became Renaissance Charters experienced a 7.7 percentage point increase in student retention in grade 3, a 6.9 percentage point increase in grade 7, and a 4.8 percentage point increase in grade 9. In Promise Academies, there was a significant 9.2 percentage point increase in student retention one year after turnaround in grade 9. In grade 3, there was a slight but non-significant increase of 2.7 percentage points, and in grade 7, student retention actually decreased after turnaround by 0.9 percentage points. See Figure 2.

Figure 2. Within-year Retention Rate from Year Preceding Turnaround to 1 Year into Turnaround in Renaissance Charter Schools and Promise Academies - by Grade



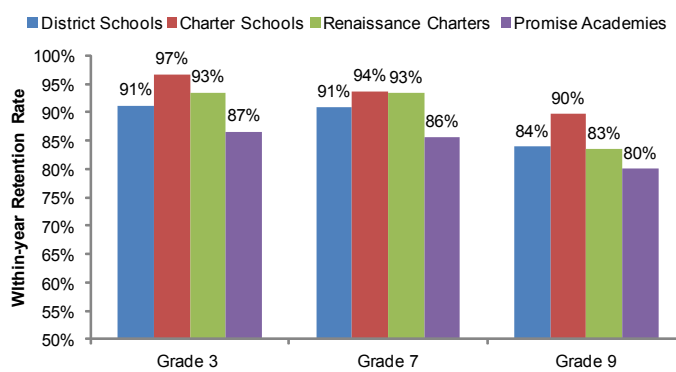
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For the most part, Renaissance Charter Schools and Promise Academies that experienced an increase in student retention in the year immediately after turnaround have maintained and in some cases expanded those increases through 2012-2013. Figure 3 shows within-year student retention rates during the 2012-2013 school year for District, Charter, Renaissance Charter, and Promise Academy Schools.

Renaissance Charter, and Promise Academy Schools.

Additional research is needed to identify the specific factors that may have contributed to decreases in student mobility after turnaround, as well as to determine whether these changes translate or contribute to improved student outcomes.

Figure 3. Within-year Student Retention Rate by School Type in 2012-2013 School Year



References

Finch, W.H., Lapsley, D.K., & Baker-Boudissa, M.E. (2009). A Survival Analysis of Student Mobility and Retention in Indiana Charter Schools. Educational Policy Analysis Archives, 17(18), 1-15. Retrieved Oct. 10, 2013 from <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v17n18/>.

Hanushek, E.A., Kain, J.F., Rivkin, S.G. & Branch, G.F. (2005). Charter school quality and parental decision-making with school choice. National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. 11252.

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