

Evaluation of the School District of Philadelphia's Renaissance Initiative and Turnaround Network:

Review of literature and evaluation plan

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Overview of today's presentation

- **Mathematica's three-year evaluation plan for the Renaissance Initiative and Turnaround Network**
- **Strategies used by districts for addressing school improvement**
- **Effectiveness studies of district- and charter-managed turnaround efforts**
- **Areas of focus when managing and operating low-performing schools**

Mathematica's evaluation plan

Year	Key study activities	Deliverable
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Literature reviewUnderstand context and supports for RI/TNDetermine the extent to which the efforts align with the five identified areas of focus	Year 1 annual report (May 2018)
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Examine impact of Renaissance Initiative on student outcomesExamine impact of Turnaround Network on student outcomesAnalysis of SDP stakeholder surveys as needed	Year 2 annual report (May 2019)
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Follow up implementation analysis on change over timeExamine impact of Renaissance Initiative on student outcomesExamine impact of Turnaround Network on student outcomesConduct cost study	Year 3 annual report (May 2020)

Implementation Study- Year 1

Activity	Length	Topics
District officials, CMO leadership	30-60 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> History and context for RI/TN Leadership and support for RI/TN schools Reform model and strategies Successes and challenges
Principal/ assistant principal interview	60- 90 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership and support as a RI/TN school Staff selection, evaluation, and support Instructional program Non-academic supports and school culture Successes and challenges
Instructional coach interview	45 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructional program Support for staff for instructional program Support for staff around data use Successes and challenges
If available: Student support staff member	45 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-academic supports and school culture Successes and challenges
1-2 teacher focus groups (3-5 teachers per group)	60 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructional program Support received for instruction and data use Non-academic supports and school culture Successes and challenges
Parent focus group (5-6 parents/families)	60 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community context School culture Successes and challenges

Strategies used by districts for addressing school improvement:

District- and charter- managed turnaround efforts

District-managed turnaround efforts

Strategy	Example(s)
District operates and supports a virtual network of low-performing schools	SDP's Turnaround Network, Miami's Zone, Charlotte-Mecklenburg's Project LIFT
District implements an established comprehensive school reform program	<i>Success for All</i>
District gives authority to other local entities	Los Angeles – mayor and community members implement programs
State takes over/manages schools in place of district	Tennessee's Achievement School District

Charter-managed turnaround efforts

Strategy	Example
Restart a traditional public school as a charter school using a whole school reform model	SDP's Renaissance Initiative
Restart a traditional public school as a charter school using a phase-in approach	LEAD Public Schools in Nashville
Close a traditional public school and replace it with one or more charter schools	Chicago's School Closure and Restart policy
State acts as authorizer to create a network of turnaround charter schools	Louisiana's Recovery School District

Effectiveness studies of district- and charter-managed turnaround efforts

Effectiveness of district-managed turnaround efforts

Effort	Effects
NYC's Renewal School Program	+ Math and ELA Variation around average effect
Project LIFT	Mixed: Math (+), Science (-) + Attendance + Graduation rate
LA Public School Choice Initiative	Mixed across the three cohorts + ELA for second cohort
Massachusetts School Redesign Grants	+ Math and ELA Decrease in ELL/non-ELL achievement gap Decrease in FRPL/Non-FRPL achievement gap
State takeover of Lawrence Public School	+ Math (large) and ELA (modest)

Effectiveness of charter-managed turnaround efforts

Effort	Effects
Green Dot Public Schools (Los Angeles)	+ School persistence + Passing college prep courses + State assessments
UP Academy (Boston)	+ Math and ELA
Recovery School District (New Orleans)	+ Math and ELA

Comparing district- and charter-managed turnaround efforts

- **Studies that compare the two strategies have varying conclusions**
 - **A study in Tennessee:** Schools given district-managed supports (iZones) outperformed those that received charter- or state-managed supports
 - **A study in Boston:** The district-managed turnaround had comparable effects to charter-managed turnaround; it implemented charter-like strategies
 - **A study across ten states:** Neither charters or district-managed schools substantially improved; charters were more likely to be closed

Five areas of focus for district or charter management of low-performing schools:

- 1) Culture**
- 2) High-quality, data-driven instruction**
- 3) Educators**
- 4) District office**
- 5) Non-academic supports**

Focus Area 1: Culture

Set a culture focused on improvement through goals, expectations, and a shared vision

- **Challenges:**

- Communication failures within district and between district and community
- Stakeholder responses to district changes
- Unfamiliar school structural realities for CMOs (e.g., neighborhood enrollment)

- **Selected strategies:**

- Superintendent meets with community leaders to share vision
- Make expectations clear and increase community outreach
- Set clear and high standards when developing requests for charter applications with transparent procedures for identifying and taking action in low-performing schools

Focus Area 2: High-Quality, Data-Driven Instruction

Use data to inform high-quality instruction, curriculum, and learning strategies that meet students' academic needs

- **Challenges:**

- Serving students with greater academic needs, high-mobility
- Tensions between using standard curricula and customized teacher lessons

- **Selected strategies:**

- Extended learning days and/or school years
- Tutoring and small-group instruction
- Data specialists offer technical assistance to teachers
- Quarterly data dashboard with student achievement, attendance, and perception data

Focus Area 3: Educators

**Recruit, retain, develop, and empower
a strong turnaround workforce in schools**

- **Challenges:**

- Finding and retaining qualified talent
- Pushback from teachers about increased or changed responsibilities
- Providing adequate professional development to staff

- **Selected strategies:**

- Find leaders through intentional partnerships
- Have co-principals divide instructional and nonacademic leadership
- Create “buzz” about recruitment through conference presentations and hiring high-performing staff from other urban areas
- Offer half-day Fridays to allow 2.5 hours of weekly teacher PD

Focus Area 4: Central Office

Ensure that district offices and staff are structured to support turnaround schools' unique needs

- **Challenges:**

- Sudden and unexplained changes in district office structure or priorities
- Inconsistent support from district officials
- Lack of collaboration between district offices and CMOs

- **Selected strategies:**

- Smaller supervisory zones
- Schools receive budget to purchase district services that meet their needs
- Regular meetings between CMOs and superintendent to align strategies during school conversions

Focus Area 5: Families and Community

Understand and support the non-academic needs of schools' students, families, and communities

- **Challenges:**
 - History of a lack of quality educational resources
 - Transportation, social-emotional needs for students
 - Highly mobile populations
- **Selected strategies:**
 - Hire local residents as paraprofessionals
 - Create partnerships with community-based organizations
 - Create parent colleges for families and their children
 - Offer mental health services for students

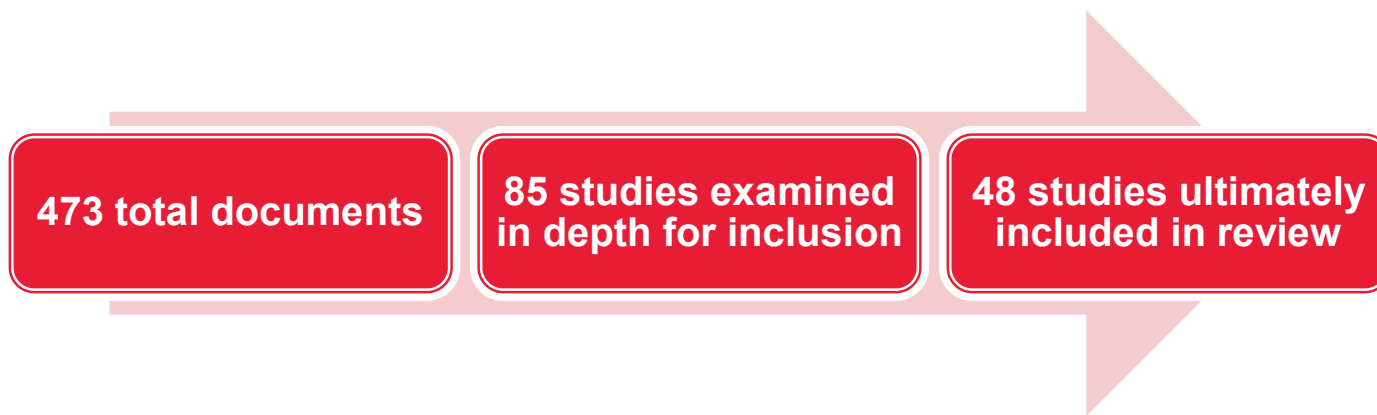
For more information

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Additional Slides

Methods

- **Identify relevant literature:**
 - Identified seminal studies
 - Searched citations from seminal studies
 - Solicited expert recommendations
 - Searched for studies of *school turnaround, management of low-performing schools, district management, and charter operators*



Literature review guiding questions

- What **strategies** for addressing school improvement have districts faced with improving low-performing schools used?
- What does recent literature say about the **effectiveness** of district- or charter-managed school improvement strategies on improving student outcomes?
- What are **areas of focus** when districts take over the management and operations of persistently low-performing schools or convert them to charter schools?