1 **Part One** *of a Series of Five Reports*

High School Reform in Chicago Public Schools: An Overview

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These reports were produced by a team of researchers from SRI International and The Consortium on Chicago School Research. The research team included Daniel C. Humphrey, Marjorie E. Wechsler, Viki M. Young, Ashley Campbell, Patrick M. Shields, Maria I. Abasi, Lauren Cassidy, Raymond McGhee, Jr., and Samantha Murray from SRI; and Sue E. Sporte, Macarena Correa, Holly M. Hart, Joy K. Lesnick, Lauren Sartain, Sara Ray Stoelinga, Julia Gwynne, Jimmy Sebastian, and W. David Stevens from the CCSR.

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HIGH SCHOOL REFORM IN CHICAGO: AN OVERVIEW

Background on the Study and the Purpose of the Report

For most of the past decade, the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) have received significant support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) to improve the performance of city high schools. As part of that support, the Foundation contracted with SRI International (SRI) and the Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of high school reform in Chicago. Although many efforts to improve Chicago high schools are concurrently under way, the focus of this evaluation is on three primary initiatives: Instructional Development Systems (IDS), Renaissance 2010, and Autonomous Performance Management Schools (AMPS).

The evaluation was initially designed to follow the initiatives for 4 years, but the BMGF decided to redirect its resources and end the evaluation after the first round of data collection. As a result, we report only on the implementation and early outcomes of the initiatives through fall 2008. Our reporting includes five documents, intended for multiple audiences. This overview summarizes the findings from each of the initiative reports and presents our cross-initiative analysis. The three initiative reports detail the implementation accomplishments and challenges, and describes early outcome data. In addition, the package of reports includes a detailed analysis of the observation data collected in 78 classrooms across all three of the initiatives.

Context of the Reform Initiatives

Overall, CPS appear to be headed in a positive direction. Particularly among the district's elementary schools, test scores and other indicators of student performance are improving. For example, eighth-grade students on the writing portion of National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) had larger increases in average scores (10 points) than the nation as a whole (2 points) (National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2008a). Compared with the previous 2002 test, students scoring at or above the "basic" level rose 11 percentage points from 72 to 83 percent, and the percentage of students rated at or above "proficient" rose from 15 percent to 23 percent in 2007 (NCES, 2008b).

Chicago high schools have also improved, but progress has been slower. On the positive side, the percentage of CPS high school graduates increased by 6.5 percentage points for college enrollment and 7.8 percentage points for university enrollment from 2004 to 2007 (Sadovi, 2008). In addition, ACT composite scores increased from 16.5 to 17.7 from 2002 to 2008, and graduation rates went from 47% in 2001 to 55% in 2008 (Weiss, 2008). Despite that progress, CPS leadership recognizes that most measures of high school performance suggest that much needs to be done. Specifically, high school students have high absentee rates, high rates of course failure, low grade point averages, high drop-out rates, and weak scores on the ACT. Of every 100 students who enter a CPS high school, approximately half fail to graduate. Of those who graduate, only about a third go on to college, representing only 17 students out of the original 100. And, of those who enroll in college, only eight obtain a bachelors' degree within 6 years. (Allensworth, 2006; Roderick, Nagaoka, & Allensworth, 2006).

The Chicago Strategy

Recognizing the challenges facing its high schools, the district, with the support of the Foundation, adopted a three-pronged theory of change to guide its reforms. The theory of change

begins within the classroom where learning occurs: *improved student learning requires improved instruction*. The second tenet of the district's change strategy broadens to include the school, recognizing that *schools are the unit of change for instructional improvement and principals are the leaders of that change*. From this perspective, the district does not control reform at the school level, but is a key player in supporting reform, leading to the third tenet: *area and central offices provide critical support for instructional improvement and differentiate that support based on school performance and need* (CPS, 2007).

To operationalize the change theory, CPS has employed a "portfolio" approach whose most obvious manifestation is the district's long-term effort to establish a variety of schools with different features and programs. The idea is to provide students with a menu of schools from which to choose. In the 2008-09 school year, the district had 144 high schools, including comprehensive neighborhood schools, career academies, charter schools, magnet schools, military academies, selective enrollment schools, small schools, special education schools, achievement academies, and alternative schools.

In addition to the portfolio of schools, the district has employed multiple strategies designed to provide varying levels of support and autonomy depending on the school's performance and capacity. Thus, some schools retain traditional governance, budgetary, and technical assistance relationships with the district, whereas others have been formally given varying levels of greater autonomy.

These strategies are played out among the three high school reform initiatives that are the focus of this series of evaluation reports. ***IDS*** high schools are engaged in a comprehensive reform effort designed to offer students a rigorous college preparatory education. At the heart of the reform is a set of rigorous curricula developed by third-party providers in English, mathematics, and science that include instructional materials, aligned assessments, extensive professional development, and school-based coaching.

Renaissance 2010 was launched in 2004 with the goal of creating 100 new elementary and high schools to provide innovative and high-quality educational approaches by 2010. To establish a new school, its founders must engage in a competitive selection process and must propose a set of high standards against which the school will be held accountable. As of fall 2008, Chicago had 85 Renaissance 2010 schools, 27 of which were high schools. Of the high schools, 12 were charters (or new campuses of existing charters), 3 were contract schools (managed by independent nonprofits under a performance agreement with the district), and 12 were performance schools (CPS-managed schools with greater autonomy and exempted from many district policies).

AMPS recognizes and rewards high-performing schools and schools that show promise by providing them autonomy in the following areas: budget, operations and maintenance, the instructional calendar, teacher induction, and the district's area structure. AMPS began in 2005-06 with 85 schools. As of fall 2008, there were 108 AMPS schools, 21 of which were high schools.

System Reform. Backing these various initiatives is the determination to improve district support for schools, regardless of their level of autonomy. Some district officials want to turn the district office into a consumer-friendly service organization. That is, all district functions—procurement, legal, research and evaluation, special needs, human resources, professional development, curriculum, and other services—are expected to provide responsive and helpful

services to schools as they need them. For other district leaders, system reform includes gathering and using better and timely information on school performance. For still other leaders, system reform means improved communications, coordination, and management practices, along with differential levels of support depending on school needs.

The Evaluation

Chicago's bold reform efforts have drawn national attention as other districts seek to replicate the portfolio strategy. For that reason, as noted, the BMGF contracted with SRI and the CCSR to conduct this evaluation to document the early progress of the initiative.

The evaluation employed multiple data-collection activities. Beginning in the early summer of 2008, researchers conducted 27 in-depth interviews with district officials to document the district's reform strategies, understand the leadership's vision for school and district improvement, and identify consistencies and inconsistencies among the leaders. The research team also examined extant documents and existing research on the Chicago reform strategy to craft theory of change hypotheses for each initiative. Initiative heads and other district leaders then reviewed these hypotheses, which were refined by the research team.

In the fall of 2008, the research team conducted site visits to 27 schools, where they interviewed 257 teachers, principals, instructional coaches, and other key implementers. The research team also participated in extensive training in classroom observations, employing a modified version of the Danielson Framework (Danielson, 2007) and then conducted 78 classroom observations during the site visits. The research team also mined existing quantitative data and incorporated those data, the interview data, and the observation data into case studies of each of the 27 schools.

The analysis of the case studies involved multiple meetings with the entire research team, the testing of hypotheses during these meetings and during the review of report drafts, and the review of report drafts by senior researchers.

The result is a collection of reports that contains both hopeful news and some important cautions. Below, we provide data on student outcomes early in the reform, report on the classroom observations, and then review the findings for each of the initiatives.

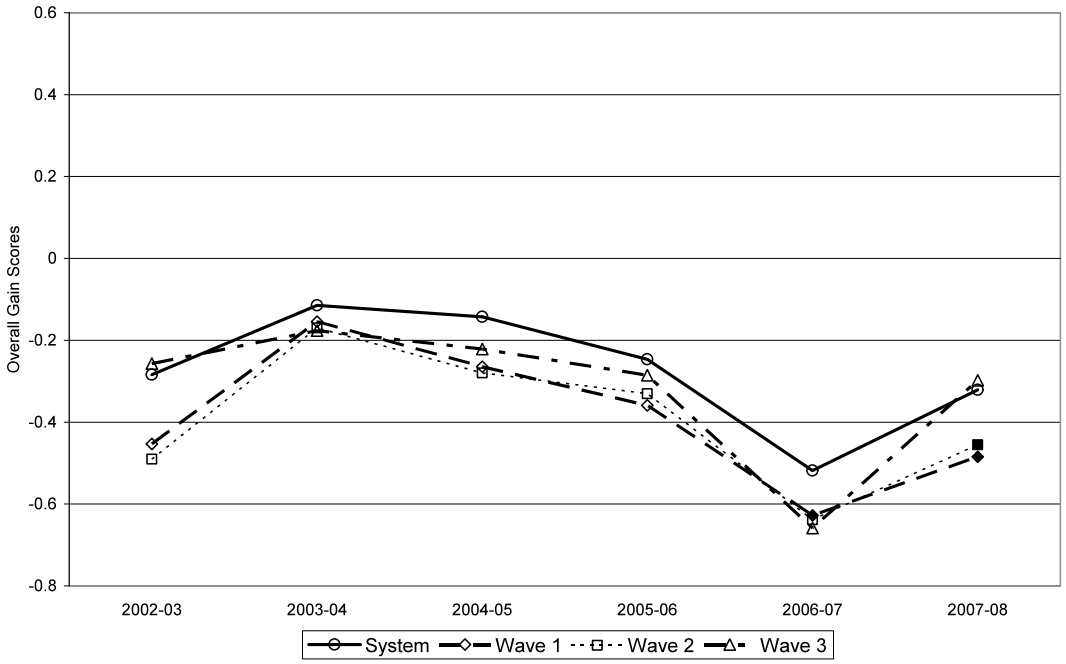
Early Student Outcomes

Each of the reports on individual initiatives presents details from our analyses of a variety of student outcomes. Overall, we found no dramatic improvements. We did find a few hopeful signs, but results were generally mixed. These outcomes are perhaps not surprising, given the relative early stage in the initiatives' implementation and the challenges facing the schools.

We examined the schools participating in each initiative in regard to student scores on the EXPLORE to PLAN tests. We used a "meets expectations" metric: 0 meant students met expectations (a positive score meant they exceeded expectations, and a negative score meant they failed to meet expectations). Exhibit 1 shows that, in general, no differences in test score growth were found between schools implementing IDS and the rest of the system; neither group met EXPLORE to PLAN expectations. Exhibit 2 shows a similar pattern for Renaissance 2010 schools. Exhibit 3 shows a mixed picture of achievement for AMPS. Although the Cohort 1 AMPS maintained their tendency to exceed EXPLORE to PLAN expectations, Cohort 3 AMPS appeared to do better than the rest of the system, although the difference is not statistically

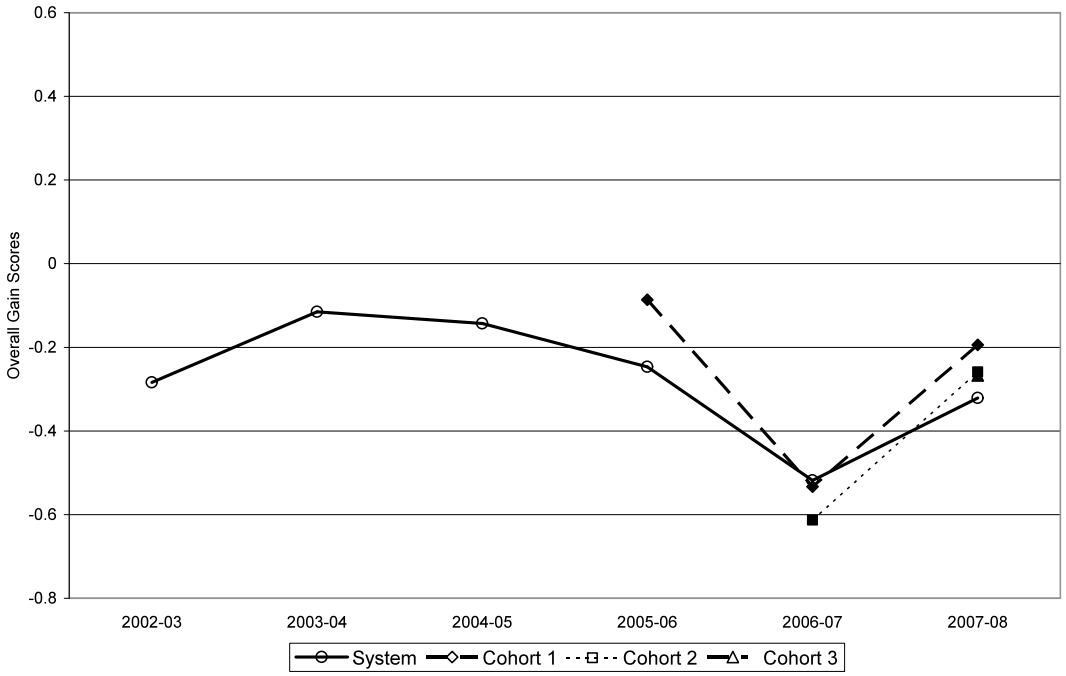
significant due to the small number of schools. Cohort 4 AMPS did about the same as the system.

Exhibit 1
Meeting Expected Gains from Explore to Plan, IDS Schools and CPS System



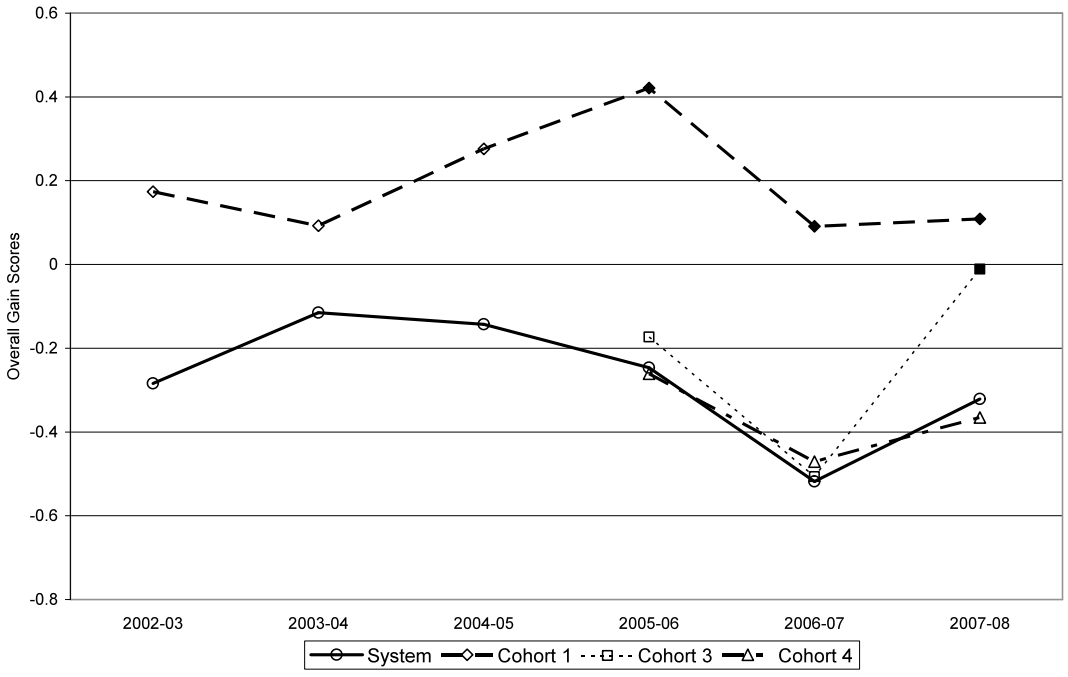
Note: Solid data points denote the years that the schools participated in IDS

Exhibit 2
Meeting Expected Gains from Explore to Plan, Renaissance 2010 Schools and CPS System



Note: Solid data points denote the years that the schools participated in Renaissance 2010

Exhibit 3
Meeting Expected Gains from Explore to Plan, AMPS Schools and CPS System



Note: Solid data points denote the years that the schools participated in AMPS

Teacher Observation Data

Each of the reports presents an analysis of our classroom observation data. In addition, we conducted a more detailed analysis of the data to address cross-initiative issues. The result of that analysis is presented in a separate report. In this section, we summarize the findings across initiatives.

The research team's observations of 78 teachers were designed to be an exploratory effort to offer CPS leadership an introductory overview of instruction resulting from the IDS, Renaissance 2010, and AMPS initiatives. Each classroom observation lasted one class period and was based on a modified version of the Danielson framework. We describe the limitations of the observation data in the report in this series, entitled *A Snapshot of High School Instruction in CPS*. We note that our findings are suggestive only and do not reflect the overall state of instructional practice in the schools participating in the initiatives. We collected data on 24 different elements that are part of instruction, although for purpose of these reports, we concentrated on the subset of elements presented in Exhibit 4.

Exhibit 4

Three Areas of Observed Classroom Instruction Based on the "Framework for Teaching" Rubric

Classroom Management	Communication	Instructional Demand
• Management of transitions	• Expectations for learning	• Expectations for learning achievement
• Management of materials and supplies	• Importance of content	• Activities and assignments
• Structure and pacing	• Explanations of content	• Feedback to students
• Response to misbehavior		• Quality of questions

Following the classroom observation, the researchers rated each teacher using the following four ratings:

- *Distinguished*—a professional teacher who innovatively involves students in the learning process and creates a true community of learners. Teachers at this level are master teachers and leaders in the field both in and out of their school.
- *Proficient*—a successful, professional teacher who consistently performs at a high level. Most experienced teachers would be expected to perform at this level.
- *Basic*—a teacher who has the necessary knowledge and skills to be effective, but is inconsistent in applying the skills, usually because of inexperience. Teachers who are new to the profession may perform at this level. Tenured teachers who have *recently* transitioned to a new curriculum, grade level, or subject may also temporarily perform at the basic level.
- *Unsatisfactory*—a teacher who does not understand the concepts underlying the component. A teacher performing at this level is doing harm in the classroom.

Overall, we found a good deal of variation in the ratings within each school. Importantly, even in schools facing the most challenges, we found examples of excellent instructional practice. In addition, we found many examples of weak classroom management. Amalgamated ratings from all of the observations indicate that 46% of the ratings were at the unsatisfactory or basic level.

Exhibit 5
Distribution of Ratings from All Observations

Rating	Percent
Unsatisfactory	10
Basic	36
Proficient	49
Distinguished	5

Next, we compared ratings by initiatives and found that ratings for teachers in IDS and Renaissance 2010 schools were at approximately the same levels. AMPS teachers earned generally higher ratings. Of course, because instruction is best thought of as the interaction of teachers, students, and content, ratings should not lead to the conclusion that teachers in AMPS schools are of higher quality than teachers in other schools. However, among the classrooms we observed, we did find more examples of proficient and distinguished instructional practice in AMPS than in IDS and Renaissance 2010 schools (see Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6
Distribution of Ratings by Initiative

	Percent		
Rating	AMPS	IDS	Renaissance 2010
Unsatisfactory	3	12	10
Basic	22	42	39
Proficient	60	43	49
Distinguished	15	3	2

The next three exhibits present the specific ratings for teachers in each initiative for the areas of classroom management, communication, and instructional demand. The ratings on the vertical axis represent percentages, while the numbers inside each section represent the actual number of teachers receiving that rating. Note that the total number of ratings in each bar may vary because of lack of evidence for an individual classroom.

Exhibit 7
Teacher Ratings on Dimensions of Classroom Management

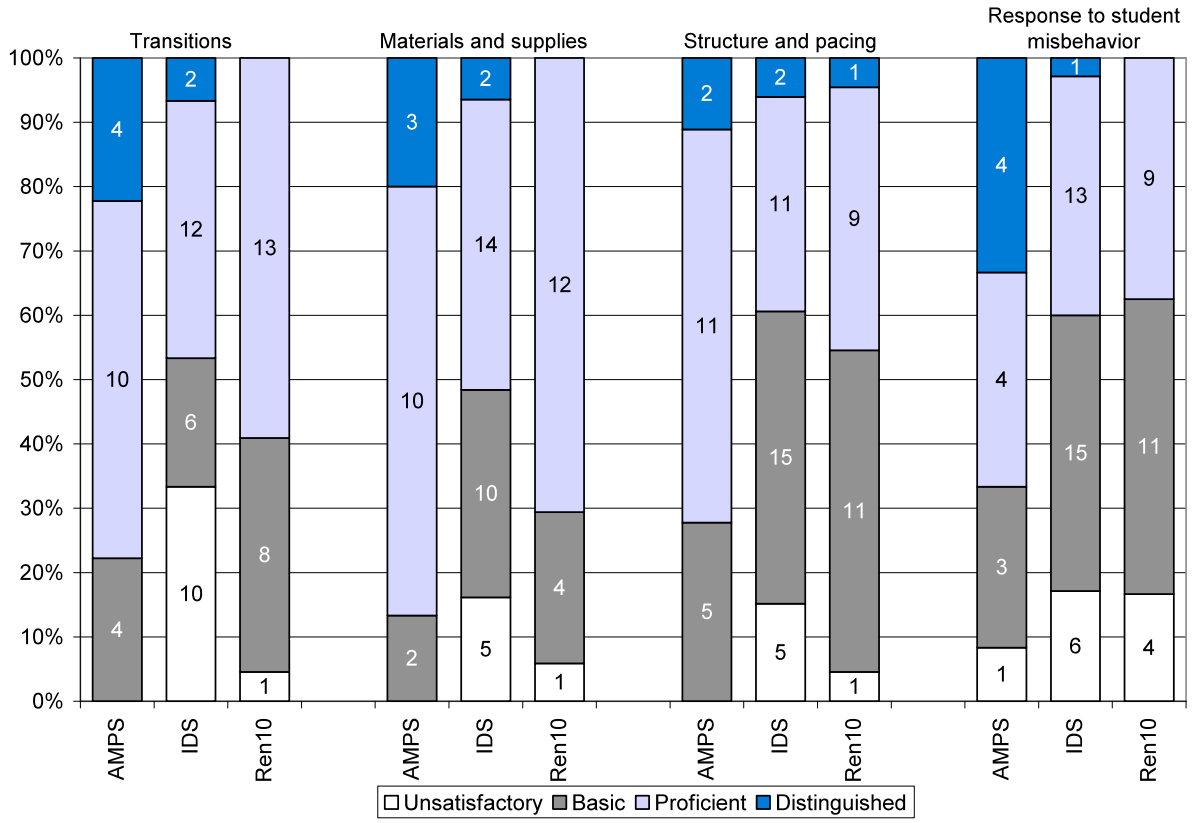
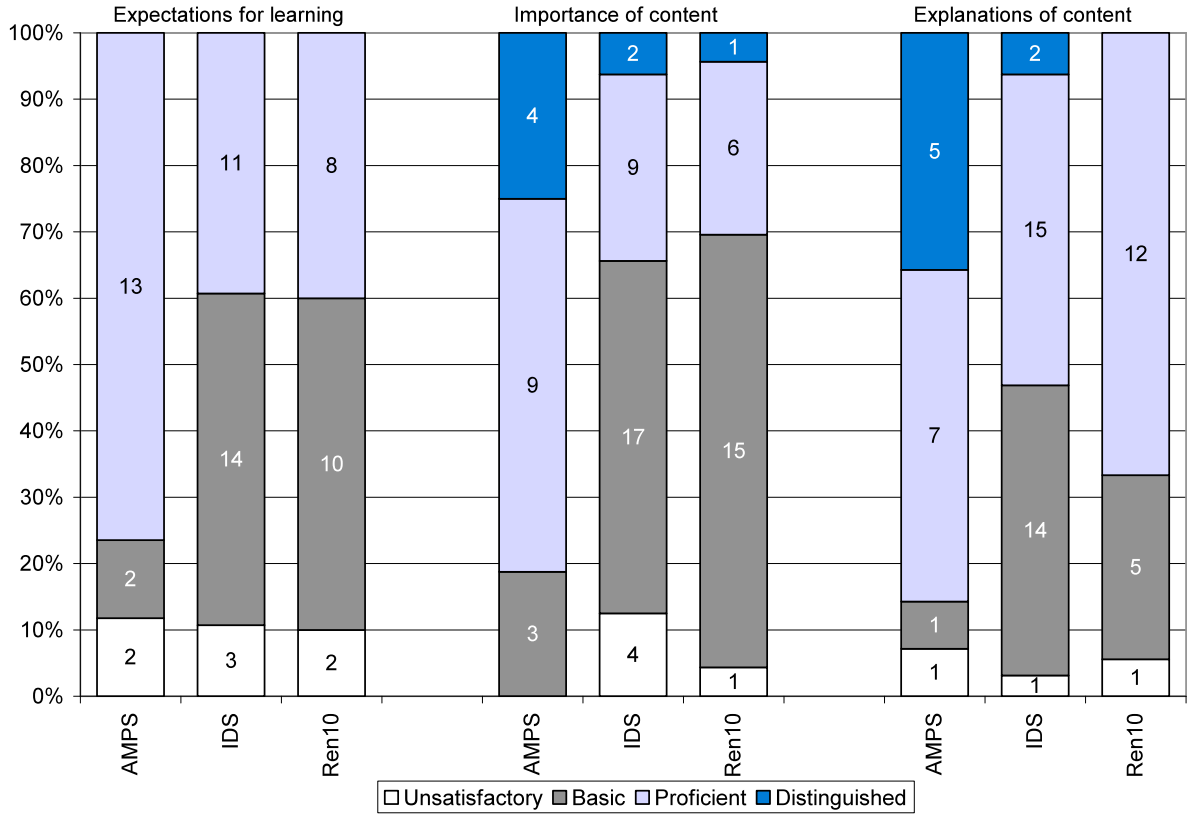


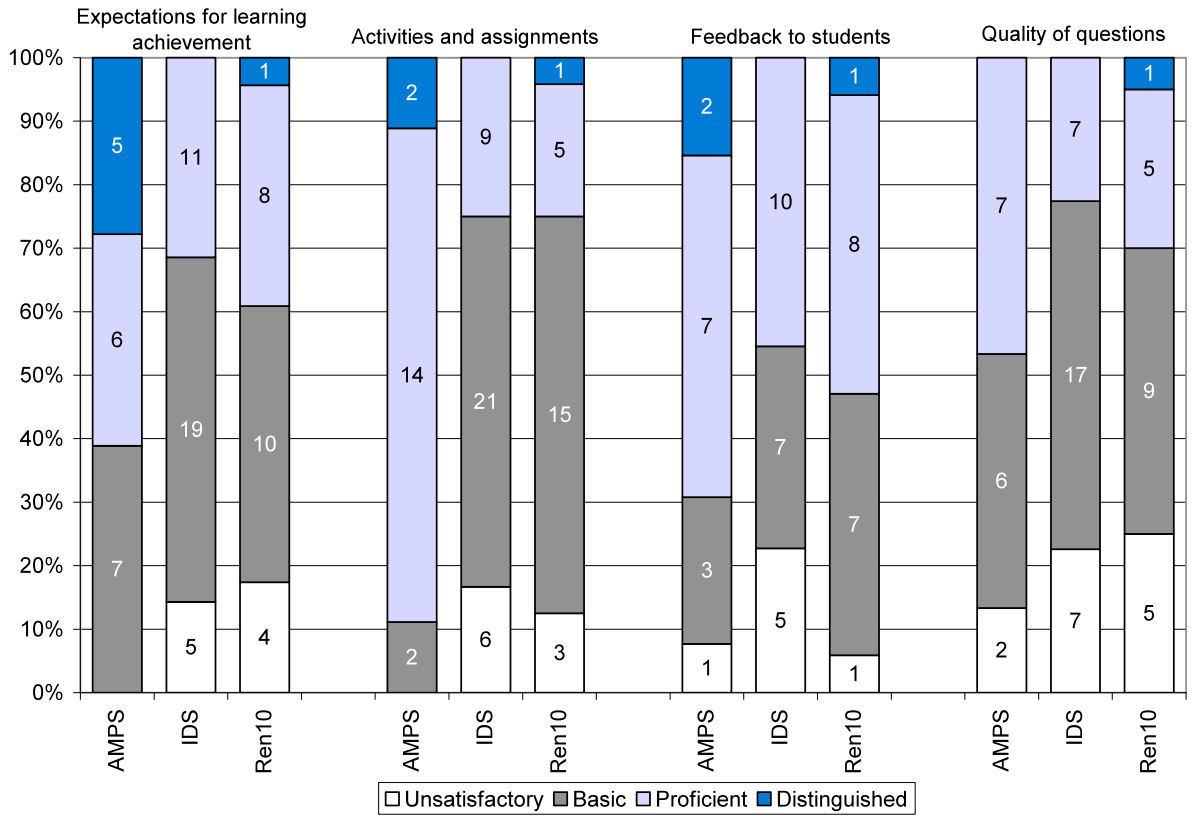
Exhibit 7 shows that AMPS teachers earned higher ratings on the various classroom management elements than IDS or Renaissance 2010 schools. More importantly, we observed large numbers of classrooms where teachers inconsistently employed techniques for running a classroom or worse.

Exhibit 8
Teacher Ratings on Dimensions of Communication



As Exhibit 8 illustrates, the majority of teachers in IDS and Renaissance 2010 schools failed to reach the proficient level for such key teaching skills as communicating the importance of the lesson they were teaching, setting high expectations for learning, and providing clear explanation of content. These deficiencies may be explained by the large numbers of beginning teachers working in schools participating in the initiatives (27% overall) and by the timing of our classroom observations, which took place in the early stages of the initiatives.

Exhibit 9
Teacher Ratings on Dimensions of Instructional Demand



Finally, the elements that reflected the instructional demand of the teacher generally suggested a low level of instructional rigor. Insofar as the quality of the questions they asked, a majority of teachers—even AMPS teachers—ranked at the basic or unsatisfactory level.

Cross-initiative Findings

The three initiatives we examined employed different strategies, but faced some common challenges. In addition, each initiative had notable successes and, therefore, provides important lessons for all high schools in Chicago. Next, we summarize the common challenges and key lessons.

Common Challenges

Nearly all Chicago high schools in the three initiatives had not raised student achievement to levels even close to realizing the goal of having all students ready for success in college and work. Our ratings of the instructional demand in AMPS high schools indicated that they may not have been helping their early cohorts of high-performing students meet their potential. All schools we examined faced challenges associated with human and material resources, as well as external factors that hindered students' academic performance. Some schools faced greater challenges than others, but the challenges facing the IDS, Renaissance 2010, and the last two AMPS cohorts were similar.

Attendance. CPS has an attendance problem. First, Chicago has one of the shortest school years and some of the shortest school days in the state. Given the low number of instructional minutes combined with low attendance rates, Chicago high school teachers have only limited time to raise the academic performance of generally low-performing students. Although accurately comparing Renaissance 2010 schools with other CPS schools is problematic, and precisely determining trends over time at individual schools is made difficult by changes in the system for tracking attendance, some improvement may be taking place (as we discuss in the next section). Yet even for schools that have 90% attendance rates, students miss at least 3 weeks per year (and even more time at Renaissance 2010 schools with longer school years).[1] It is safe to say that nearly all Chicago high schools and the reform initiatives are easily undermined by low attendance.

Low academic levels. At the heart of all of the initiatives is the goal of preparing students for success in postsecondary education and employment. However, students in each of the initiatives enter high school behind, meaning teacher face a large number of students behind grade level. For example, three of the Wave 1 IDS schools had mean incoming Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) scores below the state standards for eighth graders. And, at these schools and two others in Wave 1, at least 25% of the students failed to reach the standards for sixth graders. For Wave 2, mean scores at four schools were below state standards for eighth graders, and at least 25% of students failed to reach state standards for sixth graders. Five Wave 3 schools had students whose average score was below the "meets standards" level for eighth graders, and at least 25% failed to meet sixth grade standards in reading.

Nor is low achievement limited to IDS and Renaissance 10 schools. Although schools in the first year of AMPS were mainly selective enrollment schools, in subsequent years schools became AMPS through an application process. Those schools mirror the achievement levels of high schools throughout the CPS system.

In addition to being behind academically, students have not acquired the academic behaviors required to take advantage of the rigorous curricula to which they are being introduced. For example, although IDS curricula require group work and inquiry-based learning, students do not have experience in using these skills. Students also bring a variety of social and emotional needs that must be addressed if they are to succeed academically. Some students, for example, have responsibilities such as working to assist their families or taking care of siblings that divert their attention from education. Schools in all three initiatives are thus challenged to simultaneously instill the expectation for postsecondary education and prepare students for that education by raising students' reading and mathematics skills, and providing the full range of social-emotional supports needed so students can succeed academically.

Prolonged implementation period. Some of the challenges facing the schools were most in evidence at IDS and Renaissance 2010 schools. As part of the urgent need to improve performance, the new initiatives did not always provide adequate time for planning, implementation, and refinement. For IDS schools, the time between deciding to participate (or being assigned to the initiative) and introducing the new curriculum was often too short to establish ownership and understanding by school leaders, or build school-wide commitment. The rapid expansion of the IDS initiative posed challenges for both the school and the district support

[1] The variation in the length of the school year and school day at various schools suggests the need to track both attendance rates and the number of instructional days students receive.

systems. In the first year, IDS was implemented in just ninth grade in 14 schools. The following year, those original schools added tenth grade, with 11 new schools coming on board with ninth grade. Within 3 years, the initiative had grown from 14 school/grade combinations to 84 school/grade combinations. One result was logistical challenges in ordering materials and equipment. At the beginning of the third year of the initiative, timely and accurate delivery of the materials and equipment needed to implement the curriculum had become problematic.

For Renaissance 2010 schools, although planning time was considerably longer, it was largely taken up with the application process. As a result, the schools had little time to hire a full teaching staff, address the logistics of starting a new school, and prepare teachers for their assignments. Most Renaissance 2010 schools also added new grades to their programs in each of their first 4 years. Some schools also lacked adequate facilities as they grew.

Ongoing hiring, novice teachers, and teacher quality. The rapid expansion of the initiatives meant that schools had to hire large numbers of teachers each year. For example, Renaissance 2010 schools had to hire staffs for entire grade levels each year. Teacher turnover was also high, with some teachers leaving because of stringent job demands with others let go because of poor performance.

Complicating the implementation challenges, both initiatives employed large number of beginning teachers, not all of whom had acquired basic classroom management skills. As our observation data suggest, schools in each initiative, not just IDS and Renaissance 2010 schools, had some teachers who lacked adequate classroom management skills. As our analysis in the companion report, *A Snapshot of High School Instruction in CPS*, shows, unsatisfactory classroom management precluded both novice and veteran teachers from reaching proficiency in other instruction areas. Indeed, teachers with a "basic" or "unsatisfactory" rating for classroom management were unlikely to achieve high ratings on important instructional practices, especially instructional demand. Identifying and improving the practice of teachers who lack proficient classroom management skills would significantly improve the overall instructional practices in the district. A concerted district strategy to attend to weak classroom management skills—one that enlists school principals, Area Instructional Officers (AIOs), human resources, alternative and traditional teacher preparation programs, induction programs, coaches, and professional development providers—is urgently needed.

Our observation data also suggest the need to improve instructional demand even in the most high-performing schools in the district. The observation data indicate the need for greater attention by principals, coaches, professional development providers, and others involved in teacher development efforts to the quality of questions, for example.

Leadership. Across all initiatives, principals play a critical role as instructional leaders. Nonetheless, principals reported that they frequently did not receive the support or information they needed to be effective instructional leaders. Nor did all principals at IDS schools fully understood the initiative. Lacking knowledge of the new curriculum and teaching strategies, they were unable to give full support to their teachers.

Renaissance 2010 school leaders faced different challenges. Because the schools were small and their administrative support staff was small, leaders' responsibilities were extensive. Not only were the principals instructional leaders, they were also responsible for all aspects of the school's operation—from purchasing materials, equipment, and furniture, through overseeing facility issues and designing curriculum, to recruiting and enrolling students.

Accountability. Each initiative raised different questions about accountability. For AMPS, we found that teachers did not understand how their AMPS status might be revoked or by what measures they were being judged. In addition, a few AMPS teachers were incorrectly concerned that their AMPS status gave their principal authority to remove them.

For Renaissance 2010 high schools, we found few outcome data for use in determining performance. Although all eleventh graders take the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE), most Renaissance 2010 high schools did not have students in that grade until their third year of operation. In addition, not all schools participated in the EXPLORE and PLAN tests. The available data did not control for possible selection bias. Although most Renaissance 2010 high schools used assessment data to help guide instructional decisions, publicly available data on performance were in short supply. Moreover, the performance measures that will be used to determine the schools' renewal after 5 years remain unclear.

For IDS schools, both teachers and principals expressed concern about lack of evidence that the approach worked. Despite the use of formative and summative assessments, few felt confident that students were making significant academic progress. As one IDS principal said, "No one appears to be holding the IDS's accountable for the quality of coaching, the quality of the curriculum, the effectiveness of the programs."

Practices Worth Sharing

Although many of the strategies of the various initiatives differ markedly, one common theme is outsourcing for supports and expertise. The IDS initiative contracts with providers of curriculum, coaching and professional development personnel, and assessment experts. Renaissance 2010 (at least the Charter schools in the initiative) contracts with outside providers and independent school operators. Individual schools in AMPS often seek external expertise (and internal expertise as well). Nevertheless, district leaders seek, for lack of a better term, in-sourcing. With in-sourcing, schools in an initiative draw on the good practices and lessons learned from each other and from school in other initiatives.

Across the initiatives, we were impressed by examples of innovation and distinguished teaching, of strong leadership, and creative use of scarce resources. However, the very structures the district has in place to foster these good practices tended to inhibit their wider distribution. Initiatives thus effectively operate in silos, not because they want to hide what they are doing, but because they are burdened by day-to-day logistics and crises, and by institutional demands (not always related to teaching and learning). Similarly, individual schools tend to operate in silos, mostly out of a desire to fend off external demands that often detract from their efforts to improve. At the same time, schools whose principals and teachers are involved in networks have found tangible benefits from sharing effective practices. l

Transforming high schools in Chicago and in the nation is likely to require a more aggressive approach than has been tried to date. A starting point may be learning from what has been tried. As Charles Payne recently noted:

> Whether they are working with individual schools or shaping statewide policies, whether we are talking about reforms of the Left or the Right, there is a recurring tendency to underestimate the rigors – the toxicity, if you will– of the urban environment and thus the modes of implementation typically employed fail to be robust enough to have a chance. Like teachers who continue to teach in ways that

> fail, reformers have difficulty learning from their own practice. (Payne, 2008, p. 154)

Proving Charles Payne wrong is not easy, but practices worth sharing can be found in schools across the three initiatives. Mutual learning among the initiatives to take advantage of the practices of all three initiatives will require conscious effort by the district and district resources to identify and use what has been learned. Thus, we conclude with10 practices worth sharing.

1. Improving Attendance. No matter how inspired the innovation, the teaching, or the curriculum, nothing happens without students in classrooms. Although the way the district collects attendance data makes it difficult to directly compare the attendance of the Renaissance 2010 Charters with other schools, the data we do have strongly suggest that some of these schools are successfully getting students to come to school, students who are demographically similar to others who are often absent. We also found examples of good attendance rates at IDS schools and AMPS—rates that are higher than student demographics might suggest. Among other efforts, these schools are building close relationships between students and adults, placing high expectations on parents for their children's attendance, and closely monitoring individuals to find them if they fail to come to first period. Learning about the practices that result in good attendance is sorely needed in the district.

2. Building Good School Climates. Although we saw and documented a good deal of variation in school climate, some schools have obviously been more successful than others in creating an atmosphere characterized by orderly student behavior during passing time, mutual respect between adults and students, and a sense of purpose focused on learning. As one principal told us:

> I'm big on building environments that are conducive to learning and that includes transitions in hallways, keeping your voices at a low tone, and respecting your peers and the people around you. I mean you have to do that, and you have to be held accountable for that.

Each initiative provides examples of good school climates, but we found such climates most common among Renaissance 2010 schools, possibly as a result of the schools' small size and the newness. The procedures they have put in place to establish a good school climate are worth learning from.

3. Providing More Student Supports. Some schools we visited took extra measures to meet students' social, emotional, and academic needs. Some Renaissance 2010 schools forged strong relationships with students' families, provided extensive counseling and social work, and expected teachers to engage in the lives of their students. Some AMPS schools used their autonomy to add engaging enrichment courses to the standard curriculum. Renaissance 2010 schools built after-school and summer programs to help struggling students academically. Such extra help is not uncommon at most schools, but the quality and the intensity of these efforts are worth sharing.

4. Fostering Teacher Collaboration. One of the major accomplishments of the IDS schools has been the increase in the amount and quality of teacher collaboration. These schools achieved better teacher collaboration in part because of the introduction of a common curriculum. In addition, the schools provided time during the school days for teachers to

collaborate by establishing frequent common planning times, structuring those times to focus on teaching and learning, and encouraging informal collaborations among teachers and across disciplines. Teacher collaboration was also in evidence in AMPS and Renaissance 2010 schools, but the existence of a common curriculum in IDS schools appeared to have raised collaboration there to a higher level. Not all IDS schools have exemplary collaboration practices, but it is worth learning form those that do.

5. Using Teachers as Coaches. In addition to the enhanced teacher collaboration noted at IDS schools, a number of veteran teachers assumed some of the responsibilities of the IDS coaches by meeting with newer teachers and observing their classroom. As the initiative matured, we saw evidence that veteran teachers taking increased responsibility for their colleagues. This appeared to result from changes in attitude (perhaps brought on by the collaboration efforts) and by the provision of time to coach. Although formalizing coaching by veteran teachers can be counterproductive when teachers are reluctant participants, facilitating opportunities for "informal" relationships to grow appears to be a key lesson offered by the IDS schools.

6. Expanding the Role of Teacher Evaluation. Most Renaissance 2010 schools have been developing rigorous teacher evaluation systems (particularly after their first few years). For example, in one school, team leaders informally evaluate teachers every month. In addition, team leaders, the principal, and the Charter Management Organization (CMO) regional manager formally evaluate teachers twice a year. The evaluations are comprehensive, focusing on issues such as student engagement, classroom management, higher order questioning, and implementation of the curricular model. The evaluations have high-stake outcomes, influencing contract renewal, raises, and bonuses. Although the high stakes nature of these evaluations may be somewhat problematic at noncharter schools, the rigor of the procedures is relevant for making tenure and other decisions. Because teacher evaluation is often considered a weak link in ensuring teaching quality, some of the evaluation models in place should inform practice in all schools.

7. Enhancing Leadership. Although most principals draw on informal sources of support, most AMPS leaders reported benefiting significantly from the formal network of principals that the AMPS office helps facilitate. As one principal said, "…knowing that we could collaborate with other selective enrollment faculties—share best practices that way—was important to us..." Several AMPS principals in later cohorts said that meeting with other principals regularly and using grant funds in support of joint professional development with other high-performing AMPS schools helped address their needs. Some Renaissance 2010 also participated in networks established by such organizations as the Center for Urban School Improvement, the Network for College Success (some AMPS schools also participated), and their CMO.

8. Using Data More Effectively. Although we were concerned about the lack of public information concerning outcomes for many of the Renaissance 2010 schools, we did find that many of these schools were beginning to use information on student learning to help inform teacher practice. Across the Renaissance 2010 high schools we visited, periodic benchmark tests such as those developed by the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) provided common sources of information about student achievement. The schools also reported examining results from the PLAN and EXPLORE tests in ninth and tenth grade and from the ACT. In addition, schools compiled class watchlists several times during a semester to identify and intervene with students receiving Ds or Fs and who were at risk of failing. The schools also routinely tracked

data on student behaviors such as tardiness, excessive absences, and disciplinary actions. In addition to collecting student achievement data, in approximately half of the schools we visited principals conducted walkthrough or classroom observations to collect data on instructional practices. Approximately half of the schools indicated that they had a leadership team or data team that took responsibility for analyzing specific data at the school level. IDS schools were also learning about data usage through their coaches.

9. Taking Advantage of Resources and Technology. The IDS schools clearly benefited from the infusion of materials, supplies, and equipment that resulted from their participation in the initiative. Most notably, teachers reported that they were able to provide the kind of inquiry/hands-on learning that was not possible when they only had textbooks. Although some teachers were not taking full advantage of these resources and although some were just learning how to employ the materials, many reported great satisfaction with the additional resources, which enabled them to be more effective teachers. Importantly, the integration of technology with the curriculum led many teachers to engage students better in the curriculum than was possible before the initiative. Non-IDS schools can examine the cutting-edge curriculum and integration of technology in learning that are not now used in their schools.

10. Learning from Good Practice in Context. Perhaps the most encouraging and important finding from our observations of teaching across the initiatives is that models for good teaching exist even in the most challenging circumstances in the district. These models may be the district's least used resource. For each teacher struggling with a difficult class, many other teachers with just as challenging students are proficient across most measures of teaching and some are truly distinguished. Using this kind of teaching as models for others will obviously take effort and time, but may prove to be the district's most valuable commodity for improving teaching.

The four reports that accompany this overview provide more detail on each of the three initiatives, as well as an in-depth analysis of the classroom observations across the three initiatives. They are meant to be a starting place for learning important lessons from the district's effort to transform its high schools.

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