

What Works Clearinghouse



August 2012

WWC Review of the Report “Philadelphia’s Renaissance Schools Initiative: 18 Month Interim Report”^{1,2}

The findings from this review do not reflect the full body of research evidence on Philadelphia’s *Renaissance Schools Initiative*.

What is this study about?

The study examined the effects of Philadelphia’s *Renaissance Schools Initiative* on students in K–8 schools after one year of implementation.

Schools were selected for participation based on their School Performance Index (SPI) at the start of the 2010–11 school year. The SPI rates every school in Philadelphia from one to 10 (one being the highest achievement level and 10 being the lowest). The schools that were selected for the initiative had an SPI of 10.

The study compared outcomes from 11 Renaissance Schools to those from 72 comparison schools that had an SPI rating of seven to ten.

Study authors analyzed average student test scores in math and reading on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) and average student attendance.

Features of Philadelphia’s *Renaissance Schools Initiative*

The *Renaissance Schools Initiative* is designed to turn around chronically low-performing public schools in Philadelphia by implementing a variety of reform strategies. In the first year of implementation, eleven K–8 schools and two high schools (not included in this report) participated.

Four of the 11 K–8 schools were operated by the school district of Philadelphia as “Promise Academies.” They typically replaced over half of their teachers, extended learning time, and received more district funding and support staff.

The seven other K–8 schools described in the report were operated by four private charter school providers. They operated with relative autonomy from the school district and adopted an instructional approach in line with the general strategy of the charter school provider.

WWC Rating

The research described in this report does not meet WWC evidence standards

Cautions: Before the initiative began, achievement levels differed between the Renaissance Schools and the comparison schools. Therefore, any changes in student outcomes cannot be attributed solely to the implementation of the *Renaissance Schools Initiative*.

What did the study find?

The study reported that students in Renaissance Schools had significantly higher math achievement, reading achievement, and attendance rates than students in comparison schools.

However, the WWC does not consider these results to be conclusive because the Renaissance Schools and comparison schools did not have equivalent average student achievement before implementation of the Initiative. Therefore, reported differences in average student outcomes between the schools might reflect these pre-program differences and not the effect of the *Renaissance Schools Initiative*.

Endnotes

¹ Full study citation: Gold, E., Norton, M. H., Good, D., & Levin, S. (2012). *Philadelphia's Renaissance Schools Initiative: 18 month interim report*. Philadelphia: Research for Action.

² Single study reviews examine evidence published in a study (supplemented, if necessary, by information from requests to the author[s]) to assess whether the study design meets WWC evidence standards. The review reports the WWC's assessment of whether the study meets WWC evidence standards and summarizes the study findings following WWC conventions for reporting evidence on effectiveness. The WWC rating applies only to the summarized results, and not necessarily to all results presented in the study. This study was reviewed using the Single Study review protocol, version 2.0. A quick review of this study was released in March 2012, and this report is the follow-up review that replaces that initial assessment.

Recommended Citation

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