3 **Part Three** *of a Series of Five Reports*

High School Reform in Chicago Public Schools: Renaissance 2010

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High School Reform in Chicago: Renaissance 2010

Introduction

The Renaissance 2010 initiative was established to increase the number of high-quality education options across Chicago. Launched in June 2004 by Mayor Richard Daley, Renaissance 2010 provides the opportunity to create new, innovative schools designed to meet the diverse needs and interests of Chicago Public School (CPS) students. Under Renaissance 2010, new schools are created through a competitive selection process based on a set of high standards to which schools will be held accountable. The first cohort of Renaissance 2010 schools opened in 2005, and with 85 schools established in four cohorts as of fall 2008, the initiative is on its way to meeting its goal of opening 100 schools by 2010.

This report presents findings about Renaissance 2010 high schools drawn from a larger study on high school reform in CPS. The study included 27 of the Renaissance 2010 high schools. Although CPS currently claims 49 Renaissance 2010 high schools, 12 schools were already in operation and 10 were in development before the beginning of the Renaissance 2010 initiative. Of the 27 schools that were studied, 12 are charter schools (i.e., independently operated public schools), 3 are contract schools (i.e., independently operated public schools under Renaissance 2010), and 12 are performance schools (i.e., CPS schools that employ CPS teachers and staff). In general, the schools are small, averaging about 250 students per school in 2007, and most will remain small even when all intended grades are enrolled.

Renaissance 2010 high schools represent a diverse set. Some of the schools are new campuses of existing charters, whereas others are the first or only schools operated by their charter management organization (CMO) or education management organization (EMO). The foci for the schools are quite varied, including the arts, military, business, African culture, and computer technology, among others. Further, the schools are geographically spread throughout the district.

This report seeks to answer the following questions about Renaissance 2010 schools:

- What are the early outcomes of the Renaissance 2010 high schools? What are the instructional practices in Renaissance 2010 schools?
- What explains these outcomes? What challenges do Renaissance 2010 schools face as they implement their models? What are the promising practices of Renaissance 2010 schools?
- What supports do Renaissance 2010 schools receive, and what do they still need?

In the next section of the report is an overview of the data collection activities on which the findings are based. Then we describe the early outcomes available for Renaissance 2010 schools and the instruction observed in the schools. Next, we describe the challenges evident in the schools and promising practices for addressing them. Finally, we present our conclusions.

Methods

The study team collected qualitative and quantitative data from a stratified random sample of high schools. In fall 2008, we conducted 1-day site visits to nine schools, three each from Cohorts II, III, and IV (i.e., schools that opened in fall 2006, 2007, and 2008, respectively).

During the site visits, researchers interviewed principals, instructional leaders and coaches, department chairs, guidance counselors, special education teachers, and ninth- and tenth-grade mathematics, science, and English language arts (ELA) teachers, for a total of 63 interviews across schools. Interview topics included school context, district and CMO or EMO support, teacher policies, access to and use of data, curriculum and pedagogy, student support and development, and student outcomes.

We also conducted classroom observations in 24 mathematics, science, and ELA classrooms in the six schools from Cohorts II and III.[1] Classroom observations lasted one full class period, or a minimum of 45 minutes in cases of double-period classes. Although the observations captured only one point in time for each classroom, the number of observations across different schools enables us to paint a general picture of the nature of instruction in the Renaissance 2010 schools. The researchers used portions of Charlotte Danielson's framework for teaching to rate teachers on elements of their classroom environment, including creating an environment of respect and rapport, establishing a culture for learning, managing classroom procedures, managing student behavior, and organizing physical space.[2] Researchers also rated teachers on elements of their instruction, including communicating with students, using questioning and discussion techniques, engaging students in learning, using assessment in instruction, and demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness. For each element measured, teachers were rated *distinguished*, *proficient*, *basic*, or *unsatisfactory* (see *A Snapshot of High School Instruction in CPS* for more information.

After each site visit, the researchers completed debriefing reports that were analyzed for predominant themes and findings. Classroom observation data also were compiled to illustrate instruction across the visited schools within the Renaissance 2010 initiative.

In addition to the on-site data collection, researchers analyzed secondary data available for all Renaissance 2010 high schools. These data include publicly available information on attendance, 1-year dropout rates, freshman on-track-to-graduate rates, and Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) and Educational Planning and Assessment System (EPAS) achievement data. We also examined information on student demographics and teacher experience.

Early Outcomes of Renaissance 2010 High Schools

As charter, contract, and performance schools, Renaissance 2010 high schools enjoy varying degrees of autonomy, with the expectation that autonomy will translate innovation into high levels of student achievement. In this section, we first report on publicly available outcomes data and then report on the results of classroom observations conducted as part of this study and designed to measure instructional practice.

Publicly Available Data

All Renaissance 2010 high schools are required to participate in the state's testing system under which 11th-grade students take the PSAE in mathematics, English, science, and writing.

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[1] We did not observe classes in Cohort IV schools because teachers had been at the school for only 6 weeks at the time of our visits.

[2] Danielson, C. (2007). *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*, 2nd *Ed.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Because most Renaissance 2010 high schools enroll 11th-graders only in their third year of operation, PSAE data currently are very limited. Other outcomes data are available, but few common outcomes measures exist for all Renaissance 2010 high schools. Even among such common outcomes measures as attendance, not all Renaissance 2010 schools' data are comparable with data from regular Chicago high schools because of variation in how each school collects the data.

Despite these limitations of data, a recent CPS report (Charter Schools Performance Report, 2007–08) suggests some positive outcomes. The report compares outcomes data on 17 charter high schools that are part of the Renaissance 2010 initiative with data on comparison schools (a weighted, aggregate average of the neighborhood schools that the charter students would have otherwise attended based on their home address). In general, the 17 charter high schools outperformed their comparison schools on measures of attendance, transfer-out rates, and dropout rates. No PSAE achievement data were available for these schools because they had not yet enrolled 11th-graders.[3]

The comparative performance of the 17 Renaissance 2010 schools in our study does not control for possible selection bias. That is, the comparison group may not reflect important differences (e.g., academic histories and demographic backgrounds) between students in the 17 charter schools and students in the comparison schools. Other research on Chicago charter schools and new small schools that compared students with similar academic backgrounds and demographic characteristics found that statistically significant differences in outcomes are only occasionally in evidence, especially in the schools' early years (Rhodes et al., 2005; Booker, Gill, Zimmer, & Sass, 2009; Young et al., 2009).

Debates over the performance of Renaissance 2010 schools are unlikely to be resolved by this report, given the limitations of the available data. What is objectively clear is that outcomes data on Renaissance 2010 schools are inadequate. Exhibit 1 presents publicly available outcomes data for all Renaissance 2010 schools. Schools with no data for any of the outcomes measures were those established in 2008.

[3] The one charter high school established in 2005 and considered part of Renaissance 2010 had PSAE scores that were slightly lower than those of the comparison schools. According to the report, 15 of the 17 charter high schools established before Renaissance 2010 outperformed their comparison schools.

Exhibit 1
Publicly Available Outcomes Data on Renaissance 2010 High Schools

High Schools	Year-End Attendance Rate, 2008	One-Year Dropout Rate for All Grade 9–12 Students, 2007	Freshman On-Track Rate, 2008	2008 PSAE Percentage Meeting or Exceeding Standards (no ESL)	Percentage Meeting Expected Gains on EPAS
Academy of Communications and Technology (ACT) Charter School	90.2	4.6		9.8	32
Amandla Charter School*					
Architecture, Construction and Engineering (ACE) Technical Charter School	88.0	9.2			38
Aspira Charter School - Early College	91.5				
Aspira Charter School (at Mirta Ramirez Computer Science Campus)	93.4	9.3		25.4	45
Austin Business and Entrepreneurship Academy	9th: 83.7 10th: 85.0	2.9			37
Austin Polytechnical Academy (at Austin)	91.1		35.8		
Bronzeville Scholastic Institute (at DuSable)	91.3	0.4	76.8	17.6	51
Chicago Academy High School	90.5	3.2	60.9	30.2	48
Chicago International Charter School - Longwood Campus	92.5	12.1		25.5	50
Chicago International Charter School - Northtown Campus	94.5	4.7		34.7	
Chicago International Charter School – Ralph Ellison Campus	94.0	2			
Chicago Mathematics and Science Academy	95.1	4.2		51.4	48
Chicago Virtual Charter School	92.5				
Collins Academy High School	89.3		79.5		
Community Services West Career Academy (CSWCA)					
Daniel Hale Williams Preparatory School of Medicine (at DuSable)	97.4		85.1		
DuSable Leadership Academy	89.3	1.2		5.4	47
Henry Ford Academy: Power House Charter High School					
Infinity Math, Science & Technology High School (at Little Village)	93.5	0	89.2		48
Lindblom Math and Science Academy High School	93.1		66.5	66.3	49
Marine Military Academy (at Grant Campus)	92.1		74.2		
Multicultural Arts High School (at Little Village Lawndale)	84.6	6.6	40.7		40
Noble Street Charter High School - Golder College Prep	94.4				

High Schools	Year-End Attendance Rate, 2008	One-Year Dropout Rate for All Grade 9–12 Students, 2007	Freshman On-Track Rate, 2008	2008 PSAE Percentage Meeting or Exceeding Standards (no ESL)	Percentage Meeting Expected Gains on EPAS
Noble Street Charter High School - Pritzker College Prep	94.0	1.3			
Noble Street Charter High School - Rauner College Prep	94.5	0.7			
Noble Street Charter High School - Rowe-Clark Math & Science Academy	93.5				
Noble Street Charter School	94.7	0.4	36.9		58
Noble Street Charter School - Comer					
Noble Street Charter School - UIC College Prep					
North Lawndale College Preparatory Charter School - Christiana Campus	94.0	3.3		14.5	43
North Lawndale College Preparatory Charter High School (at Collins)	94.5				
Orr Academy High School					
Perspectives Charter School - Calumet Campus	92.3	0.6			49
Perspectives Charter School - Calumet HS of Technology	90.1				
Perspectives Charter School - IIT Math and Science Academy*					
Perspectives Charter School - Rodney D. Joslin Campus	91.8	6		17.8	50
Prologue Early College	9th: 89.3 10th: 89.6 11th 84.0 12th: 88.9			16.7	
Rickover Naval Academy (at Senn)	89.9	7.3	68.5	40.8	47
Social Justice (at Little Village)	87.9	2.2	78.4		53
TEAM Englewood Community Academy	87.6		59.6		
University of Chicago Charter School - Woodlawn Campus	93.6	1			45
UNO Charter School - Archer Heights High School					
UPLIFT Community School (at Arai)	86.4	5	65.7	16.2	27
Urban Prep Academy for Young Men Charter School - Lindblom	92.6	0.7			57
VOISE Academy High School					44
World Language High School (at Little Village)	91.6	0.6	50	9.9	40
Young Women's Leadership Charter School	89.5	9		16.5	44
Youth Connection Charter School**	77.2	40.4		11.8	

*Amandla Charter School and Perspectives Charter School - IIT Math and Science Academy do not currently serve high school students.

**Youth Connection Charter School serves high school dropouts.

As Exhibit 1 illustrates, all the Renaissance 2010 schools reported attendance data although at different levels of aggregation—some present an overall school year-end attendance rate and other present grade-level rates. Because most Renaissance 2010 schools do not use the district's reporting system, that the comparisons with regular CPS schools may not be reliable. Nonetheless, the Renaissance 2010 schools do appear to have better attendance rates than are typically seen in the district. For example, the district average for ninth-graders was 80% for the 2007–08 school year, whereas Renaissance 2010 schools with available data are typically above 90%.

Other Renaissance 2010 school-level data are reported unevenly. For example, only 27 of 49 Renaissance 2010 schools in operation in 2007 reported a dropout rate, and only 15 of 49 reported a freshman on-track rate. Because not all schools have reached 11th grade yet, only 17 of 49 schools report a percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards on the PSAE test. In addition, 24 of 49 reported the percentage of students meeting gain expectations on the EPAS EXPLORE to PLAN. In some cases where the data are not available from the Chicago Public Schools Office of Research, Evaluation and Accountability, the schools provide data in their own publications. For example, while the freshman on-track rate for Urban Prep Academy was not available from CPS, in its own materials the school reported a rate of 79% compared with a district average of 47%.

As is the case of Urban Prep Academy, CMOs provide data not available through CPS or state databases; however, those data are not always disaggregated at the school level. Instead, the CMOs sometimes report on the network as a whole or on a few of the more established sites. For example, Chicago International Charter Schools report on their website an average student ACT score of 19, citing an average of 17 at Longwood and 20 at Northtown. No average is presented for the Ralph Ellison Campus, however. The Perspective Charter Schools also provide key data points in their annual report, such as an 80% graduation rate in their earliest high school charter.

EXPLORE to PLAN Data

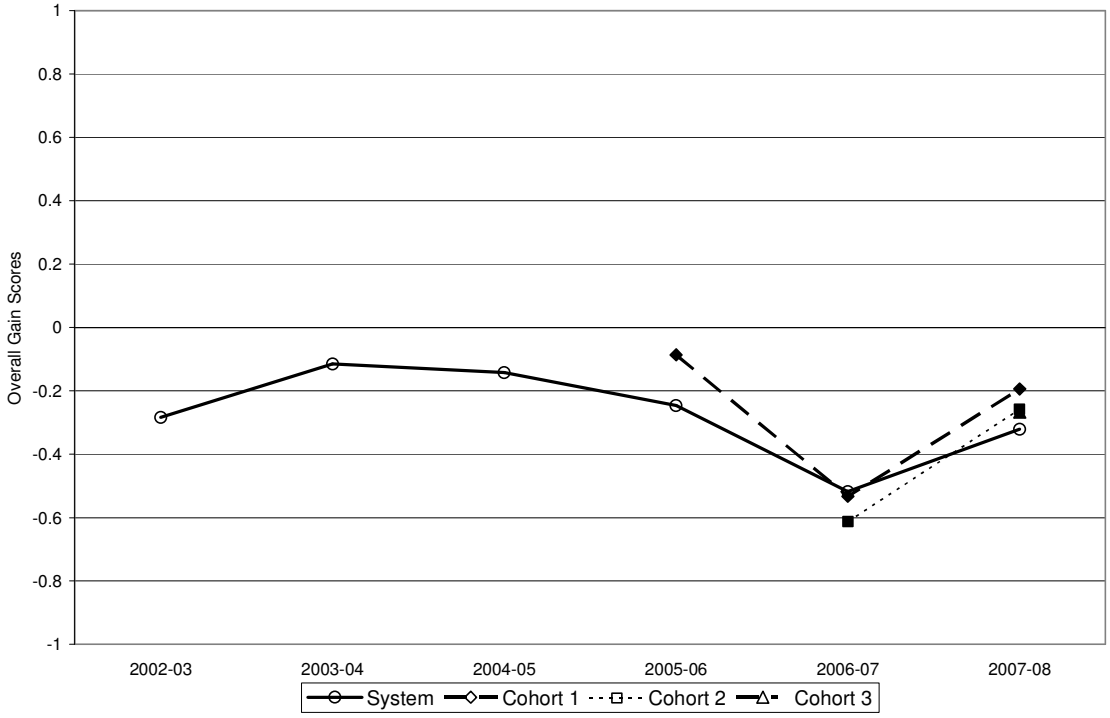
To understand better the availability and usefulness of the outcomes data, we analyzed expected gains by students from the EXPLORE test to the PLAN test on EPAS for the 2005–06, 2006–07, and 2007–08 school years. The greatest problem in trying to make sense of the scores of Renaissance 2010 schools was that only a subset of them used the EPAS system. Overall, we had data for only 20 of the schools (10 from Cohort I, 4 from Cohort II, and 6 from Cohort III). Identifying a good comparison group was also a problem. Ultimately, we could use the district scores from only 99 non-Renaissance 2010 high schools as a point of reference. We recognize that this is not a good comparison group because students self-select into Renaissance 2010 schools, and using the district average for all non-Renaissance 2010 high schools as the reference point confounds the effects of Renaissance 2010 with any self-selection bias. Further, we faced the problem that the amount of growth expected differs by subject and the student's initial score. Finally, "form effects" were a problem; that is, the tests seemed to be more difficult in some years than in others.

Ultimately, we used a metric called *meets expectations*, created by subtracting a student's expected gain from his or her actual gain. Thus, if a student attains his or her expected gain, the *meets expectations* score is 0. A positive score would indicate that the student exceeded his or her expected gain, and, conversely, a negative score would indicate that the student's gain was lower than expected.

Renaissance 2010 schools do not demonstrate consistent performance on actual compared with expected gains on EXPLORE to PLAN, and data are inadequate to evaluate the performance of Renaissance 2010 students relative to a valid comparison group.

Exhibits 2 through 6 present *meets expectations* scores for students' composite, mathematics, science, reading, and English EPAS tests (EXPLORE to PLAN).

Exhibit 2
Difference in Actual and Expected Gains on EXPLORE to PLAN, Composite Scores for CPS System and Renaissance 2010 Schools



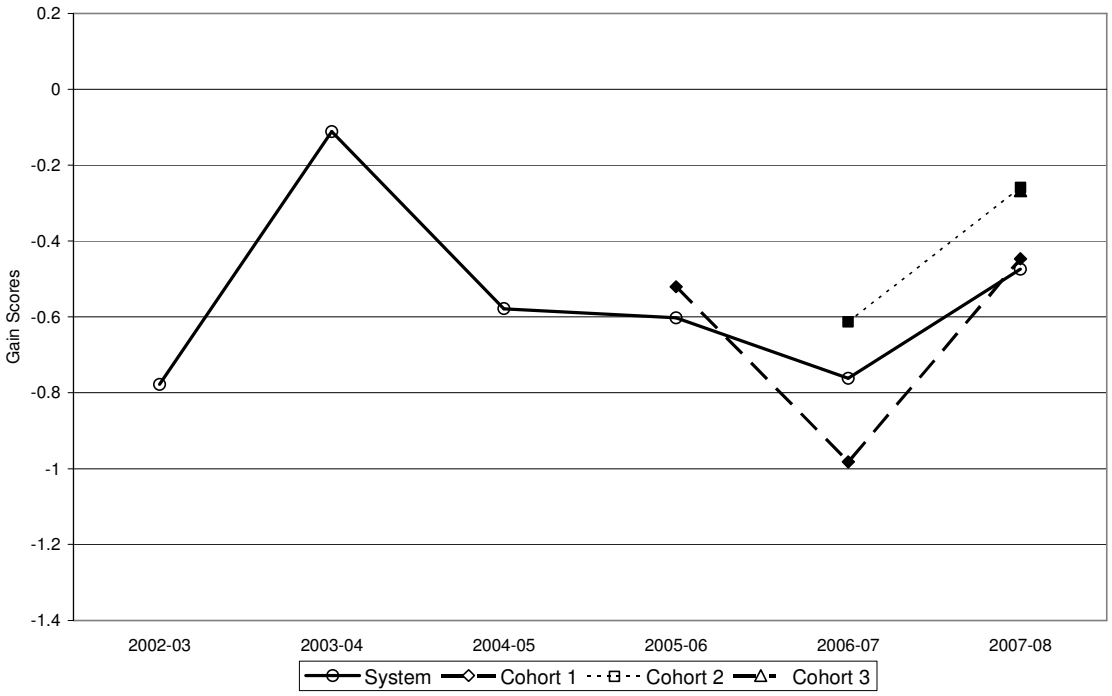
Note: Solid data points denote the years that the schools participated in Renaissance 2010

Note: Difference in gains calculated as actual minus expected gains from EXPLORE to PLAN tests on EPAS from year to year.

As Exhibit 2 illustrates, Cohort I Renaissance 2010 schools started out slightly ahead of the system average, performed less well in 2006–07, and then performed better than the system average in 2007–08. In addition, Cohort II Renaissance 2010 schools started out behind the system in 2006–07, lagged slightly behind in 2007–08, but showed more improvement than the system. Cohort III schools started out slightly ahead of the

system in 2007–08. Exhibits 3 to 6 illustrate the data in mathematics, science, reading, and English.

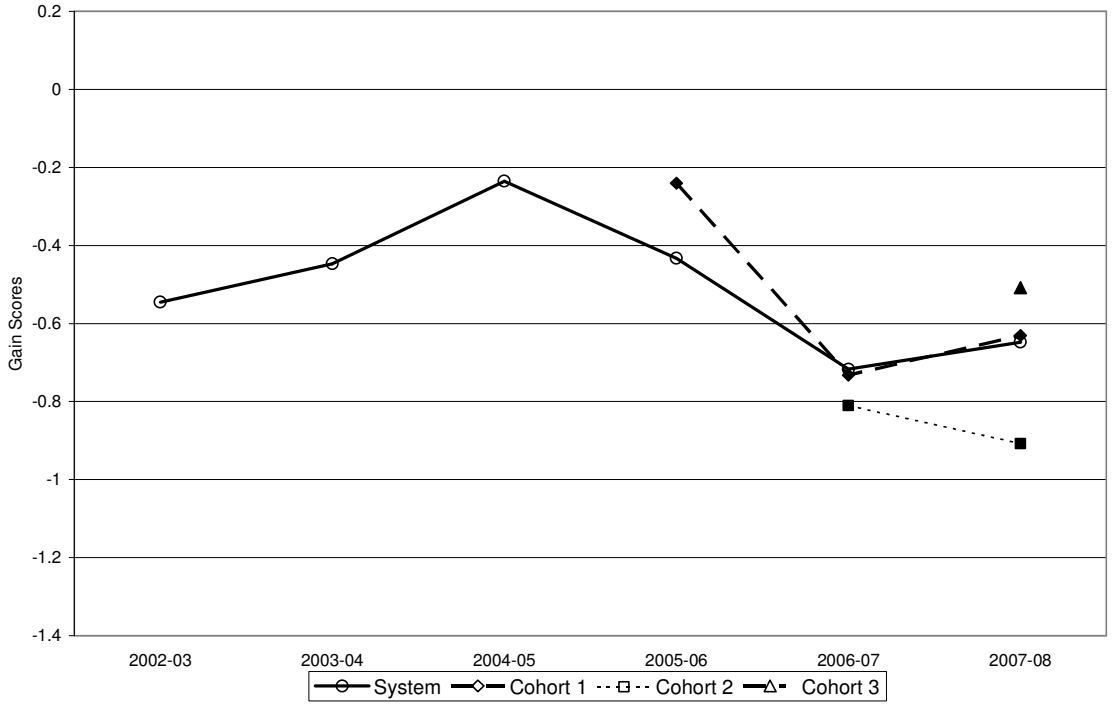
Exhibit 3
Difference in Actual and Expected Gains on EXPLORE to PLAN, Math Scores for CPS System and Renaissance 2010 Schools



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

Difference in gains calculated as actual minus expected gains from EXPLORE to PLAN tests on EPAS from year to year.

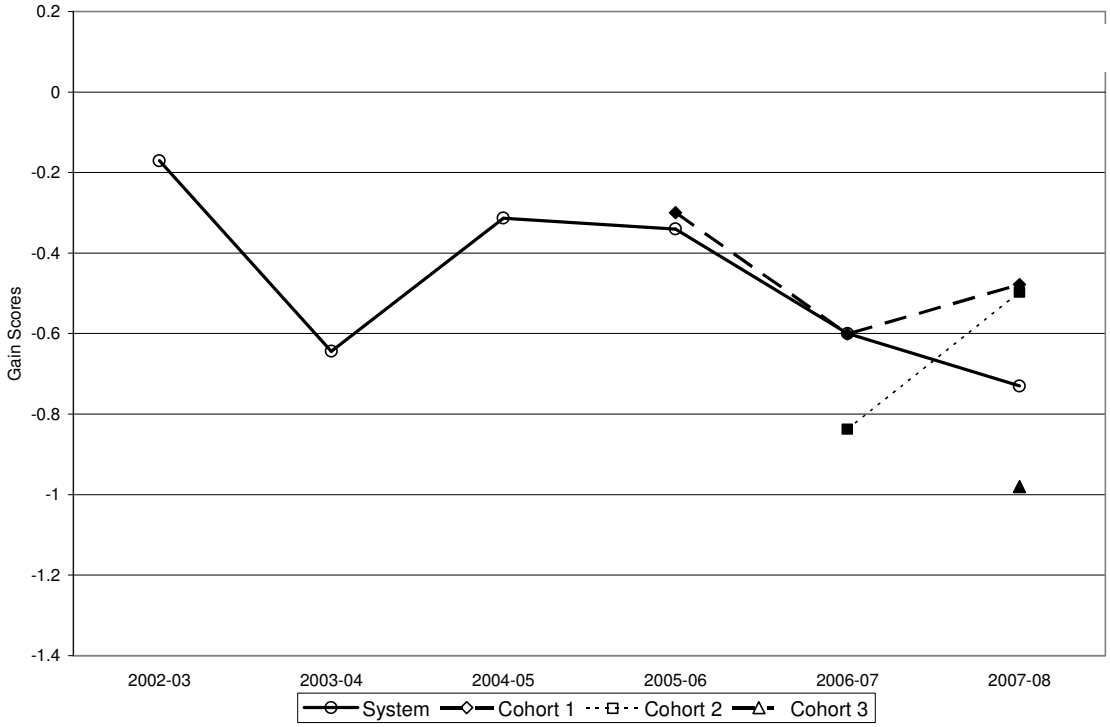
Exhibit 4
Difference in Actual and Expected Gains on EXPLORE to PLAN, Science Scores for CPS System and Renaissance 2010 Schools



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

Difference in gains calculated as actual minus expected gains from EXPLORE to PLAN tests on EPAS from year to year.

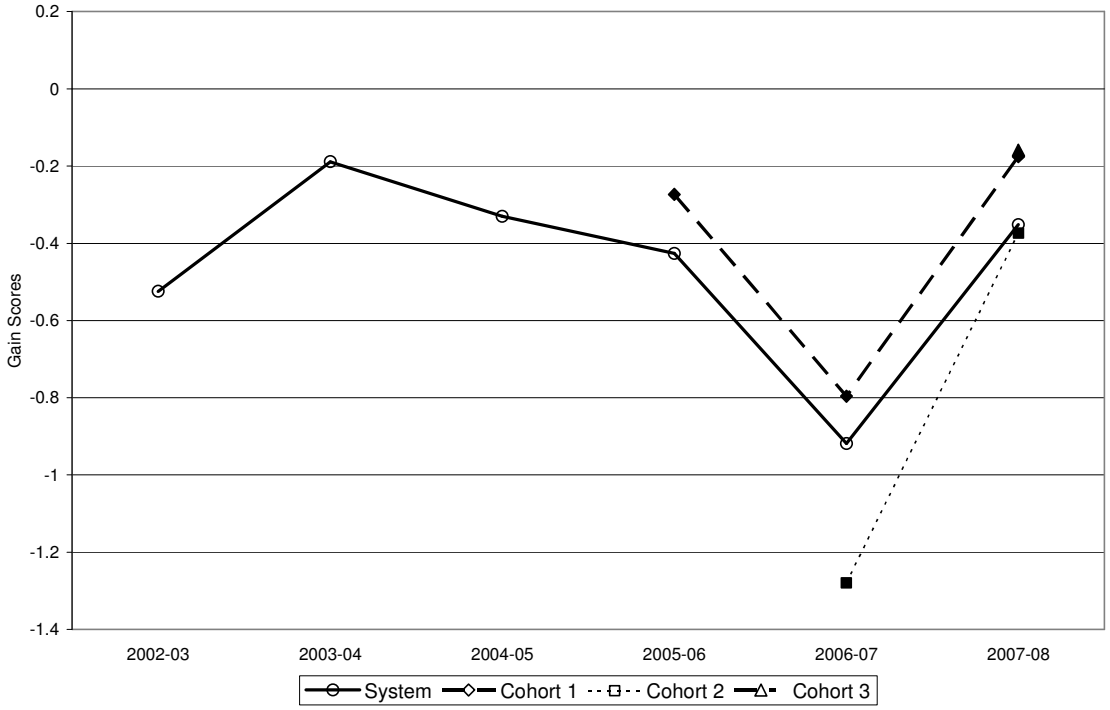
Exhibit 5
Difference in Actual and Expected Gains on EXPLORE to PLAN, Reading Scores for CPS System and Renaissance 2010 Schools



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

Difference in gains calculated as actual minus expected gains from EXPLORE to PLAN tests on EPAS from year to year.

Exhibit 6
Difference in Actual and Expected Gains on EXPLORE to PLAN, English Scores for CPS System and Renaissance 2010 Schools



Note: Solid data points denote the years that the schools participated in Ren10

Difference in gains calculated as actual minus expected gains from EXPLORE to PLAN tests on EPAS from year to year.

As Exhibits 3 to 6 illustrate, no entirely consistent patterns are evident, although Cohort I schools seem to fare better than the system by the 2007–08 school year in mathematics, science, reading, and English. Whether this pattern holds for the newer schools and whether the pattern continues for Cohort I schools are yet to be determined. Moreover, deeper analysis is necessary to understand the extent to which student self-selection accounts for any differences between Renaissance 2010 and other schools. Overall, the EXPLORE to PLAN results suggest weak performance by high school students throughout Chicago schools; regardless of Renaissance 2010 participation, students fail to meet the expected gains.

The availability of outcomes data is uneven and unable to support accountability for Renaissance 2010 schools.

Overall, our examination of available outcomes measures on the performance of Renaissance 2010 schools suggests at least three important conclusions. First, attendance rates at Renaissance 2010 schools appear to compare favorably with the average for regular Chicago public schools, although direct comparisons are problematic as we explained earlier. Still, some Renaissance 2010 schools have been very successful in maintaining high levels of daily attendance, and other schools would be wise to better understand how these rates are achieved. Nevertheless, 90% daily attendance rates (the

rough average for Renaissance 2010 schools) means that the average student is missing about 3 weeks of instruction.

Second, achievement measures from our analysis of the EPAS tests are well below expectations. Although some Renaissance 2010 schools appear to be performing fairly well, the overall picture is not good. At only a handful of the schools are more than half of the students meeting expected gains. Similarly, the limited data available on the percentage of freshmen on track to graduate suggest both wide variation in the schools' performance and generally low levels of academic progress. Among the more mature Renaissance 2010 high schools, PSAE results are poor. Rapid improvement will be required for Renaissance 2010 students to be truly ready for college.

Finally, the most important of the three conclusions is that there is a paucity of outcomes data on Renaissance 2010 high schools. The basic premise behind the establishment of Renaissance 2010 schools was the exchange of independence from most CPS rules, regulations, and procedures for presumably enhanced innovation in school practices and accountability for heightened achievement. Arguably, Renaissance 2010 schools are held accountable by market forces. That is, if the schools do not perform well, then parents will not send their children to the schools. However, market accountability does not guarantee high student performance, at least in the short run. Official accountability for Renaissance 2010 schools exists in that the school charters come up for renewal in their fifth year. But the lack of achievement and other outcomes data for all Renaissance 2010 high schools raises concerns about what data charter renewal decisions will be based on and whether parents have sufficient data to make their enrollment choices. Early indications are that some Renaissance 2010 high schools are working to improve their data collection on outcomes. But currently no adequate measurement systems are in place to include a valid comparison group. This lack of comparison is of particular concern given that most research on charter schools (with some exceptions) that used valid comparison groups has found some small positive effects but few positive effects on standardized tests (Rhodes et al., 2005: Booker et al., 2009; Young et al., 2009).

Overall, outcomes data on Renaissance 2010 schools are in short supply, and we cannot draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the initiative as a whole with the available data.

Next, we present the results of classroom observations that we conducted as part of the larger study of high school reform in Chicago. As was the case with other outcomes data, the observation data have serious limitations but offer an important window into Renaissance 2010 schools.

Classroom Observation Data

CPS officials were particularly eager to have the research team observe instructional practices in schools. While recognizing the limitations of one-time observational data, the research team adapted Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching* as the classroom observation instrument. A Danielson *Framework for Teaching* expert trained 13 researchers in how to use the rubric for rating teachers on 24 different elements in two of Danielson's four "domains"—classroom environment and instruction.

Researchers visited classrooms for one class period (typically 45 minutes), recorded qualitative evidence, and rated each element on a 4-point scale: *unsatisfactory*, *basic*, *proficient*, or *distinguished*. We conducted 24 classroom observations in six Renaissance 2010 schools and interviewed each teacher we observed. We observed teachers only in schools that had been operating for at least 1 full year. We discuss our methods and the limitations of the data in *A Snapshot of High School Instruction in CPS*. Although the observational data are hardly conclusive, we believe that we captured a usable snapshot of instructional practice in Chicago high schools.

Although we collected data on multiple dimensions of the classroom environment and instruction, we present here the most central of those dimensions—organized by classroom management, communication, and instructional demand—to provide a glimpse into the classroom in Renaissance 2010 schools. Rubrics for each of the dimensions discussed below are appended.

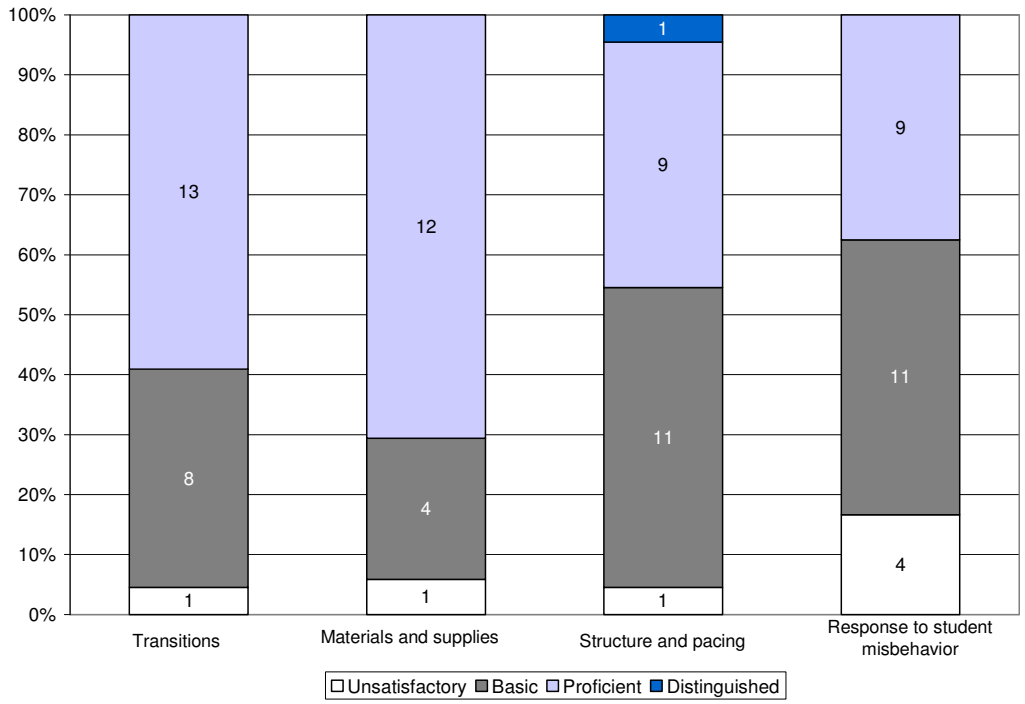
Classroom Management

Classroom management encompasses procedures that provide for seamless transitions from one activity to another, efficient handling of materials and supplies, explicit lesson structure and appropriate pacing, and appropriate teacher responses to student misbehavior. Teachers proficient at managing *transitions* within lessons lose very little instructional time, and students understand the procedures and take responsibility for moving smoothly from one activity to another, for example, from listening to the teacher give instructions to small group work. Chaotic transitions are the mark of unsatisfactory performance. Similarly, teachers proficient in handling *materials and supplies* have routines established for students to readily access the materials with little loss in instructional time.

Managing *structure and pacing* is at the intersection of management and instruction. Proficiency in this area requires teachers to plan their lessons with a structure that is clear to students, for example, stating objectives, presenting concepts, guiding students through practice examples, and giving students a related group assignment. Proficiency in structure and pacing also means that the lesson has a planned pacing that is appropriate to the activities, including enough time for students to engage in the material. Unsatisfactory pacing is evident when the lesson is either too slow or too rushed or both at various times during the class.

Response to student misbehavior refers to respectful and appropriate teacher responses when students are disruptive in class. Lack of response and responses that are overly harsh or disrespectful are all unsatisfactory. Exhibit 7 presents the ratings for the observed Renaissance 2010 teachers.

Exhibit 7
Classroom Management Ratings at Six Renaissance 2010 High Schools



Overall, the majority of observed Renaissance 2010 teachers performed at the proficient level on the combined elements reflecting classroom management skills.

The teachers rated proficient in managing transitions during a lesson were those who lost little time between various activities. As one researcher reported,

> When I enter the classroom, students are working on PDN (Please Do Now), which is displayed on the smart board. The teacher says, "I'll give you guys about 5 more minutes. This [PDN] is an intense one because of the word problem." After going over the PDN, the teacher moves smoothly into the day's lesson by asking for volunteers to help her illustrate a concept in front of the class. The lesson ends shortly before the bell rings to end class.

In contrast, teachers rated at the basic level in managing transitions tended to lose instructional time, as in this example:

> Although the students are responsive and not too disruptive, the procedures for checking answers seemed inefficient. All students leave their seats and crowd around the teacher. While the teacher later explains that he is trying to have an active classroom in keeping with the needs of the 14- and 15-year-olds in his charge, significant instructional time was lost.

The researchers also measured the structure and pacing, and fewer than half of the observed teachers received a proficient or distinguished rating. The teachers who earned

a proficient rating did well in keeping students engaged and productive. In the following example, the teacher effectively gave students supports to keep them engaged in their work after class was over.

> The teacher starts the class with a "whip-around" by going from student to student and having each one say where they are in their personal narratives. Then she explains the presentation options for their narratives. For the remainder of the period, she allows students to work independently on their papers. She has a timer set to go off when there is 10 minutes left in the period and at this point she says, "Okay, 10-minute warning, which means you have 5 more minutes left to work." When the beeper goes off again (5 minutes later), she says, "All right, find a good stopping point. My email address is on the board and on the syllabus. I'll be here until 4:30 if you want to work on it after school."

For those teachers in which structure and pacing are a challenge appeared to have problems keeping all students engaged. Typical of teacher earning a basic rating was this example:

> Almost the entire period was a work period for the students, with the teacher meeting with individual students and groups throughout that time. This seemed an appropriate amount of time for a minority of students, those who could concentrate on their narrative essay that whole time. The pacing was otherwise too slow. A few students and two of the groups finished their work early and were not doing anything productive until the teacher could come and meet with them.

Of the four elements, the observed teachers did least well in their response to student misbehavior. Typically, we saw inconsistency in teachers' approaches to disruptive students, as in the following example of a teacher with a basic rating:

> The teacher responded to student misbehavior periodically. For some students the intervention made no difference, and they carried on as though never having been addressed. It took the teacher multiple attempts to call the class to order. She did move one student who had been disruptive but allowed another disruptive student to remain where he was. Students had written rules earlier in the year. They were not posted.

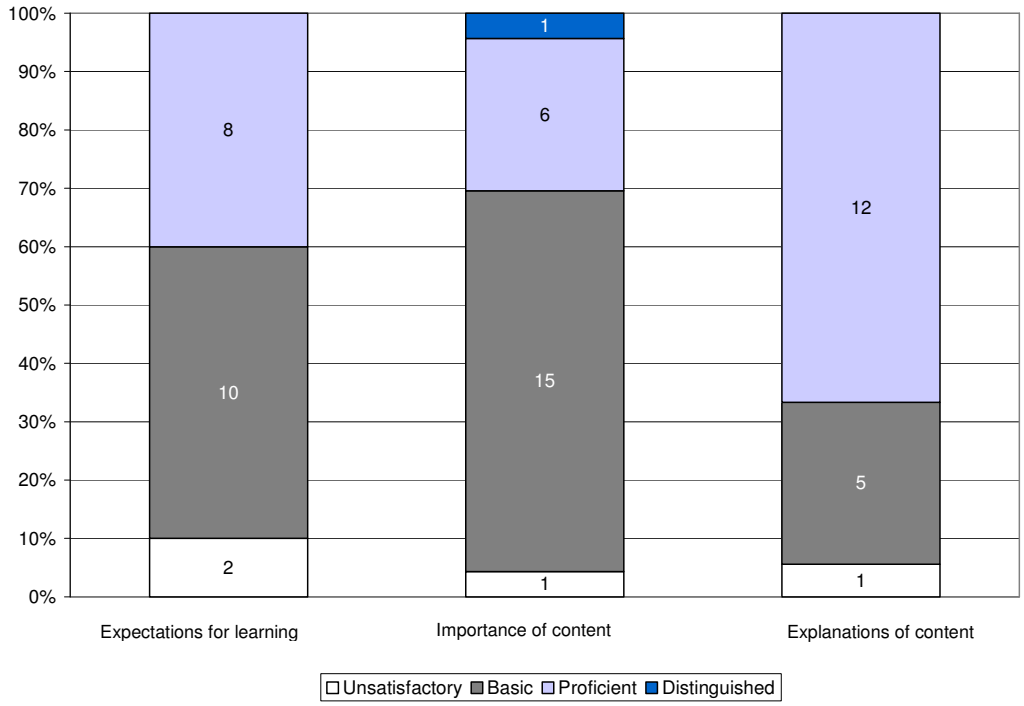
As detailed in our report on the observations, classroom management is a foundation for other instructional practices. Without proficient management of a room of teenagers, teaching and learning are undermined.

Communication

We also examined how well teachers communicated their expectations for learning, the importance of the content, and explanations of the content for the lesson. Teachers proficient in communicating their *expectations for learning* provide students with a clear purpose for the lesson and put the lesson within the context of broader learning, for example, how the lesson relates to the main concepts in the subject area or the real world. Communicating the *importance of content* proficiently means that teachers convey a personal conviction about why they are teaching the material to students, and students

value the content. Communicating a negative attitude about the content or justifying the content because it is mandated is unsatisfactory. Teachers proficient in *explanation of content* use appropriate language and relate the content to students' own knowledge and experiences. Unclear or confusing explanations and inappropriate language (including vocabulary that is too basic or too advanced are unsatisfactory. Exhibit 8 presents the ratings for the Renaissance 2010 teachers.

Exhibit 8
Communication Ratings at Six Renaissance 2010 High Schools



The observed Renaissance 2010 teachers earned mixed ratings on how they communicated their expectations for learning, the importance of the content, and their explanations of the content.

The majority of observed teachers earned basic (or unsatisfactory) ratings in providing students with a clear understanding of the purpose and importance of their lessons. For example, researchers typically described the following teacher behaviors that resulted in a basic rating:

> Teacher does not explain the purpose of the activity, just the procedures for doing the activity. Only after the activity did the teacher introduce the content and the vocabulary.
>
> The teacher gives a very short introduction to the lesson. She asks a student to read the day's assignment. While he's reading, she's straightening up the classroom from the last period.
>
> Teacher says, "I know you are sick of this stuff about membranes."

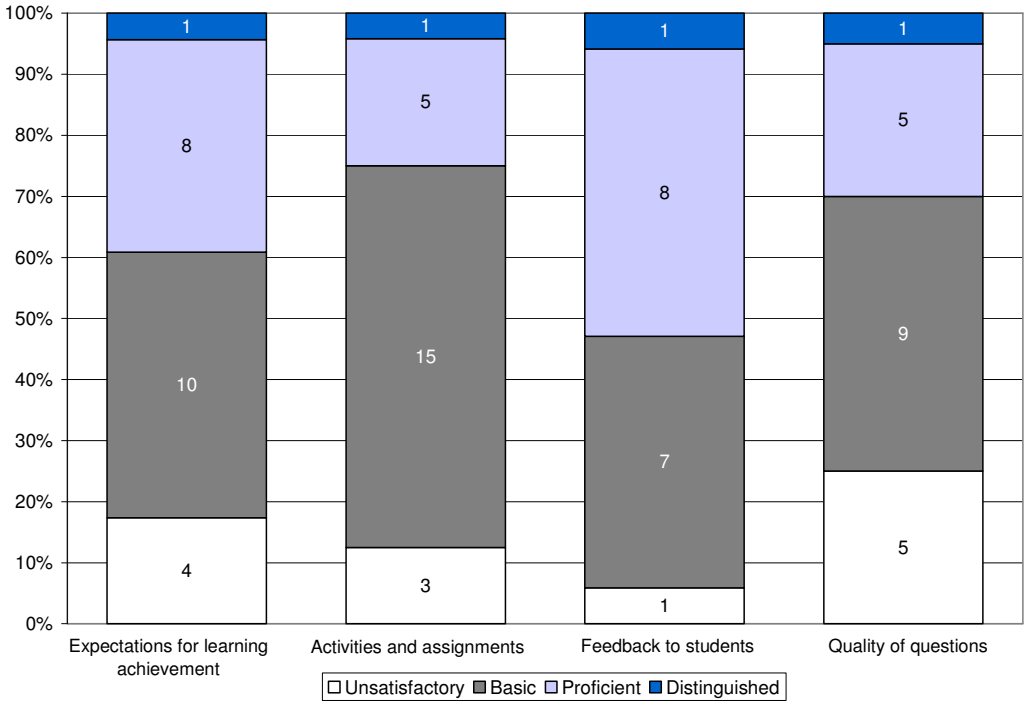
In contrast, the observed teachers earned higher ratings in their explanation of the content of their lessons. Typical of a proficient rating was the following:

> The teacher introduces the concept for force, asking students for examples of when they have seen force used. Quite a few students want to give answers, about a quarter of the class. As the teacher goes through the lesson, she says several times, "This [concept of force] is what you know and see everyday. We're just putting it into words." She explains that force, mass, and acceleration are central to Newton's second law of motion. Her students are curious, and one asks why they are learning the second law first.

Instructional Demand

We explored instructional demand in terms of teachers' stated expectations for learning achievement, the activities and assignments they ask of students, the feedback they give students, and the quality of their questions to guide student learning. Proficient teachers express high expectations for *learning achievement* in the stated outcomes, the designed activities and assignments, and the various interactions with students during the lesson. *Activities and assignments* need to be appropriate to students and stimulate cognitive engagement among students, not just the appearance of students being on task. To be proficient, teachers need to provide *feedback to students* in a timely manner and in a way that individualizes instruction for students, that is, tells students the extent to which their specific work meets standards. Finally, the *quality of questioning* raises instructional demand on students when the questions allow for divergent responses, provoke hypotheses, or prompt connections to other experiences or shake students' previously held beliefs. Proficiency in questioning also means that students have enough time to formulate thoughtful responses and that the pace of questioning is not rushed. Exhibit 9 presents the ratings for Renaissance 2010 teachers.

Exhibit 9
Instructional Demand at Six Renaissance 2010 High Schools



Instructional demand on Renaissance 2010 students lacked appropriate rigor among observed Renaissance 2010 teachers.

Overall, the observed teachers had low instructional demand ratings. Often, we saw lessons that were undermined by poor classroom management and disruptive students. In other cases, the lessons appeared to be less than rigorous. The following examples were typical of the low ratings for the teachers' expectations for learning achievement and the quality of the assignments:

> Students were not engaged in the lesson. They were either distracted by the misbehavior of a handful of students or were misbehaving themselves. Students voiced that the lesson was too easy. "We've done this before, right?" "Like in first grade." The teacher continues but fails to notice that the student work on the board is incorrect.

> The students are asked to complete problems on the board, a worksheet, and an oral problem. The assignments only require students to memorize procedures (with clues for completing the work on the worksheet and on the board). Students use calculators to solve simple arithmetic problems.

The researchers did see numerous examples of proficiency and a few examples of distinguished teaching. One researcher's report on the quality of questioning was typical of the teachers who earned high ratings:

> The teacher had engaging questions that the students enjoyed discussing. The questions were based on the reading and written on the board. These included
>
> - Who creates youth culture?

- What is slang? Example of how used today
- When was hippy culture developed?
- List and define slang words.
- How does slang contribute to youth culture?
- What details were mentioned about the main character's clothes? How do these details make the story more engaging to readers?

Following the discussion, the teacher assigned the students a 1-page typed essay that answered the first question for homework.

Our examination of teaching among a small sample of Renaissance 2010 high school teachers is not definitive, but it does suggest much room for improvement in instructional practice. Our ratings point to a need for school leadership to identify teachers with weak classroom management skills and provide them with the training they need to ensure other areas of their teaching are not undermined. In addition, school leaders should identify examples of distinguished teaching in their schools and provide opportunities for less skilled teachers to learn from them. Finally, the majority of teachers could probably benefit from additional training to strengthen the rigor of their assignments and the quality of their questions.

To better understand what is behind the various outcomes, the research team conducted visits to nine Renaissance 2010 high schools and interviewed teachers, administrators, counselors, and other staff members. As the remainder of this report on Renaissance 2010 high schools suggests, the schools faced significant challenges but exhibited some very promising practices.

Understanding the Outcomes: New School Challenges

The schools and their operators put considerable energy into developing innovative programming and are driven by their mission to prepare students for college. Nevertheless, opening a new school is challenging, and as we discuss below some of those challenges interfere with the noble intentions of the schools.

Start-up pressures last at least 4 years as schools tackle a multitude of demands, all vying for attention and resources.

All the schools we visited were busy establishing educational programs designed to meet the complex needs of their students while simultaneously settling into new facilities, establishing consistent operating procedures and policies, and acculturating staff and students to the philosophies of the school. In addition, as the schools added grades, each year they had to incorporate a new group of teachers, develop and learn curricula for a new grade, and develop new processes related to additional grades and larger staff. Start-up for these schools thus turns out to be a multiyear process. The charter high schools expect that start-up pressures will last a full 4 years if they add a new grade each year until they reach full enrollment. For schools intending to serve grades 6 through 12, start-up can last even longer.

Start-up challenges can make it difficult to meet the expectations of parents and students. As one principal reported,

> It would be nice to have total buy-in from students and parents and understanding and flexibility from staff. There's a lack of patience from the community. Because we're new, the expectation was that everything was supposed to be perfect. New meant totally new, totally different, totally perfect. Very unrealistic expectations.

Adequate facilities are an ongoing issue during the multiyear start-up of schools.

Across the sample of case study schools, problems with facilities were widespread and disruptive. Many of the schools were at capacity before reaching their full grade configuration, others were lacking fundamental space such as science laboratories and gymnasia. As one teacher told us, "I wish they had put in real science labs. …I don't know how they expect us to do inquiry-based science without labs."

School facilities were difficult to come by, and they often required retrofitting or expansions over the first 4 years. Some schools were housed in temporary facilities or were sharing a facility with other schools, and some were delayed in opening because of construction and renovation setbacks. The start of one school, for example, was delayed 2 weeks because of renovations. As a result, half the professional development days scheduled for each month during the school year were front-loaded and offered in a 2-week block in August. Although the staff was productive during the construction delay, they preferred the original schedule because it would have enabled them to try out new ideas in class and then reconvene to share successes and challenges in applying what they learned.

Complaints about the lack of space were fairly common among the teachers we interviewed. For example, one teacher told us

> When they were planning this, I think the people who were making the decision were not educators. They were business people, and a little of that is good but not when certain decisions about how many classrooms do you need and what size classroom and things like that are made.

The scarcity of suitable facilities in Chicago has resulted in some creative use of space, but as the schools add grades and students the facilities challenges are likely to remain.

Addressing the full spectrum of their students' needs is another core challenge facing Renaissance 2010 schools.

While the Renaissance 2010 schools staffs were settling into new facilities and establishing their education programs, they also were busy creating structures to support the varied needs of their students. The Renaissance 2010 schools are located in some of the most disadvantaged neighborhoods in Chicago. As is true in many CPS schools, Renaissance 2010 students generally enter ninth grade with low academic skills. Further, Renaissance 2010 staff report that in addition to their inadequate academic preparation, the students face social and emotional challenges that the schools must address. Some students at Renaissance 2010 schools, for example, shoulder responsibilities that take their attention away from their own education, such as working to assist their families or taking care of siblings. They may come from broken homes and may need socioemotional supports. In some cases, the depth of the problems is overwhelming. As one school counselor explained,

> [The students] …know about the violence in the neighborhood and know they can tell me in confidence. I have students who know who the shooter is.… I meet with

> students, their families, and teachers. We have all kinds of issues. I had a boy with sexuality identity issues who came out to his mom.… There needs to be constant communication between the school, community, and parents.… I am trying to get the school to be a clinical site for graduate students.

First-generation college-goers, in particular, may also lack knowledge about the college application process, financial aid, family support, or other aspects related to college. Serving student populations with academic, social, and emotional needs, Renaissance 2010 schools face the challenge of instilling an expectation of and preparing students for postsecondary education, addressing the basic need to raise students' reading and mathematics skills, and providing the full range of social-emotional supports needed so students can succeed academically.

Hiring teachers is an ongoing challenge for Renaissance 2010 schools, which must staff a new grade level each year and fill gaps created by high teacher turnover rates. The continual hiring often results in very inexperienced staffs.

In the schools we visited, the need for new teachers was continual as the schools expanded to full enrollment and added grade levels. The need for new teachers was intensified by the considerable teacher turnover in Renaissance 2010 schools. For example, one principal reported that only three of the school's original teachers were still on staff in the third year of operation. The principal at another school reported that his school lost 50% of its teachers from 2007–08 to 2008–09. Turnover occurred in some cases because teachers were not an appropriate fit for the school or were underperforming, so their contracts were not renewed. In other cases, teachers were overwhelmed by the stresses of start-up demands and chose to leave. Creating even more disruption, some turnover occurred midyear, often because inexperienced teachers were not prepared for the realities of classrooms serving at-risk students. One teacher said, "We get a lot of young teachers fresh out of school who have no clue what they're in for. They're in tears for a month and then they quit…. We've had teachers quit after 3 and 4 weeks." At another school, a teacher reported, "We've had people leave in November during Thanksgiving break, Christmas break, spring break. We had one guy quit last year 3 weeks before the end of the school year. He just couldn't even do 3 more weeks."

Schools augment and replenish their teaching force from various sources, but our observations of Renaissance 2010 schools indicate that novice teachers remain a significant proportion of their staff. Of the 24 teachers we observed, 11 had only 1 or 2 years of experience. Data on the experience of teachers in Renaissance 2010 high schools are sparse, but among the six schools in our sample that reported data to the state, the average years of experience was between 4 and 6. Overall, Chicago high school teachers averaged 12.3 years of experience in 2008.

Novice teachers can bring fresh ideas and enthusiasm to a school. However, a greater proportion of the novice teachers consistently fell into the basic or unsatisfactory categories (as opposed to proficient and above) compared with veteran teachers on a host of teaching elements on the classroom observation rubrics, including

- Interacting with students
- Conveying the importance of the content they teach
- Setting clear and appropriate expectations for learning achievement

- Managing transitions between activities
- Managing materials and supplies
- Responding appropriately to student misbehavior
- Explaining the content clearly and with depth, asking critical questions
- Setting assignments appropriately rigorous for the grade level
- Grouping students effectively for instruction
- Using appropriate instructional materials and resources
- Providing timely and constructive feedback to students.

Novice teachers also are limited in their use of data to improve their instruction, a commonly espoused strategy among the Renaissance 2010 schools. In part, novice teachers have a less diverse repertoire so that even though they may be able to identify particular areas of concern (e.g., students who need more help or topics students did not understand or master), they need instructional ideas from more experienced colleagues or instructional coaches. With such young and inexperienced faculties, the extra effort to support new teachers is limited to the relatively small proportion of experienced staff. Indeed, teachers with only 2 or 3 years of teaching experience often are viewed as veterans and are called on to support their even less experienced colleagues.

Renaissance 2010 schools have difficulty finding teachers trained for their specific student populations. They also have difficulty filling certain teaching positions, particularly for special education and bilingual education.

The Renaissance 2010 schools we visited took pains not only to fill their teaching positions with teachers who are qualified (i.e., hold appropriate credentials), but also to find teachers who can meet the demands of the student population and who fit with the overarching philosophies of the schools. Hiring teachers with the particular skills and experience necessary at these schools, however, is an uphill battle. One principal, for example, reported that she had difficulty finding teachers who knew how to teach in a low-income inner-city environment. She said

> We didn't have new teacher training specifically focusing on our community. I underestimated how much training that might take to get teachers who will be culturally responsive. They started out saying, "these" kids, and "zoo," and "animals" and *whoa*! I know this is tough. But that doesn't make them "other." We're paying more attention to that when we recruit [now].

Several schools also had trouble recruiting teachers to work with their particular populations, including English language learners (ELL) and special education students. For example, one school with a mission to serve Latino students experienced a shortage of ELL teachers so that some students were without any support in some of their classes. Several of the schools mentioned not having enough special education teachers despite having a large percentage of special education students. For example, one science teacher explained, "I would like more support in special ed…. This year, special education students are so dispersed that it's hard for me to get to all of them. I have no extra support."

Teachers are taxed to create their own curriculum and materials as well as to implement the complex instructional models adopted by many of the Renaissance 2010 schools.

As part of start-up, teachers in many of the schools must create their own curriculum, which places significant demands on them. For example, one first-year teacher explained that her school's mathematics curriculum does not provide the resources she needs; therefore, she must create all handouts and homework assignments and write her own problem sets. She said, "I made everything as a new teacher—I make everything we do in this classroom."

The demand for creating curriculum is even greater given the instructional models embraced by the schools. For example, one school has an ambitious vision of project-based learning that places the onus on teachers to create interdisciplinary projects that reflect the state standards, engage students, and meet their academic needs. The principal said about the school's instructional design, "There are no bars—we do whatever it takes to do what the students need." Although schools attempt to hire teachers who share their instructional philosophies, these expectations are more difficult for novice teachers to meet as they simultaneously climb a steep learning curve in managing instructional time and student behavior.

Teaching is hard work, but the demands and high expectations for teachers in Renaissance 2010 schools appear to be particularly intensive. Although some innovations such as the extended school year and school day may be an appropriate response to the low academic performance of the students, the risk is that committed teachers are unable to maintain the level of effort necessary. As a result, schools face the disruption of high turnover discussed earlier. In addition, the psychological toll on teachers appears to be high. As one school counselor and psychologist explained, "My other challenge is [providing] reassurance to the young teachers. They are under stress.... I see teachers going through divorces. The commitment is extensive."

Understanding the Outcomes: Promising Practices

Having considerable autonomy and being free from most district requirements, Renaissance 2010 schools directly and purposely address these myriad challenges. In particular, Renaissance 2010 schools build teacher capacity through comprehensive professional development and teacher evaluation programs. They use data to reflect on students' academic progress and teachers' instructional practices, they nimbly respond to address any identified shortcomings, and they develop support services to meet the needs of their students.

Renaissance 2010 schools invest a lot of time and resources in teacher professional development to build the capacity of their instructional staffs.

The Renaissance 2010 schools we visited invested heavily in building teacher capacity through their professional development programs. Summer and weekly professional development days are widespread throughout the sample of visited Renaissance 2010 schools, although the length and focus of the training vary across schools. The length of summer professional development ranged from 3 days to 5 weeks, with new teachers often receiving more days of professional development than returning teachers to acquaint them with school philosophies, policies, and procedures. Common topics for whole school staffs tend to be more instructional, such as understanding the curriculum, creating lesson plans, differentiating instruction, and managing student behavior.

In addition to summer training, the majority of the schools schedule weekly early-release days for students to provide professional development time for teachers. Although the extra time is not consistently used for instructional improvement, some of the schools have tried intentionally to focus the professional development more on curriculum and instruction and less on administrative issues. As one principal said,

> There are some nonnegotiables. We don't talk about attendance, not what's going wrong with the school, not the lunchroom, not personal business. We focus on students, what they're learning, if they're learning, if they're not, how do we plan [to address their needs]…, is this curriculum working, is it too much?

Another strategy to build teacher capacity, albeit a less common one, is the hiring of instructional coaches or instructional leaders (ILs). The instructional coaches and ILs help teachers create lesson plans, observe their classrooms, offer feedback and suggestions for their teaching, and provide materials and supplies. In one school, the ILs differentiate their support by teacher experience. Beginning teachers reported receiving individual weekly meetings with the ILs, whereas other teachers received support primarily in the department meetings.

Renaissance 2010 schools support strong instruction and build teachers' capacity through their teacher evaluation systems.

To ensure that teachers are effective instructors and that they are an appropriate fit for the school, principals conduct regular teacher evaluations. In some schools, these evaluations are formative, with principals conducting periodic walk-throughs and observations for purposes of instructional improvement. All schools also have well-developed summative evaluation systems for making high-stakes decisions about contract renewal, salary, and bonuses.

Systems for evaluating teachers at Renaissance 2010 schools are uneven but can be quite intensive. For example, one principal collected monthly classroom data including the number of students in a class, the percentage of students who were engaged, and the instructional strategies the teacher used. Another school established a series of steps tied to evaluation and teacher improvement. In that school, if teachers are not meeting expectations, they receive support from an instructional leader. If they still do not improve, they are put on a probationary contract that spells out the areas they need to focus on. If still no progress is made, the teachers are put on a formal contract that lists changes that must be made and sustained within the next 30 days and can lead to termination if the terms are not met. Through this process, the school has terminated one teacher during the year and elected not to renew two contracts last year.

Example of Comprehensive Teacher Evaluation

One Renaissance 2010 school in the sample has a particularly rigorous teacher evaluation process. In this school, teachers are informally evaluated by the team leader every month. In addition, they are formally evaluated twice a year by the team leaders, the principal, and the CMO regional manager. The evaluations are comprehensive, focusing on such issues as student engagement, classroom management, higher order questioning, and implementation of the curricular model. These evaluations are high stakes because they influence contract renewal, raises, and bonuses.

As a central strategy to improving the school overall and instruction in particular, Renaissance 2010 schools are by and large proponents of data-driven decision-making.

Across the Renaissance 2010 high schools we visited, periodic benchmark tests such as those developed by the Northwest Evaluation Association were common sources of information on 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 "watch lists" several times during a semester to identify and intervene with students receiving Ds or Fs and who are at risk of failing. One principal explained, "I mean if you have 70% of your students failing in one particular class you have to ask, 'What's the disconnect?' We just try to identify that early on and then they [teachers] work with them." Schools also routinely tracked data on student behavior such as tardies, attendance, and discipline.

In addition to collecting student achievement data, in approximately half of the schools we visited principals conducted walk-through or classroom observations to collect data on instructional practices. The formality of those walk-throughs varied, however. Some schools had goals specifying the number of observations each week, some used formal rubrics, and others were more informal and used the walk-throughs to get a sense of the classrooms.

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. One school belonged to a CMO that was completing a new "dashboard" to facilitate timely data analysis. Data included in the dashboard will be attendance over time; percentage of teachers demonstrating specific behaviors on classroom walk-throughs; teachers' ratings of professional development in terms of relevance and usefulness, among other qualities; percentage of students mastering concepts on interim assessments; and the percentage of students showing no change, a 1-point increase, or a 2- or more point increase on EPAS (EXPLORE, PLAN, and ACT).

Renaissance 2010 schools and their CMOs/EMOs showed willingness and flexibility in responding to various data sources. The schools were able to institute changes to their programs in attempts to address students' most pressing instructional needs. For example, on the basis of the low reading and mathematics skills of most of its students, one school extended instructional time through block schedules, an afterschool program, Sunday school, and a summer program. Another school decided to use its 25-minute daily advisory to tackle the skills students were weak on, as indicated by EPAS results. Yet another school reconfigured its schedule to incorporate a double period of algebra to allow more time for remediation because of students' lower than expected test scores.

Reflecting on Data

One school with a relatively comprehensive approach to using data provides each teacher with summaries of biweekly assessments, accompanied by reflection questions to prompt teachers to use the data. These five reflection questions, following, are designed to connect assessment results to actions in the classroom:

1. Please describe the results of the assessment.
2. What conclusions can be made about the results?
3. What are the possible reasons for these conclusions?
4. What steps will I take to improve the results and by when?
5. Which question(s) will I use to re-assess and when will that happen?"

Instructional leaders review the questions and data with the teachers and discuss instructional activities resulting from the analysis. Instructional leaders then look for the strategies and activities they agreed on when they conduct their classroom walk-throughs.

Aware that many of their students enter high school with low academic skills, situated in myriad circumstances that can interfere with their success in high school and beyond, many Renaissance 2010 structures schools and offers support programs to accelerate academic growth.

Across the board, Renaissance 2010 high schools are clear that one of their guiding missions is to prepare students for college. Yet students entering Renaissance 2010 schools are significantly behind grade level. In one school, for example, all but two members of the junior class were failing at least one course. In another school, the guidance counselor estimated that 30 to 40 members of the junior class were missing from 2 to 6 credits.

To help students pass their courses and recover missing credits, Renaissance 2010 schools have adopted numerous strategies. Common across schools is providing more time for student learning, either through an extended day or an extended school year. Extended time is used for academic coaching or tutoring, additional instructional time, or enrichment classes that otherwise would not be available because of the academic focus during the regular instructional day. All these strategies are designed to overcome the achievement gap with which students enter high school.

In addition to academic support programs, some schools have developed more comprehensive student support services to meet the full range of their students' needs. Whether offered directly by the school or by community organizations partnering with the school, support services span a range of opportunities including character education programs, counseling, home visitations, support for going to college, mentoring, and advisory and enrichment activities. One school, for example, offers a package of programs designed to enable students to navigate the road to college. Activities include college tours, support for completing college applications, and information about and assistance applying for scholarships.

Comprehensive Student Support Services

One school has developed wraparound services to meet the diverse academic and social needs of its students. The school has instituted a mandatory ninth period used for credit recovery and enrichment. A counselor monitors students' academic credit, keeps them on track to graduate, and assists them with the college search and application process. In addition to the counselor, the school staff includes a character education teacher, a social worker, and a psychiatrist to support students' social and emotional needs. The school also has established numerous partnerships with community-based organizations that provide a plethora of supports for students including college awareness support, financial aid application support, ACT preparation, college tours, internships, mentoring, job shadowing, and other learning opportunities such as character and leadership development. Through this menu of diverse support services, the school is working to ensure students have every opportunity to succeed.

The Renaissance 2010 schools we visited had created school climates notable for their orderliness and clear expectations for student behavior.

The Renaissance 2010 schools we visited created structures and atmospheres that promoted high expectations for student behavior. Creating a positive school climate is still in progress, but attention to climate and student behavior seemed to be a top priority of school leaders. As one principal explained,

> 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 school has slightly different extended schedules, tutoring programs, summer programs, and other academic supports, but the school leaders we interviewed seemed to send students a common message about the behaviors they expected.

> [Our] specific goals for students: academic excellence, be here, be here on time. Go to class and be engaged and learn all you can in all those classes. Participate, rise to academic excellence. I feel we can demand that of them because they've been given a lot. You have every resource available to you. If you try to give excuses for not doing well, that doesn't go over well with me.

Such expectations appeared to result in such observed features as orderly student conduct during passing time and a seriousness of purpose. Although not all classrooms were well managed, as we noted earlier, the overall school climate seemed more conducive to learning than we saw in many of the large comprehensive high schools we visited for our study of the Instructional Development Systems initiative. This may be a result of the expectations of the school leaders, the small school size, and the apparently strong relationship between students and the adults in the buildings. It may also be a result of the newness of the schools and the apparent sense among students that theirs was a different kind of school than ones they had experienced before. Whatever the cause, the generally positive school climates we observed bode well for the future academic promise of the Renaissance 2010 high schools.

Conclusions

Outcomes data appear to show that some Renaissance 2010 schools have higher attendance rates than most other CPS high schools. Although comparisons are problematic given data limitations, it seems clear that Renaissance 2010 high schools have seen some measure of success with the difficult challenge of improving student attendance. That said, even at the rate of 90% the average Renaissance 2010 student is missing approximately 3 weeks of school during the year. Achievement data, on the other hand, do not appear to show the gains needed to ensure large numbers of students will be ready to succeed in college. For the limited number of schools for which data are available, Renaissance 2010 high school students were not reaching expected gains on the EXPLORE to PLAN tests. This lack of gains is not unexpected given that the schools are still in their early years of development. Perhaps most important, the paucity of outcomes data for Renaissance 2010 schools and the lack of a valid comparison group mean that the district and the public cannot sufficiently understand how well Renaissance 2010 schools are serving their students.

Limited classroom observation data in a sample of Renaissance 2010 schools indicate that Renaissance 2010 teachers have plenty of room for improvement. Although the researchers found examples of distinguished and proficient teaching, classroom management skills could be stronger, as chaotic classrooms undermined instruction. Moreover, the researchers found the rigor of the instructional demands to be at a basic or unsatisfactory level in a majority of observed classrooms.

The nature of these achievement and teaching outcomes can be explained in part by the challenges new schools face. The start-up period, during which the focus and energy of school staff are spread too thinly over facilities, procedures, curriculum development, and continuous hiring, is a multiyear process while the school grows one grade at a time to full enrollment. Finding, building, and maintaining adequate facilities are ongoing concerns contributing to the disruptiveness of the start-up period. So, too, is the continuous need to hire teachers to staff new grades and backfill high turnover. The result of continuous hiring is schools staffed with high proportions of novice teachers, and teachers with only 2 to 3 years of experience serving as mentor teachers.

Despite these challenges, Renaissance 2010 schools exhibit some promising practices. They provide considerable scheduled time for teacher professional development. Some schools have established comprehensive teacher evaluation processes. A common strategy at Renaissance 2010 schools is to formally use data to enhance professional development, teacher evaluation, and instruction. Renaissance 2010 schools are able to extend the school day and school year to offer more instructional time to meet students' academic needs and have put in place a range of student supports to bolster basic academic skills as well as more students toward college readiness. The Renaissance 2010 schools we visited had established generally positive and orderly school climates that hold promise for the future development of their academic programs.

Going forward, the New Schools Office and Renaissance 2010 schools face some enduring dilemmas:

- How can schools simultaneously increase curricular demands while supporting students with low skills, especially with teachers new to teaching or new to the curriculum?

- How can ONS and the schools improve the classroom management skills of their novice teachers?
- How can ONS determine the appropriate amount of system-level support given the autonomy provided through the initiative and the fact that implementation is at least a 4-year process?

As new Renaissance 2010 schools prepare to open, purposeful system-level thought to these questions can help prepare the schools, and their students, for success.

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Appendix. Classroom Observation Rubrics

Exhibit A-1
Observation Rubric for Classroom Management

	Performance Level			
Dimension	**Unsatisfactory**	**Basic**	**Proficient**	**Distinguished**
Management of transitions	Transitions are chaotic, with much time lost between activities or lesson segments.	Only some transitions are efficient, resulting in some loss of instructional time.	Transitions occur smoothly, with little loss of instructional time.	Transitions are seamless, with students assuming responsibility in ensuring their efficient operation.
Management of materials and supplies	Materials and supplies are handled inefficiently, resulting in significant loss of instructional time.	Routines for handling materials and supplies function moderately well but with some loss in instructional time.	Routines for handling materials and supplies occur smoothly, with little loss of instructional time.	Routines for handling materials and supplies are seamless, with students assuming some responsibility for efficient operation.
Structure and pacing	The lesson has no clearly defined structure, or the pace of the lesson is too slow or rushed, or both.	The lesson has a recognizable structure, although it is not uniformly maintained throughout the lesson. Pacing of the lesson is inconsistent.	The lesson has a clearly defined structure around which the activities are organized. Pacing of the lesson is generally appropriate.	The lesson's structure in highly coherent, allowing for reflection and closure. Pacing of the lesson is appropriate for all students.
Response to student misbehavior	Teacher does not respond to misbehavior, or the response is inconsistent, is overly repressive, or does not respect the student's dignity.	Teacher attempts to respond to student misbehavior but with uneven results, or there are no major infractions of the rules.	Teacher response to misbehavior is appropriate and successful and respects the student's dignity, or student behavior is generally appropriate.	Teacher response to misbehavior is highly effective and sensitive to students' individual needs, or student behavior is entirely appropriate.

Exhibit A-2
Observation Rubric for Communication

	Performance Levels			
Dimension	**Unsatisfactory**	**Basic**	**Proficient**	**Distinguished**
Expectations for learning	Teacher's purpose in a lesson or unit is unclear to students.	Teacher attempts to explain the instructional purpose, with limited success.	Teacher's purpose for the lesson or unit is clear, including where it is situated within broader learning.	Teacher makes the purpose of the lesson or unit clear, including where it is situated within broader learning, linking that purpose to student interests.
Importance of the content	Teacher or students convey a negative attitude toward the content, suggesting that is it not important or has been mandated by others.	Teacher communicates importance of the work but with little conviction and only minimal apparent buy-in by the students.	Teacher conveys genuine enthusiasm for the content, and students demonstrate consistent commitment to its value.	Students demonstrate through their active participation, curiosity, and taking initiative that they value the importance of the content.
Explanations of content	Teacher's explanation of the content is unclear or confusing or uses inappropriate language.	Teacher's explanation of the content is uneven; some is done skillfully, but other portions are difficult to follow.	Teacher's explanation of content is appropriate and connects with students' knowledge and experience.	Teacher's explanation of content is imaginative and connects with students' knowledge and experience. Students contribute to explaining concepts to their peers.

Exhibit A-3
Observation Rubric for Instructional Demand

	Performance Levels			
Dimension	**Unsatisfactory**	**Basic**	**Proficient**	**Distinguished**
Expectations for learning achievement	Instructional outcomes, activities assignments, and classroom interactions convey low expectations for at least some students.	Instructional outcomes, activities and assignments, and classroom interactions convey only modest expectations for student learning and achievement.	Instructional outcomes, activities and assignments, and classroom interactions convey high expectations for most students.	Instructional outcomes, activities and assignments, and classroom interactions convey high expectations for all students. Students appear to have internalized these expectations.
Activities and assignments	Activities and assignments are inappropriate for students' age or background. Students are not mentally engaged in them.	Activities and assignments are appropriate to some students and engage them mentally, but others are not engaged.	Most activities and assignments are appropriate to students, and almost all students are cognitively engaged in exploring content.	All students are cognitively engaged in the activities and assignments in their exploration of content. Students initiate or adapt activities and projects to enhance their understanding.
Feedback to students	Teacher's feedback to students is of poor quality and not provided in a timely manner.	Teacher's feedback to students in uneven, and its timeliness is inconsistent.	Teacher's feedback to student is timely and of consistently high quality.	Teacher's feedback to students is timely and of consistently high quality, and students make use of the feedback in their learning.
Quality of questions	Teacher's questions are virtually all of poor quality, with low cognitive challenge and single correct responses, and they are asked in rapid succession.	Teacher's questions are a combination of low and high quality, posed in rapid succession. Only some invite a thoughtful response.	Most of the teacher's questions are of high quality. Adequate time is provided for students to respond.	Teacher's questions are of uniformly high quality, with adequate time for students to respond. Students formulate many questions.