New Schools for New Orleans

Scaling the Charter Restart Model

DID THE CHARTER RESTART MODEL (CRM) HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON STUDENT GROWTH AND ACHIEVEMENT?

Project Overview

THE PROBLEM: What Challenge Did the Program Try to Address?

Disadvantaged students in New Orleans, LA, and Nashville and Memphis, TN, comprise a large percentage of students attending the lowest academically performing schools. The CRM is designed to expand highly effective charter management organizations to traditional failing (closing) public schools to improve student outcomes.

THE PROJECT: What Strategies Did the Program Employ?

Using its 2010-2015 validation grant,[1] New Schools for New Orleans (NSNO) implemented the CRM model in 21 underperforming schools in New Orleans, Nashville, and Memphis to turn around the schools that would otherwise close and positively impact student growth and achievement. Closing schools became Turnaround schools, implementing either the "fresh start" or "full school turnaround" CRMs. A quasi-experimental design study (QED) was conducted to evaluate the program in 19 of the schools. The QED used a Virtual Control Record (VCR) approach with matched student records that are followed over time. The current analysis examines whether students in newly opened CRM schools outperform their virtual control peers. The study included 6,467 target students matched to 5,119 virtual peers. The study meant to determine whether student learning gains improved as a result of the CRM initiative. Learning gains are based on school-level progress from year to year on state standardized tests in grades 4-10 in Louisiana and Tennessee.

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[1] Validation grants provide funding to support the expansion of projects that address persistent education challenges at the regional or national level. All i3 grantees are required to conduct rigorous evaluations of their projects. New Schools for New Orleans received a validation grant supported by the U.S. Department of Education's Investing in Innovation program through Grant U396B100118.

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THE **NSNO Model**

- **Fresh Start.** In this CRM, a new school begins with a single grade and grows over time. Students from a closing school may not attend the fresh start school if the new school starts by serving a grade lower than the grade the student will enter.

- **Full-school Turnaround.** In the "full school turnaround" track, a new school begins operating with as many grades as the closing school.

- **Promising Sites.** A key strategy was to hold a competition to identify Charter School Management Organizations (CMO's) with a track record of success to open the new charter schools.

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Summary of Results

DID THE CHARTER RESTART MODEL (CRM) HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT?

Reading and Math Achievement at CRM vs. Comparison Schools
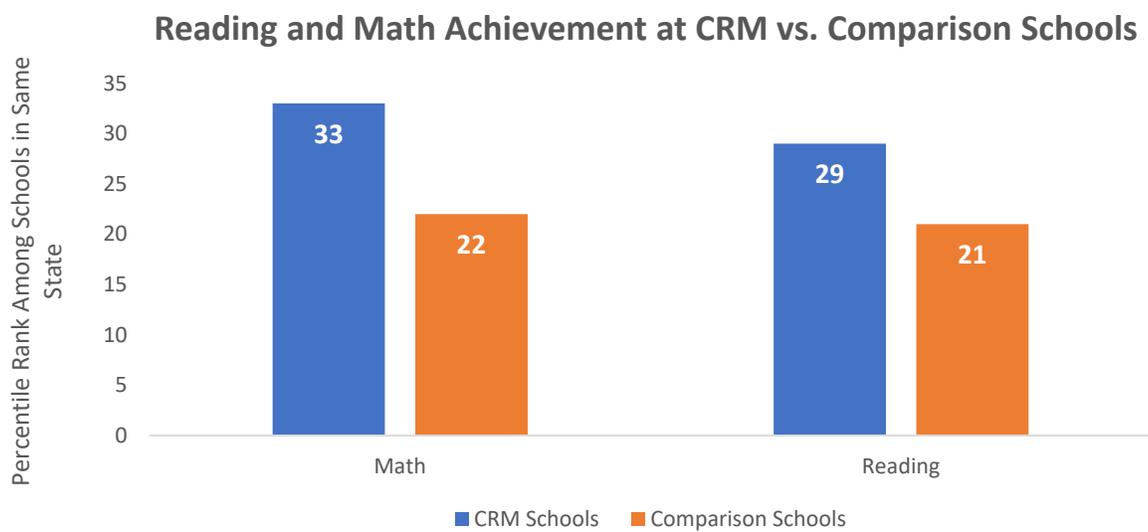
Overall, the CRM did not increase student achievement in CRM schools when compared to students at traditional public schools. However, the model did have the following positive effects:

- **LOCATION.** Three of the 13 New Orleans schools reached school performance targets in reading, and two of the New Orleans schools reached those targets in math.

- **CLOSING SCHOOLS.** The CRM schools had greater student growth compared to the Closing schools.

- **CRM MODEL.** The type of CRM model mattered. Students attending fresh start schools had greater student growth in math and reading compared to their peers at full turnaround schools as well as their peers in traditional public schools.

Please see Appendices A and B for information about the evaluation's design and the quality of the evidence, respectively.

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SECONDARY FINDINGS

- **BLACK STUDENTS.** The performance differences between Black students in CRM versus non-CRM schools is not significantly different for either reading or math; Black students fare the same regardless of attending a CRM school or a non-CRM school.

- **LOW INCOME STUDENTS.** Free/reduced price lunch-eligible student peers in non-CRM schools have academic growth in math comparable to that of free/reduced price lunch-eligible CRM students.

- **ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS.** The gains in reading and math were found to be equivalent across the CRM and non-CRM school settings.

- **FRESH START VS. FULL TURNAROUND SCHOOLS.** When the fresh start gains are compared directly to the full school turnaround impacts, the difference in reading is substantial and statistically significant: fresh start students gain 131 extra days of learning in reading over full turnaround students. The difference in math gains was not statistically significant.

- **HISPANIC STUDENTS.** When Hispanic CRM students are compared to Hispanic non-CRM students, the difference is positive and significant for reading, amounting to 97 additional days of learning per year for Hispanic CRM students. The difference in math growth for Hispanic students was not significantly different.

- **SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS.** A comparison of the academic gains of special education students shows the differences between the gains for special education students in CRM schools and non-CRM schools are not statistically significant for either subject.

- **SCHOOL SETTING.** On average, CRM students see similar growth as their VCR counterparts in both reading and math at all levels except in multi-level schools. CRM students in multi-level schools show weaker growth in both reading and math compared to their VCR peers in non-CRM settings. This translates to 251 fewer days of learning in reading and 211 fewer days of learning in math.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The study included an implementation evaluation. Its findings are discussed below.

- **TEACHER QUALITY.** Teacher quality was unilaterally considered by schools to be a fundamental challenge to the success of the CRM. Principals struggled to find teachers who both fit their schools' culture and who also could produce student results. Teachers reported consistent frustration in accessing professional development resources.

- **STAFF TURNOVER.** Teacher turnover was high, and the teaching corps in both cities were so inexperienced, that professional development focused on basics year after year in support of new teachers, instead of progressing to more sophisticated pedagogical topics. Principal turnover was also a problem: 12 CRM schools had at least one school leader turnover during the study period. Leadership turnover created inevitable disruptions to the continued maturation of school operations.

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To effectively implement a CRM, the following factors are important to consider:

- **CMOs.** Ensure that there are enough high performing CMOs with strong endowments to meet the needs of the community. Recognize that CMOs are more effective at school improvement than system improvement. This means that an entity must provide system-level support across CMOs.

- **LEADERSHIP.** Strong and stable leadership is critical at the CMO and school-level, including leadership knowledge of the grades served in the school.

- **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT.** Decentralization and the assumption that the CRM would succeed all at once, created external issues which CRM system-level partners did not anticipate or were not equipped to resolve. Continuous improvement at the system level requires an ongoing effort at both CMO- and school-levels.

- **SCHOOLS.** Successful CRM schools place students at the center of all decisions while simultaneously ensuring buy-in from all stakeholders, such as teachers to cafeteria staff.

For More Information

Evaluation Reports

Final Evaluation Report (Full Report) (The Center for Research on Education Outcomes)[2]

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Appendix A: Students Served by the Project[3]

GRADE(S)

PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

GENDER	RACE/ETHNICITY	COMMUNITY
Not Reported		Not Reported

Hispanic 3%
Asian 3%
White, 1%
Black, 93%
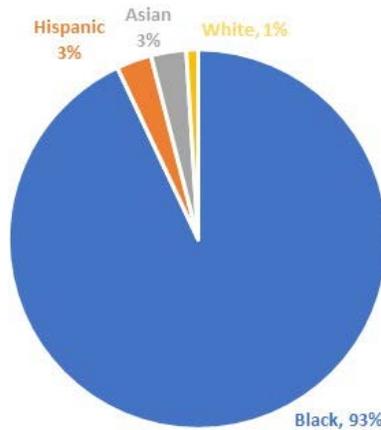
HIGH-NEED STUDENTS[i]

Free/Reduced-Price Lunch	English Learner	Students with Disabilities
87%	3%	9%

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[3]These data reflect the entire student population served by the intervention, not just the evaluation sample used in the impact study.

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Appendix B: Impact Evaluation Methodology[4]

RESEARCH DESIGN:

Design:	Quasi-Experimental Design (QED)
Approach:	- The study uses the Virtual Control Record (VCR) methodology that uses matched student records followed over time. The study uses a VCR for each CRM student. VCR students are identical to CRM students except they attend a non-CRM school. - The study controls for the following student characteristics: prior academic achievement, race/ethnicity, special education status, socio-economic status, English proficiency, grade level, and retention grade.
Study Length:	Six years

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Study Setting:	Nineteen CRM schools (12 in New Orleans and seven in Tennessee)
Final Sample Sizes:	*Intervention group*: 6,467 *Matched Group:* 5,119 Students
Matched Group Characteristics:	- Free/Reduced Priced Lunch: 89% - Individualized Education Program: 8% - Black: 98% - Hispanic: 2% - English Learner: 1%
Data Sources:	State student assessments
Key Measures:	- Student growth in reading on state standardized tests - Student growth in math on state standardized tests

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[4] These data reflect only the evaluation sample in the impact study, not the entire population served.

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Appendix C: Quality of the Evidence

Although an evaluation may not have been reviewed by the time of publication for this summary, it is possible that the study will be reviewed at a later date. Please visit the websites found in the footnotes on this page to check for updates.

WHAT WORKS CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW[5]

STUDY	RATING
Not reviewed as of 01/22/2020	N/A

EVIDENCE FOR ESSA REVIEW[6]

STUDY	RATING
Not reviewed as of 01/22/2020	N/A

NATIONAL CENTER ON INTENSIVE INTERVENTIONS REVIEW[7]

STUDY	RATING
Not reviewed as of 01/22/2020	N/A

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[5] https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/FWW
[6] https://www.evidenceforessa.org/
[7] https://intensiveintervention.org/

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The **Investing in Innovation Fund (i3)**, *established under section 14007 of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, is a Federal discretionary grant program at the U.S. Department of Education within the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE). i3 grants help schools and local education agencies work in partnership with the private sector and the philanthropic community to develop and expand innovative practices that improve student achievement or student growth, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout rates, increase high school graduation rates, and/or increase college enrollment and completion rates for high-need students.*

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[i] "High-need student" refers to a student at risk of academic failure or otherwise in need of special assistance and support, such as students who are living in poverty, attend high-minority schools, are far below grade level, who have left school before receiving a regular high school diploma, at risk of not graduating with a diploma on time, who are homeless, in foster care, have been incarcerated, have disabilities, or who are English learners. For more information see: Applications for New Awards; Investing in Innovation Fund-Development Grants, 81 FR 24070 (April 25, 2016).

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