# New Schools for New Orleans Year 2 Report

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# List of Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| A-NET | Achievement Network |
| APE | Adapted Physical Education |
| ARRA | American Reinvestment and Recovery Act |
| ASD | Achievement School District |
| BESE | Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| CA | Collegiate Academies |
| CCS | Crescent City Schools |
| CLA | Crescent Leadership Academy |
| CMOs | Charter School Management Organizations |
| ECO | End-of-Course |
| FEMA | Federal Emergency Management Agency |
| FIN | Future Is Now |
| FOK | Friends of King |
| GEE | Graduate Exit Exam |
| GSA | Gordon Science and Arts |
| i3 | Investing in Innovation |
| iLEAP | Integrated Louisiana Educational Assessment Program |
| LEA | Local Education Agency |
| LEAP | Louisiana Educational Assessment Program |
| LDE | Louisiana Department of Education |
| LSP | Louisiana Scholarship Program |
| MCS | Memphis City Schools |
| MLK | Martin Luther King School |
| MNPS | Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools |

NACSA    National Association of Charter School Authorizers

NOLA     New Orleans, Louisiana

NSNO     New Schools for New Orleans

OPSB     Orleans Parish School Board

PMO      Performance Management Organization

RFP      Request for Proposals

RSD      Recovery School District

SPED     Special Education

SPS      School Performance Score

TASD     Tennessee Achievement School District

TDOE     Tennessee Department of Education

TFA      Teach for America

TPS      Traditional Public School

USDE     United States Department of Education

Y-PLAN   Youth - Plan, Learn, Act, Now

# Executive Summary

**Introduction**

We present the Year 2 report of the federally-required evaluation of the Scaling the New Orleans Charter Restart Model, an Investing in Innovations and Improvement (i3) Validation grant from the US Department of Education. The evaluation spans the first four years of the five-year partnership between the Recovery School District of Louisiana (RSD) and New Schools for New Orleans (NSNO). The project aims to transfer the operation of chronically failing schools in New Orleans to selected charter management organizations with proven records of performance. The project also called for replication of the model in another community; the Achievement School District in Tennessee (ASD) has adopted the approach for its work in Memphis and Nashville, albeit with modification.

This interim report presents results from three related strands of evaluation. First, an impact analysis of the performance of students affected by the first cohort of charter restarts is presented. These schools formed the basis of the Year 1 report on the project's implementation efforts, but the impact of those efforts relies on end-of-year achievement tests, so this is the first opportunity to share that analysis. Second, we present the ongoing findings of an organizational capacity analysis of the lead organizations in the partnership and their activities on behalf of the i3 project. The organizational capacity study serves three functions: 1) it tests the fidelity of program activities to the i3 proposal, 2) it studies the partners' responses to internal and external barriers and challenges and 3) it provides as independent assessment of the alignment of current operational directions and levels of effort against the project goals. The final strand of the evaluation is an implementation study of the transition from failing school to charter restart, using the i3 grantee's prior school(s) as a reference for performance and quality standards.

**Changes in Landscape** New Orleans is a highly dynamic community in many respects; the education policy landscape certainly earns that description. Shifts in the political, legislative, regulatory and economic environment are frequent, some of which could impact on the design or execution of the Charter Restart Model. Accordingly, the evaluation design includes regular environmental scans to identify changes that have current of possible future influence on the success of the project.

**Statewide Policy Changes** The Louisiana Scholarship Program (LSP) was implemented statewide in 2012 and created conditions that potentially could impact 2012-2013 academic year enrollment in both traditional public schools and charter

schools[1].  The program offers a scholarship (i.e., a voucher) to eligible students for use as tuition to any private schools that elects to participate in the program.  To be eligible for a scholarship, students must have a family income of less than 250% of the federal poverty line and must be entering kindergarten or must already be enrolled in a low-performing school with a C, D, or F grade.  The LSP is currently being challenged in the courts on constitutional and procedural grounds [2], so potential impact on future enrollment in i3 charter schools is unclear.

**RSD Policy Changes: i3 Selection and General Operation**  All NOLA Cohort 1 i3 principals reported changes in Spring 2012 to insurance legislation and testing policies that required administrative changes to school operations. Additionally, the Clark principal reported that during their second year of operation, both the school and the CMO (FirstLine) received additional funds mobilized at the building level.

**RSD Policy Changes: Expulsion Policy**  A new Expulsion Policy [3] was implemented by RSD and introduced in July of 2012 via community meetings. In part, the new policy shifts focus from frequency of misbehavior to severity of misbehavior, meaning that students who repeatedly make low-level infractions will remain in school; but a single serious infraction can result in expulsion.

**RSD Policy Changes: OneApp**  In February 2012, RSD launched and implemented a city-wide centralized enrollment system, called OneApp, allowing students and families to enroll in RSD direct-run and charter schools through a single application[4]. It permitted parents to rank order their preferred schools with accommodations for letting rising students in each school remain enrolled and to allow sibling enrollments at the same schools. It did not, however, attempt load balancing or give priority enrollment to students who were unable to attend their previous schools due to grade span shifts in the restart schools.

It was implemented in time to handle enrollment preferences for the 2012-2013 school year.  In its first year, RSD reported that 84% of students entering Kindergarten or 9th grade (the system's "entry grades") received one of their top

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[1] For more information, see http://www.louisianabelieves.com/schools/louisiana-scholarship-program

[2] See, e.g., http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2013/03/jindal_voucher_louisiana_orlea.html

[3] Available at:
https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=http%3A%2F%2Fblogs.edweek.org%2Fedweek%2Fcharterschoice%2FRSD%2520Expulsion%2520Process%2520and%2520Standards%25202012-13.pdf
[4] http://laschoolfinder.com/news/detail/36/Recovery-School-Districts-OneApp-School-Application-Process; see also http://enrollnola.org/

three school choices[5], with 76% of entry grade applicants placed in their first choice school[6].

**RSD Reorganization**  The RSD underwent a significant realignment over the past year and is now situated more closely within the LA Department of Education. There has been turnover in the Superintendent position, the second time in as many years.  Staffing in the rest of RSD has stabilized, with key vacancies filled from within the organization; one notable exception was the hire of a well-respected professional from the community to continue the public communications work that the current RSD Superintendent began when he held a similar position.

**NSNO Growth**  NSNO successfully attracted significant grants from both the US Department of Education for a Teacher Incentive Fund grant and the Arnold Foundation to accelerate the creation of successful restart schools. These additions have broadened the scope of work undertaken at NSNO, and will allow them to focus on developing the pipeline of qualified teachers and operators into New Orleans.  NSNO has also made additional hires over the course of the second year.

**ASD Growth**  The ASD has increased staffing as well, although by the standards of a traditional school district they remain very lean.  By the end of the second year of evaluation, the ASD had given away each of their i3 grants and were considering an independent application for additional i3 funding to continue granting awards.

**Impact Analysis**  The impact portion of the study is meant to determine whether student learning gains improved as a result of the i3 project.  Learning gains are judged based on progress from year to year on the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) and Integrated Educational Assessment Program (iLEAP) tests, the evidence base for the state's school accountability program.  The data for the impact study was provided by the Louisiana Department of Education.  It included school enrollment and test score information for each student.  The table below lists the academic years included in this analysis with the corresponding and available test scores.

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[5] See, e.g., http://www.nola.com/opinions/index.ssf/2012/09/oneapp_needed_for_all_new_orle.html
[6] See, e.g., http://waltonfamilyfoundation.org/grantees/recovery-school-district?utm_source=Walton+Family+Foundation+News&utm_campaign=fde1e35e7f-New_ed_reform_grantee_spotlights8_14_2012&utm_medium=email

**Table 1:  Impact Study Universe for Year 1**

| Academic Year | 2009-2010 | 2010-2011 | 2011-2012 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Test Administration | Spring 2010 | Spring 2011 | Spring 2012 |
| Tests | Grades 3-9, GEE[a] | Grades 3-8, EOCs[b] | Grades 3-8, EOCs[b] |
| Growth Period | | 2011 | 2012 |
| i3 Cohort | | Cohort 1 Closing Schools | Cohort 1, Year 1 i3 Schools |

The Impact Analysis for this report covers the three schools in the first cohort of i3 funded schools in New Orleans:  Joseph S. Clark HS / Firstline, Harriett Tubman / Harriett Tubman Charter School and Gregory / KIPP Believe Elementary School.  It should be noted that the grades served by the KIPP Believe Elementary do not align with the grades that were served under Gregory; all rising students in Gregory were ineligible to attend KIPP Believe Elementary.

Students affected by i3 can be grouped into six categories:

- **Persisters**: These students attended both the Closing school and its i3 counterpart.  When various approaches to "turn-around" schools are discussed, these are the students that are the target of consideration.

- **New Entrants**: The students who attended the i3 school in its first year, but did not attend the Closing school.

- **Opt-out**: Students who attended the Closing school, had the option of attending the new i3 school, and chose not to enroll there.

- **Flux**: These are students who attended the Closing school for whom some special accommodation was made when they were displaced by the i3 school due to a grade configuration mismatch.  Twenty-two Gregory  students were given a seat at a KIPP middle school that was affiliated with the i3 school run by KIPP.

- **Ineligible**: Students who attended the Closing school but were not able to attend the i3 school due to a grade configuration mismatch and for whom no special accommodation was made.

- **Aged Out**: The students who attended the Closing school in its highest grade level and were therefore going to enroll in a different school the following year regardless of the i3 project.

- The subsequent enrollments of students from the three closing schools are presented Table 2.

**Table 2:  Cohort 1 Student Enrollments by School and Category**

| Cohort 1 School | Before i3 | After i3 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Closing | Persisters | New Entrants | Opt-out | Flux | Ineligible |
| Clark | 366 | 117 | 192 | 54 | 0 | 0 |
| Gregory | 268 | 0 | 88 | 0 | 22 | 128 |
| Tubman | 498 | 142 | 248 | 223 | 0 | 0 |
| **Totals** | **1152** | **259** | **528** | **277** | **22** | **128** |

The group of students who attended i3 schools in their first year of operation consists of new entrants and persisters.  To assess the impact of attending the restart charter schools on their academic progress, we examined their year-over-year growth on the Louisiana LEAP and ILEAP tests.  Their progress was contrasted with two comparison groups:

1. A group of students who are exact matches drawn *only* from the schools currently operated by the Recovery School District.

2. A second group of student matches from *any* school in the Recovery School District (direct-run or charter school).

The overall results appear in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Cohort 1, Year 1 Impact for i3 Attendees Against Two Comparison Groups**
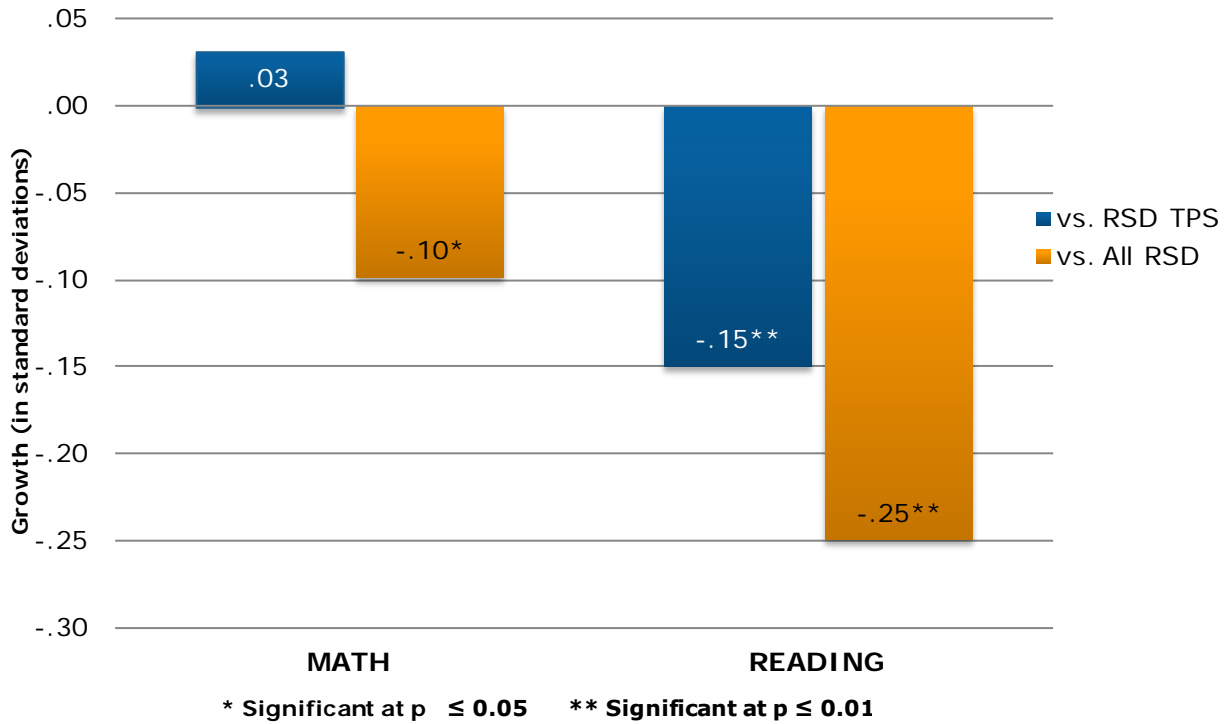


The first comparison, i3 attendees vs. RSD TPS, is shown in blue above. The math learning gains for i3 attendees were the same as those for RSD TPS students. In reading, however, learning gains for i3 attendees were significantly lower than their RSD TPS peers' growth.

The second comparison is shown in orange above for i3 attendees vs. All RSD. Against this baseline, the i3 attendees' learning gains were significantly lower in both math and reading than that of their counterparts.

The outcomes of all students affected by the i3 closing were examined separately by the path they followed, presented below in Table 3.

**Table 3: Cohort 1, Year 1 Impact by Student Category**

| Test, Baseline of Comparison | Before i3 | After i3 | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Closing | Persisters | New Entrants | Opt-out | Flux | Ineligible |
| Math, RSD TPS | .10* | -.03 | .07 | -.01 | .40* | -.10 |
| Math, All RSD | -.02 | -.17* | -.06 | -.21** | .20 | -.21** |
| Reading, RSD TPS | .11** | -.23** | -.08 | -.01 | .22 | -.22** |
| Reading, All RSD | .00 | -.36** | -.16* | -.16* | .15 | -.33** |

*Significant at p≤.05, **Significant at p≤.01

Closing school students had positive learning gains in both math and reading compared to RSD TPS.  Learning gains for Closing school students were similar to their ALL RSD counterparts in both subjects.  Of the remaining categories of students, only the Flux students had significantly positive impacts (in math only).  Students who actually attended an i3 school (Persisters and New Entrants) did not have significantly positive outcomes.  This means that positive impacts for the first year of i3 were realized only for one small group of students who did not attend an i3 school – the Gregory students who were given spots in a high-performing KIPP school that was affiliated with the Gregory i3 school.  These extraordinary placement efforts were taken because of the special circumstances around that particular restart.  The Charter Restart Model does not have a system in place to continue such special placements at high-performing schools.

With only three schools in the first cohort of i3 schools, and different restart experiences among them, it is premature to draw definitive conclusions about the effectiveness of the restart effort in creating stronger learning outcomes for students.  It bears noting, however, that these first signals do not begin in a positive direction, so while additional years of experience in these schools, as well as the experience in later restarts, may eventually point to overall positive performance, the present impact analysis shows negative effects that must be overcome if an overall positive result is to be achieved.

**Organizational Capacity Analysis** Organizational capacity refers to the capabilities, knowledge and resources needed in order to be effective. Much of the reform dialogue presumes that where the will to perform exists, capacity to execute follows and change occurs. How well the organizational partners adjust their operations to fulfill the ambitions of the Charter Restart Model is the subject of the Organizational Capacity Analysis. Our goals in conducting an organizational capacity study are binary: we want to provide actionable feedback to the program team about their strategies and tactics as an interim check on their likelihood of overall project success. We also have a more academic interest in identifying functional areas or institutional habits that have a discernible impact on the program team's effectiveness.

The organizational capacity analysis is structured around the areas of responsibility that were laid out in the original i3 proposal. Last year, the analysis focused on three areas: Operator Selection, CMO Development and Community Engagement. In this report, we introduce two new areas of analysis: Documentation and Dissemination of the process and progress of the i3 project, and Conducting School Reviews as a way of tracking restart implementation and providing independent feedback to schools. We review these new areas below.

**Conducting School Reviews and Monitoring Turnaround Performance** The i3 proposal included the commitment that NSNO would monitor the performance of schools through a twice-annual school visit. The initial idea was that an independent audit could measure periodically the implementation of the school described in the i3 application, assess the performance of schools and provide feedback to school and CMO leadership to guide on-going school management.

As was documented in the first year's report, the "pipeline" of qualified operators and CMOs ready and willing to conduct turnarounds in New Orleans was leaner than initially envisioned at the outset of the i3 project. This lean pipeline, combined with a sense of urgency driven by both formal grant deadlines and a sense of moral obligation to aid struggling student in New Orleans, led to the selection of certain operators that did not meet the i3 program's established standards of quality (the evolution of the selection process is described more fully later in this section). This led to a change in the nature of the school reviews, morphing from a summative assessment to a formative one, in which feedback is provided based on observed deficiencies, and responsiveness to this feedback is judged in future reviews.

Key findings about the School Reviews and Monitoring Turnaround Efforts are highlighted below:

- The decision has been made to get more involved in the process of improving school quality, as opposed to simply monitoring outcomes and supporting CMO capacity to intervene when necessary. This is reflected in the expansion of the school review team, as well as statements from multiple members of NSNO regarding the necessity of direct school level intervention. It is also reflected in the retraction of i3 funds when a school seriously deviates from the stated intentions in their i3 proposal. In this context, the term "intervention" does not imply that NSNO personnel inject themselves in any way in the process of running a school. Rather, it refers to any attempt by NSNO to alter the formula for school quality that a school or CMO pursues. This occurs through activities such as formative assessments, professional development opportunities or the allocation of non-i3 resources to address observed deficiencies. In the first year of the project, the purpose of the school reviews was to "check school model fidelity with the flagship or proposed model and give input from peers serving as friends." Early in the second year of the project, an NSNO employee predicted a shift toward greater involvement in school level processes, stating that "The new batch of schools we haven't had a relationship with before. We may need to be more interventionist." This prediction was later confirmed by multiple NSNO personnel (e.g. "The i3 project has shifted the focus of NSNO to school reviews." & "If a school is not on track to make progress, we'll intervene.").
- Evidence from school level personnel suggest that NSNO's feedback is well regarded, with many praising NSNO for the quality of their reviews and identifying specific issues for which NSNO's feedback was valuable. This suggests that the i3 partnership has capacity that could be transferred to CMOs, increasing their ability to conduct their own high quality school reviews in the future. NSNO currently conducts these reviews at the request of many schools and CMOs, as it both relieves them of the associated logistical challenges and they are seen to provide a valuable outside perspective on school performance.
- Currently, the results of the school reviews are shared with principals and typically with CMO CEOs, who are always invited (but not mandated) to participate in the process.
- School reviews may no longer be only a method merely to ensure implementation fidelity to the school model presented during selection. School reviews may now have become an augmented part of the theory of action to achieve Goal 1. NSNO leadership views the conduct of school reviews as largely a continuation of existing activity. CREDO believes that the school reviews have taken on a new emphasis and urgency due to observed challenges at i3 CMOs/schools and early

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signals of school quality. The original theory of action expected that selection of high quality operators and support of CMO functions would produce better outcomes for students. The expansion of the scale and scope of school reviews moves the theory of action to include both the selection of high quality operators and the feedback from repeated school reviews to produce high quality outcomes for students. A member of NSNO explained this shift, sharing that "the recruiting and support of operators has driven the model forward...has carried the project when other elements have ebbed."

The responsibility to "monitor schools with a robust data system" has partially merged with the twice annual school reviews The data system currently in development, the school dashboard being developed by NSNO, includes key metrics from the school review and indicators of academic performance. The development, content and uses of the school dashboard will be covered in depth in future reports.

**Documenting and Disseminating the Model** The Investing in Innovation and Improvement grant program is designed to create scalable models of school improvement. As a result, capturing the original design and actual implementation of the program are essential steps to ensuring that the localized investment of grant resources is also leveraged for the learning benefit of other communities. In the first year of the grant, NSNO made two budget allocations toward this priority. First, they hired an outside contractor to document the historical antecedents to the i3 project, the so-called "pre-requisites" for the i3 model. That product was completed in Year 1 and disseminated as a "How-to Guide." Since then, the focus of dissemination efforts has shifted to more informal (but potentially as valuable) dissemination methods, including social media, conference presentations and networking with national education organizations.

The second allocation by NSNO was the hiring of an analyst to track and review their practices and processes, in the hopes that her work would serve both to feed a continuous improvement cycle as well as to form the basis of future updates to "How-To Guides" for implementing the Charter Restart Model. This person left in Year 2, and no systematic outside review has replaced it; the director of i3 implementation has taken on this responsibility. There are, however, still plans to release an updated version of the "How-to Guide" in the future.

Key findings about Documenting and Disseminating the Model are highlighted below:

- Both documentation and dissemination have received less attention in the second year of the project, which partially reflects the increasing

- time pressure in other aspects of the project (e.g. selecting operators to receive the remaining i3 awards).
- In lieu of regular step back and review practices, there have been more ad hoc approaches to reviewing operations and improving practice (the development of a white paper, review of school visit protocols, review of selection processes, & review of grant letter process and payouts), but the results of these reviews are not currently collected or organized into a cohesive package of "lessons learned." There are plans to do this in the future.
- Failure to document operations and changes as they occur may also hinder future attempts to replicate the Charter Restart Model, given the acknowledged difference between the model and its implementation. NSNO stated explicitly that the How-To Guide tells districts how to create the necessary pre-requisites for an "i3-like" project. It is not a guide to create a Charter Restart District.

Current dissemination efforts focus on the importance of "relinquishment" of authority over day to day school operations as the key to success, but the educational environment over the last year has in some respects moved away from decentralization in ways that adversely affect the operation of certain i3 schools.

**Updates on Responsibilities Covered in the Year 1 Report**

**Selection**   In the first year of the grant, the primary strategy to maximize school quality was the selection of applicants capable of achieving high quality out of the gate.  NSNO would then facilitate and fund contract services for individual operators where needed.  The past year saw a decreased emphasis on selection as the primary mechanism to ensure Goal 1, and this willingness to select operators with a lower chance of meeting the ultimate quality bar necessitated a shift to deeper investment and investigation into school performance post-selection.  Selection can now be viewed as one step in a longer process, which may include setting milestones for an operator that necessitate process and/or personnel changes, school reviews and supports, and direct human capital development activities.

**Community Engagement**   A significant part of the i3 project design was aimed at mobilizing the public at large to reject the current level of school performance as unacceptable. The next step was for the public to embrace the concept of turnaround and continuous ratcheting of quality standards as the best approach for overall system improvement.  In the short term, the principal focus of engagement is to smooth the closure of failing schools and the transition to new operators.  In the long run, Goal 2 (the creation of a permanent infrastructure to turn around the

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bottom 5% of schools each year) implies the existence of sufficient community demand for high quality school options to drive future increases in quality.

The responsibility to engage with the community is shared, but the lead role has shifted from NSNO to RSD in the second year of the project. In response to community reaction during the first year of evaluation, RSD decided to vest community relations, which is not the same thing as engagement, to two individuals who were well-known members of the community. The current Superintendent of RSD spent a considerable amount of time meeting with parents, educators and community groups; his experience as both a local and state policy official gives him credibility and his local roots give him connection. The individual serving as the Deputy Superintendent of External Affairs has a similar blend of professional credentials and local connection. Since New Orleans natives are especially passionate about maintaining a sense of "their own" and not being dictated to by "outsiders," a significant barrier to constructive dialogue was reduced by these additions.

The initial approach to community engagement experienced limited success. The decision to close schools was based largely on an objective measure of school performance, the School Performance Score (SPS). The apparent objectivity of the decision was used as a launching point for further discussion with the community about school closures.[7] Once the community was taught about the SPS, the conversation moved on to a community-based visioning process, where members of the community around failing school sites were invited to share their desires and expectations for a new school operator. However, the RSD wasn't interested in adapting its plans in any significant way to accommodate community tastes. This may have been a legitimate tactical decision in many instances, particularly when community requests would have reduced the emphasis on school quality or required resources that were not available. However, the perception that RSD was not interested in a true partnership diminished much of the value of the visioning process as a strategic asset. During the second year of evaluation, the community visioning process was eliminated and replaced with the creation of advisory councils at each failing school site. This approach has also been adopted in Tennessee. Plans had been drawn up to hire 24 community representatives to assist RSD in this process, but this plan was dropped during the early stages of implementation. The focus of community engagement in New Orleans has shifted from a collaborative

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[7] The School Performance Score is computed differently for high school than for elementary and middle schools. High schools add graduation rates (obviously for earlier student cohorts) to the base set of factors which include attendance rates and average achievement scores on the annual state accountability tests. It should be noted that the selection of academic achievement -- as opposed to academic growth, disadvantages schools with high proportions of historically underserved students.

effort at co-creation to an exercise whose primary function is to increase public awareness, understanding and support of district policies.

**Development of CMO Capacity**  The Charter Restart Model depends on a supply of high-performing CMOs willing to expand their networks via charter restarts (which must themselves be high-performing).  Therefore, a necessary condition of success is that CMOs must have the capacity to design, implement and guide the development of high quality schools under turnaround conditions.  For many CMOs, the difference between "green field" start-ups (where school culture, behavioral expectations, etc. can be built from scratch) and restarts (where the CMO must deal with the "legacy" of the failed school) is considerable.  Due to this, it is important to the success of the enterprise to examine the capacity of CMOs to successfully expand in this specialized environment.

In the first year of the grant NSNO hired contractors to enhance the capacity of their i3 awardees. Regular meetings were conducted, during which CEOs from CMOs both within and outside of the i3 project were invited. Content for these meetings was developed by an expert in organizational design from UC Berkeley. In the second year of analysis these meetings were  replaced with less regular meetings led by NSNO personnel and a "Communities of Practice" meeting, in which personnel from i3 award recipients in both New Orleans and Tennessee shared their strengths and challenges with other attendees, who were then invited to provide possible solutions to the issues presented. Additionally, NSNO supported CMO development in a series of informal and collaborative ways. For example, they facilitated and encouraged the sharing of interim assessments across CMOs and supported collaboration around SPED assessments and services. Non-i3 funds are also made available for certain CMOs when NSNO personnel feel they are necessary to develop a particular aspect of CMO capacity.

**Charter Restart Implementation Analysis**   At the time of the second year Implementation analysis, thirteen schools have opened as i3 awardees. The list is presented in Table 4 below.   Ten of these schools are still in their first year of operation and the i3 project has been underway for over two years. With that timeframe in mind, the implementation analysis shows variation in the degree of stability and fidelity to the original proposed school designs. While there are a number of i3 schools that opened with a keen focus on student learning and consistency in their operations, the implementation analysis revealed that many of the schools encountered significant challenges in their opening that impeded efforts to establish strong school culture and high performance norms for students and staff.   Especially troubling is the removal of two schools (CLA and John McDonogh-FIN) from the i3 cohort for failure to comply with their grant agreements and school management plans.

**Table 4:  Implementation Analysis**

| i3 Opening Year | i3 School | CMO | Flagship School | Closing School |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cohort 1 NOLA | | | | |
| NOLA 2011 | Clark Prep | Firstline | Ashe | Clark High School |
| NOLA 2011 | KIPP Believe Primary | Knowledge Is Power Program | KIPP Believe | Gregory |
| NOLA 2011 | Harriet Tubman Elementary | Crescent City | No Flagship | Tubman |
| Cohort 2 NOLA | | | | |
| NOLA 2011 | Cohen College Prep * | New Orleans College Prep | NOCP Elementary NOCP Middle | Walter Cohen |
| NOLA 2012 | Crescent Leadership Academy | Rite of Passage | Canyon State Academy | Schwartz |
| NOLA 2012 | Mc Donogh 42 Elementary Charter | Choice Foundation | Lafayette Academy | Mc Donogh 42 |
| NOLA 2012 | Joseph A. Craig Charter | Friends of King | Martin Luther King, Jr. | Craig |
| NOLA 2012 | Carver Prep | Collegiate Academies | Sci Academy | Sojourner Truth |
| NOLA 2012 | Carver Collegiate | Collegiate Academies | Sci Academy | Carver |
| NOLA 2012 | John Mc Donogh: FIN High School | Future is Now | No Flagship | John Mc Donogh |
| Cohort 1 TN | | | | |
| MEMPHIS 2012 | Gordon Science and Arts | Gestalt | Power Center Academy | Humes Middle School |
| MEMPHIS 2012 | KIPP Memphis Academy Middle | Knowledge Is Power Program | KIPP Memphis | Cypress Middle School |
| NASHVILLE 2012 | Brick Church Middle School | Lead | Cameron College Prep | Brick Church |

*Please note: though Cohen College Prep opened in 2011, it is part of the Cohort 2 schools for the purposes of analysis.

Many of the challenges identified at the time of the first year report continue to apply in the second year. In some cases these challenges present as even greater concerns, given both the increase in the number of schools in the second cohort for New Orleans as well as the expansion of the project to Memphis and Nashville. The Implementation team observed continuing challenges with community engagement, creation and maintenance of positive school culture, stability of leadership and staff, and fidelity to model. The work of any school in its opening years sets the foundation for the future expectations and performance of each school. Decisions made early have long-lasting impact and are difficult to undo, meaning that early decisions matter tremendously. This is especially important for schools struggling to firmly establish their culture, operational processes, and definitions of fidelity and success.

Inconsistent engagement and accountability around the closure process continues to represent both an immediate threat to the student body at Closing schools as well as potential threat for residual resentment at new i3 schools. The process improved from NOLA Cohort 1 to Cohort 2 showing signs of both improved communication and more coordinated strategy around the closure process. However the confusion and disorder that was observed in Tennessee indicates a gap in the information transfer between the two locations around best approaches.

**Implications and Suggestions**

Roughly half the NOLA grants will be allocated in the final years of the project. In Tennessee, the ASD team is seeking to expand their efforts with additional funding. Therefore, there is both opportunity and motivation to consider refinements to the program design and implementation with the aim of improving the overall performance of the project by the end of the grant period.

Related to Goal 1: Creating high-quality schools under the restart model, the evaluation team considers the following areas to be opportunities for further investigation:

1. **Recommit to Model Elements** -- All the marginal adjustments to the model over the past two years resulted in a (perhaps temporary) fuzziness about what features are and are not essential to the overall approach for Charter Restarts. During the second year of the i3 project, several of the implementation challenges and program monitoring difficulties arose from adaptations that were made to the model in the first 18 months of the project. The NOLA Project team has more recently revisited the original proposal and identified, from the vantage of experience and expectations about the future, what the non-negotiables of the

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model are.  This mid-point clarification and recommitment will refine both strategy and tactics in the remainder of the grant.

2.  **Selection** -- Under any version of the Charter Restart Model, the gateway function of selection is the keystone to its success.  Based on the selection rounds observed during the second year of the i3 project, two areas of needed revision became clear.  First, the selection process must largely rely  on hard evidence of prior proven performance by applicants.  The schools that are evidencing problems during their early years are schools for which the evidence of prior performance was sketchy or non-existent (i.e., the new CMO start-ups).  Second, the construct of leadership as a predictive factor for success would benefit from additional clarity; CMO leadership capacity is not a direct substitute for school-level leadership.  Both are needed to fulfill the promise of the model.  These are areas where NSNO has already begun to focus.

3.  **Structure of the Operator Grants** -- The current approach to disburse the full award amount prior to school opening does not foster the right kind of incentives for the CMO and school partners.  Once their funding is in hand, the attachment to the project and to the on-going requirements of the grant (including, but not limited to, participation in evaluation activities) diminishes quickly.  This area of the program design is wide open for innovation and experimentation.

4.  **Different Approach to Failing Schools** -- As the charter restart leaders report, schools that are closed and then restarted have a long legacy that can impede the creation of a successful new school culture.  It begs the question of whether full restart needs to be employed in a more judicious manner.  Other CREDO research has shown that full starts produce lower academic results than schools that open with a grade and grow incrementally.  This model seems more suitable where there is a strong affiliation with a failing school.  Perhaps in these cases, the failing school should be closed completely with the school name retired for some period and then resurrected for a new school operator.  As long as there was a solid supply of high quality charter seats for the students from the Closing school to fill, better outcomes all around would result.

5.  **Supports for Schools** -- A fundamental question for the i3 project team to consider is whether i3 school failure is an option.  Current behavior draws the line at extreme malfeasance, leaving a lot of schools in play that are obviously having difficulties.  The transition of the school reviews from summative performance reviews to formative input and process reviews raises a number of important questions.  While no one doubts the earnest effort that goes into the reviews, it does merit the question of how certain the review team is of the direct connection between the topics of the review and eventual high-quality results.  It would be one

thing if there was a sophisticated body of evidence supporting the review practice, but in fact in several topic areas, the literature shows otherwise.  Regardless, another question is whether NSNO is the best or only organization capable of providing the review (however it is structured.)  One option might be to turn the instruments over to the CMOs and hold training sessions for their reviewers.  This would free NSNO to pursue program and policy development that they and they alone can successfully manage.  Such a move would resolve any potential conflicts in the roles NSNO currently plays as Selector and Improvement Coach. These dual roles could create contradictory allegiances in the future should the need arise to recommend charter closures.  Having the team involved with school reviews creates bad incentives for new applicants as well; they will be able to count on external services to address their performance issues, which essentially amount to double funding.

6.  **Future Challenges** -- Similar to the many human capital challenges that schools face across the nation, i3 school leaders report a concern for finding and retaining high quality teachers.  The early signs of teacher and principal burnout emerged this year. The report of teachers and our own observations indicate that gaps in supply and distribution of youth support services have an impact on instruction and school culture.   Further, our data suggests, that a future challenges may arise related to human capital; junior and senior educators both reported short time horizons for remaining in their current positions.  In addition, there is a need for strengthening the role of parents in the new school landscape.  Parents need help to become stronger consumers, including more information about schools and their performance and guidance on how vital school quality is in the future lives of their children.  Parents' political support is also needed to sustain the momentum for the larger school improvement strategy in the community over the longer term.

These gaps in access to student support and teacher support, are not unique challenges to New Orleans.  However, whether NSNO addresses this with their own resources or seeks external support, this is a future challenge that could threaten the success of the Charter Restart Model.  The success and sustainability in creating the first restart charter district is dependent on considering the long term effects of high teacher turn over.  Something for NSNO consider, will be to determine what role NSNO will have in addressing both human capital concerns as well as school's access to student supports.

To enhance Goal #2:  Create a Permanent Infrastructure to Perpetuate the Restart Model, change in several areas is possible.

1.  **CMO Expansion** -- The evaluation team considers the CMOs to be the drive train of the Charter Restart Model.   Its success is only as strong as its CMO

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partners. They will eventually inherit the charter district as co-creators, and several will be called upon to continue replications or to provide wider leadership to the operator community. Building their capacity as individual enterprises and as strategic actors in the developing new school landscape is essential. While this challenge is not unique to New Orleans, it is certainly more keenly centered there as a direct result of the Charter Restart Model. A CMO Resource Center would provide immediate value both locally and nationally; it could serve initially as a repository for policies and practices, and eventually add evidence of effective practices as the research base grows. By limiting the contributions to the center to only high-performing CMOs, there is a better chance that the collection and sharing will lead to effective results.

2. **The SPS Ratchet Mechanism** -- The School Performance Score will undergo revision in 2013, but the new version includes academic growth only as an afterthought. SPS performance and growth are only mildly correlated, so both need to be considered to avoid errors in decisions about failing schools.

3. **Consider evolving the policy target to a "neo-portfolio" framework** -- As discussed in the Organizational Capacity analysis, RSD has adopted some practices that may be more appropriate in "regular" portfolio districts but that have a dampening effect both on the autonomy of charter schools (as protected by Louisiana state statute) and on the development of a true charter district. RSD is in a unique position to refine its strategy relative to its charter schools to model a "neo-portfolio" framework instead. It would be characterized by a limited role for RSD, including the role of external arbiter of school quality, in which chronically underperforming schools would be closed. New charter operators, approved by BESE, would be added to the supply side only as niche solutions rather than replacements for the closed schools. RSD would deal directly with schools only in two additional areas: they would award facilities and monitor their continued use based on performance. They would also handle areas of externalities, such as community-wide solutions to the delivery of special education services to students in need or transportation or voluntary group purchases of meals or school-based technology. In other words, RSD would act in cases where a uniform solution both eliminates externalities and promotes ease of transfer of students and information across schools.

Finally, with Goal #3: Replication and Dissemination, a final point deserves reflection and possible action.

**When considering the model as a national demonstration, it is important to know the absolutes of the model and to reflect them as such.** There are a number of critical differences between the New Orleans and Tennessee restart

models, some of which are so distinct as to call into question the fidelity of replication. The programmatic features that NSNO details as essential elements its own restart model need to be used as the standard to assess any replication elsewhere; this is needed both to test replication fidelity and to provide fair tests of the model itself. Further, additional discussion is needed on the relative importance of each critical element so other communities can reap the benefit of experienced-based judgment. In the past year, public discussion about the Charter Restart Model got far ahead of the reality, which is both grittier and more nuanced than communicated. Once generous claims about the model have been made, it is hard to walk back from poor performance. The project partners need to keep the long view in mind: how will the story be told in Year 5 and beyond?

# Introduction

This document presents the second year report of a five-year evaluation of the Scaling the New Orleans Charter Restart Model, an Investing in Innovation Validation grant from the United States Department of Education Office of Improvement and Innovation. The project is an ambitious strategy to utilize public and private influence to improve the quality of education in New Orleans using a dramatic and innovative approach to school turnarounds, the charter restart.

Charter restart involves transfer of operation of failing schools to charter school operators with strong records of performance or evidence of strong potential. The model rests on a legislative and regulatory foundation that allows for the closing of poorly performing schools and the transfer of the school entity to new providers. The new charter school operators then bring new staff and new models to the enterprise. Students from the previously failing school have first option to attend the new charter school if it serves the appropriate grades.

The ability to prove scalability in other communities is integral to the project goals. Thus, in addition to expanding the use of charter restarts in New Orleans, the project aims to replicate the approach in Tennessee and to disseminate the policies and program design to other communities.

**Partners in the i3 Charter Restart Project** The Scaling the Charter Restart Project in New Orleans is a coalition of public and private agencies that share a strong motivation to improve academic outcomes for students in New Orleans and elsewhere. The partnership is led by New Schools for New Orleans, a policy advocacy and school start-up organization started to support new school formation after Hurricane Katrina. The Recovery School District is also a key partner, as are a growing list of Charter Management Organizations (CMOs) who run and oversee the restart charter schools funded as part of this project. The Louisiana Department of Education and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) serving as charter school authorizer for the state play supportive roles but are not direct partners in the effort. In Tennessee, The Achievement School District (ASD) serves the dual roles of RSD and charter school authorizer. At present there is no private organization serving in the school start-up support role.

**CREDO Approach to the Evaluation** The Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford University was selected to serve as the project evaluator in January 2010. The evaluation spans four and one-half years. A project of such large scale and scope requires a comprehensive evaluation plan. The first several months of activity were devoted to putting final touches on the

evaluation plan before submitting it for review and approval by the overall i3 evaluator, Abt Associates.

The evaluation design incorporates three separate studies. The first study examines the organizational capacity of the project partners to undertake the necessary tasks and activities outlined in their project proposal. We use a variety of value-neutral mapping and data collection tools to understand the initial endowments of the partners and to track them over the course of the evaluation. Using detailed personal interviews and extensive observational data, the organizational capacity studies takes the vantage of a "critical friend" to share an independent assessment of how organizations gain and use resources to fulfill the goals of the Charter Restart project.

Using interviews and observations from twice-yearly school visits, we are studying how the implementation of the Charter Restart model works as i3-funded schools take their place in the community. We triangulate the implementation experience by simultaneously documenting opinions, activities and practices in the final year of the failing school's operation and the similar set of items in one of the existing schools previously opened by the i3 awarded CMO (referred to as the Flagship school, though in some cases it is not the original school that the CMO founded.). In this manner, we set out to see if the new i3 school brings the proven practices of the existing school to the new setting and creates meaningful changes in the daily fabric of school life.

Ultimately, the importance of implementation is the impact on student academic progress. While other outcomes are desirable and also covered in the study, the chief aim of the initiative is to improve the number of high quality seats in New Orleans and other communities that adopt the model. Thus, the third study of the evaluation is a quantitative analysis of student academic progress in i3 funded restart schools compared with a number of alternative scenarios. Because we focus on the academic growth of students from one year to the next, the impact study lags the other two studies by a year. This year, we present students from the three schools in the first i3 cohort in New Orleans. We will extend the analysis to include more NOLA schools and the first cohort in Tennessee in future reports.

**What's Covered in the Year 2 Report**  The report begins with the Impact Analysis on the students in the first cohort of i3-funded schools. It makes sense to take an initial step backward to recap the performance of the first cohort of schools in their first year (they are now completing their second year) before turning to a more contemporary analysis of the Charter Restart model program efforts.

The organizational capacity analysis follows with two main areas of focus. First, there are portions of the project design that had not been fully deployed at the time of the Year 1 Report, including Documenting and Disseminating the Model and Conducting School Reviews. During the second year of the i3 project, the decision was made to integrate a third area -- Develop a Robust Performance Tracking System -- into the School Visit data collection and to produce an integrated dashboard on the i3 schools. Each new focus area is assessed for initial starting capacities and then examined during its implementation phase.

We also provide an update to the critical areas of program function that comprised the bulk of the Year 1 Organizational Capacity Analysis: Operator Selection, CMO Capacity Development and Community Engagement.

In the final study of this report, the School Restart Implementation Analysis, the process, challenges and accomplishments of the i3 funded schools that began operations in 2012 are analyzed. This covers five schools in NOLA and three in Tennessee. We return to the three Cohort 1 schools to deepen our record of implementation data with updates of occurrences and impacts over the 2012-2013 school year. Based on the experience of nearly a dozen schools, we introduce our initial look at implementation fidelity between the CMO flagship school and the i3 funded school.

The final section of the report includes a discussion of the conclusions drawn from the data and implications for the future operations of the Scaling the New Orleans Charter Restart Model.

# Impact

The impact portion of the study is meant to determine whether student learning gains improved as a result of the i3 project.  Learning gains are judged based on school-level progress from year to year on the Louisiana LEAP and iLEAP tests, the evidence base for the state's school accountability program.  To measure impact for the first year of i3 school operation (2011-2012), we needed student enrollments and test scores from the end of the academic year.  Therefore, results in the impact study lag a year behind the implementation and organizational capacity evaluation strands.  This section, then, reports on the impacts for the first year of i3 Cohort 1 in New Orleans.  It is important to remember that Cohort 1 faced two unique challenges that may influence the results.  First, the time between award notification and the i3 school openings was shorter than for subsequent cohorts, which meant less time for school development and student recruitment activities. This shorter lead time was exacerbated by the second challenge, which concerned student recruitment.  The OneApp matching process to enroll students in NOLA public schools – both traditional and charter – was launched after the Cohort 1 i3 schools began their first year of operation.  Cohort 1 i3 schools, therefore, shouldered a heavier burden of student recruitment and enrollment in their first year than later cohorts.

**Data and Methods**  Data from the first three i3 schools in New Orleans is available for the impact study:  Clark, Gregory and Tubman.  Although this is a small group of schools, their data is adequate to begin to answer the research questions that will be addressed more fully in subsequent years.  Specifically, we want to know first about enrollment patterns:

1. **How many students from closing schools attend their i3 restart school?**  Answering this question requires comparing student enrollments from the closing school year to the first year of the i3 school.

2. **If they do not attend the i3 school, what happens to them?** Data from the first question and contextual information from the implementation team combine to address this second question.

When the enrollment patterns of students affected by the i3 project are understood, an additional research question is needed to determine the impacts: How do the learning gains of students affected by i3 compare to the learning gains of students not affected by i3?  This question addresses the student experience as a group and from the individual schools.

**Data** The data for the impact study was provided by the Louisiana Department of Education. It included school enrollment and test score information for each student. The table below lists the academic years included in this analysis with the corresponding and available test scores.

As shown, there were notable testing changes for high school grades from the 2009-2010 to the 2010-2011 school year. Grade 9 was tested for the last time in 2009-2010, the same year in which a passing score on the Graduate Exit Exam (GEE) was required for high school graduation. In 2010-2011, although some existing high school students were allowed to fulfill their testing requirement with GEE, End-of-Course exams (EOCs) were introduced as a replacement for the entering high school cohort. In addition to earning a passing score on a science or history EOC, which we do not cover in this study, students must pass one math and one English language arts exam to graduate with a regular high school diploma.[8]

**Table 5: Impact Study Universe for Year 1**

| Academic Year | 2009-2010 | 2010-2011 | 2011-2012 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Test Administration | Spring 2010 | Spring 2011 | Spring 2012 |
| Tests | Grades 3-9, GEE[a] | Grades 3-8, EOCs[b] | Grades 3-8, EOCs[b] |
| Growth Period | | 2011 | 2012 |
| i3 Cohort | | Cohort 1 Closing Schools | Cohort 1, Year 1 i3 Schools |

[a]GEE is the Graduate Exit Exam with math and English language arts components.
[b]EOCs are End-of-Course exams in Algebra I, Geometry, English II and English III.

**Methods** To identify the students affected by i3, the enrollment records for the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 school years were utilized. The 2010-2011 school year corresponds to the last year of operations at the RSD direct-run schools that were closed in anticipation of being transferred to i3 operators in the 2011-2012 school year. Every student who was enrolled for more than 80 days at one of the three Cohort 1 closing schools in the 2010-2011 school year was included. Similarly, in the 2011-2012 school year, students were assigned to the three i3 schools if they were enrolled in one for more than 80 days of the school year. In both school years, each student in New Orleans who was not affected by the i3 project was

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[8]Louisiana Department of Education. End-of-Course Tests.
http://www.louisianabelieves.com/assessment/end-of-course-tests

assigned to the school at which he or she was enrolled for the longest time during the school year, as long as he or she was enrolled more than 80 days at that school.

The requirement that a student be enrolled for more than 80 days at a school in order to be assigned to that school struck a balance between two competing issues. On the one hand, we wanted to maximize the number of students who were assigned to schools in New Orleans and therefore available for inclusion in the study as either affected or unaffected students. On the other hand, however, schools deserved to be assessed on the basis of students enrolled for a substantial portion of the school year, especially if they were affected by i3, before ascribing their learning growth to that school. The "more than 80 days" criterion allowed a school assignment to be made for nearly 97 percent of New Orleans students.

To obtain control observations to serve as the counterfactual in our analysis, students with school assignments who were affected by i3 (i.e., "case" students) were matched with identical students in New Orleans who were unaffected by i3 (i.e., "control" students). This matching process is visualized in Figure 2. A detailed description of the process can be found in Appendix A.

**Figure 2: Virtual Control Record Process**

Case Student

Control Students

MATCHING VARIABLES:
✓ Race/ethnicity
✓ Gender
✓ English proficiency
✓ Lunch status
✓ Special education status
✓ Grade level

MATCHING VARIABLE:
✓ Test scores from $t_0$

Provide List of Potential Match Control Students

Find Matches Based on Demographic Variables

Eliminate Matches Who Attend i3 Schools

Match Test Scores

Virtual Control Records

Creating control observations for this study presents atypical challenges. The New Orleans education market is unique in that the vast majority of students attending public school in the city attend a charter school. Most of the remaining traditional public schools (TPS) are under the jurisdiction of the Recovery School District (RSD)

because they are very low-performing and are likely to be closed in the next three years. Therefore, it was necessary to create two control pools against which the academic progress of i3-affected students would be compared. The first control pool was comprised solely of the RSD TPS students in New Orleans, referred to as RSD TPS. Each of the closing schools was a TPS under RSD, so this comparison will give insight into how the closing and i3 school impacts compare with other TPS in New Orleans. The second control pool was comprised of all students in the New Orleans Recovery School District (i.e., students from any RSD charter or TPS in New Orleans), referred to as All RSD. This comparison enables a view into where the closing and i3 school impacts fit into the overall NOLA education market. The proportions of case students for whom controls could be found from each match pool are displayed in Table 6 below.

**Table 6:  Student Match Rates by School and Control Pool**

| Cohort 1 School | Math | | Reading | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | RSD TPS | All RSD | RSD TPS | All RSD |
| Clark | 68% | 76% | 67% | 74% |
| Gregory | 86% | 95% | 90% | 95% |
| Tubman | 84% | 92% | 85% | 91% |
| **Overall** | **83%** | **91%** | **86%** | **92%** |

**Cohort 1 Student Enrollments**  To ground the analysis that follows, we present the student enrollments for the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 at the three i3 Cohort 1 schools.  These are shown in Table 7 below.  The students from all three schools are remarkably similar demographically.  Nearly all students are black (98%) and qualify for free or reduced-priced meals (95%).  About 12 percent of the student population receives special education services and less than one percent are English Language Learners.

**Table 7:  Student Enrollments at Cohort 1 Schools**

| Cohort 1 School | 2010-2011 Closing Grades | 2010-2011 Enrollment[a] | 2011-2012 i3 Grades | 2011-2012 Enrollment[a] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Clark | 9-12 | 366 | 9, 10-12 | 309 |
| Gregory | 4-8 | 268 | K | 88 |
| Tubman | K-8 | 498 | K-8 | 390 |

[a] Enrolled at the school for more than 80 days.

Of the three Cohort 1 schools, Tubman and Clark had the same grade configuration in the Closing school and i3 school incarnations.  It is notable that Clark served the same grades in both periods, but in the i3 school, the 9th grade was run separately from grades 10-12. There was no grade configuration overlap between the Gregory closing and i3 schools.

The grade configuration and enrollment numbers in Table 7 reveal that the students who attended the Closing school do not perfectly overlap with the students who attended the corresponding i3 school.  In fact, as seen in Figure 3 below, students affected by i3 can be grouped into six categories:

- **Persisters**: These students attended both the Closing school and its i3 counterpart.  When various approaches to "turn-around" schools are discussed, these are the students that are the target of consideration.

- **New Entrants**: The students who attended the i3 school in its first year but did not attend the Closing school.

- **Opt-out**: Students who attended the Closing school, had the option of attending the new i3 school, and chose not to enroll there.

- **Flux**: These are the students who attended the Closing school and for whom some special accommodation was made when they were displaced by the i3 school due to a grade configuration mismatch.  In

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the Gregory situation, 22 students were given a seat at a KIPP middle school that was affiliated with the i3 school run by KIPP.

- **Ineligible**: Students who attended the Closing school but were not able to attend the i3 school due to a grade configuration mismatch and for whom no special accommodation was made.

- **Aged Out**: The students who attended the Closing school in its highest grade level and were therefore going to enroll in a different school the following year regardless of the i3 project.

**Figure 3:  Cohort 1 Student Categories**
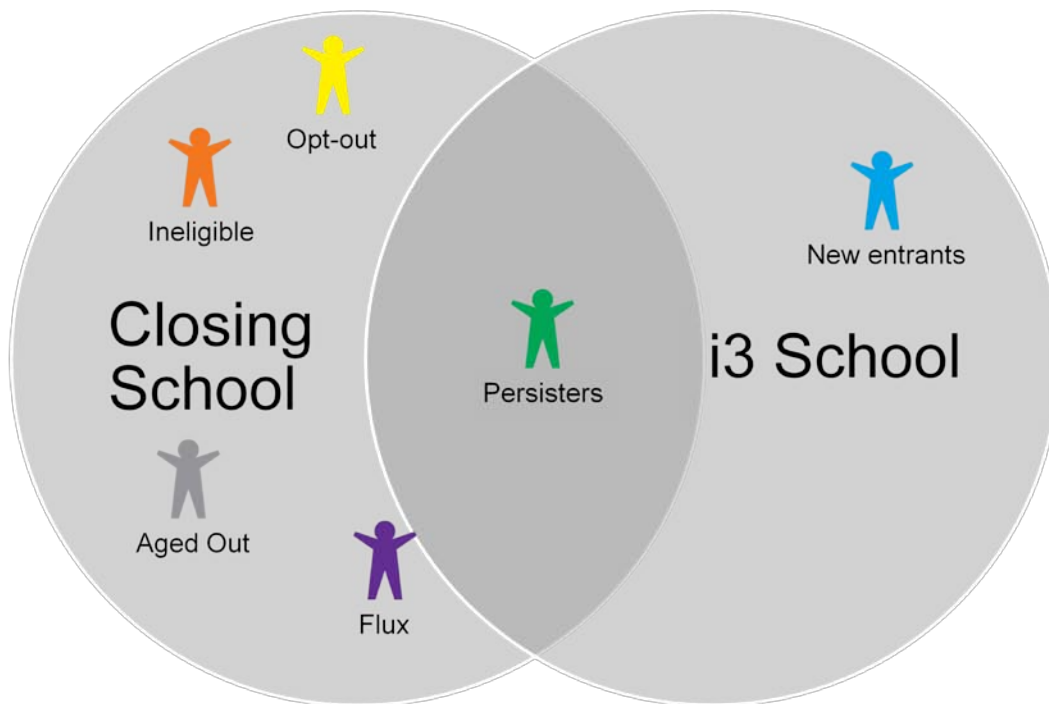


For the counts and calculations below, Closing school students are all the students who attended the Closing school in its final school year, i.e., Persisters, Opt-out, Flux, Ineligible and Aged Out.  For the first year of the i3 school operation, all students except Aged Out students are counted by individual category.  One aggregated category, i3 Attendees, is sometimes used and includes all the students who attended the i3 school in its first year (Persisters and New Entrants).

Table 8 below displays the breakdown of students by school and category.[9] Since the categories were created post-hoc to account for all the different possible ways a student's enrollment could be affected by i3, some of the cells in the table are empty, indicating that a closing school did not have students who fit a particular scenario. For example, Gregory had no Persisters or Opt-out students because there was no grade-level overlap between the closing and i3 schools. Tubman and Clark, as full restarts, had no Flux or Ineligible students. The result of these various scenarios is that each category except the Closing group is dominated by only one of the three Cohort 1 schools.

**Table 8: Cohort 1 Student Enrollments by School and Category**

| Cohort 1 School | Before i3 | After i3 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Closing | Persisters | New Entrants | Opt-out | Flux | Ineligible |
| Clark | 366 | 117 | 192 | 54 | 0 | 0 |
| Gregory | 268 | 0 | 88 | 0 | 22 | 128 |
| Tubman | 498 | 142 | 248 | 223 | 0 | 0 |
| **Totals** | **1132** | **259** | **528** | **277** | **22** | **128** |

The enrollments numbers show that about one-third of the students who attended the i3 schools in their first year came from the Closing school. This proportion is the ratio of Persisters divided by the total enrollment for the i3 schools (Persisters and New Entrants). This level of re-enrollment is the result of the large proportion of Tubman students who chose not to attend the i3 school and the Gregory restart school shifting grade spans, leaving all prior students unable to attend the i3 school. Because of the varied ways in which students were affected by the i3 project, it became apparent that we needed to determine the learning gains for all case students regardless of category or attendance at the i3 school. That meant finding matching control records for them.

For i3-affected students with two consecutive years of test results were between 83 percent and 92 percent, there were quite a few students who did not have the required two test scores, as can be seen in Table 9 below.[10] Two reasons account for this phenomenon: 1) The aforementioned testing changes in the high school

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[9] The table shows the total number of students enrolled at the Closing school in its final year. The Closing column includes Persisters, Opt-out, Flux, Ineligible and Aged Out. Aged Out students are not tracked in the after i3 time period.

[10] Counts in this table are from the match process conducted for math using the All RSD match pool.

grades, and 2) the testing regimen beginning in grade 3, which means that grade 4 is the earliest students can obtain their second test score. The result is a low proportion of enrolled students with matches in all but the Ineligible and Flux student categories.

**Table 9: Cohort 1 Students with Growth Scores and Matches**

| Cohort 1 School | Before i3 | After i3 | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Closing | Persisters | New Entrants | Opt-out | Flux | Ineligible |
| **Clark** | | | | | | |
| Growth scores | 61 | * | 48 | * | N/A | N/A |
| Matches | 43 | * | 41 | * | N/A | N/A |
| **Gregory** | | | | | | |
| Growth scores | 171 | N/A | 0 | N/A | 18 | 99 |
| Matches | 161 | N/A | 0 | N/A | 17 | 96 |
| **Tubman** | | | | | | |
| Growth scores | 187 | 79 | 97 | 96 | N/A | N/A |
| Matches | 172 | 76 | 86 | 90 | N/A | N/A |
| **Totals** | | | | | | |
| Enrollment | 1132 | 259 | 528 | 277 | 22 | 128 |
| Growth Scores | 419 | 79 | 145 | 96 | 18 | 99 |
| Matches | 376 | 76 | 127 | 90 | 17 | 96 |
| **% Enrolled with Matches** | 33% | 29% | 24% | 32% | 77% | 75% |

*Cell size is less than five and therefore redacted.

N/A: Not Applicable. There were no enrolled students in this category.

NOTE: Low percentages of enrolled students with matches are due to the low numbers of enrolled students with test scores in both closing year and restart year and not the matching methodology.

**Student-level Results** In this section, we will examine the impacts on student learning for the Closing students and i3 Attendees (i.e., the Persisters and New Entrants combined) as well as those for the rest of the categories in Table 9. It is important to keep in mind that though students in all categories were affected by i3, each category except the Closing group is dominated by only one of the three Cohort 1 schools. However, as the project adds new cohorts, continuing to track enrollments and measure impacts for students in these categories will provide a fuller picture of the i3 project's outcomes.

Successful charter restarts are at the heart of the i3 project. To determine whether the restarts met with success in their first year of operation, we compare the learning gains of the Cohort 1 i3 attendees to two different groups of student peers. The bars in Figure 4 present the results of both comparisons. We examine academic growth in math and reading separately. In the first comparison, the baseline is comprised of the learning gains of identical students enrolled in RSD Traditional Public Schools (TPS) in NOLA. This comparison is appropriate because the i3 closing schools were RSD traditional public schools. The second comparison uses a baseline group of students from All RSD in New Orleans – both traditional and charter schools. This comparison provides insight into Cohort 1 student growth relative to the NOLA average for identical students.

**Figure 4: Cohort 1, Year 1 Impact for i3 Attendees Against Two Comparison Groups**
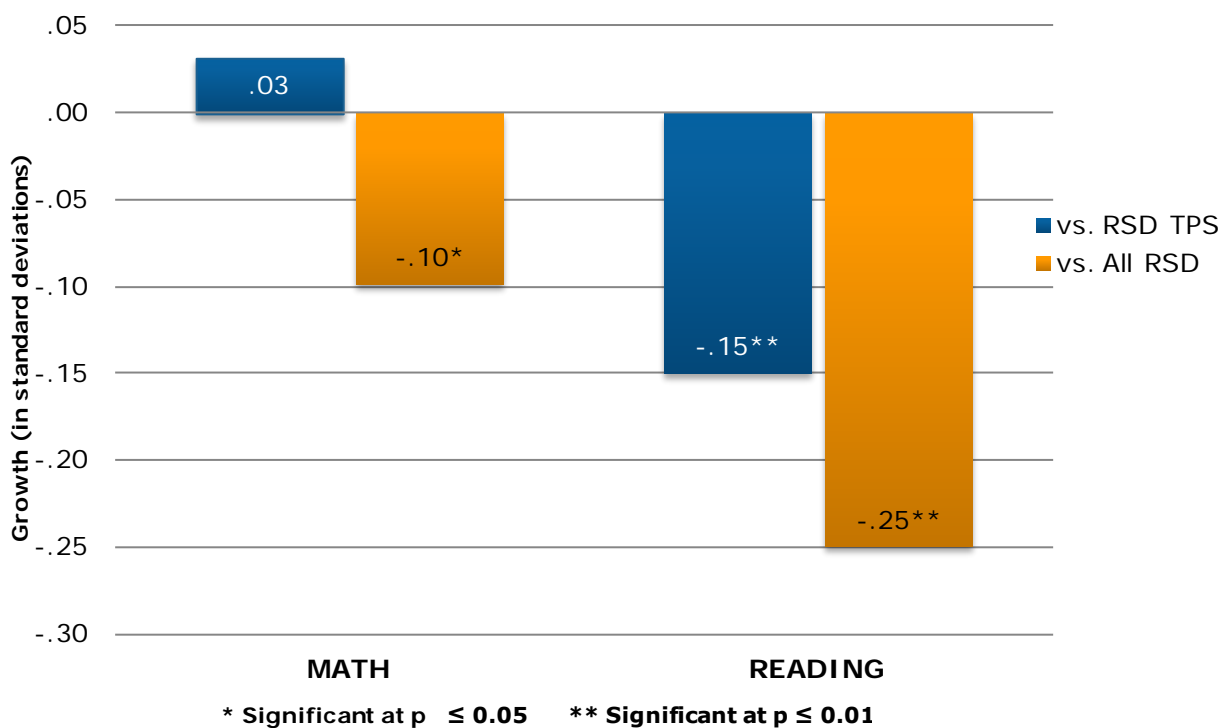


The first comparison, i3 attendees vs. RSD TPS, is shown in blue above. The math learning gains for i3 attendees were the same as those for RSD TPS students. In reading, however, learning gains for i3 attendees were significantly lower than their RSD TPS peers' growth.

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The second comparison is shown in orange above for i3 attendees vs. All RSD. Against this baseline, the i3 attendees' learning gains were significantly lower in both math and reading than that of their counterparts.

Because i3 attendees are comprised of both Persisters and New Entrants, two groups with different prior-year school experiences, the Year 1 impacts may also differ. Table 10 below displays the results separately for these two groups of students as well as for the other student categories that were discussed in the Cohort 1 Student Enrollments section above. The findings are presented by comparison group for math and reading.

**Table 10: Cohort 1, Year 1 Impact by Student Category**

| Test, Baseline of Comparison | Before i3 | After i3 | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Closing | Persisters | New Entrants | Opt-out | Flux | Ineligible |
| Math, RSD TPS | .10* | -.03 | .07 | -.01 | .40* | -.10 |
| Math, All RSD | -.02 | -.17* | -.06 | -.21** | .20 | -.21** |
| Reading, RSD TPS | .11** | -.23** | -.08 | -.01 | .22 | -.22** |
| Reading, All RSD | .00 | -.36** | -.16* | -.16* | .15 | -.33** |

*Significant at p≤.05, **Significant at p≤.01

Closing school students had positive learning gains in both math and reading compared to RSD TPS. Learning gains for Closing school students were similar to their All RSD counterparts in both subjects. Of the remaining categories of students, only the Flux students had significantly positive impacts (and only in math compared to RSD TPS). Students who actually attended an i3 school (Persisters and New Entrants) did not have significantly positive outcomes. This means that positive impacts for the first year of i3 were realized only for one small group of students who did not attend an i3 school – the Gregory students who were given spots in a high-performing KIPP school that was affiliated with the Gregory i3 school. These extraordinary placement efforts were taken because of the special circumstances around that particular restart. The Charter Restart Model did not have a system in place for such special placements at high-performing schools in the first year of the project. However, the OneApp process that was implemented

citywide in the second year of the project does prioritize placements for students displaced by school closures.

**Results by School** Because the three i3 schools each had a unique restart configuration, discussing the results by school can provide additional insight that accounts for the context of the restart. We are able to do this for Tubman and Clark, since these schools serve the same grade levels as their closing schools. Gregory cannot be included because the i3 school enrolled only kindergarten students and therefore did not have any tested students in its first year of operation.

**Figure 5:  Tubman Closing and i3 School Impacts**



* Significant  at p≤ 0.05     ** Significant  at p ≤ 0.01
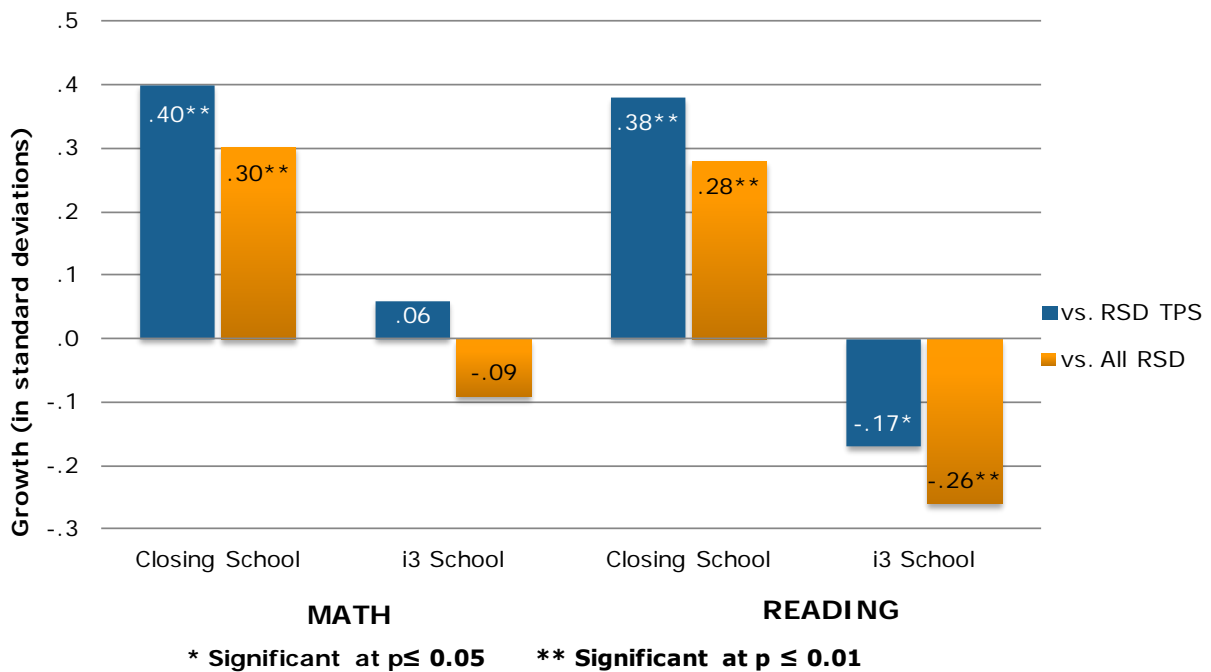
The Tubman impacts on student learning gains in its closing year and then its first year of operation as an i3 school are shown above.  Consistent with the findings from the Implementation team, Tubman's impacts in its final year were significant, positive, and large in both reading and math whether compared to peers from RSD TPS or All RSD.  The impacts for the i3 school's first year, in contrast, were mixed. Math growth was statistically similar to RSD TPS and All RSD peers, while reading

growth for Tubman i3 students was significantly lower than that of their counterparts in RSD TPS and All RSD.[11]

Multiple strands of information must be considered to gain a full understanding of the Closing and i3 school impacts for Clark. First, as detailed in the Data and Methods section above, the testing regimen for Louisiana high school students underwent a transition year in the middle of our data window (2010-2011). This transition created a shift in the high school grades that are commonly tested and also reduced the probability that students would test in consecutive high school grades in the same subject area, as seen in Table 11 below. The upshot is that the impacts of the Closing school are mainly based on grade 9 to GEE growth scores in math and reading (for 10th graders), while the impacts of the i3 school are primarily based on grade 8 to Algebra I growth in math only (for 9th graders).

**Table 11: Clark Enrollment and Testing Pattern Changes**

| | Enrollment | Tested | Growth Score | Matched |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Math** | | | | |
| Closing School Grade 9 | 113 | 18 | 15 | 11 |
| Closing School Grade 10 | 76 | 51 | 36 | 31 |
| i3 School Grade 9 | 108 | 63 | 45 | 40 |
| i3 School Grade 10 | 76 | 49 | 5 | * |
| | | | | |
| **Reading** | | | | |
| Closing School Grade 9 | 113 | * | * | 0 |
| Closing School Grade 10 | 76 | 49 | 35 | 31 |
| i3 School Grade 9 | 108 | 7 | * | 0 |
| i3 School Grade 10 | 76 | 45 | 0 | 0 |

*Cell size is less than five and therefore redacted.

The testing regimen transition had further ripple effects, as seen in Table 12 below. The matched students from the Closing school had slightly lower starting scores than those who did not receive matches; this is true for both math and reading. However, the situation is reversed in the i3 school's first year; FirstLine Clark students who received matches had higher starting scores than their unmatched

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[11] A higher-than-normal proportion of Tubman students scored at the Basic level in 2010-2011 and then fell to the Far Below Basic level in 2011-2012. A small proportion of students have this pattern in all NOLA, so we are unable to determine which of the suspicious Tubman records were legitimate. When all the suspect records are excluded from the analysis, the impacts change only slightly and the interpretation of the findings (e.g., statistical significance) is unaffected.

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classmates. These matched-student differences amplify the already-large starting score differences between the Closing and i3 schools. Starting score differences of this magnitude show that student groups at the Closing and i3 schools are dissimilar on an important dimension, and this could lead to growth differences that would be unrelated to school differences.

**Table 12: Starting Scores for Matched and Unmatched Students at Clark**

| Student Group | Math | | Reading | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Closing School | i3 School | Closing School | i3 School |
| Matched | -0.97 | -0.25 | -1.04 | N/A |
| Unmatched | -0.88 | -0.66 | -0.94 | * |
| **Total** | **-0.94** | **-0.32** | **-1.02** | |

*Cell size is less than five and therefore redacted.
N/A: Not Applicable. There were no students in this category.

Yet another consequence of the testing regimen transition was the extreme difference in the absolute growth of the VCR comparison groups for the Closing and i3 school incarnations of Clark, shown in Table 13 below. The growth for Closing school VCRs was very positive in both subjects, while growth for the i3 school VCRs was negative. This finding has two implications. The first is that the testing regimen faced by the Closing school students and their peers was likely much easier to achieve high growth than the newer testing regimen. Secondly, the VCR average growth is essentially the standard against which the case students are measured. Therefore, the Closing school students appear to have a more stringent standard than the i3 school students.

**Table 13: Average VCR Growth for Clark Closing and i3 schools**

| VCR Group | Math | | Reading | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Closing School | i3 School | Closing School | i3 School |
| RSD TPS | 0.26 | -0.48 | 0.37 | N/A |
| All RSD | 0.33 | -0.17 | 0.45 | N/A |

N/A: Not Applicable. There were no students in this category.

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The ability to compare the impacts found for Clark's Closing and i3 schools is limited by the testing changes. It is impossible to project how the leadership at the Closing school would have adapted to the testing changes. However, determining the impact of each school incarnation is still useful if considered in the context of the changes.

**Figure 6: Clark Closing and i3 School Impacts Against Two Comparison Groups**



\* Significant at p≤ 0.05      \*\* Significant at p ≤ 0.01
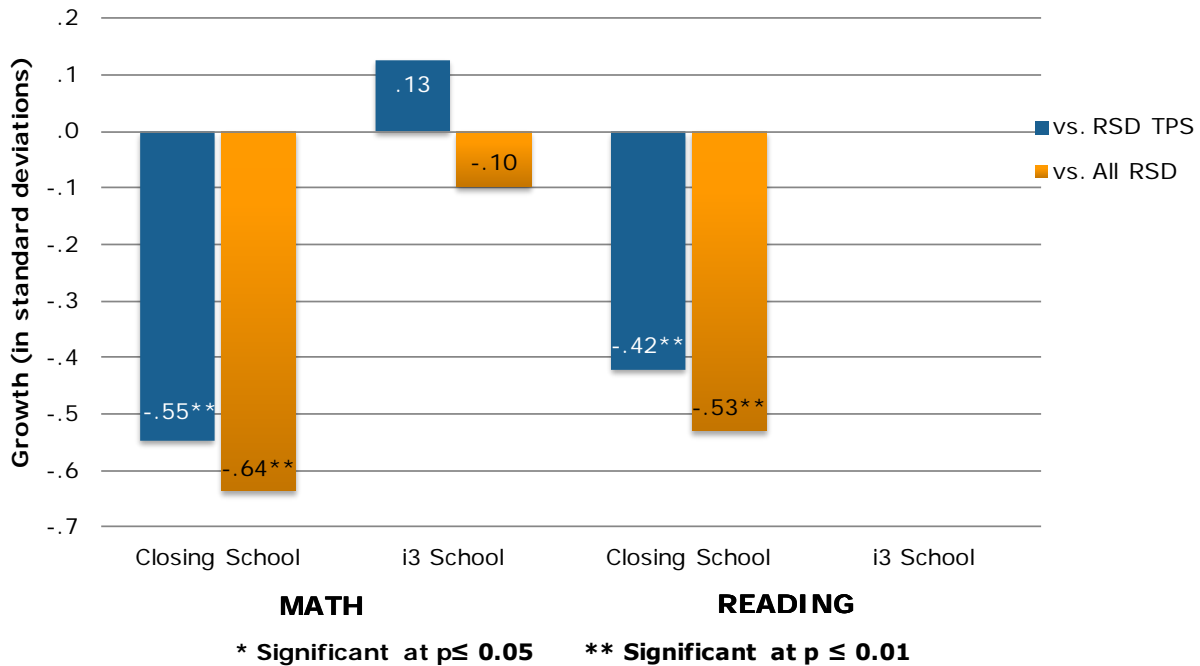
In its closing year, Clark students' average learning gains in math were significantly lower than the learning gains of their peers, regardless of whether the comparison is limited to RSD TPS or includes All RSD. As with math, the Clark Closing school students had substantially lower learning gains in reading than their peers in both comparison groups, and these differences were statistically significant.

The i3 school math results are not statistically different than the comparison students from RSD TPS or All RSD. As explained earlier, reading results are not available for the i3 Clark school. The math findings indicate that the i3 school had improved impacts compared to the Closing school. While the Closing school impacts were lower than for their New Orleans peers, the i3 school impacts were on par with those of their peers.

**Conclusion**

With only three schools, and different restart experiences among them, it is premature to draw definitive conclusions about the effectiveness of the restart effort in creating stronger learning outcomes for students. It bears noting, however, that these first signals do not begin in a positive direction, so while additional years of experience in these schools, as well as the experience in later restarts, may eventually point to overall positive performance, the present impact analysis shows effects that must be overcome if an overall positive result is to be achieved.

One of the apparent influences behind the findings is that the Charter Restart Model was implemented differently for one of the three Cohort 1 schools. Tubman and Clark were full restarts, but Gregory was not. At Gregory, the i3 school began with kindergarten and will grow one grade per year. Thus, our scope of study for the Impact Study must consider those students who were served by an i3 school and those students from the closing schools that, by circumstance, were not served by the i3 school.

The majority of students who attended the closing schools did not attend the i3 school. This fact, in and of itself, deviates from the popular conception of restarts, though in the present analysis, it would be hard to hope that all students in the closing schools received the same subsequent outcomes as did the student who did actually persist. The immediate disposition of student outcomes for the students touched by i3 has many paths but a consistent result. Those students who were Ineligible to attend the i3 school by virtue of changes in the grade configurations between closing and i3 schools had the worst learning gains of all the student categories analyzed in math and reading. Their results were significantly lower than their RSD TPS counterparts in reading and their peers from All RSD in both subjects. For the students who did attend the i3 schools, there does not appear to be widespread improvement in the quality of schooling since the Charter Restart Model was implemented at the three locations. These findings are limited in scope for two reasons, however. First, the Gregory i3 school enrolled only kindergarten students in its first year, and is therefore unable to contribute to the impact results for a few more years. Second, the changes in the high school testing regimen make the Clark math findings somewhat ambiguous and completely prevent impact measurements in reading. However, the Clark math findings do indicate an improvement from below-average student growth in the Closing school to average student growth in the i3 school.

Given the data limitations and with only one growth period of data, it is not possible to generalize these results to determine whether the Charter Restart Model will

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ultimately prove successful. In these three instances, however, the impact findings suggest that school closure followed by a new school growing one grade at a time can lead to unintended poor student outcomes. The students displaced by this model (i.e., Ineligible students), even in a dynamic education market like New Orleans, experienced a significant learning loss compared to their peers in the academic year following their displacement. This may only be a Year 1 problem, however. Concern about displaced students led to action with the advent of the OneApp process administered by RSD for the 2012-2013 school year. The algorithm used by OneApp gives displaced students priority in school placements that is second only to sibling preference. Because of this, impact results for subsequent cohorts of displaced students may be more positive. What remains to be seen, however, is whether parents of these students have enough information to choose better-performing schools without additional supports.

The OneApp process with priority for displaced students is just one of several changes documented by the Implementation and Organizational Capacity teams in the Spring of 2013. These changes show that the Charter Restart Model program continues to evolve in response to new information. This evolution may lead to greater success for later cohorts.

# Organizational Capacity

The study of organizational capacity is one part of a multiple methods evaluation of the Scaling the New Orleans Charter Restart Model, funded as part of the i3 program of the Office of Innovation and Improvement at the US Department of Education. Unlike other reform proposals submitted under i3, this ambitious proposal is not designed to incrementally improve upon existing structural elements within the educational environment; it is designed to create the essential elements of a Charter Restart District, changing the nature of the relationships between educational providers, governmental agencies, support organizations and the broader community of students, parents and key stakeholders.

The project is designed to achieve three primary goals:

1. Successfully turn around 19 low performing schools in New Orleans and 8 in Memphis and Nashville using high quality charter operators.

2. At the end of the grant period, a "permanent turnaround infrastructure" will continue to turn around the bottom 5% of schools annually utilizing only per pupil funding and existing federal charter grant funds.

3. The New Orleans Charter Restart Model will be codified and disseminated widely (RSD and NSNO, 2010)

The i3 proposal included a number of specific responsibilities the authors felt were necessary to achieve the goals of the project. In total, CREDO identified nine explicit and implicit responsibilities necessary to achieve the three major goals listed in their proposal. These are documented in Table 14 below, displayed with the goal to which they are connected.

**Table 14: Scaling the Charter Restart Model**

| Three Levels of Inquiry | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Execution** | **The Partnership** | **Continuous Improvement** |
| **Goals** | **Responsibilities** | | |
| **Goal 1**<br>Successfully turn around 27 failing schools in NOLA & TN. | 1 - Recruit school leaders and incubate their school for one year prior to opening.<br><br>2 - Conduct selection process for NOLA and TN CMOs/charter schools.<br><br>3 – Efficiently and effectively execute sub-grants to CMOs to augment their central infrastructure.<br><br>5 – Conduct community engagement to foster support for turnarounds and educate the community on charter schools.<br><br>6 - Identify failing schools and monitor turnarounds using a robust and transparent data system. | | |
| **Goal 2**<br>Create a "permanent turnaround infrastructure" to sustain restart process. | 4 - Enhance CMO efficiencies and help streamline/consolidate back office infrastructure.<br><br>5 – Conduct community engagement to foster support for turnarounds and educate the community on charter schools.<br><br>7 - Conduct twice annual school reviews to monitor performance and convene charter leaders. | | |
| **Goal 3**<br>Scale strategy by codifying and replicating The New Orleans Charter Restart Model | 8 - Provide technical assistance to districts outside NOLA looking to implement the *New Orleans Charter Restart Model*.<br><br>9 - Document the New Orleans Charter Restart Model and disseminate widely. | | |

**Defining Organizational Capacity**    Organizational capacity refers to the capabilities, knowledge and resources needed in order to be effective (GEN-GEO, 2000).  Much of the reform dialogue presumes that where the will exists, capacity to execute follows and change occurs.  The "structural" approach to education reform outlined above presumes that partner organizations have the ability to marshal the necessary resources to execute the required transitions.  However, the role of organizational capacity in program or policy design and execution is a largely unexplored question with significant implications for the success of reform efforts. The critical relationship between endowments, plans, strategies and tactics in producing successful reform efforts is largely overlooked in the general discourse on education reform.    CREDO's approach to examining organizational capacity was

developed in detail in our first year report; a summary of our approach is presented below.

The concept of organizational capacity has migrated from the corporate arena to the public sector.  The non-profit literature has swelled in recent years with mentions of organizational or sector capacity to fulfill their missions.  As an illustration, the online archive of the Non-Profit Quarterly has over 2400 articles addressing capacity.  The literature contains many different implied definitions of capacity, ranging from common vision to discretionary resources to the change in impact that accompanies dramatic changes in the environment.  It seems much like the Blind Men and the Elephant, that what is perceived has much to do with where one starts.  From a social science perspective, such differences in frames of reference make it hard to measure capacity across settings and circumstances and to reach a common basis for conclusions and generalizations.

Definitional differences aside, the direct applicability of measures of organizational capacity used in business to the non-profit sector has been questioned (Guthrie, K. et al, 2005).  For some, the disconnect centers on differences in key values.  For example, the mission to serve at-risk populations may be accompanied by beliefs that inclusion of local human capital enhances the integrity of the program, even if hiring community members requires more training and development than hiring elsewhere.  In other cases, outcomes may not be measurable, as in the case of youth development programs that focus on both academic impacts (which can be measured, at least in part) and fostering a cohesive peer leader culture (which is more problematic).  In the emerging world of K-12 systems-level transformation, a major problem lies in the scarcity of experience with reform efforts, making it difficult to gauge the adequacy of effort or to know if the observed impacts are too little, too much or something else.

To overcome the challenge of multiple frames of reference discussed above, there have been several attempts to construct a paradigm for organizational capacity for the non-profit sector.  We find that the Organizational Capacity Framework, developed by McKinsey and Co. for Venture Philanthropy Partners (VPP), provides a coherent conceptual model that can be applied across a wide range of settings. We present the Organizational Capacity Framework elements in Table 15 below.

**Table 15:  The McKinsey and Company Organizational Capacity Framework**

| Framework Element | Description of the Element |
| --- | --- |
| Aspirations | An organization's mission, vision, and overarching goals, which collectively articulate its common sense of purpose and direction |
| Strategy | The coherent set of actions and programs aimed at fulfilling the organization's overarching goals |
| Organizational Skills | The sum of the organization's capabilities, including such things (among others) as performance measurement, planning, resource management, and external relationship building |
| Human Resources | The collective capabilities, experiences, potential and commitment of the organization's board, management team, staff, and volunteers |
| Systems and Infrastructure | The organization's planning, decision making, knowledge management, and administrative systems, as well as the physical and technological assets that support the organization |
| Organizational Structure | The combination of governance, organizational design, interfunctional coordination, and individual job descriptions that shapes the organization's legal and management structure |
| Culture | The connective tissue that binds together the organization, including shared values and practices, behavior norms, and most important, the organization's orientation towards performance |

The strength of the Framework lies in the applied and concrete details within each functional category.  Specifying the dimensions that make up each grouping does two things,  First, it creates a functional map of activities within each group that contribute to results; this allows research over time to inform whether these are the correct factors and how they are weighted in importance.  Second, the approach provides the opportunity to examine the particular ways in which organizations allocate and manage their resources.  This permits comparisons across organizations -- for example, what electives high schools choose -- and to see how these choices interact.  The first advances the science of organizational development and the second informs the science of public policy effectiveness.

Our goals in conducting an organizational capacity study are two-fold: we want to provide actionable feedback to the program team about their strategies and tactics as an interim check on their likelihood of overall project success. We also have a more academic interest in identifying functional areas or institutional habits that have a discernible impact on the program team's effectiveness, either positive or negative. Thus, our choice reflected the desire to be fully grounded in empirical observation and concrete data but also to provide direction in terms of which functional areas the program team might need to devote additional attention. Dividing the abstract construct of "capacity" into discrete and applied tactical areas allowed the research team -- and hopefully the program team -- to more clearly see gaps and potential points of leverage.

Over the course of the evaluation project, CREDO will develop an organizational capacity rubric to map more precisely the relationship between specific aspects of organizational capacity and subsequent outcomes. Once sufficient data on organizational capacity and school and student performance has been collected, our rubric will allow CREDO to tie specific measures of capacity to student outcomes and determine which aspects of capacity drive student growth. CREDO's evaluation of organizational capacity in next year's report will be the first to examine multiple years of observational data in both New Orleans and Tennessee. This should present enough movement in our measures of capacity to begin to make both longitudinal and "between district" comparisons of quantitative data.

**CREDO Organizational Capacity Analytic Framework** Once the approach to mapping organizational capacity was set, it became feasible to structure the way in which organizational capacity would be analyzed for this evaluation. The Scaling the Charter Restart Model project exemplifies the challenges of assessing capacity in the public sector. The underlying Theory of Change includes foundational factors not under the control of the project, such as the legitimate authority to close failing schools and continued support from legislators and regulators. Actions today may not have any discernible effects for years, making it difficult to create a reasonable evaluation time frame. Finally, considerable resources are being devoted to diffuse or largely unobserved activities -- information campaigns, community engagement or "quiet diplomacy" may have specific objectives and related tactical activity, but are hard to track on any systematic basis. The development of CREDO's organizational capacity framework is explained in detail elsewhere (AEFP, 2012). A visual representation of the framework can be seen in Figure 7 below, followed by an explanation of the most significant components.

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**Figure 7: Analytic Framework**
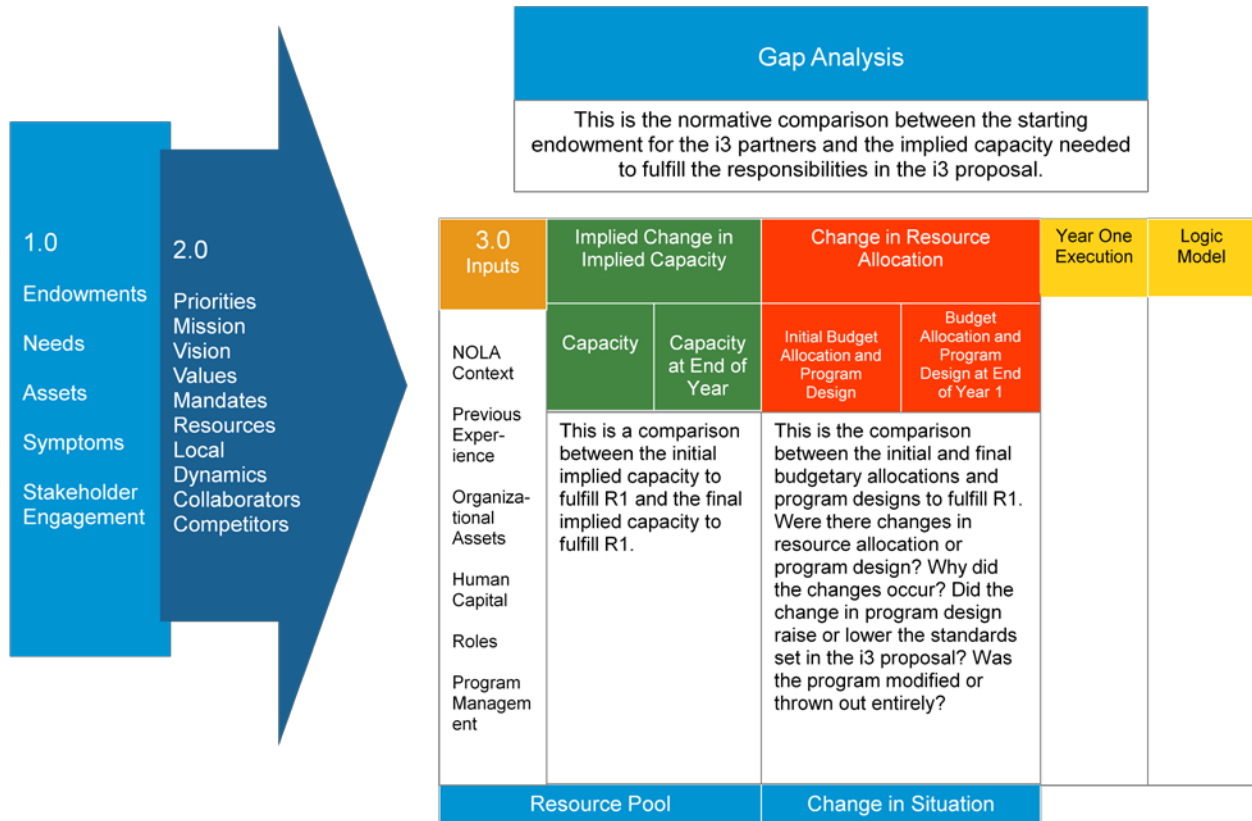


**Inputs**   To identify the impact of the i3 project we must first understand the context in which i3 is operating.   These include institutional factors, such as the existence of an objective and well-known school review mechanism known as the SPS and a district with the authority to close failing schools.   Another important contextual factor in New Orleans is the relatively robust human capital sector, bolstered by the attention paid to it by national operators like New Leaders for New Schools and TeachNOLA, the local TFA affiliate.   As mentioned earlier, the reputation of the i3 partners, the impact of previous education reforms and the lingering effects of Hurricane Katrina must be considered as well.

**Implied Change vs. Implied Capacity**   The next step in our analysis was to identify the level of capacity implied in the i3 proposal.   In other words, what have the partners committed themselves to doing, and what resources do they have to do it? A major challenge when applying analytic frameworks to the examination of a concept as multifaceted as organizational capacity is the danger to get lost in theory and minutiae.   To avoid this, CREDO searched for a consistent process with which to connect the theoretical aspects of capacity outlined above to the "day to day" operations of the i3 partners.   Our selection of the McKinsey Framework

allowed us to factor the implied and necessary capacity of the i3 partners in each functional area.  It stands to reason that the demands of the Charter Restart Model would require enhancements in many of the functional areas.  This "gap analysis" serves as a guide for assessing the actual changes in capacity that are discerned through interviews and observation.

**Change in Capacity**  After the "gap analysis" comparing the starting endowments of the partnership and the capacity implied in their proposal, we next examined how their capacity changed throughout the first year.   For example, if the partnership recognized that they had committed themselves to execute a responsibility they weren't capable of fulfilling, how did they respond to this?  Did they simply alter or abandon that responsibility, or did they add capacity to their team through the reallocation of staff or the hiring of additional employees?  Either approach would work to reduce the gap, but they could have drastically different consequences on the ultimate success in achieving the three major goals of the project.

**Initial vs. End of Year Design**  The next step in the execution of the analytic framework involved an examination of how the program designs evolved over the course of the first two years.  Initial program designs are necessarily written from a somewhat naive perspective given the uncertainty over factors beyond the control of its authors that will nonetheless impact execution of the project.   This is especially true of ambitious projects like the one evaluated here.  Deviation from original program design is therefore itself not a negative decision, any more than deviating from one's original strategy in a game of chess is inherently a negative decision.   The relevant considerations are; 1. "Could the situation that led to the deviation in program design have been foreseen?"  And 2, "Was the deviation from original program design done to improve execution of the project or for the benefit of the partners?"  Finally, after the program has been adopted, is it documented properly and incorporated into the Charter Restart Model moving forward to ensure implementation fidelity in other districts?

**Execution**  The final step in the analysis was to determine how successful the partnership was in executing the responsibilities they faced in the second year of implementation. This included an examination of three related components: First, were the partners successful in fulfilling the tasks necessary to achieve their second year goals? Second, did the manner in which each responsibility was executed have a deleterious impact on the other responsibilities or broader project goals? Third, was the execution conducted in a manner, and documented sufficiently, to allow future identification of which elements of the Charter Restart Model drive successful reform?  In other words, it is important that other districts considering which

elements of the Charter Restart Model to adopt not be confused between adopting the model as it exists on paper and the model as it was executed in reality.

In addition to program execution, CREDO examined two more aspects of organizational performance to ensure a comprehensive view of capacity was achieved. We looked at how the partners interacted with one another, including the frequency and usefulness of their internal communication processes and the manner in which roles and responsibilities were divided between the partners. CREDO also analyzed the processes put in place to ensure that lessons learned during the first two years would be used to improve execution in subsequent years of the project. What kind of program management practices did the partners use to ensure they operate as continuous learning organizations, and to ensure that information and knowledge capable of improving the process could be shared freely and efficiently?

CREDO's organizational capacity framework is also used to detect the emergence of new capacities, the development of which is strongly implied by the goals of the project. The existence of these "new capacities" also provides a foundation on which to test "real world" developments on the ground. For example, the notions of innovation and continuous improvement require the development of new capacities both within and outside the i3 partnership. Another capacity we would expect the i3 partners to address are the critical supply chains that feed the success of any endeavor and are especially important in school reform (e.g. high quality teachers, school leaders, support personnel, community education/parent support groups, etc.) The extent to which these capacities are developed provides insight into both the sophistication of the i3 partner's theory of action regarding systemic school reform ("How thoughtful were they?") as well as to the gap between school reform in theory and school reform in practice. Speaking generally, our evaluative standard of organizational capacity is essentially that which is needed to fulfill the goals of the project as originally designed.

The rest of the chapter proceeds as follows. First, CREDO discusses significant changes to the landscape in which the i3 project is operating. Next, the major findings for each responsibility are presented. Newly examined responsibilities are discussed first, followed by updated findings for the responsibilities covered in depth in the Year 1 report. It is important to note that these findings are based primarily on the second year of i3 implementation (with data collection ending in early 2013) and may not reflect on subsequent strategies, tactics or implementation, which will be reflected in later reports. Conclusions are presented next, followed by possible implications for the remaining years of the grant and beyond.

**Changes in Landscape**  The RSD underwent a significant realignment over the past year and is now situated more closely within the LA Department of Education. There has been turnover in the Superintendent position, the second time in as many years.  Staffing in the rest of RSD has stabilized, with key vacancies filled from within the organization; one notable exception was the hire of a well-respected professional from the community to continue the public communications work that the current RSD Superintendent began when he held a similar position.

In addition, the RSD adopted a computer-based application to handle the enrollment process for parents and students.  It was implemented in time to handle enrollment preferences for the 2012-2013 school year.  It permitted parents to rank order their preferred schools with accommodations for letting rising students in each school remain enrolled and to allow sibling enrollments at the same schools. It did not, however, attempt load balancing or give priority enrollment to students who were unable to attend their previous schools due to grade span shifts in the restart schools.

NSNO successfully attracted significant grants from both the US Department of Education for a Teacher Incentive Fund grant and the Arnold foundation to accelerate the creation of successful restart schools.  These additions have broadened the scope of work undertaken at NSNO and will allow them to focus on developing the pipeline of qualified teachers and operators into New Orleans. NSNO has also made additional hires over the course of the second year; however, their leadership team has remained stable (The CEO who approved the i3 initiative left, but her role had been shrinking since the start of the project and shifting toward the person that succeeded her on the job).  The ASD has increased staffing as well, although by the standards of a traditional school district they remain very lean.  By the end of the second year of evaluation, the ASD had given away each of their i3 grants and were considering an independent application for additional i3 funding to continue granting awards.

Program implementation saw changes in several of the primary responsibilities of the grant. The selection process has remained a major focus of the i3 partnership in the second year of the grant, but other strategies have been bolstered in an effort to support and address CMO and school quality.  Significant efforts were made at NSNO in Year 1 to develop a comprehensive community engagement plan, but this responsibility was subsequently shifted almost entirely to the RSD.  Efforts to support CMO development garnered fewer resources in Year 2; morphing from a series of regular meetings facilitated by multiple expert sub-contractors to a series of meetings conducted by NSNO personnel and supplemented by a "Communities of Practice" meeting attended by personnel from all i3 CMOs.  Formal attempts to document day to day practices and decisions were stopped partway through the

second year. A significant increase in resources, including the hiring of new personnel, has been devoted to the conduct of school reviews at NSNO. Toward the end of the second year, the activities necessary to select operators to receive grants before the i3 deadline and to conduct formative school assessments received the bulk of the attention devoted to i3 within NSNO.

**Findings on Key Responsibilities** The original i3 application began with a clear theory of action to achieve superior performance among i3 grant recipients. From the i3 grant application, we extracted six key responsibilities that the parties committed to cover: Operator Selection, Community Engagement, CMO Development, CMO Incubation, School Reviews and Documentation of the Charter Restart Model. In the Year 1 Report, we presented analysis of four of the responsibilities; Operator Selection, Community Engagement and CMO development and incubation. The remaining areas formed the core of the field work for the past year, with updates to the original four responsibilities. This section includes a description and assessment of each responsibility. In the first two years of analysis, significant changes have taken place as each partner has attempted to fulfill their responsibilities in the i3 project. In this section we document instances in which goals, strategies, tactics, human capital, administrative supports and organizational structures have been altered.

**First-Time Analysis of Responsibilities** The extensive scale of the Charter Restart Model necessitated a staged approach to examining the project team's efforts in the responsibilities described in Table 14. In this report, we introduce two new areas of analysis -- Documentation and Dissemination of the process and progress of the i3 project, and conducting School Reviews as a way of tracking restart implementation and providing independent feedback to schools. We review these new areas below.

**Conducting School Reviews and Monitoring Turnaround Performance** The i3 proposal included the commitment that NSNO would monitor the performance of schools through a twice-annual school visit. The initial idea was that an independent audit could measure periodically the implementation of the school models described in the i3 application, assess the performance of schools and provide feedback to school and CMO leadership to guide on-going school management.

As was documented in the first year's report, the "pipeline" of qualified operators and CMOs ready and willing to conduct turnarounds in New Orleans was leaner than initially envisioned at the outset of the i3 project. This lean pipeline, combined with a sense of urgency driven by both formal grant deadlines and a sense of moral obligation to aid struggling student in New Orleans, led to the selection of certain

operators that did not meet the previously established standards of quality (the evolution of the selection process is described more fully later in this section). This led to a change in the nature of the school reviews, morphing from a summative assessment to a formative one, in which feedback is provided based on observed deficiencies, and responsiveness to this feedback is judged in future reviews.

There are several challenges to doing this work. The first is that the formula for success in schools, including the specific factors that will drive student performance in each school, must be clearly specified and able to be used as a standard of evaluation. There must also be sufficient understanding of how the formula for success varies over the life of the school, that there are some elements of successful schools that must be present immediately after opening while others can or should come on in later years. And the relative importance or "weights" of each of these elements in creating student success must be known as well. The precision that would be required of the reviews to correctly map the school-age-dependent use of resources and processes to create the targeted level of student academic progress arguably exceeds the current level of knowledge anywhere in the field.

NSNO has made the deliberate decision not to mandate specific types of school, personnel, curricular or instructional approaches during either the school reviews themselves or follow up meetings. However, data collected for the Implementation evaluation suggests that NSNO does in fact have a high degree of influence, at least for a subset of the schools under review. CREDO found evidence, for example, of multiple schools reassessing and altering the approach to basic aspects of their school model (e.g. establishment of school culture), based on the feedback provided by NSNO. Whether NSNO's influence is due to respect for the skill of their school review team members, CMO's recognition that additional i3 and non-i3 funds may become available in the future, or a combination of the two, NSNO should be aware of the influence that their feedback carries with certain operators.

Any change to each i3 school's behavior as a direct result of NSNO's support, be it through feedback after school reviews or other school level supports arranged by NSNO, affects the ability of CREDO to accurately quantify the impact of the Charter Restart Model. One role of the evaluation of i3 grants is to identify the efficacy of different types of education interventions, with the possibility to scale up the "treatments" with the largest impact on student achievement. To the extent that NSNO's support alters the behavior or model of i3 schools, this makes it difficult to distinguish which "treatment" is driving results. Are changes in academic performance due to the inherent quality of selected operators, or are they a product of NSNO's feedback and support? If the former, this is evidence that the original program design drives increases in academic growth. If the latter "treatment" is

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truly driving changes in school performance, this is evidence for a different approach to education reform, in which an NGO, armed with expertise and public money, reviews and supports a group of operators to ensure the necessary pre-requisites for quality (predicated on a specific concept of "high quality") are in place. Under the original i3 program design, the fact that all CMOs are not themselves equipped to identify and address shortcomings in their schools is a challenge to achieving the goal of continuous improvement beyond the life of the grant.

The responsibility to monitor turnaround performance with a robust data set did not see much progress in the second year of implementation. Instead, during the year, significant investments were made toward a "school dashboard" that uses a broad set of academic metrics to track performance over time. The dashboard utilizes information from the school review process. Since the dashboard was not finalized during the year covered by this report, the details of this work will be covered in greater detail in next year's report.

Key findings are highlighted below:

- The decision has been made to get more involved in the process of improving school quality, as opposed to simply monitoring outcomes and supporting CMO capacity to intervene when necessary. This is reflected in the expansion of the school review team, as well as statements from multiple members of NSNO regarding the necessity of direct school level intervention. It is also reflected in the retraction of i3 funds when a school seriously deviates from the stated intentions in their i3 proposal. In this context, the term "intervention" does not imply that NSNO personnel inject themselves in any way in the process of running a school. Rather, it refers to any attempt by NSNO to alter the production function of school quality through activities such as formative assessments, professional development opportunities or the allocation of non-i3 resources to address observed deficiencies. In the first year of the project, the purpose of the school reviews was to "check school model fidelity with the flagship or proposed model and give input from peers serving as friends." Early in the second year of the project, an NSNO employee predicted a shift toward greater involvement in school level processes, stating that "The new batch of schools we haven't had a relationship with before. We may need to be more interventionist." This prediction was later confirmed by multiple NSNO personnel (e.g. "The i3 project has shifted the focus of NSNO to school reviews." & "If a school is not on track to make progress, we'll intervene.").

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- Evidence from school level personnel suggest that NSNO's feedback is well regarded, with many praising NSNO for the quality of their reviews and identifying specific issues for which NSNO's feedback was valuable. This suggests that the i3 partnership has capacity that could be transferred to CMOs, increasing their ability to conduct their own high quality school reviews in the future. NSNO currently conducts these reviews at the request of many schools and CMOs, as it both relieves them of the associated logistical challenges and they are seen to provide a valuable outside perspective on school performance.
- Currently, the results of the school reviews are shared with principals and typically with CMO CEOs, who are always invited (but not mandated) to participate in the process.
- School reviews may no longer be only a method merely to ensure implementation fidelity to the school model presented during selection. School reviews may now have become an augmented part of the theory of action to achieve Goal 1. NSNO leadership views the conduct of school reviews as largely a continuation of existing activity. CREDO believes that the school reviews have taken on a new emphasis and urgency due to observed challenges at i3 CMOs/schools and early signals of school quality. The original theory of action expected that selection of high quality operators and support of CMO functions would produce better outcomes for students. The expansion of the scale and scope of school reviews moves the theory of action to include both the selection of high quality operators and the feedback from repeated school reviews to produce high quality outcomes for students. A member of NSNO explained this shift, sharing that "the recruiting and support of operators has driven the model forward...has carried the project when other elements have ebbed."
- Evidence from school personnel interviews suggest that CMOs are still the primary providers of support for their schools, but NSNO is the second most commonly cited provider of school level support. The support provided by NSNO is highly rated by school personnel but, as seen in the Implementation Analysis, some of the support is duplicative.
- The rubrics used to evaluate school performance appear to be used as both a monitoring system and a diagnostic tool. The monitoring system described in the i3 proposal was primarily outcomes focused (including interim outcomes, like attendance and persistence, as well as full outcomes) and monitored micro-level activity with a performance rubric that sought to explain observed results. The current school reviews serve as a diagnostic tool involving a greater degree of science, because it requires an ability to perceive and

measure the production function of schools, not merely at the population average, but stratified by student population and the age of the school.

- The responsibility to "monitor schools with a robust data system" has partially merged with the twice annual school reviews. The data system currently in development, the school dashboard being developed by NSNO, includes key metrics from the school review and indicators of academic performance. The development, content and uses of the school dashboard will be covered in depth in future reports.

Against this backdrop, the evolution of the i3 school reviews takes on one of two interpretations. Either it will move the current level of knowledge forward and act as a successful temporary intervention to increase school capacity in the short term and CMO capacity in the long term, or it will absorb project resources that could have realized greater yields in other ways. School performance and CMO capacity in future years will provide clues to which of these interpretations is correct. The development of a process to correlate school review observations with academic performance may increase the likelihood that the first interpretation is correct.

**Documenting and Disseminating the Model**  The Investing in Innovation and Improvement grant program is designed to create scalable models of school improvement. As a result, capturing the original design and actual implementation of the program are essential steps to ensuring that the localized investment of grant resources is also leveraged for the learning benefit of other communities. In the first year of the grant, NSNO made two budget allocations toward this priority. First, they hired an outside contractor to document the historical antecedents to the i3 project, the so-called "pre-requisites" for the i3 model. This move was justified by project leadership because of the time interval required to secure these policy foundations and to let them mature. That product was completed in Year 1 and disseminated. Since then, the focus of dissemination efforts has shifted from formal undertakings to more informal (but potentially as valuable) dissemination methods, including social media, conference presentations and networking with national education organizations.

The second allocation by NSNO was the hiring of an analyst to track and review their practices and processes, in the hopes that her work would serve both to feed a continuous improvement cycle as well as to form the basis of future updates to "How-To Guides" for implementing the Charter Restart Model. This person left in Year 2, and no systematic outside review has replaced it; the director of i3 implementation has taken on this responsibility. There are, however, still plans to release an updated version of the "How-to Guide" in the future.

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Key findings are highlighted below:

- Both documentation and dissemination have received less attention in the second year of the project, which partially reflects the increasing time pressure in other aspects of the project (e.g. selecting operators to receive the remaining i3 awards). This is evidenced by the decision at NSNO to not formally track their practices and processes as well as explicit statements by team members; "Outreach and dissemination are on the backburner for the moment. Giving out our remaining awards by the cutoff date is taking up most of our time."
- In lieu of regular step back and review practices, there have been more ad hoc approaches to reviewing operations and improving practice (the development of a white paper, review of school visit protocols, review of selection processes, & review of grant letter process and payouts), but the results of these reviews are not currently collected or organized into a cohesive package of "lessons learned." There are plans to do this in future years. There was also a four month period in which the analyst hired to conduct systematic reviews and collate this information had to step into the role of Communications Director, during which time she discontinued her documentation work. If these experiences are not integrated systematically into program design and tactics, which has not happened yet in New Orleans or Tennessee, it could jeopardize each organization's continuous improvement.
- Failure to document operations and changes made may also hinder future attempts to replicate the Charter Restart Model, given the acknowledged difference between the model and its implementation ("It's strange that NSNO are the ones touting a design that doesn't align perfectly with what's happening on the ground."). NSNO stated explicitly that the How-To Guide tells districts how to create the necessary pre-requisites for an "i3-like" project. It is not a guide to create a Charter Restart District. The staff turnover at NSNO and persistent reorganizations within RSD make the failure to document implementation of the Charter Restart Model more urgent, given that institutional memory is reduced with each departure and reorganization.
- Current dissemination efforts focus on the importance of "relinquishment" of authority over day to day school operations as the key to success, but the educational environment over the last year has in some respects moved away from decentralization in ways that adversely affect the operation of certain i3 schools. Compared to two years ago, an i3 charter operating in New Orleans now has more in

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depth school visits and feedback, a district office that determines the appropriateness of student expulsions, and greater restrictions on their ability to advertise for and recruit students. These may be necessary and legitimate actions, but they do not look like the relinquishment of authority and responsibility to CMO and school leadership. CREDO does not currently have a judgment on the balance struck between ensuring equity for students and the potential to harm academic success (e.g. by interfering with ability to establish culture), but this will be a focus of future analyses.


**Updates to Responsibilities Covered in the Year 1 Report**

**Selection of New Charter Grantees** The keystone of the Charter Restart Model is the selection of i3 grantees. In the i3 proposal, this selection was to be based on previous evidence of academic growth with high need students. In the past year, the selection process was conducted jointly by NSNO and RSD personnel in New Orleans, and by NSNO and ASD personnel in Tennessee. There were multiple selection rounds in each location. The design of the selection process was predicated on the assumption that there would be a sufficient number of high quality applicants from which to choose, an assumption that did not pan out ("We underestimated how much work we would have to do to help each of these applicants after we selected them … the type of assistance each applicant needed, the particular strengths and weaknesses of each one, also vary a lot more than we thought.").

In the first year of the grant, the primary strategy to maximize school quality was the selection of applicants capable of achieving high quality out of the gate. NSNO would then facilitate and fund contract services for individual operators where needed. The past year saw a decreased emphasis on selection as the primary mechanism to ensure Goal 1, and this willingness to select operators with a lower chance of meeting the ultimate quality bar necessitated a shift to deeper investment and investigation into school performance post-selection. Selection can now be viewed as one step in a longer process, which may include setting milestones for an operator that necessitate process and/or personnel changes, school reviews and supports, and direct human capital development activities. As discussed above, this strategy shift is largely driven by a belief that there is a lack of capacity at some i3 schools to achieve the desired growth in current market conditions. There are plans to examine this aspect of CMO capacity (to oversee and intervene in failing schools) in more detail in future selection rounds in New Orleans. Determining the necessary level of CMO capacity to intervene in failing schools will first require the resolution of any tension between those in the i3

partnership dedicated to market reforms and outcomes monitoring to drive quality and those focused primarily on school level supports. Is intensive support best invested in promising schools to help them get better? Or is it also to help poor quality schools serve their students better, even if the i3 partners don't expect sufficient quality even after their support? These are difficult, but necessary, questions to address.

Key findings are highlighted below:

- The selection process through the first two years of the project has focused primarily on the achievement of goal 1, maximizing school quality, and less on evidence of existing CMO capacity to ensure sufficient quality during expansion. The existing literature on the elements of CMO capacity needed to drive student performance is thin, which makes it understandable that the i3 partners would be reticent to reject an applicant they believe has the capacity to achieve high levels of student growth due to weaker scores on (still developing) measures of CMO capacity. For example, one local operator with strong student growth was selected despite explicit expectations that they would never have a sufficient CMO structure to expand beyond a second school ("I don't expect them to grow beyond two schools and I don't think they should.").
- The development of the selection rubrics and written applications represented a "sunk cost" for NSNO, potentially making significant strategic changes to the process more difficult. According to NSNO staff, changes to the rubric were just beginning to be connected to student outcomes at the end of year 2 (after the evaluation team had completed its field work and data collection). The development of a school dashboard, combined with a rigorous process for collecting, archiving, and analyzing data represents a major positive development for NSNO as an organization, and should help to drive continuous improvement and increase the rigor of the selection process. Thus, the wavering from rigor and adherence to the model that was observed in Year 2 may be seen to be corrected in subsequent periods of the evaluation.
- The schools that have caused NSNO the most concern after their selection are those that have either been selected without evidence of prior growth with high needs students or where there were specific concerns about school leader capacity. As a senior member of NSNO said, "Nobody has caused us concern during the selection process and then gone on to succeed."

- The standards used during the selection process for some applicants in both New Orleans and Tennessee has changed from a "reward for prior demonstration of excellence" to a consideration of whether an i3 grant would help an operator to perform "better than before." In the first year in New Orleans, the following statement was made during discussion of an i3 applicant: "They've been granted a charter, they're going to open anyways. I think i3 money can help them." By the second year of the project, the decision to grant i3 funds to an applicant had arguably changed, at least for some applicants, from an award to recognize excellence or at least the ability to make marginal quality improvements to an award to rectify identified deficiencies. For example, a CMO submitted multiple proposals to receive i3 money for two separate school sites in Tennessee. The final vote to determine whether i3 funding would be granted was split 50/50 for each of the school sites. Rather than reject both applicants (which would normally be the result of an evenly split vote), the decision was made to grant money to the CMO and allow them to allocate it between the two school sites to correct the concerns identified by the selection team. As explained by a member of the selection team at ASD, "They already got a charter anyways, so the question is whether we help them with this or not." The observed drift in the standard of evidence used during selection is likely due in part to timing issues in the process of selection (e.g. The decision to close New Orleans' main "alternative school" was made before the i3 selection round, pressuring the selectors to use one of the grants to incent an experienced operator of alternative programs to locate in New Orleans or face the chance that there would be no alternative provider in NOLA).

The lack of confidence in school and CMO capacity begs a critical question about the Charter Restart Model in its current formulation. The model hinges on CMO capability to replicate previously successful models with fidelity or, in the unfortunate alternative that implementation has not been successful, to intervene with appropriate remedial efforts. If the NSNO team does not believe that the current crop of i3 grantees can be relied on for these actions, it creates doubt about either the selection process or the overall model itself.

**Community Engagement** A significant part of the i3 project design was aimed at mobilizing the public at large to reject the current level of school performance as unacceptable. The next step was for the public to embrace the concept of turnaround and continuous ratcheting of quality standards as the best approach for overall system improvement. In the short term, the principal focus of engagement is to smooth the closure of failing schools and the transition to new operators. In

the long run, Goal 2 (the creation of a permanent infrastructure to turn around the bottom 5% of schools each year) implies the existence of sufficient community demand for high quality school options to drive future increases in quality.

The responsibility to engage with the community is shared, but the lead role has shifted from NSNO to RSD in the second year of the project. In response to community reaction during the first year of evaluation, RSD decided to vest community relations, which is not the same thing as engagement, to two individuals who were well-known members of the community. The current Superintendent of RSD spent a considerable amount of time meeting with parents, educators and community groups; his experience as both a local and state policy official gives him credibility and his local roots give him connection. The individual serving as the Deputy Superintendent of External Affairs has a similar blend of professional credentials and local connection. Since New Orleans natives are especially passionate about maintaining a sense of "their own" and not being dictated to by "outsiders," a significant barrier to constructive dialogue was reduced by these additions.

The initial approach to community engagement experienced limited success. The decision to close schools was based largely on an objective measure of school performance, the School Performance Score (SPS). The apparent objectivity of the decision was used as a launching point for further discussion with the community about school closures. [12] Once the community was taught about the SPS, the conversation moved on to a community-based visioning process, where members of the community around failing school sites were invited to share their desires and expectations for a new school operator. However, the RSD wasn't interested in adapting its plans in any significant way to accommodate community tastes. This may have been a legitimate tactical decision in many instances, particularly when community requests would have reduced the emphasis on school quality or required resources that were not available. However, the perception that RSD was not interested in a true partnership diminished much of the value of the visioning process as a strategic asset. During the second year of evaluation, the community visioning process was eliminated and replaced with the creation of advisory councils at each failing school site. This approach has also been adopted in Tennessee. Plans had been drawn up to hire 24 community representatives to assist RSD in this process, but this plan was dropped during the early stages of implementation. The focus of community engagement in New Orleans has shifted from a collaborative

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[12] The School Performance Score is computed differently for high school than for elementary and middle schools. High schools add graduation rates (obviously for earlier student cohorts) to the base set of factors which include attendance rates and average achievement scores on the annual state accountability tests. It should be noted that the selection of academic achievement -- as opposed to academic growth, disadvantages schools with high proportions of historically underserved students.

effort at co-creation to an exercise whose primary function is to increase public awareness, understanding and support of district policies.

Key findings are highlighted below:

- The goal of community engagement changed during the first two years of analysis, from a community dialogue to foster partnership to an intention to minimize resistance to change. What took place in the second year of evaluation certainly still qualifies as community engagement, but the scope was largely restricted to school closure and transition.
- The RSD added capacity to engage with the community after recognizing that the current staff did not have the legitimacy to create meaningful engagement. The shift in emphasis of community engagement to smoothing the transition of school closures and generating support among community members is driven in part by this added capacity. The Deputy Superintendent of External Affairs was previously employed at a CMO with a record of success at generating community support using a combination of advisory councils and community meetings to increase public awareness and collaboration.
- Initial plans called for a "co-visioning" between the RSD and the communities around failing schools regarding what their new school should look like. However, this process was abandoned after it was recognized that despite community input, RSD had final authority on which operators were brought in to run the new school.
- Community engagement has searched for a home over the life of the i3 grant in New Orleans. It is primarily an RSD responsibility in Year 2. RSD/ASD are having success improving the transition from the closing school to the restart/turnaround (e.g. CMO leaders often cite RSD's support as very useful during the early stages of their transition), but attention to creating long term demand for high quality education was limited. There have been nascent attempts by the RSD to implement community wide education programs, but by the end of the second year of i3 there was still no systematic, sustained effort at community wide education in place.
- The concept of community engagement has been fragmented: The closure and transition process is tightly controlled by RSD, with relatively little real input from community members, parents or students. This is no doubt due in part to the kinds of reactions RSD personnel have received at community meetings (e.g. CREDO personnel observed a routine presentation to share the details of the

new district expulsion policy to parents at an RSD direct-run school.  A significant portion of the Q & A was dominated by displaced education professionals and activists).   Community Engagement as executed during most of the second year of evaluation has taken on the character of a "must be completed" requirement in New Orleans (although not in Baton Rouge, which will be discussed in a future report) rather than an overture to form a legitimate partnership with the community.

**Development of CMO Capacity**  The Charter Restart Model depends on a supply of high-performing CMOs willing to expand their networks via charter restarts (which must themselves be high-performing).  Therefore, a necessary condition of success is that CMOs must have the capacity to design, implement and guide the development of high quality schools under turnaround conditions.  For many CMOs, the difference between "green field" start-ups (where school culture, behavioral expectations, etc. can be built from scratch) and restarts (where the CMO must deal with the "legacy" of the failed school) is considerable.  Due to this, it is important to the success of the enterprise to examine the capacity of CMOs to successfully expand in this specialized environment.

In the first year of the grant NSNO hired contractors to enhance the capacity of their i3 awardees.  Regular meetings were conducted, during which CEOs from CMOs both within and outside of the i3 project were invited.  Content for these meetings was developed by an expert in organizational design from UC Berkeley.  In the second year of analysis these meetings were replaced with less regular meetings led by NSNO personnel and a "Communities of Practice" meeting, in which personnel from i3 award recipients in both New Orleans and Tennessee shared their strengths and challenges with other attendees, who were then invited to provide possible solutions to the issues presented.  Additionally, NSNO supported CMO development in a series of informal and collaborative ways.  For example, they facilitated and encouraged the sharing of interim assessments across CMOs and supported collaboration around SPED assessments and services.  Non-i3 funds are also made available for certain CMOs when NSNO personnel feel they are necessary to develop a particular aspect of CMO capacity.  As an example, an i3 CMO was provided non-i3 funds to hire a Chief Academic Officer at the behest of NSNO.

CMOs need to have a solid understanding of what makes a good school, along with the knowledge of how to create that reality from their early days.  It is also important that CMOs be able to identify significant obstacles to success and how to craft and implement effective remedies for continuous improvement.  Many CMOs may possess some of this knowledge, but could still fall short of Goal 1 success because they lack one or more of these requisite skill sets.  It is unclear whether

current approaches to develop capacity are sufficient to ensure the most important CMO capacities are present.

Key findings are highlighted below:

- CMO capacity is necessary for the execution of Goals 1 and 2, but i3-based efforts to develop capacity have become less formal and more reactive in the past year. The CEO of a CMO selected during the second year of the project stated that "NSNO has not provided any leadership or support on any CMO abilities." This suggests both that Goal 2 is not the primary focus of the second year of the project and that enhancing CMO capacity is not seen as the optimal strategy to achieve Goal 1. However, it should be noted that the simple presence of i3 funds has allowed multiple CMOs to free up money for development activities that would otherwise have been devoted to more pressing needs. For example, the same CEO that commented on the lack of direct development work above also stated that "As a result of i3 money, we've been able codify our processes and transfer these to new schools so we don't have to reinvent the wheel (at each new school)."
- The personnel at NSNO do not have significant experience in CMOs, which makes the evaluation of CMO capacity and identification of deficiencies a challenge (e.g. "Nobody here (at NSNO) has ever run a CMO, so there's a cloud of uncertainty over that part of the selection round."). This issue is exacerbated by the initial overestimation of existing CMO capacity in New Orleans. In Tennessee, however, significant national recruitment (e.g. Aspire, YesPrep) ensures a larger pool of qualified applicants to receive i3 grants.
- The decision to discontinue "in depth" and proactive CMO development activities was viewed with regret by several CMOs. While new school leaders were invited to participate during their ramp-up year, and indicated they found the sessions helpful, they also expressed the view that the pre-opening development work had been mostly conceptual in nature and now that they were confronted with the realities of operating a school and managing a team, they wished they still had a more structured and regular venue to bring their actual experiences to a setting of reflection and critique. As one CMO CEO put it, "I found the meetings to be fun for brainstorming and thinking big. Now that I'm actually running a school I think I could get more out of it." There is evidence that NSNO plans to increase the frequency of these meetings in year 3.

- Apart from the Communities of Practice meeting, a series of CMO leader conventions and the delivery of non-i3 funds to some operators, developing CMO capacity to "become the system" (admittedly CREDO's understanding of the ultimate purpose of Goal 2) has not been a priority for the i3 partnership in year 2. NSNO does attempt to both support school level functions and simultaneously engage in knowledge transfer and capacity building, but this transfer of knowledge is focused almost exclusively at school level personnel.

An underutilized tactic to bolster CMO capacity (mentioned in early interviews by the i3 leadership) is to promote interaction and integration among CMOs, which will also smooth the transition to CMOs "becoming the system" (where presumably they will need some regular formal interaction). NSNO has been including school staff on visits to other schools and facilitating observations in various classes, but this may not serve the same function. The fact that the Community of Practice meeting was so well received is evidence that CMOs are on board to meet more regularly. Furthermore, data from school visits made for the implementation analysis suggest gaps in professional development for leaders and teachers, pointing to a possible need for the i3 partners to increase CMO capacity in this regard as well.

**Conclusions**

The findings presented above for each major responsibility suggest the existence of broader shifts in strategy and tactics and an evolving sense of the scope of project itself. These shifts are driven by many factors, including experience and feedback during the first two years of execution, adoption of the project in a new environment, the pre-existing capacity of the partner organizations, occasional disconnects between the personnel in charge of strategy and implementation, an expanded scope of responsibilities (outside of i3) at partner organizations, and tensions between maintaining high standards and sticking to limited timelines. These conclusions are examined in greater detail below.

I. The i3 partnership has shifted the tactical focus of many responsibilities to maximize Goal 1 (successful turnarounds) in the 2nd year of the project. Examples of this shift can be seen across multiple responsibilities. These include the selection of i3 applicants to turn around schools despite concerns regarding CMO or school level leadership capacity. Another shift of emphasis to the school level is seen in the RSD's decision to focus community engagement activities on smoothing the closure of failing schools and the transition to new operators, as opposed to investing the

bulk of their community engagement resources toward preparing communities to demand high quality schooling. This despite the fact that community demand for high quality education is seen to be one of the primary drivers of continued reform at the end of the grant period. In addition, the responsibility to monitor the performance of selected operators with a "robust data system" has partially merged with the twice-yearly school visits, with the focus of these visits largely on school level performance. There is evidence that NSNO has gotten involved in supporting school operations, tailoring their feedback to principals based on findings from school visits and the results from interim assessments. NSNO's decision to offer direct instructional support to operator personnel, such as the provision of a "math workshop" provided in the summer of 2012, is additional evidence of a shift to bolster the capacity of schools to support quality improvements.

II.    The shift of programmatic focus back to the school level noted above is consistent with each organizations historical areas of competence, the activities most similar to each organization's pre-i3 behaviors. Tactics are also seen to drift to match existing capacity for some responsibilities, as opposed to adding new capacity to fulfill i3's original program design. The shift to maximizing school level quality is also legitimately driven by an observed lack of capacity among i3 grant recipients to meet the pre-determined quality standards, but the lack of operator capacity is itself partly due to the conduct of the selection process. NSNO recognizes the correlation between flexibility in the selection process and subsequent under-performance and has invested resources to "tighten up" the process in future years.

III.    There is emerging evidence of a divide between the developing strategy of the Charter Restart Model and implementation of i3 on the ground. On the strategic side, the focus is on a system where educational quality and equity is driven largely by CMO and school expertise, with the primary role of government being to establish an institutional framework within which multiple, competing organizations can drive continuous improvement. However, the system being implemented thus far is a system in which school quality is largely driven by formative assessments and school supports, while district compliance requirements ensure the equitable treatment of students (e.g. centralized enrollment system, central expulsion office, etc.). On the plus side, evidence presented in the implementation portion of this report suggests that there is emergent collaboration across schools and CMO/school

professionals in New Orleans. This may be an appropriate place for the i3 project to be at this level of its evolution, so long as significant recentralization doesn't occur within each district.

IV.  The role of CMOs in the Charter Restart District is less clear than originally conceived in the grant. CMOs play a unique and challenging role in the education landscape, having to simultaneously focus on improving quality at the school level while also managing a larger, and often growing, organization at the systems level. Rather than focus on the center of this "Janus face" and support CMOs to fulfill these dual roles, NSNO has in certain respects shifted their focus away from CMOs toward more granular (e.g. direct school level support) and more expansive (e.g. developing the human capital pipeline) considerations. As NSNO continues to expand the scope of their work, and as RSD begins to consider expansion to other locales within Louisiana, the partners must work to ensure that i3 does not become a tactical asset to improve the quality of instruction in a subset of NOLA schools, subsumed into a broader portfolio strategy to create "50,000 high quality seats" in New Orleans. NSNO's plans to broaden and strengthen their CMO Development process in year 3, with continued input from outside experts, are an important development in this regard.

V.  In both New Orleans and Tennessee, participants in the selection process show an occasional willingness to select operators that are "better than what existed before," as opposed to retaining previously determined high standards of quality for each selection decision. School level evidence also suggests that school leaders are highly variable in their confidence that their goals and targets are attainable. The decision to accept operators with a lower probability to reach objective quality standards set into motion a cycle of shortfalls in new school performance and subsequent allocations of resources to provide supports at the school level in response to insufficient quality.

VI.  The execution of i3 is different in Tennessee than in New Orleans, but it is too soon to establish whether these are primarily differences in tactics and implementation toward the same goals, or if the differences are large enough to suggest a different strategy is in place in each state. In the first year of execution in Tennessee, the selection process (with significant assistance from NSNO) and CMO recruitment were emphasized. ASD has made the decision to collaborate with existing traditional public school districts, which requires a design that is different than the one in New Orleans (e.g.

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"ASD has opted exclusively on phase outs instead of transformations."). The Charter Restart Model in Tennessee does not meet all of the "absolutes" of the model in New Orleans, such as free parent choice due to enrollment feeder zones and free educator choice given the proportion of school personnel under contract in Memphis and Nashville. However, it is not clear whether these differences will hinder the formation of the fully autonomous and accountable schools that form the basic unit of a portfolio model, which is the desired outcome ("We are looking to create incentives similar to a portfolio district."). For example, if a charter school receives its students through feeder zones, has "district-approved" personnel and school models, contracts transportation and food services through the district, and has to conform to district-wide expulsion policies, how are their incentives different to a TPS in a district with high standards? As one CMO CEO put it, "The ASD model is good as long as it doesn't turn into a direct run district."

An important question permeates the entirety of this ambitious i3 project; "Who has the necessary knowledge to run a good school?" The assumption at the outset appeared to be that somewhere between the CMO and the school leader there would be adequate knowledge to achieve the expected level of quality, and this led to a structure that devolved much of the risk in Goal 1 to CMOs. Power in the Charter Restart District was seen to correlate with knowledge (including in the "How-To Guide" released by NSNO), which meant decentralization in the original proposal. Statements by personnel across the i3 partnership suggest that some do not believe that many CMOs or schools currently have sufficient knowledge to operate at the expected level of quality. Time will tell if the decision to invest in the process of achieving school quality is a temporary reversion to rectify prior mistakes made during the selection process, or if this is a permanent reduction in the level of risk with which the i3 partners are willing to let CMOs exist.

**Implications**

**A Shift of Focus from Outcomes to Process**  The shift of programmatic focus back to school level support at NSNO may make it harder for them to remain an outcomes-based organization in the future, despite the fact that direct assistance from NSNO is considered helpful by school personnel.  Notwithstanding NSNO's expertise at the school level, direct support of the "process" of education may make them partially responsible (or at least make them feel responsible) for these school's outcomes.  For example, one of the schools most heavily supported by NSNO during their formation showed sub-par performance in their first year of operation.  The decision was made to create "alternative analytics" to predict academic success in the second year of operation, based on the hope that this school would follow a similar path to other high quality schools that struggled in their first year of operation.  Rather than focus on the results from interim assessments, other aspects of school performance deemed necessary precursors to student growth, such as the establishment of strong student culture, would be the focus during the first year in a turnaround school.  The same struggling school mentioned above was also the recipient of additional non-i3 funds to open a second school after initial plans to apply for an i3 grant fell through when they failed to meet the objective standards to receive additional funds.

**Shrinking Goals**  The first two goals of the i3 project have "shrunk" over the course of the first two years.  For example, the functional definition of Goal 2 is drifting back toward RSD's pre-existing role; using School Proficiency Scores to monitor school performance and closing the worst performing schools each year.  If the continuation of pre-existing district policies is viewed as fulfillment of Goal 2, this would represent no change in the behavior of the i3 partners or in the capacity of the district at large.  The scope of Goal 1 has also shrunk in the second year, in that there are less resources devoted to building CMO capacity to drive school quality and more toward direct support (although there are plans to provide more regular and more structured support to CMOs in future years, as discussed above). The capacity of the CMO sector, not direct intervention from government/NGOs, will drive school quality in the "permanent infrastructure" of the future.  This is clearly implied by the language of the grant itself, which states that the permanent improvements in average quality each year will be driven by per-pupil funding. Unless the authors of the i3 grant believe that i3 CMOs will become so efficient that they will have additional, non-philanthropic funds to invest in outside organizations to drive internal quality improvements, CMO capacity must be the driver of quality once i3 funds run out.

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**Questions at the End of Year 2**

The dynamic aspect of our organizational capacity framework allows us to detect emerging trends in our data which are presented below, with the caveat that these results are preliminary given the limited data window.

**Will Tactics Continue to Shift to Meet Existing Capacities?** As discussed above, rather than grow the range of skills and capacities both within and outside of the i3 partnership, the partners have exhibited a tendency for tactics and processes to retrench toward pre- existing capacities. Changes to program design are essentially value neutral; organizations are expected to alter processes as implementation reveals unforeseen challenges or as their operating environments change. However, if processes change without a focus on pre-determined goals but instead change to better match existing abilities within each organization, this could jeopardize the success of the entire project.

**Will Goals Continue to Shrink to Meet Existing Capacities?** The original formulation of Goal 2, the creation of a permanent infrastructure to turn around the bottom 5% of schools each year using per pupil funds, implied the creation of new institutional capacities within the district. These new capacities include a federation of CMOs sharing best practices and cooperatively addressing some of the issues handled exclusively by governmental agencies in traditional districts (e.g. special/alternative education, expulsion centers, equity issues, etc.). However, as discussed above, the partners appear to be drifting the functional definition of Goal 2 back to RSD's pre-existing role; using School Proficiency Scores to monitor school performance and closing the worst performing schools each year. The decision to cease any formal review of operations may indicate more than a shift in tactics. It may be related to the "shrinking" of Goal 2. A formal review of operations is useful if goals are fixed, and processes are adjusted based on measured progress to those goals. However, if processes are set based on the existing capacity of the organizations, and goals are then adjusted to fit these "capacity-driven" behaviors, formal review is not necessary, insofar as it would not affect future process changes. The reinvestment of resources to formally review i3 program operations may be a sign that there is a reemphasis on the original goals and standards written into the i3 grant.

To ensure the original definition of each goal does not "drift" over time, the primary drivers of educational quality in the future Charter Restart District must be established. Will the Charter Restart District be a system where educational quality and equity are driven by institutional structures and competition, or one where quality is driven by school level supports and equity is ensured by compliance to RSD requirements? The former is the one currently being touted in dissemination

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efforts, the latter more closely resembles the one being implemented on the ground in Year 2.

The partnership has not redefined Goal 1 in the same manner, but the strategic approach to achieve Goal 1 has changed in a way that represents a similar "shrinking" from its original definition. Initially, school quality was to be assured through the combination of a rigorous selection process and subsequent monitoring of outcomes. By the second year of operation, the tactical changes to the process of ensuring sufficient quality outlined earlier (formative school reviews, school process supports and direct instruction of school personnel) represent a partial change in the strategic approach to achieving Goal 1. Recent research from CREDO suggests that initial quality signals are strong predictors of future performance, calling into question the wisdom of this strategic shift (CREDO, 2013). In addition to the finding that early school quality strongly predicts future quality, the paper also found that across the country the variation in school performance within a CMO is remarkably consistent. This suggests that there is an inherent institutional quality that is hard to escape across time and space. NSNO's recognition of the mistakes made in the earlier selection rounds and subsequent "tightening up" of the selection process (evidenced by the approval of only 2 applicants in the last 3 rounds of selection) may signal a shift back toward the original strategic approach to Goal 1.

Even if the aforementioned strategic and tactical shifts seen in year 2 are successful at improving school quality, these shifts ignore an important aspect of Goal 1: the drive to improve quality matters most in the short run, but the reason schools strive to improve matters in the long run. If the purpose of the Charter Restart Model is to create a Charter Restart District as originally envisioned, it will no longer be sufficient for schools to improve their quality primarily in response to external stimuli (e.g. threats of closure, process changes dictated by outside organizations, etc.) The desire to improve student performance must come from internal stimuli too, such as a school's dedication to their CMO's mission or the need to attract a sufficient number of students. If the i3 schools get better, but only because outside forces push them to do so, why would we expect continued progress when the external "push" goes away? In other words, if Goal 1 is achieved, but in a way that does not promote continued improvements in school quality beyond the term of the grant, this constitutes a retreat from the broader conception of Goal 1 in the context of the Charter Restart Model.

**Ambition Must Match Time Frame** The commitments made in the i3 grant are ambitious and represent the creation of something never before seen in the American education landscape. It is also the case that the goals of the project are nested in a way that requires the achievement of one for the others to be worth

doing. If the schools aren't good, there is no need to promote their replication (which is in part a justification of the shift in focus to Goal 1 seen in year 2.). And if a system of CMOs is not created to permanently turn around the most poorly performing schools each year, there is little reason to disseminate the Charter Restart Model as a self-sustaining solution to poor quality schools in other districts. But what if the time spent ensuring short term achievement of Goal 1 (high quality schools) leads the partners to run out of time to meet Goal 2? This would be a failure of execution, but should this be viewed as failure of the Charter Restart Model itself? Should evaluators extrapolate any trends present at the end of the evaluation period and give "partial credit" for improvements that are projected to take place after the end of the grant period? Given the intensive resources currently being directed to ensure the quality of i3 schools, time may become a limiting component in the remaining years of this analysis. This is true both from the perspective of the organizations themselves as well as for the ability of the evaluation to issue a final determination on the legitimacy of the model as an avenue of education reform.

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# Implementation Evaluation Year 2

The i3 initiative Scaling the New Orleans Charter Restart Model proposes three overarching goals:

- **Goal #1:** Build the capacity to incubate and expand charter restart operators
- **Goal #2:** Provide infrastructure to sustain charter restart schools
- **Goal #3:** Scale strategy by codifying and replicating

The Implementation Study covers the restarts that occur in the first through fourth years of the project period by examining the transition from closing to new schools, and the first and second years of the schools under new management. In the first year of the i3 initiative (2011), the Implementation evaluation identified serious challenges to the success of the project as proposed, including revisions to the selection process, deficits in community engagement, inconsistent performance measures across schools, and under-developed approaches to continuous improvement. These challenges, while not unexpected in the project's first year, have the potential to undermine the goals (particularly Goals 1 and 2) of the project as proposed if not addressed through the course of the i3 project.

As such, when evaluating implementation in the second year of the i3 initiative (2012), the evaluation team not only applied the Analytic Approach employed in Year 1 (described below), but also looked specifically at the evolution of the challenges identified in Year 1; and also sought evidence of the transfer of learning in regards to addressing these challenges from Year 1 to Year 2.

**Analytic Approach**  The Implementation Study continued the qualitative time-series analysis. The analytic framework that was used for the Year 1 analysis was revisited and expanded upon for the Year 2 analysis to account for the additional time span for the first cohort of i3 awardees, the addition of a new cohort of i3 NOLA schools as well as to account for the expansion of the work in Memphis and Nashville.

**Analytic Framework**  The Implementation Study continues to focus on two sets of paired comparisons for schools in their first year of operation. The first is a comparison between the RSD direct-run or charter school that has been informed of closure (Closing school) and the charter restart that replaces it (i3 school). The second comparison examines the similarities between the new school and the Flagship or other schools operated by the i3 awardees. Since the existing schools of the i3 grant recipients served as the exemplars for selecting the restart

operators, this side-by-side comparison helps us understand how the proven model functions in the restart context.

The first cohort of NOLA i3 schools is in their second year of the evaluation. The Implementation analysis included the continuity of the year one findings, new challenges faced by this cohort in year two of operation as well as a deeper look at the relationships the schools have formed and the supports received through these relationships.

The research design is carefully calibrated to produce equivalent measures across sites and equivalent measures over time so cross-sectional and longitudinal comparisons begin to be possible in Year 2.

**Figure 8: Analytic Framework of Implementation Evaluation**



Closing School

Flagship School

**I3 SCHOOL**
•Community Engagement
•Facilities
•Pre-launch planning activities
•Staffing and recruitment
•Internal Relations
•Assessment Practices
•Leadership & Governance
•External Relations
•Continuous Improvement
•Implementation Fidelity

**CMO Development**
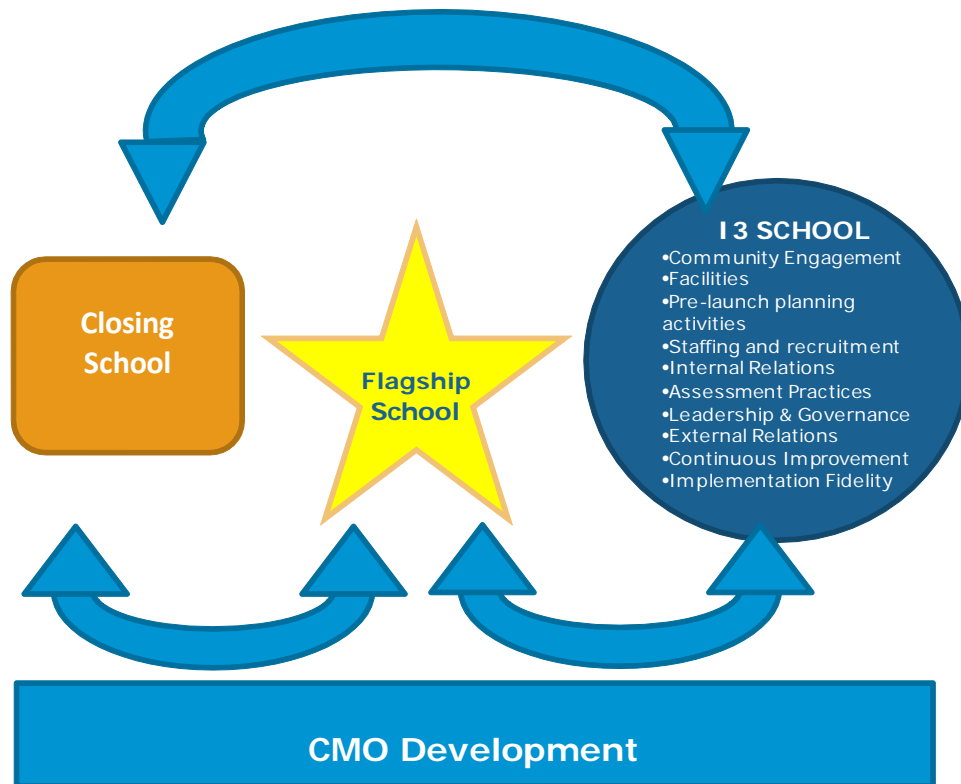
**Figure 9: Framework of Cohort 1 Year 2 Longitudinal Analysis**
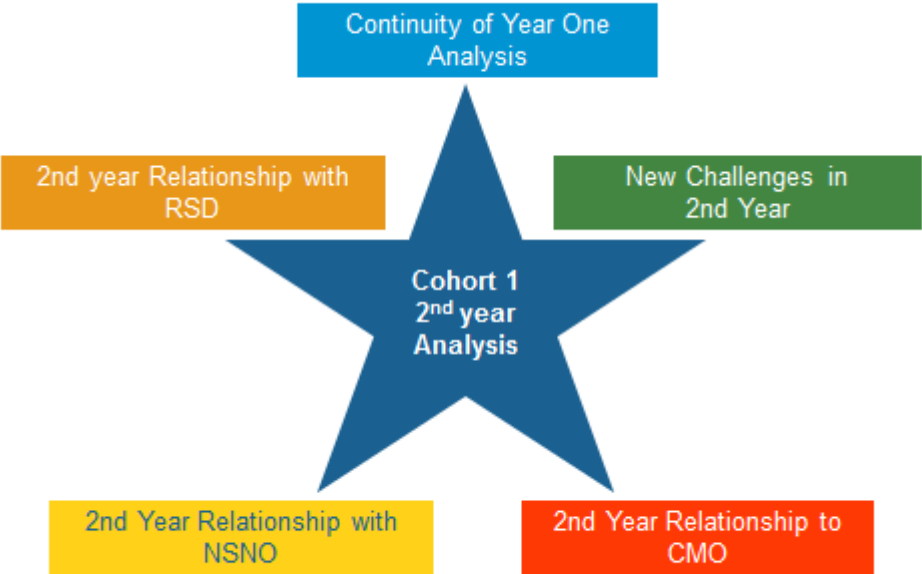


**Research Methods** The protocols administered to schools in the first year of i3 turnaround focus on start-up activity and the school's approach to instruction. Second year visits take an in-depth look at not only the operational aspects of the school, but also the relationship between the schools and the District, the schools and their flagship schools, and NSNO, RSD/ASD, and the larger community.

The Implementation team continued to conduct site visits and interviews with principals and teachers in each of the three types of schools (Closing, Flagship, i3). In addition interviews with support staff members at cohort 1 schools were conducted as well as a comprehensive teacher and principal survey.

**Table 16:  Longitudinal Implementation Study Data Collection Tools**

| Data Collection Methods Used | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Year 1 of i3 Turnaround | Year 2 of i3 Turnaround |
| Closing Schools | Observations Interviews Media Review | None |
| Flagship Schools | Observations Interviews Media Review | None |
| i3 Schools | Observations Interviews Media Review | Observations Interviews Surveys Media Review |

The Implementation team developed standards for inter-rater reliability at the outset of the study, and periodically re-tests inter-rater reliability by deploying multiple observers at a single site.

For inclusion in this report, New Orleans Cohort 1 schools had a total of three site visits conducted, whereas New Orleans Cohort 2 and Tennessee Cohort 1 schools had been open only a few months at the time of this report, so there was only one site visit and the volume of evidence for those schools is thin at this juncture. These qualitative data were combined with the classroom and school level observations of the Implementation evaluation team.  The analytic framework was populated with the coded and classified data collected during the observations and field work.

The Implementation evaluation team continues to collect the appropriate data to populate the performance management rubric.  The rubric was discussed in full in CREDO's original evaluation proposal; it consists of 23 measures of school practice that have been statistically associated with higher achievement and higher academic growth.  These common measures are used to conduct cross-sectional and longitudinal comparisons across sites over the course of the evaluation.  The performance management rubric captures which practices associated with high levels of performance are commonly embraced in the schools as well as which elements are not.  The rubric will be included in future reports.

**Challenges to the Analytic Process**  Exigencies in the field often create unanticipated analytic challenges; this holds true for the Implementation study in Year 2.  The i3 project as proposed and designed has evolved as NSNO has responded to gaps in the educational marketplace.  NSNO has developed responses to building-level needs in real time that deviate from the role of NSNO as originally proposed.  Further, NSNO has tweaked the i3 selection processes in order to field schools each year, even lowering performance requirements (see Organizational Capacity study for further discussion).  As such, structural differences across schools, as well as systems-level changes to school operation (e.g. OneApp and the RSD expulsion policy, discussed below) impact both the operational procedures of the i3 initiative, as well as the Implementation evaluation.

**Table 17:  i3 Participant Schools and CMOs**

| i3 Opening Year | i3 School | CMO | Flagship School | Closing School |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cohort 1 NOLA | | | | |
| NOLA 2011 | Clark Prep | Firstline | Ashe | Clark High School |
| NOLA 2011 | KIPP Believe Primary | Knowledge Is Power Program | KIPP Believe | Gregory |
| NOLA 2011 | Harriet Tubman Elementary | Crescent City | No Flagship | Tubman |
| Cohort 2 NOLA | | | | |
| NOLA 2011 | Cohen College Prep * | New Orleans College Prep | NOCP Elementary NOCP Middle | Walter Cohen |
| NOLA 2012 | Crescent Leadership Academy | Rite of Passage | Canyon State Academy | Schwartz |
| NOLA 2012 | Mc Donogh 42 Elementary Charter | Choice Foundation | Lafayette Academy | Mc Donogh 42 |
| NOLA 2012 | Joseph A. Craig Charter | Friends of King | Martin Luther King, Jr. | Craig |
| NOLA 2012 | Carver Prep | Collegiate Academies | Sci Academy | Sojourner Truth |
| NOLA 2012 | Carver Collegiate | Collegiate Academies | Sci Academy | Carver |
| NOLA 2012 | John Mc Donogh: FIN High School | Future is Now | No Flagship | John Mc Donogh |
| Cohort 1 TN | | | | |
| MEMPHIS 2012 | Gordon Science and Arts | Gestalt | Power Center Academy | Humes Middle School |
| MEMPHIS 2012 | KIPP Memphis Academy Middle | Knowledge Is Power Program | KIPP Memphis | Cypress Middle School |
| NASHVILLE 2012 | Brick Church Middle School | Lead | Cameron College Prep | Brick Church |

*Please note: though Cohen College Prep opened in 2011, it is part of the Cohort 2 schools for the purposes of analysis.

**Changes in the NOLA Market**  In addition to these cross-cohort/cross-city comparisons, exigencies unique to the New Orleans landscape arose during Year 2

as well.  These exigencies are worth noting in some cases for the impact they have already had on i3-involved schools; and in other cases for the anticipated impact these circumstances will have in Years 3-5 of the i3 project.

**Vouchers**  NOLA schools report very little or no impact of the Louisiana Scholarship Program [13] (statewide voucher program) on their operations.  The LSP was implemented statewide in 2012 and had potential impact on 2012-2013 academic year enrollment; however, NOLA Cohort 1 schools report no disruptions due to vouchers.  KIPP Believe reported losing "only a handful" of students to vouchers; Tubman reporting losing two students.  Clark reported no impact at all.  The LSP is currently being challenged in the courts on constitutional and procedural grounds[14], so potential impact on 2013-14 enrollment is unclear.

**Policy Changes: i3 Selection and General Operation**  In Spring 2012, all NOLA Cohort 1 i3 principals reported changes to insurance legislation and testing policies that required administrative changes to school operations.  Additionally, one Cohort 1 school reported that during their second year of operation, both the school and the CMO received additional funds mobilized at the building level.

Additionally, structural differences across schools disrupted straightforward longitudinal and cohort comparisons.  In particular, the Implementation evaluation team sees wide variation across the operation of schools and in the baseline quality/performance of Flagships.  In terms of variation in operations, some i3 schools have no identified Flagship (Harriet Tubman, John McDonogh-FIN) or have flagships that do not align in grade span (Clark, KIPP Believe, Cohen) or in pedagogical model Crescent Leadership Academy (CLA).  Assessing i3 schools relative to their flagship counterparts becomes problematic when i3 schools must intentionally deviate from the operating principles of their flagships for these structural reasons.  Further, flagship schools were identified by CMOs, rather than using a standardized set of criteria.  The flagship schools ostensibly represent the CMO's prototypical high performing model.  In reality, however, the flagship schools vary in their school performance ratings and in some cases are not, by objective standards, high performing.  The impact on the i3 initiative of these structural differences are discussed further below.

Finally, the real-time development of CMO structure simultaneous to i3 school expansion (rather than making i3 investments in existing, operational CMOs) challenges smooth assessments of fidelity-to-model.  Collegiate Academies, Friends of King, and Choice Foundation did not operate as fully formulated CMOs prior to

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[13] For more information, see http://www.louisianabelieves.com/schools/louisiana-scholarship-program
[14] See, e.g., http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2013/03/jindal_voucher_louisiana_orlea.html

the impetus of i3 replication.  This represents a change in selection policy and operation from the i3 initiative as originally conceived.

**Policy Changes: RSD Expulsion**  RSD's Expulsion Policy[15] was implemented in 2012 and introduced in July of 2012 via community meetings.  In part, the new policy shifts focus from frequency of misbehavior to severity of misbehavior, meaning that students who repeatedly make low-level infractions will remain in school; but a single serious infraction can result in expulsion.

NOLA Cohort 1 i3 schools did not report impact of the Expulsion Policy. School leaders of NOLA i3 schools knew that their CMO leaders had contributed to the drafting of the RSD policy, but were not fully cognizant of the process that created the policy.  As of Fall Year 2, one Cohort 1 i3 principal lacked familiarity with the policy because the principal did not see it as highly applicable, reporting that the school does not "have the occasion to expel kids."  Another Cohort 1 i3 principal felt unconcerned about the RSD policy because it aligns closely to the pre-existing policy of that school and their CMO.  The third Cohort 1 i3 principal reported "still trying to figure it out," in Fall Year 2.  This principal appreciated the policy's creation of consistency across schools, but expressed concerns that "the bar has been set so high that students who need an alternative system may not get one. The policy is now based on severity of actions rather than frequency." This element of the policy did present at least one instance of disruption for a Cohort 2 NOLA school, when a student who had made repeated threats remained enrolled (high frequency but low severity); while a student who had received threats, fearing attack, carried a weapon to school for protection and was expelled.[16]

**Policy Changes: OneApp**  In February 2012, RSD launched and implemented a city-wide centralized enrollment system, called OneApp, allowing students and families to enroll in RSD direct-run and charter schools through a single application[17].  In its first year, RSD reported that 84% of students entering Kindergarten or 9th grade (the system's "entry grades") received one of their top

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[15] Available at: https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=http%3A%2F%2Fblogs.edweek.org%2Fedweek%2Fcharterschoice%2FRSD%2520Expulsion%2520Process%2520and%2520Standards%25202012-13.pdf
[16] See http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/02/20/21charters-neworleans.h32.html?r=1658319809
[17] http://laschoolfinder.com/news/detail/36/Recovery-School-Districts-OneApp-School-Application-Process; see also http://enrollnola.org/

three school choices[18], with 76% of entry grade applicants placed in their first choice school[19].

However, despite this success rate, NOLA Cohort 1 i3 schools expressed concern that RSD lacked the capacity to run OneApp well. Principals reported concern that RSD lacked the necessary capacity to implement OneApp in a way that could effectively meet the needs of families and students. Principals felt that recruitment methods should allow them to "tell the story" of their school, and to connect with parents on an individual level, in order to equip parents to make the best school choice for their children.

Principals believed problems with OneApp's roll-out in its first year of implementation and with OneApp's underlying selection algorithm negatively impacted recruitment and enrollment at their schools. OneApp required schools citywide to change their recruitment timelines and strategies. As one Cohort 1 leader explained, "We had to use the RSD timeline this year instead of our timeline for recruitment. We were stuck in a holding pattern and had less time to do our recruiting. We could only recruit up until a date in the spring then we had to stop. Then we were given our second enrollment group a week before school and we were given a list that had incorrect family contact numbers. We were under-enrolled and then we had less time to recruit to fill those spots."

The other two Cohort 1 i3 school leaders also mentioned incorrect enrollment information as a problem with RSD's handling of OneApp. "Rather than having a waiting list that we created from information provided directly to us from parents," one principal explained, "we were given a waiting list from RSD that was less accurate." The third Cohort 1 i3 principal reported "I didn't always get information--they were not always clear on the process. For example, they sent the list of names of students who were put on our roll, but there was no contact information." This principal also noted that RSD did not communicate students' IEP needs in advance, making it difficult to plan for effective SPED services. This information was crucial for this school in particular, which enrolled over thirty new high needs students exiting alternative placements in the 2012-13 school year.

Ultimately, the three Cohort 1 i3 schools each responded to OneApp differently. One of the three schools simply sidestepped RSD directives, and registered students directly. That school leader reports, "We found discrepancies in the

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[18] See, e.g., http://www.nola.com/opinions/index.ssf/2012/09/oneapp_needed_for_all_new_orle.html
[19] See, e.g., http://waltonfamilyfoundation.org/grantees/recovery-school-district?utm_source=Walton+Family+Foundation+News&utm_campaign=fde1e35e7f-New_ed_reform_grantee_spotlights8_14_2012&utm_medium=email

OneApp process, for example, there were families that put [this school] as their first choice but were not matched, even though we still had open slots." A second Cohort 1 i3 school followed RSD's directives closely, referring parents to RSD Parent Centers for registration and living with the fact that "with the OneApp, there would be sacrifices" of autonomy. The third Cohort 1 i3 principal felt that OneApp went "fairly well," but notes that this perception was driven by having "low expectations" for the process overall.

All three Cohort 1 i3 principals report that they responded to RSD's limitations as effectively as they could at the building level. Fall Year 2 interviews indicate that families appreciated support from their children's schools in navigating OneApp. One Cohort 1 i3 parent coordinator reported that his school provided parent support in filing OneApp, even when parents chose to move their children to another school. Just by offering this help, he reported that some parents who had considered a switch eventually chose to re-enroll because they so appreciated the school's commitment to helping them.

In addition to the disruption presented by OneApp, Cohort 1 i3 schools still face additional challenges in recruiting as well. The two NOLA Cohort 1 i3 K-8 schools do not have feeder schools and must recruit citywide. The NOLA Cohort 1 i3 high school, which does have ostensible feeder schools in its CMO network, faces an additional conundrum: the CMO's K-8 schools aim to place their eighth graders in the best possible secondary placement, but the i3 high school is not yet considered a "best" placement for high performing eighth graders. As such, this school has feeders that do not want to act as feeders at this stage of the high school's turnaround.

Overall, NOLA Cohort 1 i3 schools still report seeing great benefit in recruitment strategies that connect with families at the human level. Schools need to "tell the story of who we are" to connect with families and students. This kind of recruitment interaction allows for authentic engagement with parents and students, and allows schools to build on word of mouth and existing family support among currently enrolled students.

NOLA Cohort 2 schools also reported challenges with recruitment and OneApp. NSNO reported that many schools emerged from the first year of the OneApp process under-enrolled by about 5%. Most notably, John McDonogh-FIN reported under-enrollment at 22%, a problem FIN attributed to a miscalculation by RSD at the outset of OneApp regarding the overall number of students seeking ninth grade slots citywide. Although John McDonogh-FIN's challenges stemmed from multiple causes (see below), NSNO nevertheless attempted to broker a solution with FIN and RSD. NSNO ultimately disavowed this remediation process due to deep

concern that the resolution RSD enacted – allowing FIN to take over management of Cohen High School's closing grades (11-12) – would hurt both FIN and the i3 initiative.  Indeed, the management agreement between RSD and FIN for Cohen was met with ire in the community, led to student protests and walk-outs[20], temporarily deflected FIN's attention from the needs of John McDonogh, and left NSNO with no remedy beyond a temporary stoppage of i3 funding to FIN upon determining that FIN had not implemented key elements of their i3 turnaround strategy by the time of the NSNO school review.

In addition a Cohort 2 principal articulated in interviews a strategy of purging his enrollment rolls immediately after the October 1 count in order to jettison students he felt had limited potential for success.  As such, remedies for under-enrollment at this school were likely complicated not only by OneApp, but by an intentional building-level strategy to decrease enrollment in mid-Fall.

**2012 Opening Schools**   Exigencies in the field impact the operations of i3-involved schools and CMOs.  There exist obvious and expected differences in landscape between Tennessee and New Orleans markets, but interesting findings emerge when comparing Tennessee's inaugural year to New Orleans in both Year 1 and Year 2.

**Locus of Control**   All Tennessee Closing school principals, whose previous experience as principals ranged from two to six years, reported that they believed their schools could have avoided closure had circumstances been different.  This finding of an external locus of control among Closing school principals mirrors the reports of NOLA Cohort 1 Closing principals, who also believed their schools were unfairly starved of resources and forced into failure and closure.  Tennessee Closing principals identify a variety of parties they believe failed to meet their responsibilities to their schools, including their districts, leaders, teachers, and parents.  Tennessee Closing school teachers also identified a multitude of needs at their schools: more parental and community involvement, stronger communication strategies, more district-level stability, more special education supports, staffing changes, calendar changes, and unsurprisingly, more money.  One Tennessee Closing school teacher suggested starting over from scratch.  A Tennessee Closing school principal reported needing "More money, more resources, more hires, more supports." Another stated, "We did not receive any support from the district.  What we have done, we've done ourselves."

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[20] See, e.g. http://www.nola.com/education/index.ssf/2012/10/recovery_school_district_faces.html, http://www.wwltv.com/news/Walter-Cohen-students-parents-upset-with-major-changes-at-school-172734051.html, and http://theadvocate.com/news/neworleans/4077257-148/cohen-firings-draw-ire.

Finally, Tennessee Closing school stakeholders expressed the same skepticism around the legitimacy of the closure decisions that NOLA Cohort 1 schools expressed. "This is a very tough school environment," one Tennessee Closing school principal noted. "Students face social and emotional challenges, we have lots of incarcerated parents, grandparents raising kids…We think this year's scores will meet the cut score [but] no matter how hard you work, it doesn't matter sometimes because the powers that be decide the fate." Closures were attributed to "political stuff". Another Tennessee Closing school principal, in reference to the closure decision-making process, put it more bluntly: "Figures don't lie, but liars do figure. You can manipulate data to support what you want to do."

These findings present a contrast with NOLA Cohort 2 Closing principals. Five of the seven NOLA Cohort 2 closing principals had been principals prior to working at the closing schools; one was a former teacher. These school leaders expressed less external locus, less surprise, and less resentment than either NOLA Cohort 1 or Tennessee Closing principals. In a few cases, school leaders recognized responsibility for a school's closing. For example, one leader noted that recommendations for staff changes from the year before had not been approved by her board, which had negative impact on school performance and stymied her ability to raise student achievement.

NOLA Cohort 2 Closing principals were by no means unilaterally positive or universally in agreement with closure decisions, but Cohort 2 Closing principals recognized in some cases that closure would benefit their students and likely improve their schools. "I was for it. It's easier to make this school a better place as a charter principal. This goes back to my thoughts about the RSD. People have the idea that RSD is an evil entity. I don't think that. Understanding the hidden culture [of New Orleans] is difficult. They [RSD] have worked hard to give me what I need. The [RSD's] growing sense of urgency may seem like sabotage [to others]," explained one NOLA Cohort 2 Closing school principal.

Interestingly, Tennessee and NOLA Cohort 2 principals agreed on one particular aspect of the closure process: structural challenges to school success. One NOLA Cohort 2 Closing principal shared that the inconsistent leadership and disruptions to school culture which had plagued closing schools in the years prior to closure caused great difficulty in meeting school wide goals:

> "You can't have a different principal every year. Even with a vision/mission, we've had to change how we achieve it every year. You need one principal with enough time to be principal. The support mechanisms charters have should be in all schools. Thirty-four eighth graders in one class isn't what it should be. It's like we're set up for

failure.  We're Ellis Island - we've never turned a kid away.  Charters can turn kids down once they hit their enrollment limit.  We can't - there is no over-enrollment for us.  Culture cannot be a strength for us because we have to re-teach it every day as new kids come in ".

A Tennessee principal agreed:

"If the Board had hired the CEO and the current principal or a comparably competent leader sooner, we could have avoided this.  It was too little, too late.  By the time the Board gave me the go-ahead on my hiring changes, the good people I'd recruited had taken other jobs and I had to hire my second and third choices. "

**Closure Process: RSD/ASD-MCS-MNPS**  The locus of control findings may be substantiated by the reports from Closing school principals: in both NOLA Cohort 2 and Tennessee (like their NOLA Cohort 1 counterparts), each felt they had requested support from RSD/ASD[21] that they did not receive.  This support included additional staff (i.e. speech therapist, social worker), support for community outreach and accessing community-based resources, and support with parental involvement. As one Closing school principal noted, "I asked for a social worker, a speech therapist, and an APE teacher.  All I got was the royal runaround."

Additionally, facilities remained a challenge for all schools, in all cohorts, in all locations.  In Tennessee, fully two-thirds of i3 school facilities were not available for move-in until very late summer.  Leaders of i3 schools diverted attention from other school operations in order to address facilities challenges, which they report had a negative impact on their schools.  NOLA Cohort 1 schools continue to face degraded facilities; a banister fell off the wall on the day of one Cohort 1 site visit, and another Cohort 1 school still resides in modular units.  NOLA Cohort 2 schools vary widely in type of facility:  some are in renovated buildings;  others in unrenovated buildings;  still others in modulars.

Facilities in some cases undermine the mission/program model of Cohort 2 schools.  For example, CLA aims to provide both intensive supports as an expulsion center and more typical curriculum for students enrolled year-round, but cannot effectively manage the delivery of both models in their current building. John McDonogh-FIN plans to move out of their current building next year to a temporary site, then back into the current building after massive renovations, at great cost to school culture

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[21] For the purposes of this document, the Implementation team will use "ASD" to refer cumulatively to the Achievement School District, the Memphis City Schools, and the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools. We will distinguish among these entities only when the Tennessee respondents themselves note substantive differences among the local district and the state turnaround entity.

and community cohesion.  Both Collegiate Academies i3 schools and their Flagship school occupy modulars, which limits their ability to provide lab sciences (a challenge to the mission of the Flagship) and clubs/sports (which CA staff report disrupts cohesion, student leadership development, and college-readiness for Carver campus students).

**Closure Process: Teachers**  Cohort 2 Closing school teachers ranged in their level of commitment to their schools upon learning of the impending closure.  At some schools, teachers felt fully committed to their students regardless: "No bitterness, fully earnest, still teaching.  We come to work every day to teach." Other schools saw a mixed reaction: "There were feelings of, why should we keep trying? [But] this attitude did not stay.  We have rallied around a 'finish strong' mentality." Similarly, another teacher shared, "No one's given up on their teaching, we'll all working but we're defeated-feeling." And, as with NOLA Cohort 1 schools, some teachers did express slackening commitment after the closure announcement: "There is a division, [an] untrustworthy atmosphere.  Support has gone, passion is turned off." Another teacher added "At the beginning, we worked hard to keep a positive culture with a focus on achievement, but that's decreased because the staff cares less now."

**Closure Process: Parents and Community**  Community engagement during the closure/restart process continues to operate inconsistently for Cohort 2 schools as it did in Cohort 1.  Closing schools in both NOLA and Tennessee learned of their own closures through inconsistent channels of communication. One Tennessee Closing school was not notified until April, and the principal reported that parents also did not know at that point that the school was closing.  The other Tennessee Closing schools were notified about closing in January; these principals reported that parents and staff were upset about the school closing.

Schools varied in whether they assumed responsibility for notifying families about the closure process and helping families navigate placements for the following year. Two of the Tennessee closing principals did not take responsibility for communicating to parents about the closing of the school and did not attend the parent meetings hosted by ASD.  One principal reported that s/he did not think parents were notified, another reported that parents were notified when news of the closure ran in local media.

The experience of Tennessee stakeholders during the closure process mirrored that of last year's NOLA Cohort 1.  However, NOLA Cohort 2 stakeholders learned of closures through formal channels and by design. Most NOLA Cohort 2 school stakeholders learned of their school's closure from RSD directly or (in the case of teachers) from their principals.  Six of the seven NOLA Cohort 2 closing schools

then notified families via a letter signed by RSD, according to teachers. Additionally, four of the schools held meetings with students. NOLA Cohort 2 respondents reported that RSD held community/parent meetings about the transition process for all but one Closing school (McDonogh 42). Five out of seven Cohort 2 schools reported that their leaders attended these meetings. Four of the schools (McDonogh 42, Craig, Sojourner Truth, and John McDonogh-FIN) held multiple community meetings. None of the Closing school leadership required teachers to attend community meetings.

This represents an improvement from Year 1 and speaks to learning exchange and intentional efforts by system stakeholders (NSNO, RSD, schools, community) to improve the closure process. However, despite a smoother notification process, NOLA Cohort 2 reported that the reaction of parents still varied greatly by Closing school. Two Cohort 2 leaders reported that parents were completely uninvolved, others said parents were comfortable with the change. Still 2 other school leaders said that parents were angry and fought against the decision.

At John McDonogh-FIN, media reports document deep community distrust of FIN and concern about the closure of John McDonogh[22]. This community distrust had been inflamed the previous year by RSD's decision to place a Renew alternative high school as a school-within-a-school in the John McDonogh building without community notification, feedback, or consent. While the Renew school no longer shares space in the John McDonogh building, that experience informed community agitation against the entrance of FIN as an operator in the turnaround year.

This shift in attitude at some schools represents normalization in communities of the turnaround process, a maturation of that process, and (potentially) a difference between K-8 and high school turnarounds. At McDonogh 42, the i3 turnaround represented one of New Orleans's first charter-to-charter school turnarounds. While the outgoing administration expressed disappointment that they had not hit performance goals, and while they expressed sadness that a community-driven charter effort had failed, they felt the decision to implement an i3 turnaround was fair and justified. The school community, having already undergone charter takeover by the community-driven group, was more familiar with the steps of the process than communities facing charter turnaround of RSD direct-run schools.

At Craig, the 2011 failure to pair the failing school with Firstline as a turnaround operator paved the way for a more authentic and community-friendly process in 2012. Parents and community members had more voice in the operator selection

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[22] See, e.g. http://thelensnola.org/2013/01/16/charter-board-meeting-erupts/ and
http://www.oprah.com/own-blackboard-wars/blackboard-wars-blog.html

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criteria the second time around.  The selection of Friends of King addressed their concerns regarding the importance of local, culturally competent, and veteran leadership.  As such, the operator selection process at Craig incorporated responsiveness and sensitivity to community feedback that had not been present in the initial turnaround conversation.

However, deep rifts still remain, particularly for turnaround high schools with active alumni associations who maintain ongoing ties between school and neighborhood identity.  The turnaround process at a total of 3 Cohort 2 schools activated strong opposition.  This opposition tapped a recurring narrative about school and community identity, takeover by outsiders, and distrust of RSD.

## Cohort 1 Update

**Staffing**  NOLA Cohort 1 schools continue to perform better than their Closing school counterparts on classroom observational measures, even in to Year 2.  All but one Cohort 1 classrooms scored better than closing counterparts on tracking (both student of teacher and teacher of students).  Further, Cohort 1 classrooms are consistently rated as more conducive to learning than their Closing school counterparts.  Note that Clark showed a small decrease in classroom observation scores from Spring Year 1 to Fall Year 2; however, this may be attributed to the increase in students entering Clark from alternative placements in the fall of Year 2.

While classroom observations indicate improved quality of instruction compared to Closing school counterparts, Cohort 1 i3 schools still face crucial staffing challenges. Leaders reported hiring for culture match, rather than for proven track record of improving student outcomes.  Cohort 1 schools saw significant staff turnover from Year 1 to Year 2.  Teachers also reported that this turnover was driven by culture mismatch, as well as performance issues.  Teachers both left willingly and were asked to leave by leadership across the three Cohort 1 i3 schools.  Principals did not believe turnover would impact school culture, although teachers did not universally agree; some felt turnover would cause longer-term challenges for maintaining school culture.

Special education (SPED) staffing also remains a challenge.  While the Implementation evaluation protocol design delves more deeply into the issue of special education needs and services in Year 3, it is worth noting here that all three NOLA Cohort 1 i3 school leaders continue to report that they face challenges in meeting students' SPED needs.  Indeed, many leaders in both NOLA cohorts note that they value their schools' participation in the i3 initiative in part because it allows them greater resources specifically to provide SPED services.

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**Professional Development** The creation and implementation of professional development programs at the NOLA Cohort 1 schools continues to be a work in progress. All Cohort 1 principals reported that their view and the CMO's view of professional development were highly aligned. All three Cohort 1 schools rated the importance of professional development highly (either an eight or nine out of possible ten).

However, findings reveal both a perceived decline in the quality of professional development at the school building level and perceived gaps in the available options.

**Table 18: Teachers' Perceived Usefulness of Professional Development**

| NOLA Cohort One i3 Teachers' Perceived Usefulness of Professional Development (Fall Year 2) | |
|---|---|
| Type of PD | % Teachers Who Rated PD Either a 4 or 5 out of 5 |
| PD Provided by School Leader | 58% |
| PD Provided by School Staff | 55% |
| PD Provided by CMO | 29% |
| PD Provided by NSNO | 13% |
| PD Provided by RSD | 8% |
| PD Provided by LADOE | 8% |

NOLA Cohort 1 teachers reported high support of the professional development programs at their schools in Year 1 compared to Year 2. Last year Cohort 1 teachers reported that the interim assessment results were driving the professional development programs at the school. One out of the three i3 schools reported customizing their professional development for individual teachers in Year 2. Teachers at the other two schools both reported low ratings of the professional development program at their school and were vocal in both survey and interview responses about the lack of relevancy and usefulness of professional development opportunities they received. Teachers at these two schools expressed a need for differentiated professional development, as well as more efficient ways to utilize teacher's time. One teacher claimed;

> "Teachers here feel incredibly pressed for time; we waste a tremendous amount of time in-school, doing shout-outs, sitting through announcements that don't apply to the entire staff, participating in PDs that aren't relevant to our subject area.... First-

and second-year teachers with no training in curriculum design are writing their own curriculum with very few resources aside from a school leader-designed pacing guide. Our students would be better served by better curriculum."

Another identified ways to improve professional development by saying, "Professional development to help teachers develop their craft, specifically for the curriculum we are using. Ways to increase student achievement in our specific classrooms." Also noted by one teacher, "Everything is one size fits all and it doesn't really fit anyone."

**Continuous Improvement**  As discussed thus far, NOLA Cohort 1 schools face numerous challenges inherent in the landscape. Cohort 1 schools have demonstrated commitment to meeting these challenges and minimizing the impact of exigent circumstances on their own ability to continually improve their practice. Cohort 1 schools have revised staffing plans in real time to better meet student needs.  They are planning for facilities upgrades, and working creatively to maximize the facilities they currently occupy.  They have changed recruiting procedures in order to participate in OneApp.  The Implementation and Organizational Capacity Teams also see burgeoning efforts to collaborate around special education, transportation, and joint assessment.

However, NOLA Cohort 1 schools continue to focus on set-up and on-boarding in the landscape with little systematic attention devoted to comprehensive continuous improvement of the program and school.  All of the Cohort 1 school leaders continue to describe what their strategies and plans will be; however action towards long term efforts of continuous improvement is still rare.  However, there is some evidence of nascent growth in the domain of continuous improvement among these schools from Year 1 to Year 2.  KIPP Believe Elementary reported customized professional development for their teachers.  Additionally, Cohort 1 i3 schools show an increase in visual markers of school culture, (e.g. bulletin board postings, examples of student work, school banners/signs) throughout their facilities from Year 1 to Year 2, indicating an ongoing effort to communicate school culture more effectively.

**School-Level Supply Constraints**  The Implementation Team learned last year that even before their doors opened, the three NOLA Cohort 1 i3 schools went to great lengths to establish an accelerated pace and set high expectations for both the staff and the students of the school.  In order to sustain and maintain the force of this strategy, the school leader must make a concentrated effort to constantly reinforce the expectations as well as to prevent and address any slippage in the

execution of the strategy. This effort aligns with evidence[23] that indicates the decisions made in the early years of a school's operation are crucial for setting the trajectory of long-term performance.

With fewer than two years of operation, the staff at the three Cohort 1 schools are already reporting trepidation in both meeting the needs of all students they serve as well as sustaining the pace moving forward.

As mentioned above, three out of three i3 Cohort 1 schools in NOLA report limitations in meeting the needs of their special education populations. They have more children with more diverse and substantial needs than they currently have appropriate staff to support. Further, they foresee SPED needs as one of the top long term challenges that their schools will continue to face. Teachers reported having some services, but not enough to meet the needs of these students. School leaders have reported challenges in identifying both SPED needs, and consequently, arranging appropriate SPED services. The Implementation Study will be delving further into the topic of special education in the upcoming spring site visits as well as in Year 3.

The attempts and dedication made by teachers to maintain high expectations and provide an optimal environment for their students have come at a personal cost. Teachers are already expressing feelings of burn-out and exhaustion. One teacher reported that most of the staff will not be returning next year. As noted in the staffing section, Cohort 1 i3 schools have already experienced significant staff turnover from Year 1 to Year 2, partially driven by culture mismatch. While the principals did not believe turnover would impact school culture, teachers did not universally agree; some felt turnover would cause longer-term challenges for maintaining school culture. The implications of teacher sustainability have cascading effects on many aspects of the school including the student and staff culture, the buy-in and collaboration of the staff and the commitment to the schools long term success.

Similarly, consistency of school leadership both physically as well as strategically are essential elements for stability in a school. Two of the three Cohort 1 i3 schools have had consistent leadership since inception. Clark Prep experienced a change of leadership from Year 1 to Year 2. The new school leader was an internal candidate who served as Assistant Principal at the onset of Clark's opening; however as the transition of the initial school leader became evident the Assistant Principal served in more of a co-principal capacity for the remainder of the first year and assumed

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[23]

https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=http%3A%2F%2Fcredo.stanford.edu%2Fpdfs%2FCGAR%2520Growth%2520Executive%2520Summary.pdf

full responsibility for the 2012-2013 school year.  Stability of leadership is discussed more fully below.

We see more evidence that NOLA Cohort 2 leaders are considering factors beyond the definition of "culture match" they employed in Year 1 when hiring teachers.  This may represent a broadening of the definition of how school leaders are defining "culture" and/or an evolving approach to staffing.  NOLA Cohort 2 principals all report looking for stamina, attitude, and receptivity to feedback in addition to culture match.  Some (but not nearly all) Cohort 2 leaders also looked for credentials and considered each potential hire's fit relative to other staff (i.e. considered unique value-add skills of each individual teacher).  However, Cohort 2 leaders are still relying heavily on culture match as a determinant of employment.  Upcoming Spring and Fall 2013 site visits will provide indication on whether teacher turnover remains as high for Cohort 2 schools as it was for Cohort 1.

**School Culture**  School culture for the three NOLA Cohort 1 i3 schools continues to occupy the minds of school leaders and staff.  As discussed comprehensively in the previous section, schools express deep concern in regards to school culture concerning the challenges of teacher sustainability and longevity.  High teacher turnover occurred in some schools; in most schools teachers express feelings of burn-out and concern for their and their colleagues' longevity.

In addition to teacher longevity, NOLA Cohort 1 i3 schools continue to focus on building and maintaining intentional school culture.  As documented in the Year 1 report, schools varied in their attempts to create a consistent and cohesive school culture in their opening year.  Perhaps unsurprisingly, the two schools taking on a partial or full school turnaround reported greater challenges in setting and maintaining a strong school culture than the fresh start i3 school did, though it must also be noted that the fresh start began with kindergarten.  Early in Fall Year 1, Clark had already undertaken a full culture reboot for their 9th Grade Academy only six weeks into the school year in an attempt to reorient the students to the school's expectations for behavior and engagement (issues that had already been previously and extensively addressed during student orientation).

In Year 2, teachers at two Cohort 1 schools continued to voice concern around school culture, particularly in terms of a mismatch on expectations and the current climate and goals of the enrolled students.  Teachers also expressed concern in the area of teacher sustainability and longevity.

In expressing the first concern around the mismatch between schools' and students' culture expectations, leaders and teachers acknowledged that the schools and their students held differing viewpoints.  One teacher shared, "a major short term

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problem is understanding that many students DO NOT choose to attend x but were SENT here thus have not fully adopted its culture and discipline policies or mission. [We have] extremely poor student morale and school connectedness beyond students who are on sports teams." Another teacher at the same school cited that the long term challenges for the school included, "sustaining a student population, finding ways to work with ALL students, setting post-secondary goals that are appropriate to the individual." Nine out of twenty-one teachers surveyed at this school cited retaining students as a long term challenge for the school. Similar concerns were brought to light at a second school: "One negative is there are high expectations that can be unrealistic. It is important to strive for the highest excellence. However, we derail for what is realistic at times. This causes a lot of stress to the students and teachers alike."

**Systems for Success - All Cohorts**  As in Year 1, the Implementation evaluation team identified Systems For Success that operate at and beyond the building-level and impact school success. These systems comprise a set of processes and practices schools and CMOs employ to confront issues including community engagement, common vision and culture, school stability, and mobilization of support necessary to meet school- and student-level goals.

**Community Engagement**  NOLA Cohort 1 i3 principals report high confidence over their second year in their internal school relationships. Cohort 1 i3 principals consistently rated their relationships with students, parents, staff, and CMO highly (four or five on a five-point scale). However, they have less confidence in their ability to develop relationships with the community, rating relationships with geographic community, greater New Orleans community, and boards lower. Interestingly, Tennessee schools report good relationships with their external communities, including faith groups, social service agencies, enrichment providers, and geographic neighbors.

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**Table 19: Principals' Perceived Support from External and Internal Relationships**

| Principals' Perceived Level of Support for School from Internal and External Groups | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Support From: | NOLA Cohort 1 Fall Y1 | NOLA Cohort 2 Fall Y1 | TN Cohort 1 Fall Y1 |
| Parents | 7 | 6.3 | 6.7 |
| Students | 8.5 | 7.6 | 8 |
| Church | 6.7 | 7.4 | 5 |
| Immediate Community | 7 | 6.3 | 5 |
| Greater New Orleans/ Memphis/ Nashville Area | 6 | 7.9 | 5 |
| CMO | 8 | 9.1 | 10 |
| Philanthropy | 7 | 7.4 | 10 |
| RSD/ASD | 2 | 6 | 8.3 |
| State DOE | 9.5 | 6.6 | 1 |
| NSNO | N/A | 5 | 0 |

It should be noted, however, that the quality of these relationships have not been assessed. While community engagement around school closures remains salient, the extent to which schools benefit from other external relationships seems variable and may warrant further attention. For example, John McDonogh-FIN received intensive publicity in its first year because of an affiliation with Oprah Winfrey's production company, which provided resources for a documentary film crew to track students through their ninth grade year. However, observational and interview data indicate that such a "resource" in fact decreased the quality of instruction and disrupted the creation of a positive school culture.

In contrast, Clark received a grant during their second year to join a national network of Y-PLAN schools[24], which engage students in real-world neighborhood development and community design challenges. This resource, while less salient in responses from teachers and students than John McDonogh's camera crews, provides evidence-based approaches to youth leadership development and is designed to address both student- and school-level challenges with community engagement. As such, the Implementation evaluation team wishes to note here that while respondents can catalogue and rate perceptions of external relationships,

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[24] http://www.citiesandschools.org

the i3 evaluation protocol does not currently assess the value of such relationships further.

**Stability of Vision and Leadership**  In Year 2, the Implementation team focused on the consistency and stability of vision between leaders and their staff.  The Implementation team paid particular attention to school leaders' approaches to high expectations and school culture remaining crucial aspects of leaders' approaches.  However, the continuity and sustainability of leaders themselves remains a challenge for i3 schools, and a threat to the success of the i3 initiative.

**Common Vision Among Staff and Leaders**  In Year 1, the Implementation team found that i3 schools devoted significant effort to establish expectations, standards, and culture.  The i3 schools were building processes in real time to reinforce those expectations, standards, and culture continuously.  Finally, the i3 schools were highly committed to data-driven decision making.  At the time of the Year 1 report, i3 schools demonstrated mixed success on these efforts, with commitment to student success and continuous improvement high, but activities such as performance management and communications not fully aligned to those commitments.

In Fall Year 2, NOLA Cohort 1 i3 principals continued to report high alignment (four or five on five-point scales) with their CMOs' values, visions, and missions.  Cohort 1 i3 principals also report high alignment to CMOs' approaches to professional development.  Teachers report similarly high alignment with their school leaders' vision and mission; 92% of teachers rate alignment to principals' vision as four or five on a five-point scale, 93% of teachers give the same ratings for alignment with principals' mission.  Teachers report commitment and collaboration among their colleagues, as well as overall school culture, as strengths of their schools.

Teachers articulate this alignment enthusiastically.  One teacher claims, "There is INCREDIBLE unity here.  All of us share one vision, and that vision is moving children on the path to college-readiness and success."  Another feels, "Everyone believes in our mission and is a delight to work with.  There is a ton of joy and smiles and laughter among the adults."  Teachers at the third Cohort 1 school report "teacher coherence" and "support for teachers' needs" as strengths of their school, and note the "true passion for working with students and improving performance" among their colleagues.

All three NOLA Cohort 1 i3 principals report setting and maintaining high expectations for both teachers and students.  Teachers agree that they and their colleagues hold high expectations for students as well.  Indeed, 85% rate their confidence in their own abilities to set high student expectations highly (four or five

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out of five); and 91% report high (four or five out of five) confidence in their principals' ability to set high student expectations.  Additionally, 70% of Cohort 1 i3 teachers rate their confidence in their own ability to motivate students as high.  NOLA Cohort 1 i3 schools reportedly use goal-setting and constant, school-wide reinforcement of expectations to immerse students in a culture of high expectations.

Efforts of establishing an environment of common vision among the adults are observed in NOLA Cohort 2 schools as well as TN Cohort 1 schools.  Multiple NOLA Cohort 2 school leaders mentioned a focus on alignment of adults and a commitment to the vision of the school as part of their hiring strategy.  Seven out of seven NOLA Cohort 2 principals give a grade of either an A or B for setting high expectations for all students.  The results were mixed for reporting alignment among adults on the mission and vision of the school.  Two school leaders rated their school with an A rating, three schools gave a B and two school leaders rated their schools with a C.

**Leadership Stability**   Leadership turnover presents a definitive threat to the success of the i3 initiative.  Strength of leadership dominates the criteria for the i3 selection process, and consistency of leadership underlies the fidelitous replication of high performing school/CMO models.  Despite this, Year 2 of the i3 initiative saw numerous disruptions to leadership stability across both NOLA cohorts.

At the CMO level, both FIN and Rites of Passage suffered nearly two-thirds turnover of central office staff from the time of i3 application to early 2013.  Firstline and KIPP also lost key leadership team members during Year 2 of the i3 initiative.  At the building level, a number of i3 schools suffered for a lack of leadership stability.  Clark Prep (Cohort 1) changed principals from Year 1 to Year 2.  While such a change is not ideal, the new principal had served as Assistant Principal in Year 1 and stepped up to a de facto co-principal position late in Year 1, when it became clear the founding principal would leave.  This may have mitigated issues related to turnover, but still constituted a substantive change in leadership style and practice, which teachers reported as a disruption in Year 2.

At one Cohort 2 school, the building-level leader appears to have extremely limited autonomy. This may represent an intentional decision by the CMO during the transition year, or may be recognition by the CMO that the school leader herself is transitioning into her role and is not yet prepared to "fly solo."  In either case, the CEO of the CMO makes most meaningful decisions at the school, is frequently physically present at the school, and maintains control over both the i3 school and its Flagship.  While the CMO was selected for i3 with the tacit understanding that they would not seek additional charters, they are under no formal obligation to

remain a network of only two schools. Building-level leadership provided by the CEO – rather than a building-level, autonomously operating school leader – will not remain a tenable model should the CMO expand beyond their two current schools.

## Leadership Failure

Perhaps the most significant have been the leadership struggles at ROP's Crescent Leadership Academy (CLA) and John McDonogh-FIN. When selecting Rite of Passage, NSNO was aware that the CMO did not have a committed and strong school leader for CLA in place. To be clear, ROP presented a leader during the selection process who was rated quite highly (a "4" out of "4") but expected that the leader could exercise her duties on a part-time arrangement. In response to this leadership concern, NSNO added an additional requirement to ROP's Operator Milestones as drafted by NSNO: "Awardee agrees to retain school leader role for the duration of the first school year." According to the agreement NSNO did not require ROP to have NSNO's approval on new assistant principal leadership hires. Rather the agreement states: "Rite of Passage will NSNO when key personnel, school leaders, or trustees leave the organization and provide information on replacements" [emphasis added]. Assuming that everyone was operating in good faith, it appears that there was a misunderstanding about the need for ROP to have NSNO's prior approval before making new hires.

The legal basis for action lies with the original agreements as stated in ROP's Operator Milestones (if ROP was willing to underwrite the development of the assistant principal and then present her as a candidate, it's not clear why NSNO would object). If ROP agreed to clear new hires with NSNO, either NSNO overstepped or NSNO failed to formalize the new requirements with ROP, as ROP hired an Assistant Principal but did not inform NSNO of their actions. That hire was eventually replaced, having been rated by the school leader as unsatisfactory.

From the start, NSNO made multiple efforts to communicate with ROP and ROP agreed to many things that then they did not follow through on. NSNO learned that the school leader was spending substantial time (more than 25 percent) away from New Orleans, directly violating their agreement that she would have the role of school leader. Months of NSNO's multiple attempts to communicate through negotiations and agreements with ROP ensued. However, CLA continued to operate without a strong leader. NSNO initially had to withhold funds due to a lack of adequate support documentation for their reimbursements, but in December 2012 NSNO decided to withhold funding until an appropriate Principal was in place. In October, ROP's leadership agreed via phone that the school leader would be present 75% of the time at minimum. Then after that, ROP agreed that no new Principal would be hired without NSNO's approval. When ROP did not fulfill these promises,

NSNO continued to work to evaluate whether they had a leader in place and went to ROP to do a site visit with interviews. When visiting the school, NSNO determined that the new principal in training did not meet NSNO's standards.

Subsequently, NSNO has informed CREDO that NSNO no longer has a partnership with ROP.

John McDonogh-FIN has not experienced principal turnover. However, the principal at John McDonogh-FIN is not in fact an employee of the school or the CMO. He is engaged as a full-time consultant through his consulting firm (an independent LLC). His contract with FIN includes a clause that allows him to work 22 days each year on outside projects he picks up through his firm, unrelated to his leadership of John McDonogh. While such split attention might be remediated by a strong assistant principal, John McDonogh-FIN's assistant principal also spent significant amounts of time away from the school. As of the Implementation evaluation team's Fall 2012 visit, the assistant principal was in the process of pursuing an Ed.D. from an out-of state University. He explained that he travels out of state frequently to fulfill university requirements and meet with advisors. This absence of daily leadership has resulted in real challenges to school culture and operations, as delineated by teachers; and has negatively impacted the quality of instruction and school culture.

Additionally, building-level decisions at John McDonogh-FIN have undermined operations and student success. The unwillingness of the principal to create and abide by plans for professional development, student enrichment, and curriculum mapping prior to the start of school has stymied teachers and staff, who were three months into the school year before leadership even began the process of creating school policies. Further, FIN agreed to allow Oprah Winfrey's production company to film a documentary in the school, chronicling the turnaround. The film requires three different camera crews reside in the building. Based on Implementation team observations, the film crews are empowered to access any part of the building at any time, can interrupt classes, and during one observation, asked a teacher to re-enact disciplining a student in the hallway because they had not captured the event on camera the first time. As of this writing, NSNO has informed CREDO that due to these deliberate deviations from the proposed school plan, as well as the disruptive presence (and ongoing public relations challenges) of the film production, NSNO will not be partnering with FIN further.

These leadership disruptions, while not universal, reveal a degree of instability in the i3 program. In response to these leadership disruptions and chain of events, NSNO has refocused their efforts in selection to avoid future disruptions to both the i3 project as well as the students being served. However, the lack of urgency in creating viable leadership for these schools raises larger questions about the

capacity of the CMOs to successfully fulfill their role in the larger school improvement scheme. If, as promised in the Charter Restart application, "the system must replicate only those charter operators with a proven track record of success"[25], the i3 initiative may be undermined by operators and schools that cannot maintain leadership stability. NSNO's challenge of attracting high quality CMOs with high quality leaders is in part due to instability in the CMO landscape and points to a weakness in the fundamental Charter Restart Model design, which operates on the assumption that there would be a stream of high quality CMO applicants.

**External School Supports**  All i3 schools across cohorts and locations report the need for support from outside the school to supplement or improve their efforts. The types of supports schools report needing vary from school to school, although some types of supports (e.g. SPED) are consistently mentioned across schools/cohorts/location. When seeking additional support, schools overwhelmingly rely on their CMOs as a resource. Indeed, principals in all locations/cohorts report that their CMOs support schools with a comprehensive system of supports and services that provide financial, human capital, curricular, and operations supports. Schools rely on other agencies less frequently; New Orleans schools access supports from NSNO and RSD more consistently than Tennessee schools access supports from ASD. Conversely, Tennessee schools report accessing more community-based supports than NOLA schools.

**RSD/ASD Supports**  As of Fall Year 2, RSD had not provided any sort of review or feedback to NOLA Cohort 1 schools. Only eight percent of surveyed Cohort 1 teachers reported that RSD-provided professional development was useful. One Cohort 1 school leader also reported concern that "RSD is now working on teacher evaluations, which is not their expertise. Rather they should be working on what they understand and what they are good at." Similarly, two of three Tennessee Flagship principals reported that feedback from ASD was not important or not applicable.

NOLA Cohort 2 and Tennessee schools had little to say about their respective state turnaround districts. In Tennessee, the schools, local districts, turnaround district, and state department of education occupy a different relationship structure than in New Orleans. ASD must interface with the local Nashville and Memphis districts more collaboratively than RSD did with OPSB. Also, Tennessee still has active teachers' unions and a smaller overall market share of charters overall, making ASD's work less comprehensive in either Memphis or Nashville relative to RSD's

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[25] "Scaling the New Orleans Charter Restart Model," NSNO i3 application, p.3.

work in New Orleans.  As such, ASD is less salient to Tennessee schools than RSD is to NOLA schools.

In New Orleans, LA DOE and RSD continued their ongoing re-organizations through the course of the 2012-13 school year.  Notably, LA DOE moved positions dedicated to the expansion of the New Orleans CMO marketplace and some deputy superintendency duties out of RSD and to LA DOE.  Given the minimal support NOLA school leaders seek or receive from RSD, school leaders may not feel the impact of these changes directly.  However, in terms of the Goals of the i3 project, particularly Goal 3 (scalability), these changes disrupt existing roles and responsibilities regarding particular supports to schools and the system of schools. Thus these changes may impact how supports funnel through to schools from external support providers such as LA DOE and RSD, but also including NSNO and CMOs.

**NSNO Supports**  By Fall of Year 2, all three New Orleans Cohort 1 schools had undergone an NSNO school review.  These principals rated their NSNO site visits as highly helpful (between seven and nine on a ten-point scale) in Spring Year 1, but their estimations of NSNO site visits fell by Fall Year 2.  In the fall, these leaders rated NSNO visits as somewhat helpful.  In addition to NSNO site visits, NOLA Cohort 1 schools also utilized CMO reviews, which they describe as inconsistent and/or non-comprehensive.  In their first year, one i3 school also underwent a review by Noble Street, one of the external CMOs that their CMO looks to as a model.  The school reported finding the Noble Street input valuable in terms of model and culture.

School leaders recognize that NSNO (among external support providers, excluding the schools' CMOs) best meets their needs for feedback on school operations. Indeed, school leaders most highly value feedback from any source given that said feedback is relevant and timely.  For example, one Cohort 1 i3 school felt their initial NSNO review provided irrelevant feedback relative to the immediate goals of the school.  School leadership expressed that concern to NSNO, and were satisfied when NSNO responded by setting up a second visit and making NSNO staff increasingly accessible.  Feedback "targeting work on our long-term mission" and on "consistency of culture" helped a second Cohort 1 i3 school identify "pockets of strength" as well as areas for growth such as student engagement.

Still, school leaders feel that NSNO's feedback can be even more finely honed.  The third Cohort 1 i3 school felt that during their Spring Year 1 NSNO visit, "NSNO got sidetracked by focusing on one or two disgruntled employees.  I felt like they emphasized those two teachers' experiences as being part of a trend.  [Those employees] may have been bitter but that does not mean that those two people's

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voices should be focused on." Also, NSNO site visits do not seem to impact teachers directly: teachers report not receiving feedback after NSNO visits, and rely instead on principal feedback. Very few (13%) of Cohort 1 teachers reported that professional development provided by NSNO was useful.

Despite concerns with some of NSNO's site visit feedback, all three Cohort 1 i3 schools recognize that NSNO is responsive. None of the Cohort 1 i3 schools felt that they could not receive relevant feedback if they requested it. One leader reports "NSNO is really responsive" and another said, "we receive plenty of visits…the more feedback the better."

NOLA Cohort 2 i3 schools also relied on NSNO-provided supports. Cohort 2 i3 schools rated NSNO supports highly. One leader explained, "They've been extremely supportive with meetings, feedback. The leadership is superb to work with. They told us about A-NET (we had no real instrument) and do walk-through visits with feedback." A Cohort 2 i3 school credits NSNO not only with leadership support at the i3 school, but with leadership development of the principal the previous year, while he was a dean at the Flagship school. This school leader appreciated the trainings and technical assistance; and expressed that NSNO's staff's thought partnership had great value. This school leader also served on NSNO review teams for other schools and felt this work was crucial to his training and development. Schools from both Cohorts One and Two reported appreciation for the training from Nancy Euske that NSNO made possible; these trainings provided leaders with feedback on efficiency, academic focus (or lack thereof), and leadership. However, NSNO discontinued these trainings.

Additionally, a few Cohort 2 schools credited NSNO with supporting cross-school collaboration. One leader explained that her school collaborates "with other NSNO schools through school reviews, thought partnership, informal conversations." A teacher at the same school noted that "the school leader has regular meetings with other high schools. We gain knowledge from NSNO feedback." And, as mentioned above, participation of one of the Cohort 2 i3 school leaders on NSNO review teams of other schools refines his approach to leadership at his own school.

Tennessee schools rely less on NSNO, as expected. In fact, one TN leader reported not knowing anything about NSNO at all. However, another i3 school did report receiving support from NSNO on their school's i3 strategic planning.

NSNO's role vis-à-vis schools have evolved through the first two years of the i3 initiative. As schools and CMOs uncover new challenges, NSNO has had to reconsider how they mobilize internal resources to provide support (or not) on meeting those challenges. Building the School Review team's capacity has allowed

NSNO to respond to building level needs; but does not speak to NSNO's role as a systems-level broker of the i3 initiative.  Similarly, changes to selection criteria (discussed more fully in the Organizational Capacity section) allow NSNO to field new schools, but not necessarily to drive the i3 Charter Restart Model as originally conceived.  Finally, situations such as the decision by RSD to allow FIN to manage Cohen's 11th-12th grades, in which NSNO disagrees with both RSD and CMO partners, raise questions about NSNO's ongoing role in support provision at the school, CMO, and systems levels.

**Summary Tables: External Support Provision** The following tables delineate the rate at which i3 schools rely on external entities for support.

**Table 20: NOLA External Supports**

| NOLA Cohort One and NOLA Cohort Two Princpals' Reported Supports Provided to Schools | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | CMO | NSNO | RSD | Board | DOE | LAPCS | Total by Support |
| Financial support | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 16 |
| Facilities | 7 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 13 |
| Student Recruitment | 7 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 11 |
| Charter Application | 6 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 11 |
| Community | 7 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 12 |
| Perf Management Plan | 7 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 12 |
| PD for Leaders | 7 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 10 |
| Public Relations | 7 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 9 |
| Lobbying | 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 8 |
| Staff | 7 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 8 |
| Leadership Training | 6 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Additional Support Staff | 7 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| Additional Resources | 7 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 6 |
| PD for Teachers | 7 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 5 |
| Curriculum | 6 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| *Total* | 87 | 34 | 26 | 25 | 13 | 6 | 133 |

**Table 21: Tennessee External Supports**

| TN Princpals' Reported Supports Provided to Schools | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | CMO | ASD | School Board | TNDOE | NSNO | TCSA | Total by Support |
| Leadership Training | 3 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 9 |
| Additional Resources | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 7 |
| PD for Leaders | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| Perf Management Plan | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| Staff Recruitment | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Curriculum Mapping | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| PD for Teachers | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Lobbying | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Financial Support | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Support Staff | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Student Recruitment | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Facilities | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Public Relations | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Community Outreach | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Charter Application | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| *Total* | 40 | 20 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 68 |

In both NOLA and Tennessee, schools rely most heavily on their CMOs, with NSNO a distant but still important second-place provider of supports for NOLA schools. This raises important questions for the work of the i3 initiative through the remainder of its five-year course: Do we expect that CMOs will continue to serve as the main provider of supports to schools? While NSNO provides numerous supports to schools, those supports for the most part are not coming uniquely from NSNO; for most NSNO-provided supports, schools report that their CMOs also provide overlapping supports. If a support that NSNO is providing is a duplicate support that is already provided by a school's CMO, how might NSNO's support influence the CMOs' relationships with schools? If a support that NSNO is providing is essential but not duplicative, then one long-term solution might be for NSNO to consider supporting CMOs to increase their bandwidth to provide these essential supports. What, then, does that indicate regarding NSNO's ongoing role as a support provider?

These questions receive deeper attention in the Organizational Capacity section of this report; however, they also imply ongoing concerns regarding fidelity to the goals of the i3 initiative as originally conceived.

**Benefits of CMO Affiliation**  Only two of thirteen i3 principals report that they have ever requested supports from their CMO that the CMO then failed to provide, and eleven of thirteen report no downsides at all to CMO affiliation. These school leaders also recognized that on the rare occasions their CMOs could not provide a requested support, the reason was budgetary and not pedagogical.

Overall, however, the vast majority of school leaders report abiding benefits of CMO affiliation.  NOLA Cohort 1 i3 principals report shared definitions of student and school-level success with their CMOs, which provide a common foundation for decision-making.  One NOLA Cohort 2 i3 principal attributed "tons of resources…and high level professionalism" to CMO affiliation.  School leaders also deeply appreciate the responsibilities CMOs carry that allow school leaders to focus primarily on building-level, instructional leadership.  A NOLA Cohort 1 i3 principal explained that because of a strong CMO, "the school leader gets to be in the classroom.  The CMO does board management, DOE and RSD management, and advocacy.  We view ourselves as a team or a family." Two of three NOLA Cohort 1 i3 principals participate in CMO-run trainings, and NOLA Cohort 2 i3 leaders also report participation in CMO-led trainings prior to the opening of their schools.

Similarly, all i3 Tennessee schools reported that their affiliation with their CMO had no downsides at all, and numerous benefits including CMO-provided support on operations such as: fundraising and financial support; board training; student, staff and board recruitment; additional staffing; professional development for leaders and teachers; administrative support; public relations; and compliance reporting to ASD and TN DOE.

Importantly, schools reported these benefits of CMO affiliation across all CMOs, regardless of the longevity of their CMOs.  Schools operating under newly developed (or still developing CMOs) reported as much benefit from CMO affiliation as schools nested in CMOs with large networks and longer histories.  For example, one Cohort 2 leader attributes access to "experts, not reinventing the wheel [and] economy of scale" to affiliation with the school's CMO.  Another Cohort 2 leader feels that their CMO provides "a lot of direct feedback and support."

This finding – coupled with Organizational Capacity and student outcome findings – may represent a crucial aspect of the i3 initiative.  It seems eminently possible when considering Year 2 findings that the creation of CMOs in real time, based on high capacity Flagship schools, may in fact support effective school turnaround as well as investment in existing CMOs.  This statement is hypothetical at this early stage, but will generate scrutiny in the evaluation in Years 3-5.

**Fidelity**  The NSNO i3 endeavor examines two different kinds of fidelity: fidelity to the goals of the i3 project; and fidelity of each i3 school to its CMO's proposed model as embodied in its Flagship counterpart.  Both are important to the success of the initiative.

**Fidelity to i3 Goals**  NSNO's original formulation of this i3 initiative laid out three overarching goals:

- **Goal #1:** Build the capacity to incubate and expand charter restart operators
- **Goal #2:** Provide infrastructure to sustain charter restart schools
- **Goal #3:** Scale strategy by codifying and replicating

At the school level, when asked "what does it mean to you to be an i3 school" a slight majority (7 of 13) of principals articulate the meaning of i3 in regards to Goal 1 (without reference to Goals 2 or 3).  For these principals, participation in the i3 endeavor equates to increased building-level resources for additional staffing (especially SPED staff), technology, and operations.  In some cases, i3 participation also provides school leaders with increased visibility and opportunities to "make exciting changes" in a short amount of time.

Only three of thirteen principals referenced Goal 2, noting that participation in i3 provides an opportunity to expand their CMO's model.  Similarly, only four of thirteen principals reference Goal 3, framing their i3 participation in terms of increased accountability to a national education reform endeavor.

While building level staff and leadership may not be expected to universally embrace or enact all three i3 goals, it bears noting that for building level leaders, NSNO's i3 initiative is first and foremost a building level endeavor.  This raises questions fundamental issues of scalability: Are building-level operations compromised by the lack of a broader sense of scope?  Given the narrow scope of school leaders, are they deliberately relinquishing systems-level work?  If so, to whom (CMOs, NSNO, RSD, other partners)? If school leaders' bandwidth is consumed by building-level operations and growth, through what channels are building-level successes communicated and replicated system-wide? As i3 implementation continues in Years 3-5, the Implementation team will continue to assess building-level stakeholders' formulations of their own goals as i3 participants; and will continue to analyze those goals vis-à-vis the three stated goals of the entire i3 project.

**Fidelity of i3-Flagship Pairs**  The NSNO i3 initiative posits that investment in high performing CMOs will result in successful replication of their school models.  As such, fidelity of i3 schools to their Flagship counterparts becomes a crucial interim benchmark for tracking longer-term school success.  As designed, the i3 project allows CMOs themselves to identify their Flagship school, the school within their network that they feel most typifies the model i3 will replicate.  However, as noted, fidelity to flagship is difficult to assess in the first two cohorts of i3 schools due to a number of structural challenges.  Some i3 schools lack flagships of any sort; some are paired with flagships that serve different grade spans or student populations; some flagships employ radically different pedagogical approaches from their i3 counterparts.

This results in situations in which direct comparisons between Flagship and i3 schools become difficult.  Further, this potentially undermines the overall success of the i3 project.  Because i3 schools lack fidelitous matches with their flagship from the outset, the i3 schools cannot fully leverage experience of their flagship counterparts, nor can they adopt their flagships' models without major revisions to pedagogy and operations.  This mismatch – in which new (i3) schools start "from scratch" rather than transport an existing, proven model – presents exactly the situation this i3 initiative was designed to circumvent.

**Conceptual Conflicts About Fidelity**  These structural mismatches create consequent conceptual conflicts about fidelity, which impact both school leaders managing daily operations and the Implementation team in implementing the i3 evaluation framework.  The i3 project (and evaluation) requires fidelity of the i3 school to its flagship match; but, as we have documented, the structural match or mismatch of i3-flagship pairs – and hence the appropriateness of testing fidelity within those pairings – varies.  Further, these mismatches create a need to diagnose the ways in which mismatches impact the implementation of a CMO's model, and to identify appropriate modifications.  This burden falls most often to the school leader, who must then "tweak" or "revise" the model in real time.

If these revisions are strategic, evidence-based, responsive to the realities of the i3 school (and documented for the sake of replicability), then these revisions may be assessed within a construct of fidelity that tests not only "sameness" to the flagship, but also effectiveness of those revisions when "sameness" does not obtain. However, overall effectiveness – that is, student and school performance – is not a pure test of fidelity to model.  While assessment of fidelity to model across schools in both cohorts and locations necessarily includes some data sources such as teacher evaluation, the reliance of school leaders on student performance data to assess fidelity presents a problem: student performance is not, in fact, an indicator of fidelity to model.  While positive student outcomes are, to be sure, the ultimate

goal of the entire i3 endeavor, the Charter Restart Model rests on a fundamental assumption that the replication of high performing schools will result from the installation of the drivers of high performance as identified in existing successful schools and CMOs.  Student performance represents the ultimate outcome, not a driver of that desired outcome.  As such, relying on student performance data to track fidelity is problematic.  Further, such a focus on outcomes to the exclusion of process risks disruptions of implementation and undermines the use of interim benchmarks to inform implementation in real-time.  Schools cannot make midcourse corrections if they fail to assess their ability to stay on course.

As such, the Implementation evaluation team will continue to track this outcome-orientation at the expense of fidelitous implementation in the remaining years of the initiative.

**NOLA Cohort 1 Leaders**  In fact, only one NOLA Cohort 1 i3 school leader reported referencing their Flagship counterpart as a model (Fall Year 2).  Only two NOLA Cohort 2 schools report that they are directly assessing fidelity.  The remaining Cohort 2 schools report that they are implementing brand new models; or that they are being assessed only on outcomes, so fidelity is not a concern unless student performance goals are not met.

For example, one Cohort 1 school does not have a Flagship school: NSNO selected them knowing their i3 school would be their very first school.  However, the school leader did spend time observing other high performing schools prior to opening. For the CMO, the notion of "model" is driven by CMO vision but also considered adaptable to real-time building-level needs.  The first i3 school identifies core elements of the school's model, including robust behavior and parent referral systems, increased science and social studies instruction, and SPED inclusion.

Neither the current principal nor teachers from the 2nd Cohort 1 school spent any time at other CMO network schools in preparation for opening the i3 school.  The school does not "match" their flagship because they are their network's first high school (the nominal flagship is a K-8 school).  Accordingly, the CMO grants the school leadership team freedom to revise the model to meet building-level needs.  The i3 school refers to other high performing high schools (including Sci Academy as well as Noble Street) as models from which they learn.  The school reports that fidelity will be maintained via CMO oversight and feedback from external observers; and that they judge success based upon academic data, student and teacher attrition, surveys, and board feedback.  The school reports that the flexibility they inherently require as their CMO's first high school allows the school to distinguish itself in its culture and discipline, as well as its academic model.

The 3rd NOLA Cohort 1 i3 school, has a Flagship at which the i3 school leader spent time prior to opening (although the grade spans of the flagship and i3 schools do not align; the school leader also spent time embedded at other CMO schools with aligned grade spans). Because of the grade-span difference between flagship and i3, the i3 school leader cannot transport the flagship model, per se. However, they say they are "inspired" by the Flagship school, specifically the culture and long-term vision the flagship has for its students. While the i3 school leader reports that fidelity is only self-assessed, they do collaborate directly with the Flagship school leader via formal monthly meetings and additional informal collaborations. The i3 school considers academic data, student and teacher attrition, parent surveys, board and teacher feedback as measures of school success. Interestingly, the i3 school leader notes that their school's engagement of families is one of the school's most distinguishing factors.

**Tennessee Leaders** In Tennessee, all i3 principals report that they have received training in, and are familiar with, the model their CMOs hope to replicate. They report that they plan to rely on student performance data (discussed above) and teacher evaluations to ensure fidelity to model. However, they also report that they have autonomy to deviate from that model and have in fact implemented deviations. In some cases, these deviations are operational, such as hiring a security guard and providing students with transportation. But in other cases, the deviations are far more fundamental: extending the length of the school day, implementing SPED inclusion instead of self-contained classrooms. These changes – on both the operational and pedagogical sides – raise questions not just about fidelity per se, but about a most fundamental premise of this i3 project. These changes test whether the proposition that investment in CMO replication is the most effective and efficient path to higher-performing schools.

In particular, the leader of the 1st TN school spent time observing the Flagship school prior to the i3 school's opening. They believe that this time spent at the Flagship gave them a strong understanding of how to adhere to the model. Additionally, they receive constant assessment through their CMO's leadership program, which supports them in achieving fidelity. Indeed, the i3 school leader reports that their school has adhered to the CMO's model with a few exceptions: The i3 school has self-contained SPED rather than following the CMO's inclusion model; the i3 school provides transportation to students; and the i3 school has additional staff (a parent counselor, school psychologist, and security officer).

The leader at the 2nd TN school also spent time observing their Flagship prior to opening. The i3 leader has some autonomy to tweak the CMO's model, such as extending the school day to five pm. However, close adherence to the model is

expected, and the school leader believes that their CMO's training and site visits to other network schools have helped ensure a solid understanding of the model.

For the 3$^{rd}$ TN i3 school, fidelity is very much leader driven: the i3 school leader was also the founding principal of the Flagship school.  While close adherence to the model is expected, the leader feels that they have some freedom to adjust, especially because the needs of the i3 school differ from those of the Flagship.  In particular, the i3 school enrolled a higher proportion of SPED students and students with lower starting test scores than its flagship.

**NOLA Cohort 2 Leaders**    Nola Cohort 2 leaders varied in their depth of immersion in Flagship school models.  Five out of the seven schools, have leaders who have spent time at their flagship models.  In the 1$^{st}$ Cohort 2 school, the leader spent a full incubation year at the Flagship, met frequently with the Flagship administrative team, received professional development dedicated to understanding the CMO model, as well as visited additional schools.  In the 2$^{nd}$ Cohort 2 school, the school leader spent over six years on the Flagship leadership team.  The leaders of the 3$^{rd}$ and 4$^{th}$ Cohort 2 schools, spent time incubating at the Flagship: one served on the flagship's leadership team, while the other taught at the flagship and was intentionally developed as a leader for i3 expansion.  These two schools also received training in leadership, and receive ongoing professional development in order to ensure fidelity.  The 3$^{rd}$ school assesses fidelity through the use of an outcomes-based score card; while the 4th i3 school also reports that assessment does not focus on fidelity per se, but on school wide outcomes.

In contrast 2 other Cohort 2 schools, did not model their schools off of a flagship.  One Cohort 2 leader observed the Flagship but did not rely on it as a model (mismatched grade span); and another cohort 2 school had no identified Flagship and their leader did not observe other schools.

Both NOLA Cohort 2 and Tennessee leaders must consider elements of fidelity but are granted autonomy to change models in response to needs.  For example, one Nola Cohort 2 i3 school uses Kickboard (a software package that allows teachers to track school culture and student performance), and offers computer classes, unlike its Flagship; but, the same school leader reports directly to the CEO of its CMO, has constant check-ins with CMO leadership, and engages in frequent self-assessment regarding fidelity.  Similarly, another Nola Cohort 2 leader reports that the i3 school and its Flagship are run as "two schools in one" with extremely close alignment between the two.  The CMO ensure adherence to model via professional development and opportunities for the i3 school and the flagship's staff to collaborate.  Fidelity is assessed through staff surveys, meetings, and receiving/responding to feedback.

Similarly, the 3rd Nola Cohort 2 school principal reports that the i3 school's core mission, to prepare all students for college success, must be maintained.  Beyond that, however, the leader has room for flexibility beyond that.  The leader of the 4<sup>th</sup> Cohort 2 school explains that their school is expected to "borrow a whole lot" from the model of their CMO.

In contrast, the 5<sup>th</sup> i3 school leader reports that their level of autonomy to deviate from the Flagship (middle school) model has increased since the school first opened. (Note: the 5<sup>th</sup> school was in its second year of operation when their i3 participation began). The 5<sup>th</sup> i3 school principal reports that the CMO uses multiple methods to ensure fidelity, including professional development, observation at the middle school, maintenance of similar organizational structures across Flagship and i3 schools, and weekly meetings with CMO leadership.  The school leader reports that the school's performance goals serve as her ultimate accountability measure.

Similarly, the school leader at the 6<sup>th</sup> Nola Cohort 2 school has "full flexibility" to adapt a model as needed.  At the i3 school, the school leader "defines the model," and fidelity has not been assessed by the CMO since the hiring process (the school leader reports fidelity has only been assessed via reference checks and during the initial interview of the school leader).  During the Fall Year 1 site visit to the 6<sup>th</sup> Cohort 2 school (in Fall 2012), the principal was in close contact with CMO leadership (multiple phone calls during the course of the site visit; CMO leadership team member on site for the first day of the site visit).  However, CMO leadership are not physically present in New Orleans, and chain of command decisions seemed to rest solely with the principal regarding culture and academics.

Overall, the Implementation team has found that fidelity of i3 to flagship varies in ways both expected and unexpected.  We expect that i3 schools serving different grade spans or populations than their flagship model would revise the CMO model in real time to address these differences. However, this evaluation has also revealed that substantive questions still remain regarding how and if the schools are in fact modeling their instructional guide, curriculum, teacher practices, professional development, and other core elements of operation on the Flagship model.

**Fidelity Metric**  In order to assess fidelity to flagship model at this stage of the i3 initiative, the Implementation evaluation team has identified ten categories for comparison that obtain across nearly all i3-Flagship pairings.  These categories map loosely onto the Performance Management Organization (PMO) rubric, the metric by which school success will ultimately be measured beginning in Year 3. The ten

categories for i3-flagship fidelity comparisons (with data sources comprising the categories) are:

**Table 22: Fidelity Domains and Accompanying Data Sources**

| Fidelity Domain | Data Source |
|---|---|
| 1. Leadership | Principal Interview Fall Year 1 |
| 2. Leader Relationship with CMO | Principal Interview Fall Year 1 |
| 3. School Culture | Principal Interview Fall Year 1/Spring Year 1 |
| 4. Academic Expectations are Communicated to Students | Principal Interview Fall Year 1/Spring Year 1 |
| 5. Teachers Buy Into Mission | Teacher Interview Fall Year 1 |
| 6. Teachers Use of Interim Assessments | Teacher Interview Fall Year 1/Spring Year 1 |
| 7. Schools Make Student Learning | Principal Interview Fall Year 1 |
| 8. Staffing | Principal Interview Fall Year 1 |
| 9. Visual Markers of School Culture | School Site Visit Observation Fall |
| 10. Students Track Teacher During Classroom Instruction | Classroom Teacher Observation Fall Year 1/Spring Year 1/Fall Year 2 |

For evaluation purposes this year, all ten elements of fidelity were weighted equally. The table below indicates the degree to which each i3 school aligns with its Flagship counterpart on each of these ten domains. Alignment is indicated by "Y", misalignment by "N". Because each domain represents various data points, alignment was determined by examining i3 /flagship pairs' responses on individual items, and then across items within each domain. Also, it should be noted that for items in which the i3 school performed better than the flagship, difference was coded as "Y" to indicate performance aligned with and higher than the flagship.

**Table 23:  Fidelity Matrix**

| Cohort | School Name | Leadership | Leadership Relationship with CMO | School Culture | Acad. Expectations Communicated to Students | Teachers Buy into Mission | Teachers Use of IAs | Student Learning is Center/Mission- | Staffing | Cultural Markers Observation | Students Track Teacher | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NOLA 1 | KIPP | Y | N | Y | N/A | N | N | Y | N/A | Y | Y | 63% |
| NOLA 1 | Clark Prep | Y | Y | Some | Y | N | Y | Some | N/A | Y | Y | 86% |
| NOLA 2 | Crescent Leadership | N/A | Some | N | N | N | N/A | N | N | N | Y | 14% |
| NOLA 2 | Mac42 | N | Y | Y | Y | N | N | N | Y | N | Y | 50% |
| NOLA 2 | Joseph A. Craig Charter School | N | N | Y | N | N | N | Y | Y | N | Y | 40% |
| NOLA 2 | Cohen College Prep | Y | Y | Y | N | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | N | 70% |
| NOLA 2 | Carver Prep | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | N | Y | Y | N | Y | 70% |
| NOLA 2 | Carver Collegiate | N | Y | Y | Y | N | N | N | Y | N | Y | 50% |
| TN 1 | Gordon Science and Arts | N | N | Y | N/A | N | N | N | N | N | Y | 22% |
| TN 1 | KIPP Memphis Academy Middle | N | N | N/A | N/A | Y | N | N | Y | N | Y | 38% |
| TN 1 | Brick Church College Prep MS | Y | N | Y | N/A | N | N | Y | Y | Y | N | 56% |

Note: The two i3 schools without flagships are not included in the Fidelity Matrix: Tubman and John Mc Donogh: FIN High School

**Table 24:  Fidelity Matrix Legend**

| % Match Between Responses from i3 Principal and Flagship Principal | |
|---|---|
| N | below 50% |
| Some | 50- 66% |
| Y | above 66% |

As the Table 25 indicates, i3-Flagship fidelity varies widely across the thirteen schools. While low fidelity in some pairings is to be expected (e.g. CLA's flagship is a residential alternative facility, hence unlike CLA in population served and pedagogical approach), other mismatches between i3 and Flagship schools are more surprising given the perception of i3/Flagship stakeholders regarding commitment to fidelity. KIPP has a notable reputation for providing substantial training and support to founding KIPP school leaders as well as having a strong reputation for consistency across the schools. Given this information the number of areas where KIPP Memphis is presently misaligned with their flagship was surprising and will be followed as the evaluation of that cohort expands.

Another example of a surprising mismatch is that between Carver Collegiate, Carver Prep, and their Flagship school Sci Academy. These schools are from the same charter management network, opened doors at the same time and both buildings are in close proximity to one another as well as to their flagship. Given all of these facts it is surprising to see the disparities this early into their operation. This instance is one of many the Implementation team will continue to follow throughout the course of the evaluation.

**Summary** At the time of the second year Implementation analysis, thirteen schools have opened as i3 awardees. Ten of these schools are still in their first year of operation and the i3 project has been underway for over two years. With that timeframe in mind, the Implementation evaluation team finds the inconsistent and variant state of the i3 schools to be of concern moving forward. Of particular importance is the removal of two schools (CLA and John McDonogh-FIN) from the i3 cohort for failure to comply with their grant agreements and school management plans.

Many of the challenges identified at the time of the first year report continue to apply in the second year. In some cases these challenges present as even greater concerns, given both the increase in the number of schools in the second cohort for New Orleans as well as the expansion of the project to Memphis and Nashville. The Implementation team observed continuing challenges with community engagement, creation and maintenance of positive school culture, stability of leadership and staff, and fidelity to model. The work of any school in its opening years sets the foundation for the future expectations and performance of each school. Decisions made early have long-lasting impact and are difficult to undo, meaning that early decisions matter tremendously. This is important for schools struggling to firmly establish their culture, operational processes, and definitions of fidelity and success.

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Inconsistent engagement and accountability around the closure process continues to represent both an immediate threat to the student body at Closing schools as well as potential threat for residual resentment at new i3 schools. The noted improvements of the process from NOLA Cohort 1 to Cohort 2 show signs of improved communication and strategy around the closure process. However the confusion and disorder that was observed in Tennessee indicates a gap in the information transfer between the two locations around best approaches.

The proposal to the U.S. Department of Education stated that "only those operators with a robust, quasi-experimental data-backed performance will be funded to replicate"[26]. The operators put forward the model (Flagship) school on which the i3 school is ostensibly referenced. However, this ongoing evaluation indicates that questions remain regarding how and if the schools are in fact modeling their instructional guide, curriculum, teacher practices, professional development, and other core elements of operation on the Flagship model.

Leadership at the NOLA Cohort 1 i3 schools continues to create and build from a well-established common vision within each CMO. Strong alignment remains between CMOs', principals', and teachers' views of their mission and vision even in schools that underwent leadership transition. A culture of very high expectations for all students is still consistently observed across the cohort 1 schools.

School leaders across cohorts and locations report that they are receiving the services they need. In New Orleans, the majority of the services that schools receive from NSNO are also provided by the schools' CMOs. This raises questions around roles and responsibilities at the building and systems levels moving forward with the i3 initiative. What are both the short term and long term impacts of NSNO providing schools feedback? Is there a possibility that NSNO feedback will not align with each CMO's philosophy, brand, and way of doing business? Those possibilities could undermine the ultimate goals of i3 to build permanent infrastructure and increase capacity of high-performing charter organizations.

Fulfilling the mission and vision of high expectations for all students appears to be coming at a cost to the current teaching staff at the i3 schools. While the staff report being aligned with the goals of the leadership team, some are already reporting that the expectations of working 80-plus hours per week is not sustainable. The leadership teams at the schools report forewarning teachers at the front end of the high expectations. Leaders report that they work to hire teachers who are eager to take on the positions. However there is a gap in providing teachers with the resources and (rest, daily supports, professional

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[26]  http://www2.ed.gov/programs/innovation/2010/summary-i3hra.pdf

development) to maintain the pace needed to best reach their (and their students') goals. Without addressing the concerns, frustrations and exhaustion of their current teaching staff, the i3 schools may be minimizing their potential for long-term success.

It is evident that both the leadership and teaching staff at the NOLA Cohort 1 schools are working long hard hours to reach their students. It is not as clear if their time is being utilized in the most effective ways given the results we are seeing in the impact analysis for the first time. If NSNO focuses their school reviews on teachers' instructional practices and principals' approaches to leadership, but not on the fact that instability of leadership and staff remains high, then i3 schools may be truly stymied – or, placed at a disadvantageous position – in Years 4 or 5 as they face the challenge of supporting new teachers and developing new CMOs at the same time.

**Synthesis and Conclusions**

At the end of the second year of the 5-year i3 project, the NOLA project partners acknowledges that the program they originally proposed has faced unanticipated challenges as they have moved to implement its various components. The transparency and candor of the i3 project leadership about their experience is both rare and commendable.

The NOLA project partners recognize that launching new i3 restarts has been more difficult than anticipated. Challenges have appeared at many points of the application, selection, contracting and opening process. Some of these hurdles also appeared in Tennessee. Both teams learned that obtaining reliable information on the past performance of potential i3 operators is more difficult than they imagined it would be. Even with data provided by applicants, interpreting results created by different performance measurement systems is time-consuming and fraught with inference problems. Fewer applicants have met the criteria for application to i3, or are inclined to apply, than were anticipated, making the pool of potential i3 candidates smaller than desired. ASD's efforts to secure the application of a nationally recognized charter management organization through direct outreach and extended relationship building were mirrored in NOLA, but with differing results.

Over several selection rounds in NOLA, the range of quality of the applications from qualified operators has been variable. For those aspirants that met the initial screening criteria, the ratings they received based on application, field visit and interviews have not met the cut score the project partners originally set. As the rounds of selection have unfolded, the major area of difficulty for applicants has

been school-level leadership -- an area that has obvious impact on the overall performance of any school. In the context of charter restarts, this capacity is perhaps even more vital.

In response to these challenges, the evaluation team has noted deliberate and concerted attempts to explore alternative approaches. Their efforts to modify the design are significant. NSNO has stepped up its efforts to attract renowned charter school operators from other parts of the country. The selection rubric has been adjusted -- sometimes in real time -- especially in the area of organization leadership capacity; specifically, what is the appropriate decision weight for CMO leadership, school leader leadership and what attributes of leadership are critical. The application has also become more concrete; reviews now look for details about instructional improvement practices and evidence that the practice has worked.

Eleven NOLA grants and four TN grants have been made at the time of this report. As described in the chapter on Organizational Capacity, the "roadmap" for choosing awardees has changed over the two years, which ultimately may explain some of the differences in their performance over the rest of the grant. These relationships will be explored in future reports.

Once school operators are selected, NSNO in particular, has expanded school supports in the early years. The NSNO team expects more frequent communication, but schools are not uniform in their receptivity to the heightened expectations. The scope and depth of school reviews has grown, and they receive a greater share of the i3 program efforts. RSD has also made changes in support of the i3 program. Over the past year, they made changes to the OneApp allocation rules in an attempt to recognize particular challenges for some students affected by the charter restart model and to assure more even enrollment results across schools. While the results of these changes will not be assessed until next year's report, they deserve recognition at the present time.

Providing a strong education to students is difficult under any circumstances, but in the context of chronically failing schools, it presents unique difficulties. Prior student behavior patterns must be adjusted. Teachers face widely differing learning foundations among their students. New instructional practices must be adopted and refined in line with interim measures of student assessment. It is clear that charter school implementation in the school turnaround context is difficult. And while no new i3 school has managed to start without some significant bumps, there is a general floor of early activity in most schools that suggest that school teams are working hard at the right things.

Despite the refined selection process and more detailed supports and reviews, the available data suggest that further adjustments to the design of the Charter Restart Model may be warranted. Two schools that opened in the 2012-2013 school year have failed to meet implementation standards and have been removed as i3 members; in one case, this meant that some of the i3 award was withheld. In addition, based on the academic growth analysis of the first cohort of schools, the student learning impacts proved disappointing in the first year of the program.

Our organizational capacity analysis identified other changes in the program partners' activities that may have an influence on the performance of the i3 program in New Orleans and Tennessee. With the expanded focus on providing school supports to opening schools, there is less bandwidth devoted to expanding the capacity of the CMO partners operating the new i3 schools. The evaluation team views this shift as a return to NSNO's older and more experienced activities, rather than pushing forward to build the new capacities demanded by the original design. The dilemma this creates is two-fold: 1) it augments or displaces (depending on one's viewpoint) the CMO's own oversight, thus weakening the chain of command within those organizations; and 2) it delays the infusion of guidance, resources and support to CMOs that ultimately will be expected to continue replicating and taking over future failing schools. The consequence is that CMOs may incorrectly assume that their efforts to create high-quality schools are sufficient or at least meet minimum requirements. It also may put NSNO in the position of "solution provider of first resort" instead of last resort, which is not part of NSNO's strategic focus (or whatever reason this is undesirable to the parties).

We also note the loss of some project activities in the second year in NOLA that may prove detrimental to the project long-term. The scope of community engagement has shrunk and become more focused on information dissemination than authentic dialog. The past year saw the evaporation of CMO development work -- a regular consultative workshop was reduced to a one-time convening of all CMO partners. Interviews with CMO operators revealed that this was an insufficient substitute, especially for the school leaders in 2012 opening schools. As well, the regular practice of reflection, progress monitoring and capture of real-time insights that occurred in the first year (and that led to some of the changes mentioned above) has been discontinued. We see an association between the loss of "step back to reflect and plan" time and an emerging gap between the senior team and the line staff in the program partners in their views of what the critical elements of the program are or what activities should receive priority. Finally, the activities related to documentation and dissemination have shifted from capturing the changes that the team makes to the model as they occur to a proactive strategy to introduce the model to other communities. This is accomplished via invited consultations, conference appearances and web blog submissions. To the extent

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that these external contacts are meant to stimulate adoption of the legislative and regulatory pre-requisites for a charter restart policy, the work is sound. Beyond that area of focus, however, emphasis is needed that the model is a work in progress.

Roughly half the NOLA grants will be allocated in the final years of the project. In Tennessee, the ASD team is seeking to expand their efforts with additional funding. Therefore, there is both opportunity and motivation to consider refinements to the program design and implementation with the aim of improving the overall performance of the project by the end of the grant period.

Related to Goal 1: Creating high-quality schools under the restart model, the evaluation team considers the following areas to be opportunities for further investigation:

1. **Recommit to Model Elements** – All the marginal adjustments to the model over the past two years result in a (perhaps inevitable) fuzziness about what features are and are not essential to the overall approach for Charter Restarts.  The NOLA Project team is strongly urged to revisit the original proposal and identify, from the vantage of experience and expectations about the future, what the non-negotiable of the model are.  This mid-point clarification and recommitment will refine both strategy and tactics in the remainder of the grant.
2. **Selection** -- Under any version of the Charter Restart Model, the gateway function of selection is the keystone to its success.  Two areas of revision are needed.  First, the selection process needs to return to a heavy reliance on hard evidence of proven performance.  The schools that are evidencing problems during their early years are schools for which the evidence of prior performance was sketchy or non-existent (i.e., the new CMO start-ups).  Second, the construct of leadership as a predictive factor for success has gotten fuzzy; CMO leadership capacity is not a direct substitute for school-level leadership.  Both are needed to fulfill the promise of the model.
3. **Structure of the Grant** -- The current approach to disburse the full award amount prior to school opening does not foster the right kind of incentives for the CMO and school partners.  Once their funding is in hand, the attachment to the project and to the on-going requirements of the grant (including, but not limited to, participation in evaluation activities) diminishes quickly.  This area of the program design is wide open for innovation and experimentation.
4. **Different Approach to Failing Schools** -- As the charter restart leaders report, schools that are closed and then restarted have a long legacy that can impede the creation of a successful new school culture.  It begs the question of whether full restart needs to be employed in a more judicious manner.  Other research has shown that full starts produce lower academic results than schools

that open with a grade and grow incrementally.  This model seems more suitable where there is a strong affiliation with a failing school.  Perhaps in these cases, the failing school should be closed completely with the school name retired for some period and then resurrected for a new school operator.  As long as there was a solid supply of high quality charter seats for the students from the Closing school to fill, better outcomes all around would result.

5. **Supports for Schools** -- A fundamental question for the i3 project team to consider is whether i3 school failure is an option.  Current behavior draws the line at extreme malfeasance, leaving a lot of schools in play that are obviously having difficulties.  The transition of the school reviews from summative performance reviews to formative input and process reviews raises a number of important questions.  While no one doubts the earnest effort that goes into the reviews, it does merit the question of how certain the review team is of the direct connection between the topics of the review and eventual long-term high-quality results.  It would be one thing if there was a sophisticated body of evidence supporting the review practice, but in fact in several topic areas, the literature shows otherwise.  Regardless, another question is whether NSNO is the best or only organization capable of providing the review (however it is structured.)  One option might be to turn the instruments over to the CMOs and hold training sessions for their reviewers.  This would free NSNO to pursue program and policy development that they and they alone can successfully manage.  Such a move would resolve any potential conflicts in the roles NSNO currently plays as Selector and Improvement Coach. These dual roles could create contradictory allegiances in the future should the need arise to recommend charter closures.  Having the team involved with school reviews creates bad incentives for new applicants as well; they will be able to count on external services to address their performance issues, which essentially amount to double funding.

6. **Future Challenges** – Similar to the many human capital challenges that schools face across the nation, i3 school leaders report a concern for finding and retaining high quality teachers.  The early signs of teacher and principal burnout emerged this year, suggesting that the lack of youth support services is a potential area of need (medical, mental health, welfare, protective services, etc.).  It's already a stretch to ask teachers to become case managers, but the implicit expectation that they will be direct service providers seems both unrealistic and potentially risky.  Our data suggests, that a future challenges may arise related to human capital; junior and senior educators both reported short time horizons for remaining in their current positions.  In addition, there is a need for strengthening the role of parents in the new school landscape.  Parents need help to become stronger consumers, including more information about schools and their performance and guidance on how vital school quality is in the future lives of their children.  Parents' political support is also needed to sustain the momentum for the larger school improvement strategy in the community over the longer term.

To enhance Goal #2: Create a Permanent Infrastructure to Perpetuate the Restart Model change in several areas is possible.

1. **CMO Expansion** -- The evaluation team considers the CMOs to be the drive train of the Charter Restart Model. Its success is only as strong as its CMO partners. They will eventually inherit the charter district as co-creators, and several will be called upon to continue replications or to provide wider leadership to the operator community. Building their capacity as individual enterprises and as strategic actors in the developing new school landscape is essential. While this challenge is not unique to New Orleans, it is certainly more keenly centered there as a direct result of the Charter Restart Model. A CMO Resource Center would provide immediate value both locally and nationally; it could serve initially as a repository for policies and practices, and eventually add evidence of effective practices as the research base grows. By limiting the contributions to the center to only high-performing CMOs, there is a better chance that the collection and sharing will lead to effective results.

2. **The SPS Ratchet Mechanism** -- The School Performance Score will undergo revision in 2013, but the new version includes academic growth only as an afterthought. SPS performance and growth are only mildly correlated, so both need to be considered to avoid errors in decisions about failing schools.

3. Consider evolving the policy target to a "neo-portfolio" framework-- As discussed in the Organizational Capacity analysis, RSD has adopted some practices that may be more appropriate in "regular" portfolio districts but that have a dampening effect both on the autonomy of charter schools (as protected by Louisiana state statute) and on the development of a true charter district. RSD is in a unique position to refine its strategy relative to its charter schools to model a "neo-portfolio" framework instead. It would be characterized by a limited role for RSD, including the role of external arbiter of school quality, in which chronically underperforming schools would be closed. New charter operators, approved by BESE, would be added to the supply side only as niche solutions rather than replacements for the closed schools. RSD would deal directly with schools only in two additional areas: they would award facilities and monitor their continued use based on performance. They would also handle areas of externalities, such as community-wide solutions to the delivery of special education services to students in need or transportation or voluntary group purchases of meals or school-based technology. In other words, RSD would act in cases where a uniform solution both eliminates externalities and promotes ease of transfer of students and information across schools.

Finally, with Goal #3: Replication and Dissemination, a final point deserves reflection and possible action.

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1.   **When considering the model as a national demonstration, it is important to know the absolutes of the model and to reflect them as such**. There are a number of critical differences between the New Orleans and Tennessee restart models, some of which are so distinct as to call into question the fidelity of replication.  It will be interesting to observe how NSNO ultimately judges the fidelity of the Tennessee model to its own professed set of critical characteristics for the model.  Further, additional discussion is needed on the relative importance of each critical element so other communities can reap the benefit of experienced-based judgment.  In the past year, the discussion that has been disseminated about the Charter Restart Model got far ahead of the reality, which is both grittier and more nuanced than has been communicated.  Once the claims about the model have been made, it is hard to walk back from poor performance.  The project partners need to keep the long view in mind:  how will the story be told in Year 5 and beyond?

# Appendix A.  Description of Virtual Control Record Methodology

The Virtual Control Record (VCR) process starts with an individual case student. Using that student's demographic profile and starting test score ($t_0$), up to seven matches are found from the pool of control students.  The control matches are selected only if they remain unaffected by i3 through the subsequent school year ($t_1$).  The test scores of the control matches are then averaged for $t_1$ to create one control record for comparison with the case record.  This process is then repeated for each individual case student.  The whole process is completed separately for math and reading scores using one of the two control pools. The result is four datasets: math with RSD TPS, math with All RSD, reading with RSD TPS, and reading with All RSD.

In each of the four datasets, the outcome being compared between case and control students is academic growth, also called learning gains, over one school year.  Using a type of statistical analysis called regression; it is possible to isolate the contributions of the i3 project from other social or programmatic influences on a student's growth.  Thus, all the findings that follow are measured as the average one-year growth of case students relative to the VCR-based comparisons.

For this type of analysis, the test scores for all grade levels are converted into a common measure called z-scores.  These are "bell curve" standardized scores that enable year-to-year computations of growth.[27] When scores are thus standardized into z-scores, every student is placed relative to his peers in Louisiana.  A z-score of zero, for example, denotes a student at the 50th percentile in the state, while a z-score one standard deviation above that equates to the 84th percentile.  Students who maintain their relative place from year to year would have a growth score of zero, while students who make larger gains relative to their peers will have positive growth scores.  Conversely, students who make smaller academic gains than their peers will have negative growth scores in that year.

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[27] For each subject-grade-year set of scores, scores are centered around a standardized midpoint of zero, which corresponds to the actual average score of the test before transformation.  Then each score of the original test is recast as a measure of deviation around that new score of zero, so that scores that fell below the original average score are expressed as negative numbers and those that were larger are given positive values.  These new values are assigned so that in every subject-grade-year test, 68 percent of the former scores fall within a given distance, known as the standard deviation.