

Report examines effects of closing low-performing Chicago schools

February 28 2013, by Emily Krone

(Phys.org)—The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research has released a full version of the report, "Turning around Low-Performing Schools in Chicago," which shows that in about three-fourths of the cases, shuttered buildings were used for new schools within a few years of the closing. Most of those new schools were designated as magnet or charter schools.

The report also shows that in the majority of cases, the schools that opened in the buildings of schools closed for underutilization served [students](#) from neighborhoods that were farther away from the school and less disadvantaged than the neighborhoods that students came from before closure. The student body of the newly opened schools generally contained fewer students requiring special education services or who were old for their grade, and students tended to have higher prior achievement levels.

The [original brief](#), released in February 2012, showed that four years after undergoing dramatic reform efforts such as turnaround, very low-performing elementary schools in Chicago closed the gap in test scores, with the system average by almost half in reading and two-thirds in math. The improvements took time to develop; test scores were not significantly better in the first year of reform, but grew larger over time. High schools that underwent reform did not show significant improvements in absences or ninth grade on-track-to-graduate rates over matched comparison schools; however, recent high school efforts look more promising than earlier ones.

The new report includes more information on student outcomes and changes in student and teacher demographics than the previously released report. It also includes a section on Chicago schools closed for underutilization since 2000.

The [report](#) shows school-by-school changes in the student body at the schools that underwent reform, including neighborhood poverty level, special education status, old-for-grade, prior reading performance, the distance that students traveled to [school](#) and racial composition. It also provides details on changes in the teacher workforce at each of the schools, including teacher age, years of service at CPS, education, provisional certification and race.

Among schools that were reformed but never closed, the student population remained largely the same and served students from the same neighborhoods. Among schools closed and then reopened as new schools, the teaching staff tended to be younger, less experienced, was more likely to have provisional certification and more likely to be white.

Provided by University of Chicago

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