

Aspen Institute NCLB Commission

Prepared Remarks for

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Introduction

- Thank you Mr./Ms. Commissioner and thank you to the Aspen Institute Commission on No Child Left Behind for the opportunity to speak today
- Providing a great education for every child in our country is not simply an education policy issue, it's an issue of social justice and civil rights. The quality of education in our country is a determinant – over the long run – of our nation's quality of life and security.
- I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you about how Chicago and the Renaissance 2010 effort is addressing one the greatest problems in America – chronically failing schools
- We were fortunate in Chicago to have the extraordinary leadership and vision of Mayor Daley and US Education Secretary Arne Duncan, and a business community who came together to change the status quo for thousands of children in an effort to launch 100 new public schools in high need communities, better known as Renaissance 2010

The Chicago Model

- At the onset of Ren10, we conducted an analysis that identified 27 communities where 75% of the schools performed below state standard
- That meant a child living in one of these neighborhoods was most likely relegated to a poor performing option, unless they were lucky enough to get into a selective enrollment school
- At the same time, however, there were some schools serving the same population but getting different results. They broke the traditional paradigm with stronger performance, better attendance, higher graduation rates and strong college acceptance rates.
- These schools, many of which were charter schools, were independent public schools approved by state law and given the freedom and autonomy to structure their education program in the best interest of kids. They offered:
 - Cultures of high expectation
 - Challenging curriculums
 - Data-driven interim assessments
 - Control over human capital decisions
 - Control of their school day
 - Freedom to set their own budget

- And most important, they were held accountable to perform, or they closed
- A framework not easily achievable in our traditional system...
- The charter model challenged us think to about a new framework in public education based on choice and competition, where:
 - independent school operators could manage a portfolio of schools
 - replace schools that were not performing
 - and put competitive pressure on the remaining neighborhood schools to improve

Launch of RSF

- The Mayor and Arne Duncan launched the Renaissance 2010 initiative and asked the Chicago business community to support the start-up investment for 100 new schools in Chicago.
- The Renaissance Schools Fund was launched and currently serves as a catalyst to create new schools in Chicago's high need communities
- Operating on a venture philanthropy model, RSF has raised \$50M, and has helped open 63 new public schools to date
- RSF:
 - Helps identify and support the replication of high-performing national and local school models
 - Partners with CPS in the selection and authorization of new schools
 - Facilitates partnerships with corporations, universities and institutions to create new school models
 - Invests up to \$500,000 per school for start up
 - RSF has created capacity building programs to:
 - Develop a pipeline of new school entrepreneurs
 - Support the growth of strong schools through business planning and technical assistance
 - Educate parents about their options to advocate for choice
- Overall, RSF drives the collaborative public-private partnership that catalyzes new school creation in Chicago
 - Our goal is to provide resources and expertise to help new schools build capacity and take their successful models to scale.
 - Interested schools have to compete in an extensive, rigorous, competitive request-for-proposal (RFP) process conducted by CPS and RSF through which new Ren10 schools are selected.
 - RSF provides national experts and assembles an investment panel to evaluate each school applicant based on strict criteria and to inform which schools are ultimately approved by the Board of Education.

- New schools qualify based on their ability to demonstrate the following fundamental strengths:
 - Strong education programs and proven curriculum
 - Program innovation and distinctiveness from traditional models
 - School leaders with a strong record of performance
 - Sustainable financial and operational plan
 - Consistent governance and a five-year performance contract
 - Growth potential (ability to replicate model)

- RSF supports only the strongest proposals that have a high probability for success.

- These educational entrepreneurs – as we call them – come from existing charter schools, private models, district schools, teachers, community organizations and industry.

Partnerships & School Models

- This effort has opened the doors to innovation and has empowered leaders from all sectors to create innovative, education options we never thought imaginable:

- A diverse collective has been engaged to invest time, resources and thought leadership in the reform of public education.

- We have been able to infuse the unique intellectual capital of leading innovators from the corporate, education and non-profit sectors to launch unprecedented new schools.

Examples of innovative new schools launched through Renaissance 2010 include:

- **Perspectives Charter School/IIT Math and Science Academy**, a partnership among **Perspectives Charter Schools**, **Motorola** and the **Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT)**, which opened fall 2008.
 - The IIT Math and Science Education Department worked closely with Perspectives to develop a comprehensive curriculum that will prepare students for college study and/or an advanced career in the sciences.
 - The IIT campus is the first Chicago charter school to provide a four-year Chinese language program.
 - In the school's first year, 76% of students met or exceeded state standards.

- **Rowe-Clark Math & Science Academy, The Exelon Campus of Noble Street Charter School**, a partnership between **The Noble Network of Charter Schools** and **Exelon**.

- At this math and science-focused school, students spend an extra month in school per year and receive 33% more core instruction time than their peers attending a traditional CPS high school.
- In its first year, an overwhelming 291 students applied for 150 available seats at the school.
- This is a true partnership between the school, the donors and the company
 - 77 Exelon employees spent time with students over the course of the 2009-2010 school year, include the heads of Exelon and ComEd and their family members – through workshops, volunteering, and special events
- **UIC College Prep, the LSV Campus of Noble Street Charter School**, a partnership between **The Noble Network**, the **University of Illinois at Chicago, Abbott Laboratories** and **LSV Asset Management** opened last fall.
 - The school’s health sciences focus gives its students opportunities to take rotations in the UIC schools of medicine, dentistry, public health, nursing, pharmacy and applied health sciences as well as utilize the resources of Abbott Laboratories.
- The Ren10 initiative has launched:
 - The city’s first all-boys public high school, Urban Prep Academy
 - The first elementary expeditionary learning school, Polaris Charter School
 - The first expeditionary learning high school, EPIC Academy
 - The first career prep high school in manufacturing, Austin Polytech
- The bottom line is that these new schools have the flexibility to do what it takes to ensure children achieve.

Impact

We are already seeing the impact of this work:

- Since 2005, RSF has supported the launch of 63 new public schools which will serve 33,000 students at full capacity.
- \$70 million has been raised for the Renaissance 2010 initiative; more than \$50 million through RSF. Nearly \$28 million has been awarded to date.

- RSF-supported schools serve a population that is comparable to the district, with slightly higher poverty than the district (88% vs. 86%) and a higher proportion of minority students (97% African-American or Latino students vs. 86% district-wide).¹
- Early results indicate that Renaissance 2010 schools are on the right track. On average, RSF-supported elementary schools collectively outperformed neighborhood comparison schools in 2008-09 – by 4.7% in reading and 3.9% in math. The 2007 cohort outpaced neighborhood comparison schools with more than 5.5% annual average growth.
- New schools demonstrate higher attendance on average – 91% vs 83% at the high school level in 2007. (In 2008, RSF-supported high schools’ attendance was 92.3% on average compared to CPS non-selective high schools at 77.7%.)
- Graduation rates are yet to come, but they are strong among the founding school campuses and charters in general. The 2007-08 CPS Charter School Report shows that charter schools have an average graduation rate of 73% compared to the district’s 68%.
- RSF-supported schools offer longer daily instruction and extended school years on average. In fact, a student who attends an RSF-supported school from kindergarten through 12th grade will receive on average 6.2 more years of instruction in core subject areas than the CPS minimum. **More than six years of additional time!!!!**
- Strong parent demand for new schools has thousands of families on waiting lists and RSF-supported schools receive an average of 2.5 applications per seat.² Thousands of students are on waiting lists to attend charter public schools.
- We believe the initiative is on track:
 - Historically, we find that the longer new schools are open the more they outperform comparison schools. For instance, Chicago charter elementary schools in operation between 1 and 4 years outperform CPS comparison schools by 7% on average, but those schools open five years or more outperform CPS comparison schools by 17%. Similarly, charter high schools in operation between 1 and 4 years outperform CPS comparison schools by 9%, while those open five years or more outperform by 13%.
 - The positive impact of charter schools on traditionally underserved student populations is even more pronounced. For example, low-income African-American boys in Chicago charter schools are performing 16% higher than the district on the 3rd grade reading ISAT and 19% higher than the district in 3rd grade math.

¹ RSF analysis of CPS data.

² RSF analysis of school-provided data.

The District Is Responding

- As RSF-supported new schools yield best practices and demonstrate results, they are inspiring the district to infuse similar principles and practices in traditional schools.
- Recent district-wide initiatives have included:
 - **Longer School Year:** The development of summer instruction and early start programs for high school freshman...as well as allowing schools to adopt a new “Track E” year round schedule
 - **Greater Flexibility:** The creation of the AMPS program, granting high performing traditional schools greater freedom in exchange for accountability

Challenges

- This work still faces a few substantial challenges.
- The first, a lack of parent and community awareness about the state of our schools
 - A recent survey of 1,400 parents and community members by the PRISE campaign in Chicago found that there was widespread lack of awareness of the troubled state of public schools. It stated: “In general, parents were shocked to learn of the troubled current state of public education in Chicago, including low academic performance levels, low graduation rates, and the low likelihood of college achievement levels among CPS graduates.”
 - This is made worse by states lowering standards and giving parents false hope
- Secondly, there remains a need for a deep bench of educators with entrepreneurial capacity and skills
- And finally, the need for consistent attention to quality from authorizers, districts, and funders

The Road Ahead

- The question is how do we take this to scale in Chicago and across the country? And, more specifically, what can the federal government do through the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind to promote sustained reform?

- Our recommendations include:
 - Maintain the context of NCLB -- autonomy in exchange for greater accountability – but take greater steps and provide support to ensure quality
 - In dealing with chronic underperformers, close schools when you have to
 - Promote choice for families, by
 - Financially supporting the growth of strong performing quality charter networks
 - Supporting the development of quality authorizers - Don't authorize schools that lack a team with a track record of success serving children in our most challenged communities
 - Create incentives for states and local school districts to close schools and support charters and new options
 - Implement consistent standards and measures and hold all schools accountable, including charters and new schools
 - Benchmark progress across districts and states
 - We have been fortunate to have a passionate and engaged business and civic community to support Renaissance 2010 and recognize this is not the case in many communities across our country
 - We recommend the federal government incentivize districts and communities to form partnerships with the private sector
 - Take this opportunity to leverage private sector resources and intellectual capital - in partnership with experienced educators - to spark innovation and support student achievement. This as an opportunity to harness and build relationships between sectors and build community capacity.
 - Finally, we must acknowledge who will make sure quality and reform is sustainable – the parents. Parents must be engaged.
 - We call on the federal government to support efforts to inform parents about their role in the education process and help them become strong advocates for their children's needs.

- If Renaissance 2010 is any indication – it takes all sectors of the community to see change through to sustainable reform.

Closing

- I again want to commend the Aspen Institute and the Commission for leading the discussion on this critically important topic.
- There is nothing more important than ensuring all children – no matter where they live, how much their parents earn, or the color of their skin – receive an excellent education that prepares them to live out their dreams and succeed in life.
- Thank you.