Los Angeles Public School Choice Initiative (PSCI):
Highlights of Research Findings

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Agenda

- Background
  - Our study
  - Public School Choice Initiative (PSCI)
- Findings
  - Successes and Challenges during Plan Writing
  - Successes and Challenges during Implementation
  - Impacts of PSCI
- Implications for Policy Development and Implementation

Our research examines PSCI's implementation and outcomes

- 4-year mixed-methods study, funded by federal i3 grant

- Two main research questions:

    1. *How was the PSCI implemented over time?*
        - Plan writing/selection successes and challenges
        - Implementation successes and challenges

    2. *What are the early impacts of PSCI participation on student outcomes?*

# LAUSD faces daunting student performance challenges

- Overall student proficiency rates are low
  - o 49% of students score proficient or above on ELA CSTs
  - o 54% of students score proficient or above on Math CSTs

- Persistent achievement gaps remain a problem
  - o 33% fewer African Americans scored proficient in ELA compared to whites; 36% fewer scored proficient in math
  - o 33% fewer Latinos scored proficient in ELA compared to whites; 28% fewer scored proficient in math

(2012-13)

PSCI was designed to address these challenges

- Resolution passed by LAUSD Board in August 2009

- Internal & external teams competed to operate lowest performing ("focus") & new ("relief") schools

- Teams responded to detailed RFP & described plans for managing the school: Plans went through multi-stage review

- Teams selected a from a range of governance models varying in degrees of autonomy

- Designed for gradual scale up until all schools district-wide are high performing

PSCI Theory of Change: Phase I

PSC Portfolio Environment Established by District & Partners

Identification of PSC schools

Facilitation of Stakeholder Involvement

Provision of Support & Oversight
- planning
- application
- review
- selection
- implementation

Accountability & Monitoring

Diffusion Activities
- Identification & Codification of best practices
- Dissemination

PSC School Application Process

Applicant Team Formation (external vs. internal)

Selection of School Type (focus vs. relief)

Development of Plan

Selection of School Model (charter, Network Partner, ESBMM, Pilot, traditional)

Review Process
- Engagement with community
- Interviews

- Rigorous screening of plans
- Competition for selection
- Autonomy to respond to local contexts & needs
- Oversight & accountability
- Capacity building
- Increased pressure & contribution from parents & community

HIGH QUALITY PSC SCHOOLS

- Strong leadership & governance
- Rigorous curriculum & instruction
- Supportive school climate
- Effective use of data & assessments
- High-quality PD
- Strong community involvement
- Performance management
- Sound financial practices
- Innovative & diverse schools & practices

Positive Outcomes for Staff

Positive Outcomes for Students

Positive Outcomes for Parents & Community

NON-PSC SCHOOLS
- Adoption of best practices
- Pressure to improve school quality & outcomes
- "Relief" effects on feeders schools

District, Community, School, Classroom Context

Understanding and commitment; capacity; motivation; leadership; politics; other accountability policies & competing interventions; community, school, staff & student characteristics

PSCI Theory of Change: Phase II

PSC Portfolio Environment Established by District & Partners

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School of Education

University of Southern California

PSCI included four cohorts of schools

	Phase I		Phase II	
	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2013/14
	PSC 1.0	PSC 2.0	PSC 3.0	PSC 4.0
# Schools	42	28	41	20
Internal operator	32	19	39	20
External operator	10	9	2	0
Relief (new)	28	23	22	0
Focus (turnaround)	14	5	19	20
- Reconstitution	0	3	0	0
- Restart	0	2	0	0
- Transformation	14	0	19	20

PSCI included a range of governance models

| Traditional | ESBMM | Local Initiative School | Network Partner | Pilot | Independent Charter |

Selected School Governance Model				
	Phase I		Phase II	
	PSC 1.0	PSC 2.0	PSC 3.0	PSC 4.0
Traditional	17	5	9	11
ESBMM	8	2	5	4
LIS			1	3
Network Partner	3	1	2	0
Pilot	8	12	2	1
Independent Charter	6	8		
Model not provided			22	1

Popular policy solutions to low-performing schools

Portfolio Management

- Intersection of market-based reform, standards-based reform & differentiation of schools
  - Competition
  - Accountability to standards
  - Diverse schooling options
- Diverse set of service providers operate schools
- Shift away from centralized bureaucracy
  - District as "strategic manager of change" & "performance optimizer"
- Key unit of change: ***Central office***

(Bulkley, 2010: Lake & Hill, 2009)

Turnaround Reform

- Designed to improve conditions in chronically underperforming schools by changing:
  - Staffing
  - Governance
  - Support
  - Instruction
- Expects improvement in very short period of time
- Ranges from the dramatic (e.g., school closure) to the modest (e.g., adding external PD provider)
- Key unit of change: ***School***

(Herman et al., 2008: Jambulapati, 2011)

Research on turnaround and portfolio reforms is growing

- Little (and mixed) evidence about effectiveness
  - SIG-funded turnarounds lead to achievement gains in CA (Dee, 2012)
  - Negative intermediate outcomes of turnaround reforms *(e.g., CEP, 2012; Malen & Rice, 2004)*
  - NY: students enrolled in Children First portfolio reform schools increased achievement (*Kemple, 2011*)
  - Chicago: increases in achievement, negative results for graduation rates, ACT scores, absenteeism *(Humhprey & Shields, 2009; Roderick et al, 2008)*

- More information about implementation
  - Complex implementation challenges in both reforms *(e.g., Bulkley et al., 2010; Gyurko & Henig, 2010; Hess, 2003; Hill, 2011; Levin et al., 2010; Rice & Malen, 2010, Wong et al., 1999)*
  - Important attributes of successful reform models: teacher collaboration, data-driven decision making, parental involvement, central office restructuring, targeted supports

PSCI combines these two reforms

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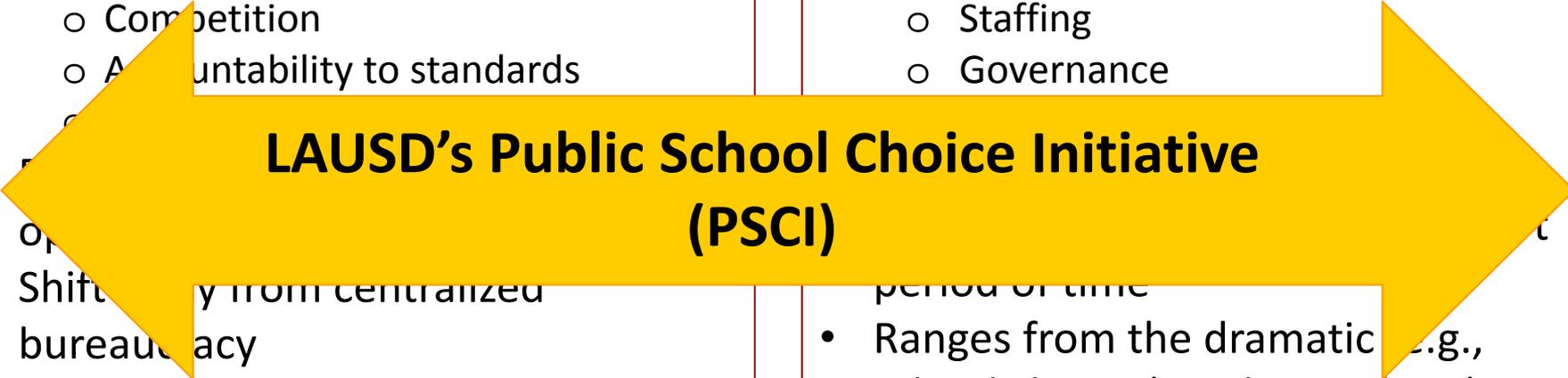
LAUSD's Public School Choice Initiative (PSCI)

# Our research examines PSCI's implementation and outcomes

- 4-year mixed-methods study, funded by federal i3 grant
- Two main research questions:

1. *How was the PSCI implemented over time?*
   - Plan writing/selection successes and challenges
     - Plan quality and competition
     - Autonomy
     - Capacity building
     - Parent engagement
   - Implementation successes and challenges
     - Capacity building
     - Autonomy
     - Oversight and accountability
     - Teacher mobility

2. *What are the early impacts of PSCI participation on student outcomes?*

Implementation Study Data (2010-2013)

Leader Interviews	46 leaders from LAUSD, partner organizations, labor, foundations, civic organizations
Design Team Leader (DTL) Surveys	80% response rate (n=36) in PSCI 2.0; 85% (n=46) in PSCI 3.0; 95% (n=21) in PSCI 4.0
Principal Surveys	2012: 66% response rate (n=27) for 1.0 principals; 52% (n=16) for 2.0 principals 2013: 66% response rate (n=27) for 1.0 principals; 42% (n=13) for 2.0 principal; 72% response rate (n=28) for 3.0 principals *(lower response rates for comparison group)*
LASDI Consultant Survey	81% response rate (n=42) in 2012
Case Studies (n=16) 6 PSCI 2.0 schools 5 PSCI 3.0 schools 5 PSCI 4.0 schools	Interviews with design teams (n=24); parent focus groups (n=112 parents total); site-specific meeting observations (n=50); interviews with principals (n=17), teachers (n=65)
Non-Case Observations	40
Plan review	206 plans for PSCI 1.0, 2.0, & 3.0
Media review	290 articles

PSCI Theory of Change:
Levers of change in plan writing and selection

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District, Community, School, Classroom Context

Commitment; capacity; motivation; leadership; politics; other policies & competing interventions; community, school, staff & student characteristics

LAUSD experienced some successes and challenges during plan writing

- Stakeholder Understanding & Commitment
  - Stakeholder levels of understanding & support were mixed

- Competition for Selection
  - +/- District attracted diverse actors to participate in teams in Phase I, but…
    - Attracting a sufficient number of applications was a challenge
    - Neutrality & fairness of process called into question
    - Competition led to unintended consequences
  - Modifications to the policy reduced competition in Phase II

- Autonomy
  - Many teams lacked an understanding of model autonomies & waivers

- Capacity Building
  - + LAUSD & partners provided strong scaffolding for plan development
  - Access to some support varied by team composition

Plan quality increased over time and selected plans were of higher quality

- Plans were of moderate quality
    - Plans Improved between cohorts 1 &2 but decreased in quality between cohorts 2 & 3
    - Plans ultimately selected were of higher quality
    - In both phases, competition was not associated with plan quality

- Phase I
    - Alternative governance model plans were of higher quality
    - Higher quality plans had higher reported levels of implementation

- Phase II
    - No significant relationships
    - Technical assistance during plan writing associated with higher quality plans

The quantity and quality of parent engagement shifted over time

- Who participated?
  - As intended, there was a slight shift to a more representative process
  - Participation remained low throughout both phases

- How did participants engage, and what was the content?
  - Content dominated by self-interest in both phases
  - Appeals to parents shifted from emotional to reason-based
  - Low levels of participant understanding throughout

- What factors shaped the quantity and quality of participation?
  - *Skepticism* about purpose of participation, district accountability
  - Lack of trust in the process (due to misinformation)
  - Language barriers
  - Facilitator skill
  - Time constraints

PSCI Theory of Change:
Levers of change in implementation

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LAUSD experienced some successes and challenges with implementation

- Autonomy
    - – Autonomies were not widely implemented
    - + Charter and pilot schools remained most autonomous; these schools were associated with intermediate outcomes, such as teacher collaboration and new teacher evaluation procedures

- Accountability
    - – Some staff reported that they had not received adequate monitoring and feedback from the district on their performance
    - +/- Staff believed they would be held accountable for test scores, yet few understood what specific consequences would be
    - + Reflective and learning components of the self-evaluation were well received

- Capacity Building
    - – Less support was provided during implementation than plan writing
    - + In cohort 2, the district supported 2 weeks of professional development/planning time prior to school opening

PSCI turnaround increased turnover and showed suggested impacts on teacher quality

- Both PSCI transformation (focus 1.0) and reconstitution (focus 2.0) increased teacher turnover in treated schools
  - Teachers are significantly more likely to switch schools after being identified for transformation but not after PSCI implementation (Cohort 1.0)
  - Teachers are significantly more likely to switch schools and leave LAUSD after being identified for reconstitution and significantly more likely to switch schools after experiencing PSCI implementation (Cohort 2.0)

- PSCI transformation may negatively impact the overall quality of the teacher workforce

- PSCI reconstitution may initially improve the quality of teachers, but over time may decrease the quality of teachers

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- Two main research questions:

  1. *How was the PSCI implemented over time?*
     - Plan writing/selection successes and challenges
     - Implementation successes and challenges

  2. *What are the early impacts of PSCI participation on student outcomes?*
     - Impact of PSCI turnaround (focus)
     - Impact of PSCI new schools (relief)

Impact Study Data & Methods

- We use LAUSD student- and school-level data from 2003-04 through 2012-13
  - ~413k 2-11th grade students enrolled in PSCI, comparison or low-performing schools in 2010-11 through 2012-13
  - Outcomes: ELA and math CST achievement; likelihood of suspension
  - Missing data on 2 relief charter schools; ½ comparison charters

- Our analysis compares outcomes of students in each cohort of schools to those of students in a set of comparison schools
  - *Focus schools vs. "Near-selected"* schools except schools treated in later cohorts (missed one indicator)
  - *Relief schools vs. feeder schools* except schools treated in later cohorts (schools to be relieved from overcrowding)

The Impact of Turnaround: Comparative Interrupted Time Series with near-selected school control group

- **"Near-selected" schools comparison group (focus schools):**
  - Replicate how LAUSD chose PSCI schools (all selected schools met each of ~5 indicators of low performance)
  - Select comparison schools as those that missed selection into PSCI by *one* indicator
  - Exclude NS schools that are treated in future cohorts of the reform
  - Baseline equivalence tests suggest sufficient similarity between comparison and treated groups in each cohort

- Robustness checks expand comparison group:
  - Include NS schools that are treated in future cohorts of the reform
  - Expand to all low-performing PI3+ schools

- Robustness check that pulls out SIG focus and near-selected schools

Comparative Interrupted Time Series (CITS) estimation strategy

$$Y_{ist} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 YEAR_t + \beta_2 PSCI_t + \beta_3 YEARS\_SINCE\_PSCI_t + \beta_4(T_{is} \times YEAR_t) +$$

$$\beta_5(T_{is} \times PSCI_t) + \beta_6(T_{is} \times YEARS\_SINCE\_PSCI_t) + \beta_7 X_{st} + \beta_8 Z_{ist} + \mu_i + \varepsilon_{ist}$$

- **Y_{ist}** = ELA and Math Standardized CST Scores normed within grade-subject-year; Suspension event
- **$YEAR_t$** = trend variable, begins at 1 in the 2003-4 school year
- **$PSCI_t$** = treatment year indicator (=1 in all years of implementation of PSCI for that cohort)
- **$YEARS\_SINCE\_PSCI_t$** = years since implementation
- **T_{is}** = treatment indicator (=1 if you are a student in a PSCI school)
- Level shift: β5
- Achievement trend: β6
- Overall effect = β5 + 2β6 (Cohort 1.0)

Achievement trend of students enrolled in focus vs. NS schools by timing of PSCI: Cohort 1.0

ELA Achievement Scores
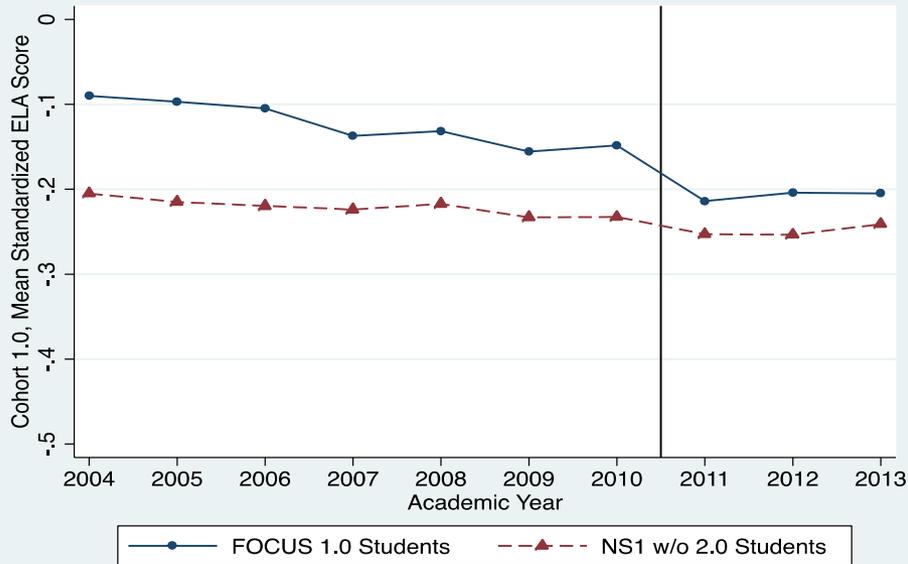
Math Achievement Scores
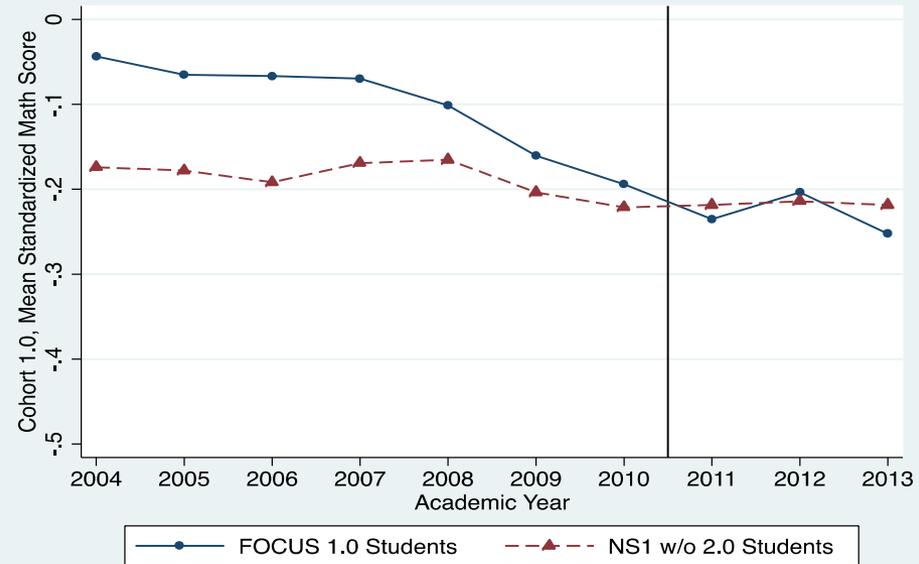
Achievement trend of students enrolled in focus vs. NS schools by timing of PSCI: Cohort 2.0

ELA Achievement Scores
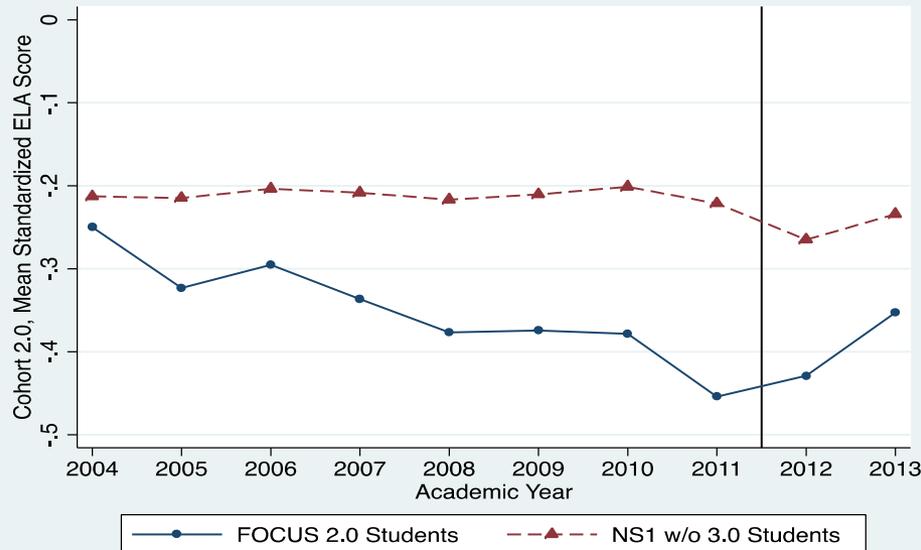
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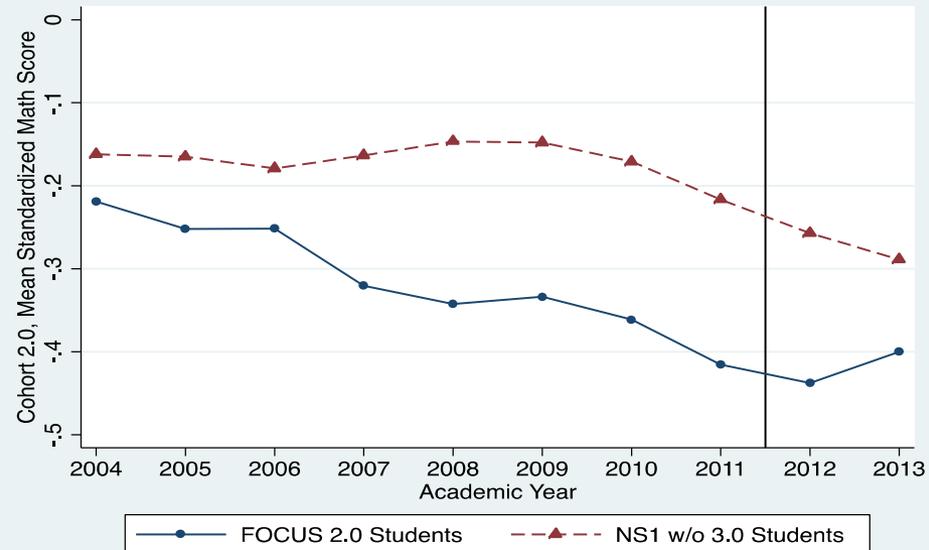
Achievement trend of students enrolled in focus vs. NS schools by timing of PSCI: Cohort 3.0

ELA Achievement Scores
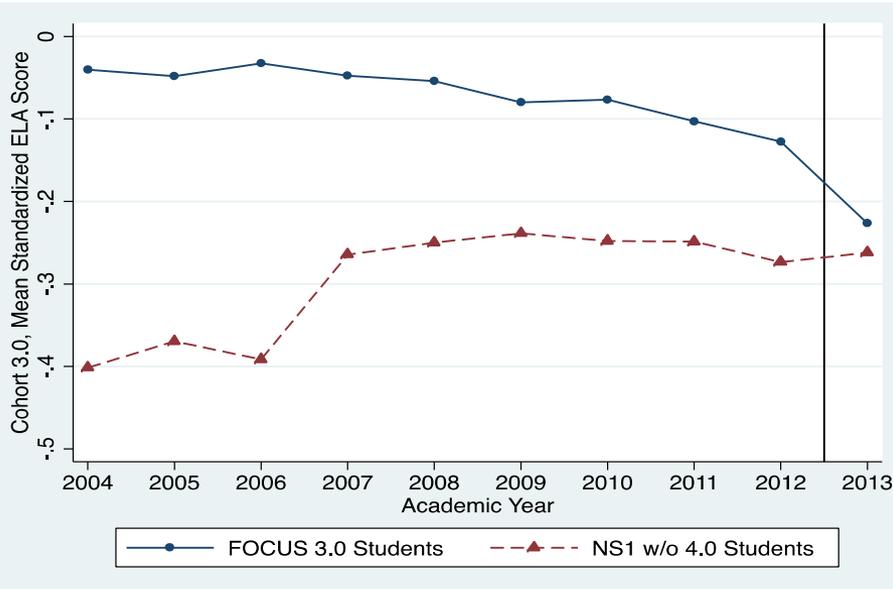
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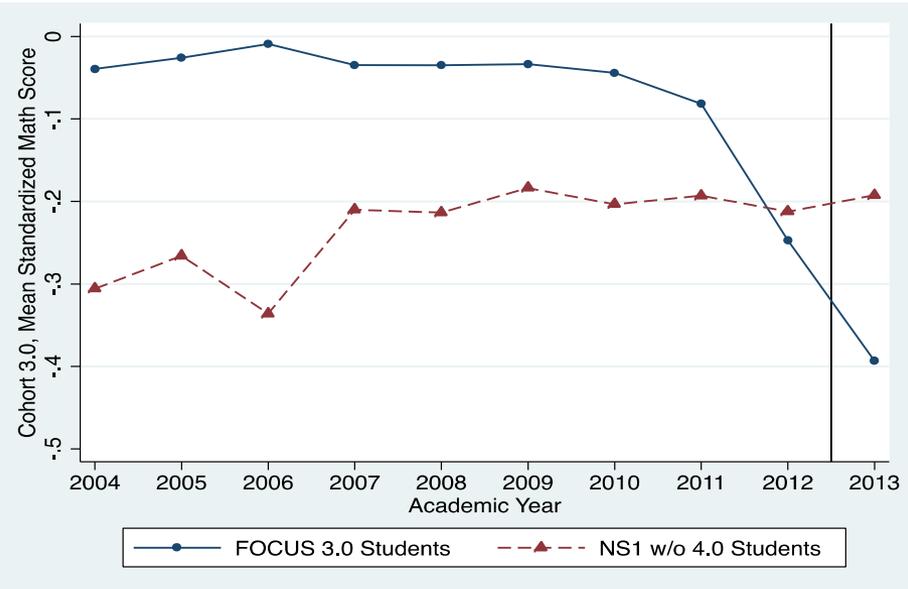
The impact of PSCI turnaround on student ELA achievement

	1.0 vs. NS	2.0 vs. NS	3.0 vs. NS
Tis x PSCIt	-0.014	0.079**	-0.102***
	(0.013)	(0.024)	(0.025)
Tis x YRS_SINCE_PSCIt	0.008	0.065**	--
	(0.010)	(0.020)	--
R2-ad	0.774	0.762	0.782
# of students	117,541	29,750	28,469
# of schools	85	28	46
Total Effect	0.002	0.144***	-0.102***
	(0.020)	(0.028)	(0.025)

*+ p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001. Standard errors are clustered to the school level.*

The impact of PSCI turnaround on student math achievement

	1.0 vs. NS	2.0 vs. NS	3.0 vs. NS
Tis x PSCIt	0.009	0.025	-0.162**
	(0.028)	(0.046)	(0.055)
Tis x YRS_SINCE_PSCIt	0.020	0.055	--
	(0.018)	(0.036)	--
R2-ad	0.656	0.650	0.684
# of students	116,151	29,113	28,263
# of schools	85	28	46
Total Effect	0.048	0.080	-0.162**
	(0.056)	(0.049)	(0.055)

*+ p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001. Standard errors are clustered to the school level.*

Allowing PSCI to begin in identification year

		ELA	Math
Cohort 1.0	**Level**	0.012	0.003
		(0.015)	(0.017)
	Growth	0.000	0.016
		(0.007)	(0.019)
	Overall	0.012	0.052
		(0.023)	(0.063)
Cohort 2.0	**Level**	-0.037	-0.015
		(0.042)	(0.046)
	Growth	0.076***	0.038
		(0.015)	(0.025)
	Overall	0 .114**	0.062
		(0.036)	(0.066)
Cohort 3.0	**Level**	**-0.041***	**-0.108***
		(0.017)	(0.044)
	Growth	-0.080***	-0.114*
		(0.022)	(0.056)
	Overall	-0.120***	-0.222***
		(0.031)	(0.062)

Factors that explain the positive Cohort 2.0 ELA achievement results

- LAUSD learned from mistakes made in the implementation of PSCI 1.0 and worked to improve professional development, technical assistance and time to collaborate for Cohort 2.0
  - o 2 weeks paid PD time before the start of the school year
  - o Infusion of i3 grant monies to assist with support and assistance

- Cohort 2.0 schools all reconstituted (N=3) or re-started (N=2)

"[Reconstitution was] a good thing for our school, that we could get different people in, that we can really get a staff here who's committed to the school, who wants to be at this school, and whoever was going to be here will have to go through a process of being here... So, it really got us a chance [to get rid of] people who weren't really onboard with certain thing...Some people did not apply to want to come back."

\- Cohort 2.0 principal

Factors that explain the negative Cohort 3.0 achievement results

- Substantial changes to PSCI policy that impacted only Cohort 3.0

  - MOU that limited competition in exchange for new opportunities for all schools to obtain autonomies

  - Changes occurred in the middle of plan-writing time period, led to confusion about who could apply and how new governance models would be enacted

  - Plan quality decreased between Cohorts 2.0 and 3.0

"This last time around … there is a lot of changes like half-way through … like the union negotiations and who can be included and who cannot. It's a point where you think you are applying for something or you are doing the assignment, and then half-way through it's kind of like well you might not even be able to apply. … I mean, there was confusion I think for anywhere between 30 to 60 days in terms of: Do we qualify? Can we apply? What does that look like? What does the new timeline look like?"

- Cohort 3.0 Applicant Team Leader

School of Education

The Impact of New Schools:
CITS with feeder school control group

- **"Feeder" schools comparison group (relief schools):**
  - Schools from which relief schools initially draw their student populations
  - Exclude Feeder schools that are treated as focus schools in future cohorts of the reform
  - Baseline equivalence tests suggest sufficient similarity between comparison and treated groups in each cohort

- Robustness checks expand comparison group:
  - Include feeders that are treated in future cohorts of the reform
  - Expand to all low-performing PI3+ schools

Achievement trend of students enrolled in relief vs. feeder schools by timing of PSCI: Cohort 1.0

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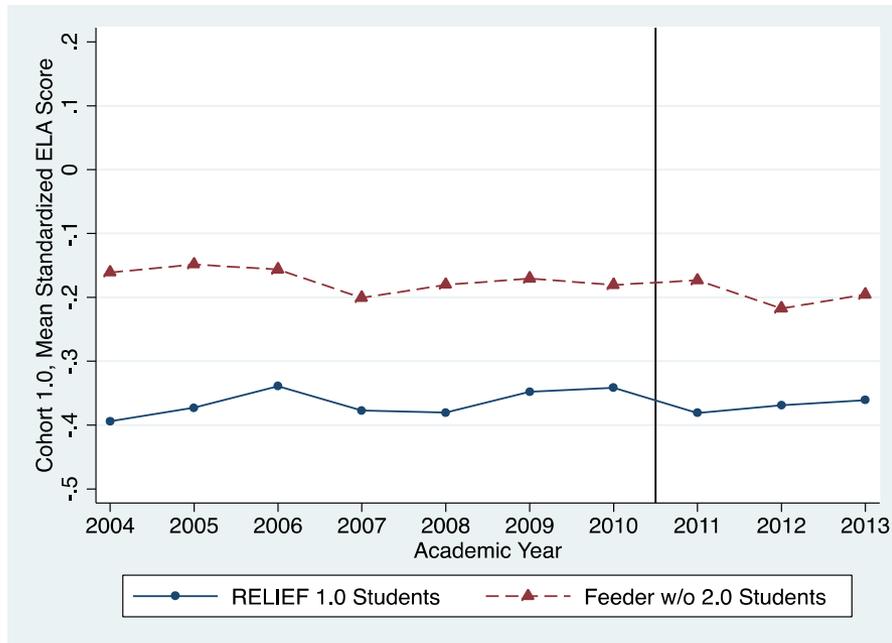
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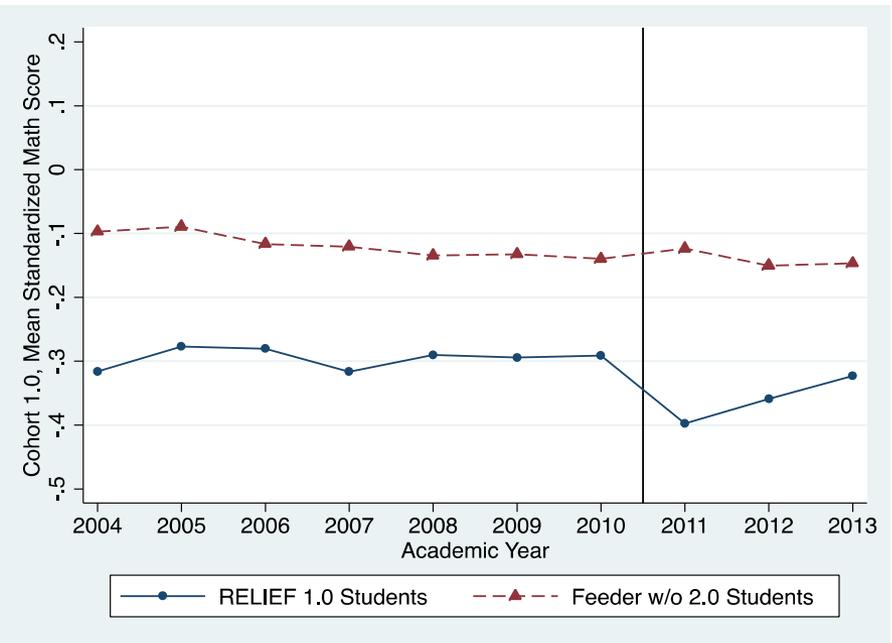
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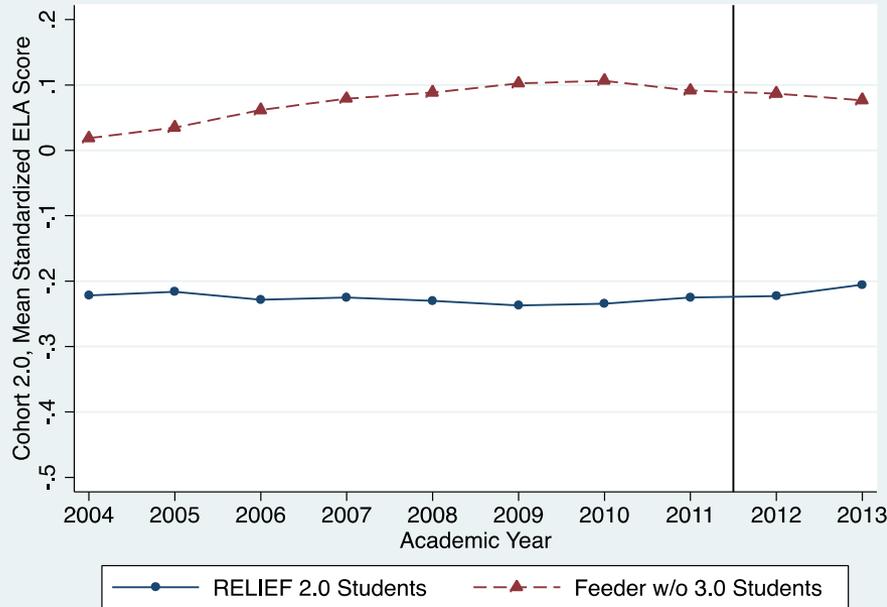
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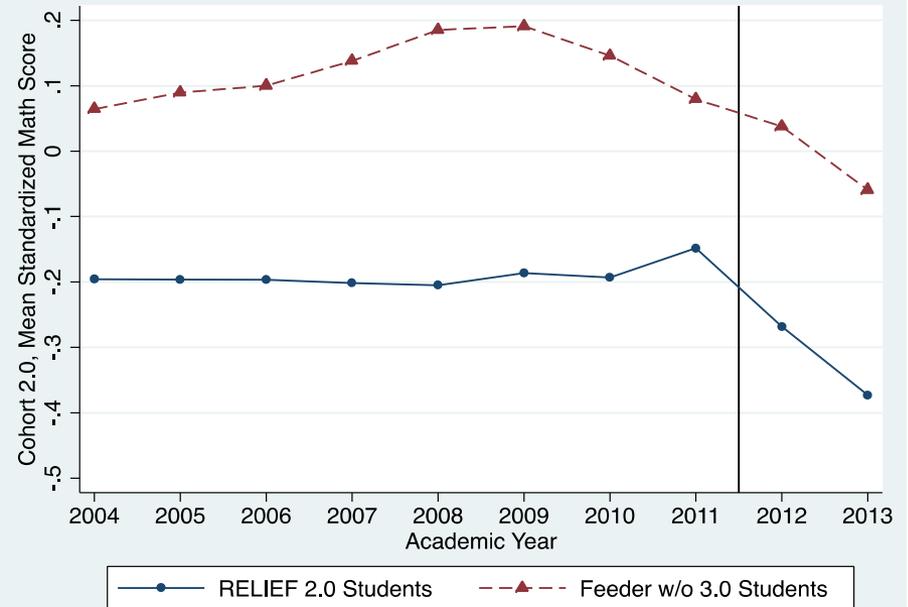
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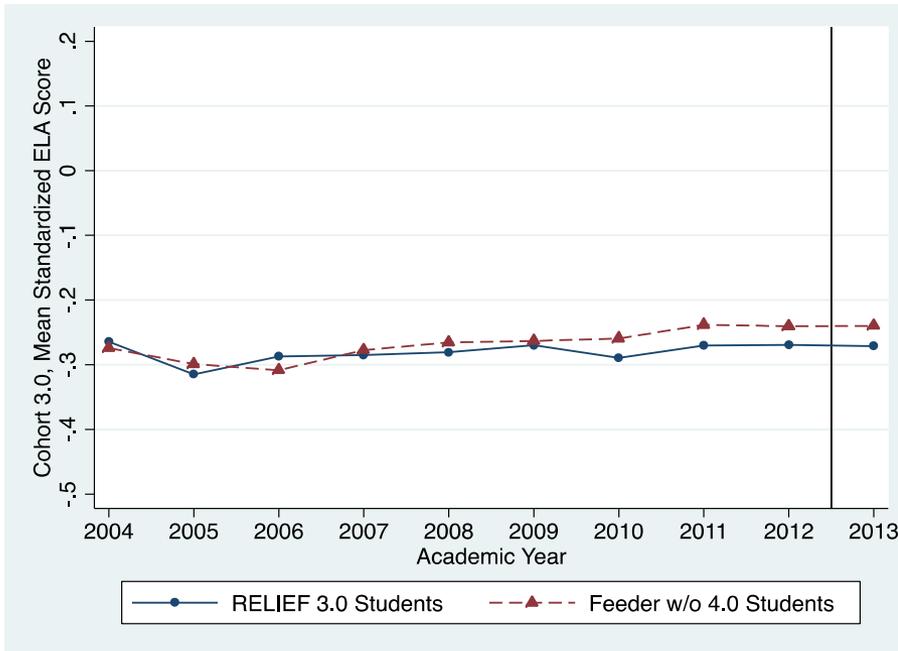
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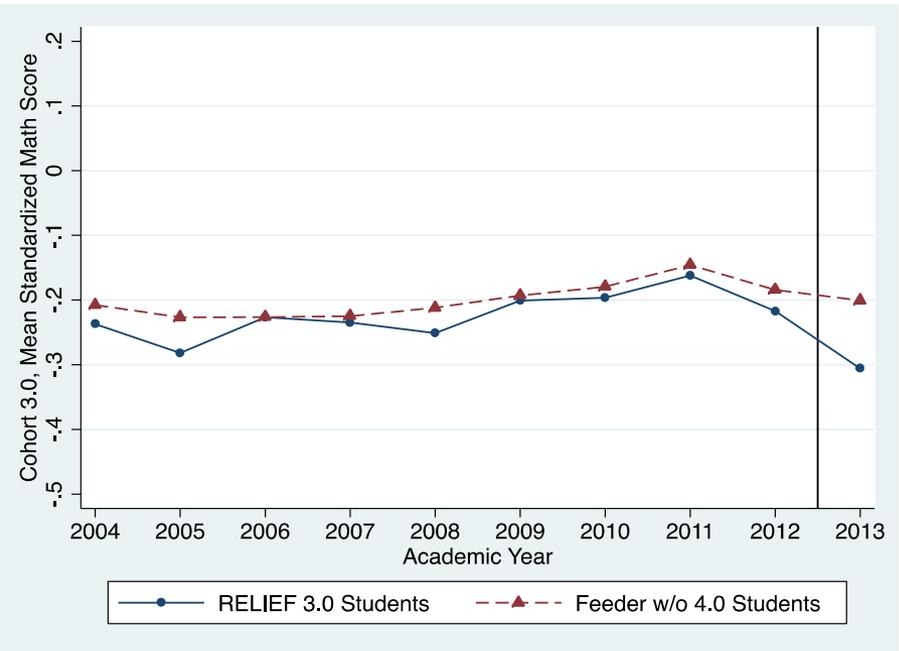
The impact of PSCI on student ELA achievement at relief schools

	1.0	2.0	3.0
Level Effect	-0.032+	0.006	0.026
	(0.017)	(0.024)	(0.034)
Trend Effect	0.024*	0.013	--
	(0.011)	(0.030)	--
R2-ad	0.780	0.81	0.769
# of students	60,606	37,598	24,418
# of schools	87	37	58
Total Effect	0.016	0.020	0.026
	(0.025)	(0.030)	(0.034)

*+ p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001. Standard errors are clustered to the school level.*

The impact of PSCI on student math achievement at relief schools

	1.0	2.0	3.0
Level Effect	-0.062+	-0.001	-0.035
	(0.034)	(0.042)	(0.062)
Trend Effect	0.044*	-0.024	--
	(0.019)	(0.035)	--
R2-ad	0.683	0.696	0.657
# of students	60,742	36,540	24,223
# of schools	87	37	58
Total Effect	0.026	-0.026	-0.035
	(0.040)	(0.054)	(0.062)

*+ p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001. Standard errors are clustered to the school level.*

Allowing PSCI to begin in identification year

		ELA	Math
Cohort 1.0	**Level**	0.006	-0.003
		(0.017)	(0.032)
	Growth	0.011	0.018
		(0.009)	(0.014)
	Overall	0.039	0.052
		(0.031)	(0.054)
Cohort 2.0	**Level**	0.025+	0.117**
		(0.014)	(0.037)
	Growth	0.007	-0.030
		(0.016)	(0.028)
	Overall	0.039	0.057
		(0.030)	(0.059)
Cohort 3.0	**Level**	-0.004	-0.015
		(0.018)	(0.050)
	Growth	0.024	-0.036
		(0.034)	(0.055)
	Overall	0.021	-0.051
		(0.039)	(0.080)

Factors that explain the relief achievement results

- Past LAUSD history includes dismal performance of newly constructed schools

> *"… the idea had origins in the fact that a lot of new schools were opening with beautiful, as you would like to say, externals and miserable internals and that he felt there was an imperative to address that.… For example, Santee which is a high school in central LA opened—a brand new school—as … one of the lowest performing schools in the first one or two years. So he took that as evidence of the fact that we needed to do something radically different"* –Staff for Mayor Villaraigosa

- Opening a new school presented unique challenges

> *"It was about creating the best operating plan for the investment of voters who supported constructing schools for kids. It was about taking the opportunity of opening a building, to open a new instructional design, specifically for that community and those students."* -Board Member Monica Garcia

o Preliminary findings indicate that relief schools demonstrated promising results in matching feeder school performance

Implications for policy development

- Alignment
  - o Ensure that key levers of policy are aligned to avoid difficult tradeoffs and unintended consequences

- Time
  - o Adequate time to develop policies and procedures is crucial

- Capacity
  - o District and state policymaker should consider districts' capacity to effectively implement and administer policies, including attention to external partnerships

Implications for policy development (cont.)

- Process Management
    - Anticipate potential tradeoffs in serving role of support provider and plan selector/evaluator
    - Districts and states should be flexible in policy-setting, learn from early mistakes and make mid-course corrections…
    - … but don't engage in drastic and confusing changes to core tenets of the reform mid-implementation year

- Selecting turnaround strategies
    - Drastic turnaround reforms such as reconstitution and re-start may be more effective at improving student achievement
    - Policymakers should consider how to retain high-quality teachers during turnaround reforms, including the capacities and resources needed

Implications for policy implementation

- Parent Engagement
  - Consider structures that inhibit and attract parent involvement
  - Invest in development of high quality, unbiased information and well-trained facilitators
  - Anticipate language barriers

- Plan Quality
  - Administrators should consider how "implementable" plans are
  - Unforeseen challenges may impede implementation; flexibility may be necessary
  - Consider the tradeoffs between competition and quality

Implications for policy implementation (cont.)

- Capacity Building
  - Provide sufficient resources aligned with school capacity deficits
  - Help build school leader and staff capacity

- Autonomy
  - Dissemination of information on autonomies is essential
  - Administrators should ensure sufficient capacity to manage and support implementation of granted autonomy

Next steps…

- Delving more into reconstitution

- Examining the role of intermediaries

- Exploring the reciprocal relationship between politics and policy

- Other ideas?

Thank you!

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