



Carlos Falu, 17, a senior at Pritzker College Prep, works on financial aid applications for college at the Renaissance 2010 school on the West Side. *NANCY STONE/TRIBUNE PHOTO*

Daley school plan fails to make grade

Renaissance 2010 officials defend efforts to upgrade education over last 6 years

By **Stephanie Banchemo**
TRIBUNE REPORTER

Six years after Mayor Richard Daley launched a bold initiative to close down and remake failing schools, Renaissance 2010 has done little to improve the educational performance of the city's school system, according to a Tribune analysis of 2008 state test data.

Scores from the elementary schools created under Renaissance 2010 are nearly identical to the city average, and scores at the remake high schools are below the already abysmal city average, the analysis found.

The marbled test scores follow other

less than enthusiastic findings about Renaissance 2010 — that displaced students ended up mostly in other low-performing schools and that mass closings led to youth violence as rival gang members ended up in the same classrooms. Together, they suggest the initiative hasn't lived up to its promise by this, its target year.

"There has been some good and some bad in Renaissance 2010, but overall it wasn't the game changer that people thought it would be," said Barbara Radner, who heads the Center for Urban Education at DePaul University. "In some ways it has been more harmful than good because all the attention, all the funding, all the hope was directed at Ren10 to the detriment of other effective strategies CPS was developing."

Turning around public schools is the

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Cunningham and other supporters argue that many new schools, mainly in low-income and high-crime neighborhoods, are outperforming nearby traditional schools. They say attendance rates, parent satisfaction and student engagement are higher. And they point out that expecting significant gains from startup schools is unrealistic.

On Saturday, Daley said the program will yield measurable results, but that it will take time.

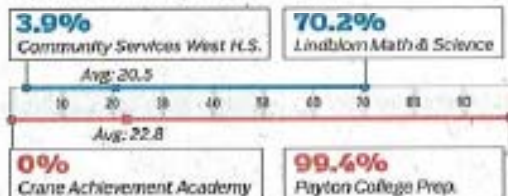
"I'll accept any criticism, and my adjustment of it, we'll look at it," Daley said.

There have been some bright spots.

Most of the elementary schools overhauled by the Academy for Urban School Leadership, which changes the school staff but leaves the students in place, are outperforming their previous selves. The Noble Street charter schools, which operate in some of the toughest neighborhoods, have college-going rates that even suburban schools would envy. And innovation has flourished, as the city's first all-boys public high school, Urban Prep, opened in Englewood, and the Chicago Virtual Charter School went online.

The business community embraced the reform agenda and has ponied up \$50 million to the Renaissance Schools Fund, a nonprofit created by the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago. The group has awarded

PSAE (Lowest and Highest percentages)



Top Renaissance 2010 donors

Since it was launched in 2004, the Renaissance Schools Fund has collected \$50 million from donors and given \$30 million to 63 schools. A look at top donors:

10 DONORS have given \$2 million or more:

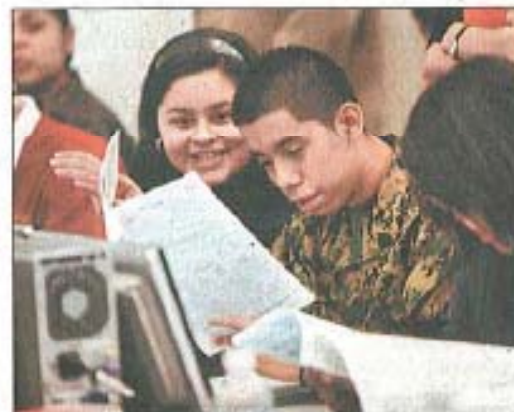
Civic Committee of The Commercial Club of Chicago; The Crown Family; Epsilon Corporation; Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; Northern Trust Dewo Family Charitable Trust; The Seale Funds at The Chicago Community Trust; The Walton Family Foundation, Inc.; two anonymous donors

15 DONORS have given \$1 million to \$1.99 million:

Baxter International Inc.; The Boeing Company; The Chicago Community Trust; Chicago High School of Redesign Initiative; CME Group Foundation; Deloitte LLP; Financial Investments Corporation; JPMorgan Chase; McCormick Foundation; McDonald's Corp. & Ronald McDonald House Charities; Polk Bros. Foundation; Pritzker Foundation; Resner Family Foundation; Sara Lee Corporation; Sonnenreich Nath & Rosenthal LLP

SOURCES: Illinois State Board of Education, Renaissance Schools Fund
KATHY CLAXTON / TRIBUNE

third are identical in performance; the rest do worse. math and reading exams. A series of studies released



Andrea Rodriguez, 17, left, and Victor Dominguez, 17, peruse an application at Pritzker. *NANCY STONE/TRIBUNE PHOTO*

those in comparable neighborhood schools.

"It's not like we are ready to cheer and scream success," Lockett said. "Our schools are doing very well but we've got to raise the bar. It's not good enough to 'just be better than the neighborhood schools.' But with the complexity of opening a new school, that's a good early goal."

Opening new innovative schools was only half of the Renaissance 2010 strategy. Closing the lowest performers was the other component — and nothing created more disruption to the city's educational landscape.

academy, sending teenagers to other schools, including Fenger. The two groups never got along and tempers flared inside and outside the school, culminating with the beating caught on videotape.

The academic outcomes of the displaced students wasn't any better. A report, issued in October by the Chicago Consortium on School Research at the University of Chicago, found that students from closed schools landed, for the most part, at campuses that were just as bad and then progressed at the same predictably low levels.

One positive outcome: students who ended up in