

Frequently Asked Questions about the Renaissance Charter School Turnaround Initiative

What is the Renaissance Charter School Turnaround Initiative?

The Renaissance Charter School turnaround initiative is a key part of the School District's ongoing work to identify low-performing schools and "turn them around" into high-performing schools – all with input and support from parents, community partners and local stakeholders. This is the fourth year of this initiative.

Why is this necessary?

Despite many improvement efforts over a long period, your school continues to have very low academic performance and ongoing issues with school climate and attendance. The District is in the process of identifying school leaders with a proven track record of successfully turning around low-performing schools and running high-performing schools to guide the transformation of these schools.

Will my child's school close?

No, your child's school will not close. The school will continue to operate as the neighborhood school, still serving children from the community, but under new school leadership.

Can my child attend his/her current school once it is a Renaissance Charter School?

Yes. Current students are **guaranteed** enrollment in the Renaissance Charter School.

What is the goal of this initiative?

We want to dramatically improve educational opportunities for students who currently attend low-performing schools. Our goal is to turn these schools into high-performing schools that serve students from the neighborhood.

How will the school change as a result of the turnaround initiative?

There will be substantial changes to your school starting in the 2013-14 school year. These changes may include a longer school day and school year, improvements to the curriculum, new student enrichment programs during and after school, and other changes to the academic program and school environment. Renaissance Schools will likely see changes in the staff working at the school. Based on the results over the first three years of the Renaissance Charter School turnaround initiative, the District expects that these changes will result in visible and measurable improvements for the school.

My child has special needs and is enrolled in one of the Regional Program classes (autistic support, life skills or emotional support). What will happen to these classes next year?

All Regional Programs will remain in place at the school and your child will continue to receive appropriate services. Renaissance Charter Schools are required to provide a free, appropriate public education to all students with special education needs.



Is a Renaissance Charter School like an Education Management Organization (EMO) School?

No. Under the Renaissance Charter School model, the Turnaround Team matched with your child's school will have extensive freedom to implement successful programs. Under the EMO model, significant aspects of school management remained under District control.

What is a Turnaround Team?

A Turnaround Team is a school operator outside of the School District. The School District is using a competitive process to identify potential Turnaround Teams to be matched with Renaissance Charter Schools. Only applicants with a proven track record of successfully turning around low-performing schools and running high-performing schools will be eligible to be matched. The Turnaround Teams eligible to be matched with schools will be announced on March 22.

Will there be changes to the current staff at my child's school?

The Turnaround Team will determine the staffing of the school. Renaissance Charter Schools may have new principals, teachers and school-based staff.

How will parents and community members be engaged in this process?

Parents and community members play a crucial role in the turnaround process. A School Advisory Council (SAC) at each school, made up of parents and community members, will be responsible for evaluating the Turnaround Teams, gathering input from the school community and making recommendations to the District about what Turnaround Teams best meet the needs of the school community. After the school is converted to a Renaissance Charter School, the SAC will help monitor the progress of the Turnaround Team in transforming the school and will make recommendations to the District about whether the Turnaround Team should remain in place. District representatives will be on site at your school over the coming weeks to share more information about SACs, answer questions and encourage you to get involved!

How will we know if a Renaissance Charter School is succeeding?

Each Renaissance Charter School will be required to meet rigorous performance standards, including specific targets for improved academic achievement and school climate, and increased neighborhood attendance and student retention. These targets will be made public and will be monitored by the District. Information about whether the Renaissance Charter School is meeting its targets also will be made public. The charter agreement between the School District and the Turnaround Team will establish clear consequences for failure to meet performance targets.

What will happen if a Renaissance Charter School isn't working?

If the District determines that a Renaissance Charter School is consistently failing to meet its performance targets, the Superintendent may recommend that the School Reform Commission replace the Turnaround Team or return the school to District management.

What happens after the end of the current school year?

The Turnaround Team will move into the school immediately after the last day of school in June. Over the summer, staff will be trained, curricula and programs finalized, facilities improved, communities engaged and the school readied for the students returning in the fall.



What are my options if I don't want my child to attend a charter school?

We hope you will be happy with the Renaissance Charter School turnaround at your child's school. To date, the results of the turnaround initiative have been very encouraging in terms of improving student academic achievement and creating positive school climate and culture, and enrollment has increased at the vast majority of the schools. You may "opt out" of the Renaissance Charter School and enroll your child in another District school. At least one "opt out" school will be identified for each Renaissance Charter School.

Some people say that charter schools "push out" students who get in trouble. Will this happen at my child's school?

Renaissance Charter Schools work hard to improve school climate and set high expectations for student conduct, but also are required to follow the School District's Code of Student Conduct. Students and parents at Renaissance Charter Schools are entitled to the due process rights set forth in the District's Code of Student Conduct.

What's next in this process?

District staff will come to your school this week to answer your questions and share more information about the turnaround process, why your child's school was selected, and the important role of the school community in the turnaround. They will be on-site at your school over the coming weeks to answer more questions and encourage parents and community members to participate in the School Advisory Council (SAC). Through the SAC, the District will work with parents and community members to select turnaround teams that have a proven track record of operating high-achieving schools. The match between your child's school and a Turnaround Team will take place in late April or early May.

How can I get more information on the Renaissance Charter School turnaround initiative?

For more information, please visit the Renaissance Schools website at www.philasd.org/renschoools, call the Renaissance School Parent and Community hotline at (215) 400-5995, or send an email to renschoolorparents@philasd.org. You may also contact the Parent Ombudsman at your school.

