



Louisiana's Accountability System

10 Year Reality Check

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See www.researchonreforms.org

2007-2008

2013-2014

1998-1999

Summary

This report reviews the progress that students have made under the Louisiana School, District, and State Accountability System over the past 10 years. The results also establish a reference point by which student progress, or lack of progress, in Orleans Parish can be put into perspective. Data for this report were obtained from the Louisiana Department of Education's (LDOE) website to address the following question:

- To what extent have the state's African American and white, 4th and 8th graders progressed towards achieving the *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* proficiency goal in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics on LEAP?

The performance of both African American and white cohorts, especially 4th grade African Americans, has increased over the past 10 years in ELA and mathematics. There have also been decreases in the achievement gap as measured by the percentage of students scoring at the proficiency level on LEAP in ELA and mathematics. Unfortunately, the performance of African American 8th graders has been abysmal in both ELA and mathematics. After 10 years, the majority of them still score below the proficient level on these tests. A reality check questions whether the gains made over the past 10 years are educationally significant, given NCLB's proficiency goal of 100% by 2014. At the rate that both of the ethnic groups are progressing, it is very doubtful that goal will be achieved, or whether the achievement gap will be closed by 2014.

Examination of the performance of 4th and 8th grade cohorts raises the question as to whether student performance, especially that of African Americans, deteriorates as they move through the educational system. Examination of the data indicates that this is a possibility. To date, the Louisiana State Department of Education (LDOE) has not officially presented the results of any longitudinal evaluations of these cohorts as they move through the system. Until such data are generated, it is rather presumptive of the LDOE to glorify the progress that has been made based on the annual fluctuations in student test scores or the debatable significance of the magnitude of changes made over the past 10 years **between** and **within** these two major ethnic groups.

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Preface

During the 2005-06 school session, the Louisiana Department of Education “took over” most of the public schools in Orleans Parish. The rationale was that the system had failed and the state would do a better job at educating the poor and disadvantaged. Orleans now has a plethora of charter and traditional schools. One of the major goals of the *Center for Action Research on Reforms in New Orleans* is to objectively monitor and evaluate the progress of students under this new “experiment”. The vast majority of students attending schools in the three different urban school districts in Orleans Parish (RSD, NOPS, and BESE)¹ are poor African Americans. In order to place the accountability challenges confronting these students into perspective, this report will examine the extent to which the educational needs of poor and disadvantage African Americans in the state have been adequately met. Subsequent reports by this researcher will examine the progress, or lack of progress, in Orleans Parish since the “takeover”.

Introduction²

In 1998, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) implemented the Louisiana School and District Accountability System. It consists of rigorous content standards for K-12 and a high-stakes assessment program of criterion-referenced tests in 4, 8 and high school that are aligned to those standards^a. Students are tested in English Language Arts (ELA), mathematics, science and social studies. These tests are designed to measure the extent to which students have mastered the content standards. Instead of pass/fail labels, students are assigned achievement levels based on their scores, i.e., *Advanced, Mastery, Basic, Approaching Basic, and Unsatisfactory*^b. Students scoring at the *Basic* level or above are performing at the proficient level. Students in 4th and 8th grades are not promoted unless they achieve the state’s promotional standards on LEAP. High school students must also meet the state’s promotional standards on the GEE in order to graduate^c. From 1999 to 2005, students in grades 3,5,6,7, and 9 were tested on the IOWA Tests of Basic Skills (NRT). In 2006, the IOWA was replaced with a standards-based, CRT/NRT, assessment instrument (iLEAP)^d. In addition to the high-stakes testing, schools are held accountable for student achievement by annually assigning to them School Performance Scores (SPS) and growth targets^e. These scores are primarily based on achievement test results, with lesser weight given to attendance, dropouts and, currently, graduation rates from high school^f. Various types of support, sanctions and rewards are subsequently administered to schools that do not meet their performance standards. For an in-depth coverage of this accountability system, the reader is referred to Bulletin 111³.

¹ Recovery School District (RSD);New Orleans Public Schools (NOPS); Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE)

² Note: Superscript letters reference endnotes and other documentation that appear at end of paper

³ *Bulletin 111—The Louisiana School, District and State Accountability System*
(www.LDOE.state.la.us/lde/saa/2343.html)

In 2001, the federal *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* was established “...to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments...”⁴ This act forced Louisiana to modify the original accountability system and goals to be in compliance with NCLB. Accordingly, the 2014 goals of Louisiana are as follows:

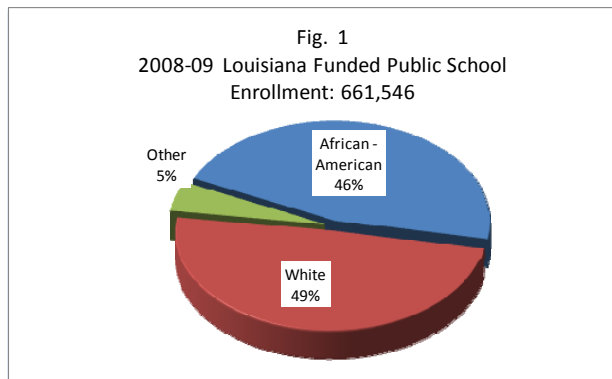
- School Performance Score Goal: Every public school will have an SPS of 120 by 2014.
- Student Proficiency Goal (NCLB): Every public school student will score at the proficiency level (Basic or above) on LEAP/iLEAP/GEE in ELA and mathematics by 2014.

Purpose

The report focuses on the student proficiency goal (NCLB). All progress made to date is viewed within that context. More specifically, it examines the progress made by African American and white students in grades 4 and 8 in attaining this goal. The data for in this report were obtained from the Louisiana Department of Education’s website (www.LDOE.state.la.us).

Demographics and Socioeconomic Factors

Before assessing the achievement data, demographic data are examined in order to place



achievement results into perspective. As of October 1, 2008, there were approximately 661,000 students enrolled in the public schools in the state⁵. Figure 1 presents the ethnic makeup for the 2008-09 school year. As can be observed, African American and white students comprise approximately 95% of the student population. The remaining 5% (other) consists of Asian, Hispanic, Native American students. This report will concentrate on the two largest student subgroups in the state, i.e., African

American and white students.

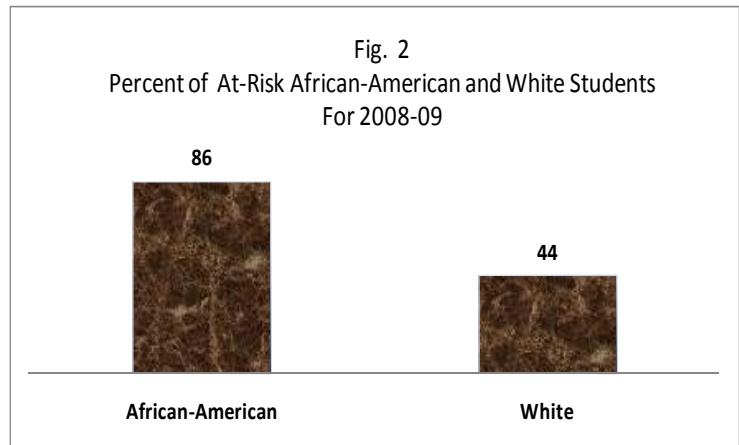
Although African American and white students make up equivalent sized ethnic groups, they are very dissimilar with respect to being disadvantaged or at-risk (i.e., eligible for free and reduced school lunch). As can be observed in Figure 2, the percent of African Americans, who are at-risk, is almost double that of white students. This ratio has changed little over the past 10 years⁶.

⁴ *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, Public Law 107-110, and Section 101.

⁵ October Multi-Stats Funded Membership(MFP) 2008

⁶ October Multi-Stats Funded Membership(MFP) 1998 to 2008

The extreme disparity in poverty between these two major ethnic groups is also reflected in the quality of schools that they attend. During the 2008-09 school year, 56% of African American students attended “Lower Performing Schools” (i.e., schools labeled as Academically Unacceptable or 1-Star) as compared to 14% of the white students. In “Higher Performing Schools” (i.e., schools with 2-5 Stars), 43% of African Americans attended as compared to 86% for white students⁷. Although improvement has occurred since 1999, it is still extremely disconcerting to observe that after 10 years under the accountability system, the majority of African American students are still attending inferior and inadequate schools across the state and are still lagging behind their white counterparts academically.



Student Achievement

4th Grade Proficiency

Table 1 presents the 10 year historical comparison of the percent of African American and white, 4th grade students scoring at the proficiency level on LEAP ELA and mathematics.⁸ These students were initial test takers. It is clear

that over the past 10 years, both groups have increased the percent that score at proficiency on both ELA and mathematics, with African American students improving

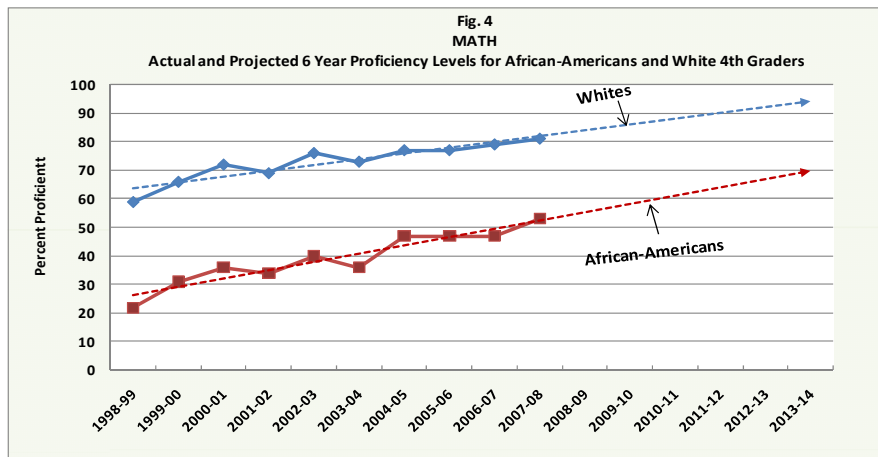
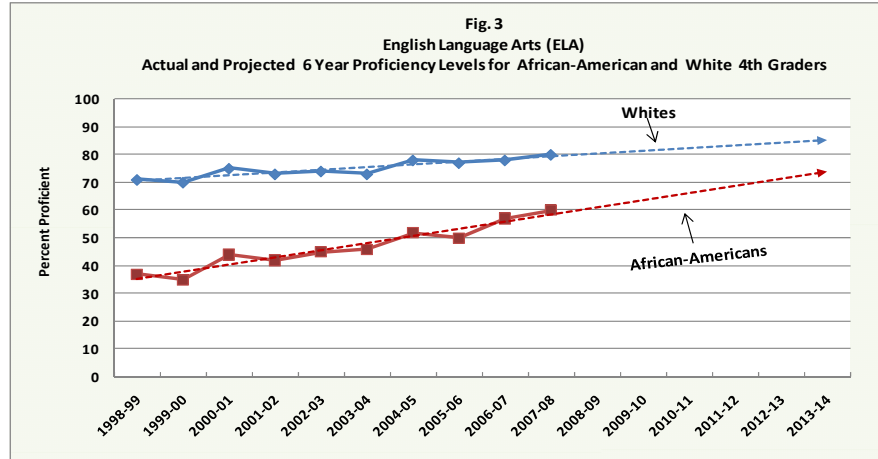
	ELA		Math	
	White	Black	White	Black
Percent Proficient in 1999	71	37	59	22
Percent Proficient in 2008	80	60	81	53
Average Yearly Change From 1999 to 2008	1.0	2.6	2.4	3.4
NCLB Percent Proficiency Goal for 2014	100	100	100	100
Percentage Points Increase Needed to Achieve NCLB Goal by 2014	20	40	19	47
Average Yearly Points Needed to Achieve NCLB Goal by 2014	3.3	6.6	3.2	7.8

at a faster rate than their white counterparts. The achievement gap between these two groups has also decreased over the past 10 years. In ELA, the gap dropped from 34 to 20 percentage points. This represents an average annual decrease of 1.5 percentage points per year. Similarly, in math, the gap dropped from 37 to 28 percentage points. This represents an average annual percentage decrease of 1.0 points⁸.

⁷ Detailed School-Level Table Fall 2008 and Fall 2002, October Multi-Stats Funded Membership(MFP) 2008; 2006-07 Louisiana State Progress Report

⁸ Spring (1999-2008) Criterion-Referenced Tests- Statewide Subgroup/Classification Reports

A reality check indicates that if African American 4th graders are to reach the NCLB goal by 2013-14 in ELA, they will need to show minimal, annual gains of approximately 6.6 percentage points for each of the next 6 years. Similarly, white students will have to average 3.3 percentage points per year for the next 6 years if they are to achieve this goal. Unfortunately, neither group has been able to consistently maintain respective gains of these magnitudes over the past 10 years. If one assumes that progress will continue to be made at approximately the same average, annual rate for both groups, then the six year projected percentage of proficiency levels presented in Fig. 3 and Fig. 4⁹ is entirely plausible. Although the achievement gap will continue to decrease, it is projected that neither group will achieve NCLB's goal by 2014. Similar conclusions about



4th and 8th grade cohorts were stated by the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana in 2004¹⁰ with respect to achieving the state's Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO's)^h. African American 4th graders have improved at a greater rate than their white counterparts. However, that rate of change will not be sufficient to decrease the

achievement gap to zero in ELA or mathematics by 2014¹¹.

8th Grade Proficiency

Table 2 presents the 10 year historical comparison of the percent of African American and white students in the 8th grade who scored at the proficiency level on ELA and mathematics. The vast majority of African American 8th graders continue to score below proficiency on ELA and mathematics as compared to

⁹ Proficiency trendlines to 2014 generated from Excel's linear regression procedures

¹⁰ "NCLB: A Steep Climb Ahead", Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana, July 2004

¹¹ Proficiency trendlines to 2014 generated from Excel's linear regression procedures

their white counterparts. The vast majority of white cohorts have maintained high levels of proficiency since 1999¹. The achievement gap between these two groups has decreased over the past 10 years. In ELA, the gap dropped from 34 to 29 percentage points. This represents an average, annual decrease of .6 points over 10 years. Similarly, in math, the gap has dropped from 39 to 34 percentage points, or an average,

	ELA		Math	
	White	Black	White	Black
Percent Proficient in 1999	59	25	56	17
Percent Proficient in 2008	71	42	73	39
Average Yearly Change From 1999 to 2008	1.3	1.9	1.9	2.4
NCLB Percent Proficiency Goal for 2014	100	100	100	100
Percentage Points Increase Needed to Achieve NCLB Goal by 2014	29	58	27	61
Average Yearly Points Needed to Achieve NCLB Goal by 2014	4.8	9.7	4.5	10.2

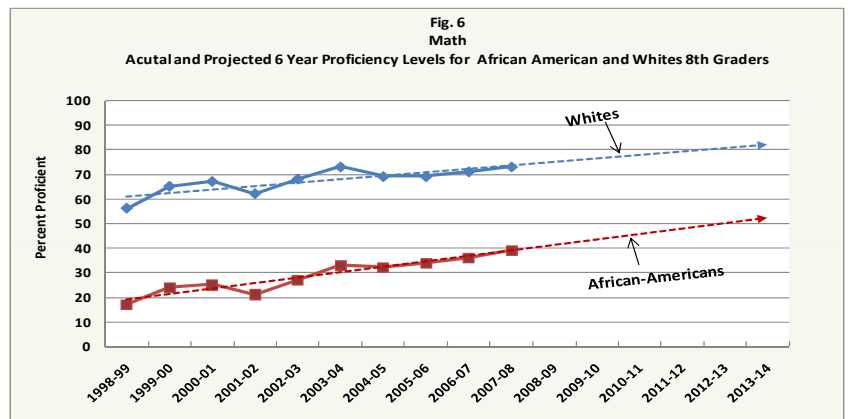
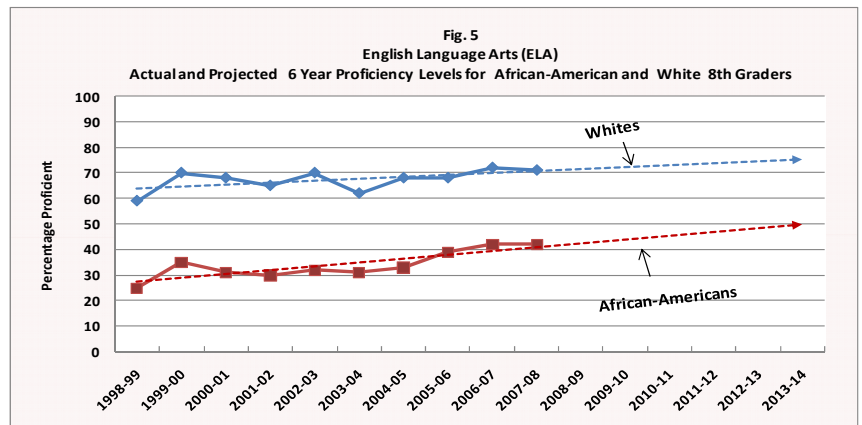
annual, percentage decrease of .6 percentage points.

A reality check indicates that if African American 8th graders are to

reach the NCLB's goal by 2014, they will have to post minimal, average gains of approximately 9.7

percentage points per year for the next 6 years. Similarly, white students will have to average 4.8 percentage points per year for the next 6 years if they are to achieve the NCLB goal in ELA. Even greater challenges exist for African American 8th graders in mathematics. Neither group has been able to consistently maintain respective gains of these magnitudes

over the past 10 years. Again, if one assumes that progress will continue to be made at approximately at the same average annual rate, it is projected that the NCLB goal will not be reached by 2014 and a relatively large achievement gap will still exist beyond 2014. See Fig. 5 and Fig. 6.



Conclusions

A recent report used the state's NAEP and LEAP data to demonstrate that the accountability system is making significant progress in narrowing the achievement gap¹². Despite the challenges of achieving the NCLB goal and making progress at closing the gap, African American 4th grade cohorts¹³ have continued to increase the percent of students scoring at the proficient levels in ELA since 2005. In mathematics, a majority of them scored at proficiency for the first time in 2008. This is indeed impressive. However, when put into the context of the timeline of NCLB, the yearly performance of both ethnic groups will have to increase at a greater rate annually if they are to achieve NCLB's goals of 100% proficient and close the achievement gap by 2014. Whether NCLB goal is realistic or attainable is open to debate and will have to be seriously addressed as 2014 nears. However, without achievement goals established, it is very difficult to put achievement gains observed into a meaningful perspective.

The various initiatives and programs that have been implemented at the early grade levels appear to have positively impacted performance of African American 4th graders. Unfortunately, the performance of African American 8th graders has been abysmal in both ELA and mathematics. After 10 years, the majority of them are still scoring below proficient on LEAP ELA and mathematics. These students have either not demonstrated or partially demonstrated "...the fundamental knowledge and skills needed for the next grade level at school..." (See Endnote "b"). Examination of performance of African American 4th and 8th graders raises the question as to whether student performance deteriorates as they move through the educational system, i.e., 4th to 8th to high school. The data presented in this report suggest that this is a definite possibility. One has to also seriously question to what extent the educational needs of poor and disadvantaged, African Americans continue to be met as they move through the educational system.

It could be argued that it is unfair to criticize the accountability system based on the results of these 8th grade cohorts. Many of the cohorts were in the system prior to the implementation of the new accountability system in 1998-99, and, therefore, did not have the benefits of being taught the content standards from the first grade. Indeed, that is a possibility. However, as of the 2008-09 school year, there were four groups of 4th grade cohorts that started first grade on or after the implementation of the accountability system in 1998-99. These 4th grade cohorts were tested in the spring of 2002 through the spring of 2005^j. As a result of normal educational progression, these cohorts should have been in the 11th, 10th, 9th, and 8th grades, respectively, during the 2008-09 school year. What happened to these African American and white 4th grade cohorts as they moved through the system? What happened to those who scored at the proficient level as 4th graders? What happened to those who scored below the proficiency level as 4th graders? What happened to those who either passed or failed LEAP based on the promotional standards? How many progressed successfully to the 8th grade? How many were retained at various grade levels, especially 4th, 8th and 9th? How many of these cohorts from 2002, 2003, and 2004 went to high

¹² "Improving Achievement and Closing Gaps", Education Watch State Report, 2009

¹³ Cohort is used here to categorize different groups of 4th grade students who started first grade in 1998 or later and took the LEAP as initial test takers.

school? How many dropped out? How many were incarcerated? In order to realistically assess the educational effectiveness of the accountability system on all students, these, and a host of other questions, should be addressed systematically by implementing educational evaluation studies. Longitudinal evaluations of these cohorts are needed to assess the long term impact of this program from K through 12.

Currently, there are no longitudinal studies by the LDOE on the 4th grade cohorts mentioned earlier¹⁴. Without longitudinal evaluation studies, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to assess the extent to which Louisiana's accountability system has made long-term, positive and systemic changes for all public school students, especially disadvantaged African American students. Until such data are generated, it is rather presumptive of the LDOE to glorify the progress that has been made based on the annual fluctuations in student test scores or the debatable significance of the magnitude of changes made over the past 10 years **among** and **between** the major ethnic groups. Recently, the LDOE was awarded a \$4 million grant from the United States Department of Education to create a data warehouse system that will "...enrich its current longitudinal data system..."¹⁵ It is expected that future longitudinal data sets will be made available to researchers once the data warehouse is developed.

As indicated earlier, the results presented in this report will be used to place the New Orleans "experiment" into perspective with respect to the progress or lack of progress made by state. Orleans Parish has more charter schools than anywhere else in the country. Are they the "answer" to the educational quagmire that currently exists? Perhaps, but until objective evaluations are conducted and the results shared with the public, the jury is still out. Future reports will begin to evaluate this "experiment" in greater detail.

¹⁴ Personal correspondence with LDOE

¹⁵ LDOE Press Release on 4/16/2009: "Department Receives Grant for Data Warehouse"

End Notes and Other Supporting Documentation

^a LEAP, GEE, and parts of the iLEAP are considered Criterion-Referenced tests. These tests are aligned with the content standards and are designed to measure the extent to which a student has mastered the standards or grade level equivalents (GLE's) at a given grade level. Students receive scores that are converted to performance labels: Advanced, Mastery, Basic, Approaching Basic, and Unsatisfactory.

^b 2006-07 Louisiana State Progress Reports, page 25

◆ *Advanced*—A student at this level has demonstrated superior performance beyond the *Mastery* level.

◆ *Mastery*—A student at this level has demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter and is well prepared for the next level of schooling. The *Mastery* achievement level wasn't named *Proficient* until the spring 2003. Though the name was changed, the achievement level remains the same.

◆ *Basic*—A student at this level demonstrated only the fundamental knowledge and skills needed for the next level of schooling.

◆ *Approaching Basic*—A student at this level has only partially demonstrated the fundamental knowledge and skills needed for the next level of schooling.

◆ *Unsatisfactory*—A student at this level has not demonstrated the fundamental knowledge and skills needed for the next level of schooling.

^c 2006-2007 Louisiana State Education Progress Report, pages 25-26

"...Louisiana's high-stakes testing policy is an important part of Reaching for Results, an educational reform system designed to improve student achievement. The LEAP tests are designed to ensure that grade 4 and grade 8 students have adequate knowledge and skills before moving on to the next grade. Beginning in spring 2004 for grade 4 and beginning in spring 2006 for grade 8, students were required to score *Basic* or above on either the English Language Arts or the Mathematics test and *Approaching Basic* or above on the other to progress to the next grade..." Prior to those years, respectively, 4th and 8th graders were required to score at *Approaching Basic* on ELA and mathematics

^d 2008 iLEAP Interpretive Guide, Section 1, Page 1

"...The **CRT component** of *i*LEAP measures how well a student has mastered the state content standards. ...The **NRT component** of *i*LEAP measures student performance in Reading, Language, and Math..." as compared to the nation.

^e School Performance Labels—2006-07 Bulletin 111, Paragraph 1101, Page 15

Performance Label	School Performance Score
Academically Unacceptable	Below 45.0
Academic Warning*	45.0 – 59.9
★	60.0 – 79.9
★★	80.0 – 99.9
★★★	100.0 – 119.9
★★★★	120.0 – 139.9
★★★★★	140.0 and above

*Effective with the 2005 performance labels, the definition of an academically unacceptable school shall be any school with an SPS below 60.0. The academic warning label will be used only with the 2003 and 2004 school performance scores.

^f SPS weighting factors- Bulletin 111, pages 2 and 3

2007 (and beyond) Baseline	
SPS K-8 Indicators and Weighting	
LEAP, iLEAP, LAA-1 and 2 (90% K-8)	Grades 3-8
Attendance (10% K-6; 5% 7-8)	Grades K-8
Dropout Rate (5% 7-8)	Grades 7-8

2007 (and beyond) Baseline	
SPS 9-12 Indicators and Weighting	
LEAP, iLEAP, LAA-1 and 2 (70%)	Grades 9-11
Cohort Graduation Index (30%)	Grade 12

8 4th Grade Proficiency Percentages in ELA and mathematics: 1999-2008

10 Year Comparison of Percent Proficiency for African-American and White 4th Grade Cohorts in ELA					
Test Year	White	Annual Change	African American	Annual Change	Achieve. GAP
1999	71		37		34
2000	70	-1	35	-2	35
2001	75	5	44	9	31
2002	73	-2	42	-2	31
2003	74	1	45	3	29
2004	73	-1	46	1	27
2005	78	5	52	6	26
2006	77	-1	50	-2	27
2007	78	1	57	7	21
2008	80	2	60	3	20
2009	83.3	3.3	66.6	6.6	16.7
2010	86.6	3.3	73.2	6.6	13.4
2011	89.9	3.3	79.8	6.6	10.1
2012	93.2	3.3	86.4	6.6	6.8
2013	96.5	3.3	93	6.6	3.5
2014	100	3.3	100	6.6	0
20 points needed from 2009 to 2014 Approx. 3.3 points per year			40 points needed from 2009 to 2014 Approx. 6.6 points per year		

10 Year Comparison of Percent Proficiency for African-American and White 4th Grade Cohorts in MATH					
Test Year	White	Annual Change	African American	Annual Change	Achieve. GAP
1999	59		22		37
2000	66	7	31	9	35
2001	72	6	36	5	36
2002	69	-3	34	-2	35
2003	76	7	40	6	36
2004	73	-3	36	-4	37
2005	77	4	47	11	30
2006	77	0	47	0	30
2007	79	2	47	0	32
2008	81	2	53	6	28
2009	84.2	3.2	60.8	7.8	23.4
2010	87.4	3.2	68.6	7.8	18.8
2011	90.6	3.2	76.4	7.8	14.2
2012	93.8	3.2	84.2	7.8	9.6
2013	97	3.2	92	7.8	5
2014	100	3.2	100	7.8	0
19 points needed from 2009 to 2014 Approx. 3.2 points per year			47 points needed from 2009 to 2014 Approx. 7.8 points per year		

^h Bulletin 111, Page 13, Paragraph 705

AMO

A. The Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) is the percent of students required to reach the proficient level in a given year on the standards-based assessments, which through 2005 will include English language arts and mathematics tests for 4th, 8th, and 10th grades.

B. As required in NCLB, the AMOs have been established based on the baseline percent proficient score (proficient = CRT level of basic, mastery, or advanced) in English-language arts and mathematics in the 20th percentile school, using the 2002 CRT test scores in ELA and mathematics for grades 4, 8, and 10.

The AMOs for ELA and math are as follows.

School Year	ELA	Mathematics
2001-2002		
2002-2003	36.9 %	30.1 %
2003-2004	36.9 %	30.1 %
2004-2005	47.4 %	41.8 %
2005-2006	47.4 %	41.8 %
2006-2007	47.4 %	41.8 %
2007-2008	57.9 %	53.5 %
2008-2009	57.9 %	53.5 %
2009-2010	57.9 %	53.5 %
2010-2011	68.4 %	65.2 %
2011-2012	78.9 %	76.9 %
2012-2013	89.4 %	88.6 %
2013-2014	100.0 %	100.0 %

8th Grade Proficiency Levels in ELA and Math : 1999-2008

10 Year Comparison of Percent Proficiency for African-American and White 8th Grade Cohorts in ELA					
Test Year	White	Annual Change	African American	Annual Change	Achievement GAP
1999	59		25		34
2000	70	11	35	10	35
2001	68	-2	31	-4	37
2002	65	-3	30	-1	35
2003	70	5	32	2	38
2004	62	-8	31	-1	31
2005	68	6	33	2	35
2006	68	0	39	6	29
2007	72	4	42	3	30
2008	71	-1	42	0	29
2009	75.8	4.8	51.7	9.7	24.1
2010	80.6	4.8	61.4	9.7	19.2
2011	85.4	4.8	71.1	9.7	14.3
2012	90.2	4.8	80.8	9.7	9.4
2013	95	4.8	90.5	9.7	4.5
2014	100	4.8	100	9.7	0
29 points needed from 2009 to 2014 Approx. 4.8 points per a year			58 points needed from 2009 to 2014 Approx. 9.7 points per a year		

10 Year Comparison of Percent Proficiency for African-American and White 8th Grade Cohorts in Math					
Test Year	White	Annual Change	African American	Annual Change	Achievement GAP
1999	56		17		39
2000	65	9	24	7	41
2001	67	2	25	1	42
2002	62	-5	21	-4	41
2003	68	6	27	6	41
2004	73	5	33	6	40
2005	69	-4	32	-1	37
2006	69	0	34	2	35
2007	71	2	36	2	35
2008	73	2	39	3	34
2009	77.5	4.5	49.2	10.2	28.3
2010	82	4.5	59.4	10.2	22.6
2011	86.5	4.5	69.6	10.2	16.9
2012	91	4.5	79.8	10.2	11.2
2013	95.5	4.5	90	10.2	5.5
2014	100	4.5	100	10.2	0
27 points needed 2009 to 2014 Approx. 4.5 points per a year			61 points needed 2009 to 2014 Approx. 10.2 points per year		

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4th Grade Cohorts in System as First Graders on or After 1998-99										
School Years										
1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th
		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th
			1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th