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**WCPSS MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT OUTCOMES
2005-06**

Editors

Nancy Baenen
David Holdzkom

ABSTRACT

This report draws together various academic performance results for middle school students in WCPSS. Generally speaking, students in grades 6-8 continue to do well on most literacy measures, but there has been a decline in mathematics EOG performance, largely resulting from the State Board of Education's action to create more rigorous cut scores for achievement levels. Results for the new test of computer skills are also a concern. Analysis of student outcomes is provided at the grade level as well as for subgroups. This report describes demographic trends that impact our student outcomes as well as information about students retained in grade. Finally, the report provides summaries of several research and evaluation efforts related to effective practices for promoting student achievement.

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WCPSS MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT OUTCOMES 2005-06

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes overall trends in student outcomes at grades 6-8 for 2005-06 and over time for the Wake County Public Schools (WCPSS). This includes not only a variety of testing results but accountability standards, promotion/ retention rates, and suspension rates. Findings related to effective practices based on our research and evaluations are included in the final chapter.

BACKGROUND

Demographic Trends

The student population in the school system has been growing rapidly, with an increase of 24% since 2001. WCPSS is growing more diverse, with an increase in the percentage of non-White, low income, and limited-English-proficient (LEP) students. Some of the groups that have been growing more rapidly have typically shown lower achievement, increasing the challenge of improving achievement.

Achievement Outcomes - Literacy

Literacy results at the middle school level include statewide End-of Grade (EOG) tests, Writing tests (grade 7), and the IDEA Proficiency Test (IPT) for students with limited English proficiency.

EOG—Reading

Generally, the percentage of students scoring at grade level on EOG reading tests has been increasing at the middle school level since spring of 2000, and achievement gaps have been closing.

- 91% of WCPSS middle school students have scored at proficient levels for each of the last two years. WCPSS proficiency is higher than that of the state overall (86% at grade level).
- The gap between White and Asian students compared to Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students has been gradually closing since the spring of 2000. Black/African American students have showed the most improvement in the percentage of students showing proficiency. The gap between White and Asian students compared to Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students in 2005-06 was still about 15 to 20 percentage points.
- Within each ethnic group, the percentage of females who scored proficient was higher than for males.

EOG—Mathematics

As in reading, the percentage of students scoring at grade level in mathematics had been increasing through 2004-05, but the new mathematics End-of-Grade tests used at grades 3-8 in 2005-06 brought more rigorous standards, lower overall proficiency, and larger gaps by ethnicity and academic risk groups.

- At grades 6-8, results for 2005-06 show the mathematics proficiency standard is more difficult to meet than the reading standard. In reading, 91% of students scored proficient, while 73% scored proficient in math.
- Higher percentages of WCPSS students in grades 6-8 scored at grade level in mathematics than was true statewide (62%).
- Middle school gaps in the percentage of students scoring at grade level in mathematics between White and Asian students and Hispanic/Latino and Black/African American students were larger with the new test and standards, and larger than in reading, with gaps of about 40% in mathematics in 2005-06. Large gaps were also evident between students who were low income, had disabilities, or had limited English proficiency and the overall population in WCPSS.
- Within each ethnic group, females were more likely to score proficient than males.
- Nearly all middle school students who took the Algebra I EOC scored proficient (98%), with no achievement gaps evident by subgroup.

Writing

WCPSS writing results at the middle school level show results above the state level but with room for improvement.

- For the past four years, WCPSS proficiency rates on the state's grade 7 Writing Test results have consistently been higher than those for the state as a whole. However, the gap between the state and WCPSS has closed slightly over that time, as the statewide rate has risen slightly (about 5%) while WCPSS proficiency has fluctuated around 60%.
- Grade 7 writing proficiency rates remain among the lowest across all of the tests that are part of the state's testing and accountability program. Grade 7 writing results often impact schools' status on the ABCs of Public Education (ABCs) negatively.
- Among various student subgroups in WCPSS, Asian, White, and female students were the only groups to reach a proficiency rate above 60% in 2005-06. The lowest proficiency rates in 2005-06 were found among the FRL, SWD, Black/African American, and Hispanic/Latino subgroups, all of whom had rates lower than 50%. Female students outperformed males on this assessment at Grade 7.

Online Computer Skills Test

Of the eighth grade students who were administered the Online Computer Skills Test, 68.8% passed the test in 2005-06. Passing this test is a graduation requirement.

IDEA Proficiency Test

On the IPT, LEP students earn scores for reading, listening, writing, and speaking. Students were most likely to score above novice levels in listening (81%) and least likely to score beyond novice levels in writing. Students must score superior in all four sections of the test to exit LEP status; few students reached this criterion (with only 2% scoring superior in writing) in 2005-06.

Retention Rates

WCPSS students are promoted at a high rate, but differences exist in the percentage of students promoted by grade level, ethnicity, academic risk factors, and gender.

- As of the end of the 2005-06 school year, 96% of WCPSS' students K-12 were promoted; while 4% were retained (4,876 students).
- High school had the highest retention rates, especially at grade 9 (15%), but also at grades 10 (9%) and 11 (5%).
- Elementary had the next highest retention rate, especially at Kindergarten and grade 1 (5%).
- Students in all The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) subgroups (ethnicity, FRL, SWD, and LEP) in WCPSS are promoted at a high rate, ranging from 91% to 98%. LEP students had the highest rate of retention (9.3%).
- Larger percentages of middle grade students were promoted than was true for elementary or high school students.

ABCs Results

At the middle school level, more schools met ABCs growth standards (93% compared to 79%) with the new formula compared to the previous. However, fewer schools received ABCs recognitions with the new formulas for growth, the re-inclusion of writing, and more rigorous mathematics standards.

- 14 middle schools met their Expected Growth Standards and 12 their High Growth Standards in WCPSS in 2006, for a total of 93%. This is an increase of 14% from 2004-05.
- Only 2 of 28 regular middle schools in WCPSS (7%) were able to reach the highest standard of Honor School of Excellence or School of Excellence in 2005-06, compared to 15 of 28 (54%) in 2004-05. The most common recognition in 2005-06 was as a School of Progress (13 schools) or School of Distinction (11 schools).

AYP Results

Federal AYP standards associated with NCLB also became more difficult to meet in 2005-06 with the change in mathematics level scores.

- Overall, 29% (8 out of 28) middle schools made AYP by meeting all of their targets. In 2004-05, 39% of schools met AYP. Another 25% missed only one or two targets.
- Over 90% of the middle school targets were met (91%). Unlike previous years, more mathematics targets were missed than reading targets (44 vs. 25).
- Across the elementary, middle, and high school levels, despite meeting over 90% of the targets (71 of 76), WCPSS entered systemwide improvement. This was because reading targets were missed in all of three levels (3-5, 6-8, and 10) for two consecutive years (2004-2005 and 2005-2006). A systemwide plan for improvement will be implemented.

WCPSS MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT OUTCOMES 2005-06

INTRODUCTION AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

INTRODUCTION

This volume provides those interested in middle school outcomes all the data we have available about student outcomes and effective practices in one place. Separate volumes are being produced for elementary and high school outcomes. We believe these volumes will be helpful to members of the Board of Education, school staff, central staff, parents, and community members. This report differs from those produced in the past, when the Evaluation & Research Department (E&R) produced separate reports and bulletins reflecting results on various tests and other student outcomes. While these reports are more inclusive, the closest report done in the past was WCPSS Outcomes Summary for 2004-05, with an Emphasis on Achievement Gap Status.

Within each volume, the reader will find:

- Demographic trends as of spring of each year, to help interpret the student outcomes.
- Testing outcomes, which are organized by subject—literacy and mathematics. Results for some assessments have not been provided in a published document in recent years (Writing Results, Idea Proficiency Test, and Computer Skills).
- Other student outcomes, including retention and suspension data.
- Accountability outcomes, including school performance on state ABCs of Public Education and federal AYP standards.
- Findings related to effective practices from E&R studies, to provide ideas on what may or may not be helpful to students.

Decision Rules

Across the various sections of the report, the data presented represent all students in the school system with a few exceptions. Results from state-mandated tests in this report (End-of-Grade Tests and the Writing Test) are based only on students able to take the standard version of those assessments. Any exceptions to this general rule are explained within the relevant sections. Results for small numbers of students who take alternate or alternative tests in lieu of those standard assessments – primarily students with moderate to severe disabilities – are not included, as they are being reported in an upcoming report on alternate assessments. These students are primarily those with moderate to severe disabilities and/or with limited English proficiency, and are relatively small in number, usually less than 5% of the student population. Therefore, the results in the End-of-Grade and Writing sections of the report are based on the vast majority of the students in WCPSS in those grade levels.

Group Counts

Throughout this document, we emphasize patterns in results based on percentages. However, we have included enough information to allow the reader to determine the number of students reflected in particular groups whenever feasible. In bar graphs, if a number is shown inside a bar or on top of a bar, it reflects the number of students actually shown in the bar (the numerator in a division problem). If counts are shown in footnotes or labels at the bottom of graphs, they represent the total number of students in that particular group considered for the analysis (the denominator).

Ways to Use This Report

This report was truly a team effort across the Evaluation and Research Department. We gratefully acknowledge the help of all staff.

We hope our readers will be able to use this report in several ways:

- To learn about basic trends in outcomes for WCPSS students over time;
- To study achievement gaps over time;
- To get a sense of the number and percent of students who are doing well and how many students may need additional assistance to succeed; and
- To understand what practices might help in efforts to assist students in need.

We welcome feedback on the format and content of this report.

Acknowledgements

A volume this large and comprehensive could not possibly have been produced without the efforts of many people. Evaluation and Research Department staff who contributed to this report included Nancy Baenen, David Holdzkom, Wanda Whisnant, Kimberly Yaman, Wendy Stevens, Anne-Sylvie Boykin, Donna Eaton, Kevin Gilleland, Glenda Haynie, Anisa Rhea, Phyllis Spencer, Megan Townsend, Amy Huebeler, Sarah Ives, Richard Innis, Brad McMillen, Juliana Muli, Colleen Paepflow, Edie Pierce, Rosemary Reichstetter, Carol Speas, and work study student, Richard Innis. Their contributions and feedback were invaluable in the development of this report.

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

In this section we describe the nature of the students served in WCPSS, along with changes over time, as context for the students' outcome data that follow. To make the demographic and outcome data as parallel as possible, we used student characteristics information in May 2006 from the WCPSS Student Information locator program and combined it with test and other status information from E&R July end-of-year summary files (as provided to the Department of Public Instruction). Thus, these figures will not match official 20th-day fall enrollments. For a few tables and figures which compared enrollment over time, only the May locators were used, so counts are slightly different. This source information is noted as appropriate.

K-12 Enrollment Trends over Time

By Ethnicity (K-12)

Across grades K-12, the number of students enrolled in WCPSS has been growing rapidly in recent years. Growth challenges all facets of the system's operations. As shown in Table 1, more than 23,500 new students have entered WCPSS schools since 2001, a 24% increase. For all ethnicities except American Indian, the numbers have increased each year. The numbers of Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students have increased more rapidly than other ethnic groups.

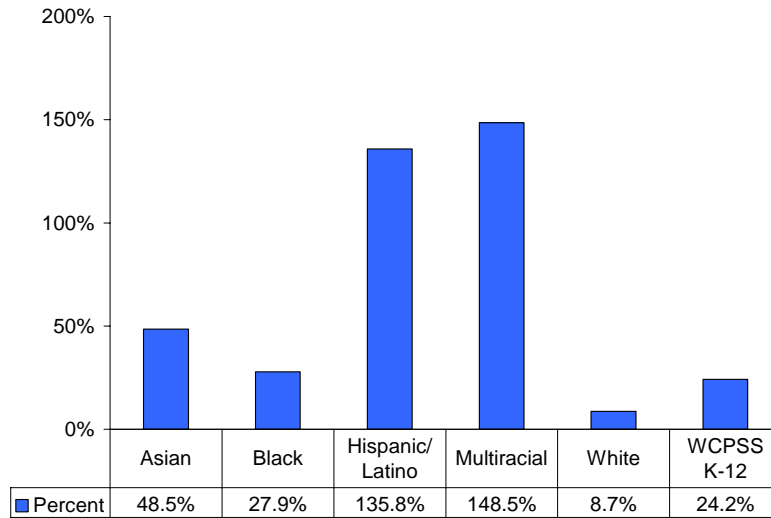
Table 1
Students by Ethnicity, Spring 2001-06, Grades K-12

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Net Increase
American Indian	271	266	270	293	306	326	55
Asian	3,925	4,180	4,483	4,694	5,108	5,830	1,905
Black/African American	25,493	26,473	27,778	29,307	30,684	32,609	7,116
Hispanic/Latino	4,855	5,877	6,978	8,197	9,676	11,447	6,592
Multiracial	1,732	2,157	2,583	3,159	3,682	4,304	2,572
White	61,246	61,959	62,372	63,062	64,478	66,598	5,352
All WCPSS K-12	97,522	100,912	104,464	108,712	113,934	121,114	23,592

Data Source: Analysis of WCPSS Student Locator annual May data

The following figure shows the percentage increase by ethnic group in spring 2006 compared to spring 2001; the Multiracial and Hispanic/Latino student groups more than doubled.

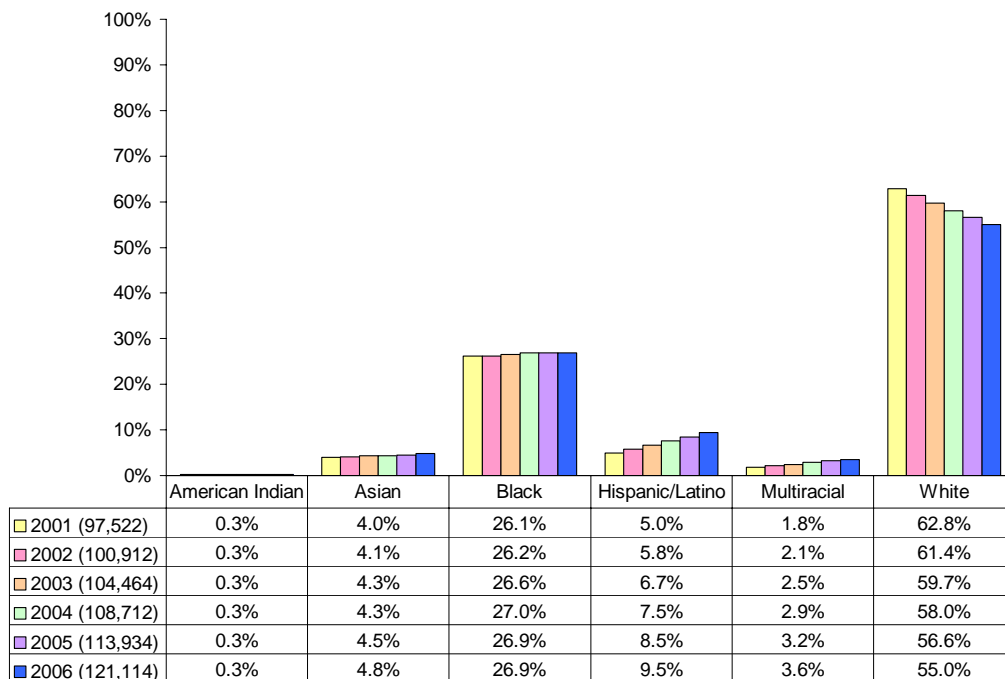
Figure 1
Increase in Membership by Ethnicity, Spring 2001-06, Grades K-12



Data Source: Analysis of WCPSS Student Locator annual May data

The following figure displays growth as the percentage of the total district population represented by each ethnicity. The largest percentage increases were for Hispanic/Latino students (up 5 percentage points) and Multiracial students (up 2 percentage points). Accordingly, the percentage of WCPSS students who are White decreased (even while the number of White students steadily increased).

Figure 2
Student Population by Ethnicity, Spring 2000-06, Grades K-12



By Academic Risk Factor (K-12)

In this report, academic risk factors are defined as students who have limited English proficiency (LEP), students with disabilities (SWD), and/or students who are eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunch (FRL). Students in these categories often have lower academic proficiency rates. Detailed analyses in WCPSS have shown having more than one of these academic risk factors correlates with even lower proficiency rates.

Enrollments increased for all academic risk subgroups between spring of 2001 and 2006, with the number of students who qualified as FRL increasing the most rapidly (see Table 2). The most common combinations of characteristics are FRL with LEP or SWD.

Table 2
Students by Academic Risk Factor, Spring 2001-06, Grades K-12

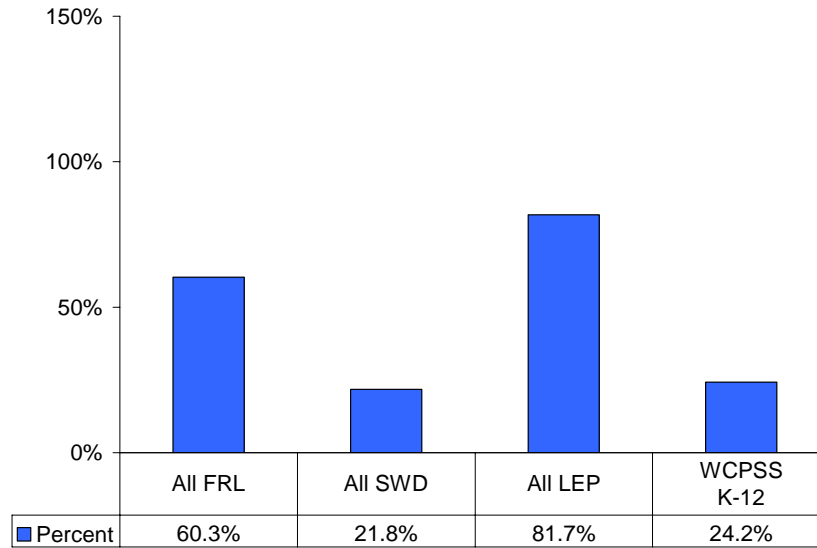
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
All FRL	21,959	24,172	25,782	28,428	30,881	35,195
All SWD	14,179	14,483	14,948	16,025	16,630	17,264
All LEP	4,398	5,451	6,610	5,659	6,371	7,989
FRL and LEP	2,686	3,455	4,157	3,801	3,982	5,429
FRL and SWD	4,806	5,134	5,320	5,851	6,050	6,752
LEP and SWD	72	96	128	109	115	128
FRL and LEP and SWD	204	289	387	408	441	553
All WCPSS	97,522	100,912	104,464	108,712	113,934	121,114

Data Source: Analysis of WCPSS Student Locator annual May data

Note: Students can be counted more than once in the top section of this table (duplicated count). Students are counted only once on the bottom part of the table (unduplicated count).

Figure 3 shows that, when the number within each academic risk group in spring 2006 is compared to spring 2001, the percentage of LEP and FRL students increased considerably more than the system overall. The number of LEP students came close to doubling (from 4,398 in May 2001 to 7,989 in May 2006), with an increase of 60% for FRL students (from 21,959 in May 2001 to 35,195 in May 2006). While the number of SWD students increased, the percentage of WCPSS students who are SWD increased about as much as the district population overall. Students with more than one academic risk characteristic, while relatively small in numbers, also increased more than the system increase in population overall (not shown).

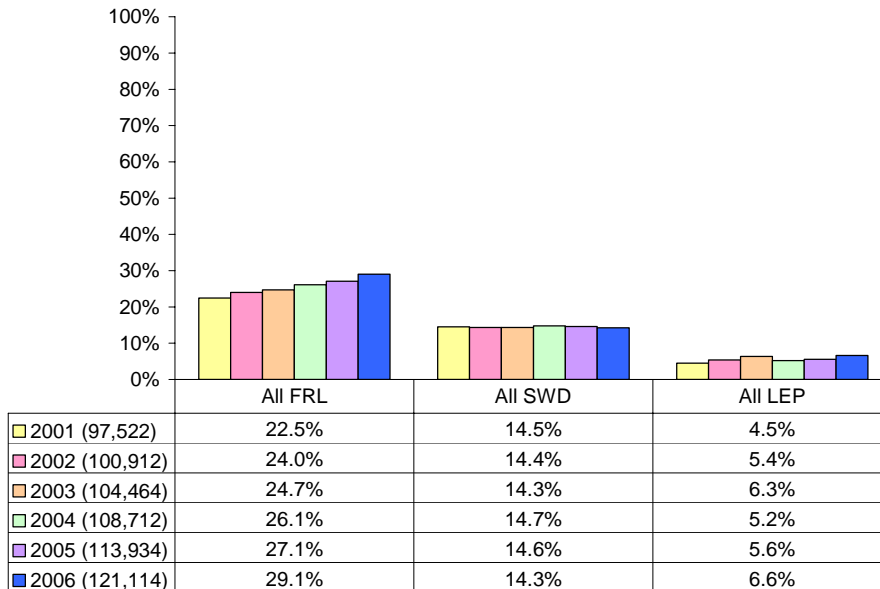
Figure 3
Increase in Membership by Academic Risk Factor, Spring 2001-06, Grades K-12



Data Source: Analysis of WCPSS Student Locator annual May data
 Note: Counts shown in Table 2.

While the proportion of students who are LEP or who qualify for FRL has increased over time, the percentage of students with disabilities has declined slightly (see Figure 4). The biggest impact of these changes has been an increase in the percentage of FRL students in WCPSS.

Figure 4
Student Population by Academic Risk Factor, Spring 2001-06, Grades K-12



Data Source: Analysis of WCPSS Student Locator annual May data. Duplicated counts.

Table 3 shows gender patterns within academic risk groups by ethnicity. The primary differences are within SWD groups; where the number of males is approximately double that of females in almost every comparison where SWD is involved.

Table 3
Students with Academic Risk Factors by Gender by Ethnicity, Spring 2006, Grades K-12

		American Indian	Asian	Black	Hispanic/ Latino	Multi- Racial	White	Total
FRL	Female	50	474	9,780	3,985	721	2,410	17,420
	Male	46	424	9,469	4,226	683	2,520	17,368
	Total	96	898	19,249	8,211	1,404	4,930	34,788
SWD	Female	19	89	2,200	425	181	2,616	5,530
	Male	33	145	4,272	841	400	5,852	11,543
	Total	52	234	6,472	1,266	581	8,468	17,073
LEP	Female	2	498	255	2,968	46	227	3,996
	Male	3	562	248	3,125	58	272	4,268
	Total	5	1,060	503	6,093	104	499	8,264
FRL-SWD	Female	6	17	1,631	117	95	376	2,242
	Male	14	17	3,053	268	172	785	4,309
	Total	20	34	4,684	385	267	1,161	6,551
FRL-LEP	Female	1	169	200	2,315	22	87	2,794
	Male	1	165	178	2,262	23	84	2,713
	Total	2	334	378	4,577	45	171	5,507
SWD-LEP	Female	0	7	1	35	4	9	56
	Male	0	17	4	50	5	19	95
	Total	0	24	5	85	9	28	151
FRL-SWD-LEP	Female	0	12	14	193	2	8	229
	Male	0	11	26	375	4	9	425
	Total	0	23	40	568	6	17	654

Data Source: May 2006 (5/1/06) Student Locator merged into July 2006 End-of-Year Summary. Different dates of files resulted in slightly different counts than May locator alone. (See Table 4)

Note: Duplicated count top section; unduplicated bottom section.

Middle School Enrollment Trends Over Time

By Ethnicity (Grades 6-8)

Almost 5,000 more students entered WCPSS middle schools from 2001-06, a 33% increase (even higher than the overall increase across grades K-12). The number of students has increased each year for all ethnic groups except American Indian students (see the following table). As was true for K-12, the number of Black/African American students and Hispanic/Latino students showed the greatest increase.

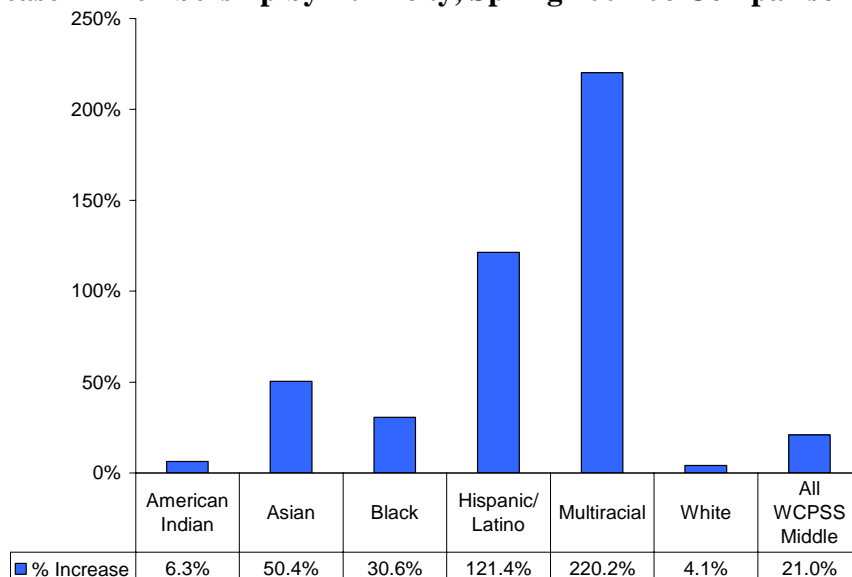
Table 4
Students by Ethnicity, Spring 2001-06. Grades 6-8

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Increase 2001 to 2006
American Indian	64	66	69	74	69	68	4
Asian	854	907	996	1,055	1,147	1284	430
Black/African American	6,289	6,763	7,237	7,643	7,830	8,212	1,923
Hispanic/Latino	1,080	1,217	1,419	1,678	1,966	2,391	1,311
Multiracial	282	408	523	620	747	903	621
White	14,696	15,051	15,200	15,147	15,166	15,297	601
All WCPSS Middle	23,265	24,412	25,444	26,217	26,925	28,155	4,890

Data Source: Analysis of WCPSS Student Locator annual May data

The following figure shows the percentage increase of each ethnicity in spring 2006 compared with spring 2001. The Multiracial population more than tripled (220%), increasing from 282 in May 2001 to 903 in May 2006, while the Hispanic/Latino population more than doubled (121%), increasing from 1,080 in May 2001 to 2,391 in May 2006 in the same period.

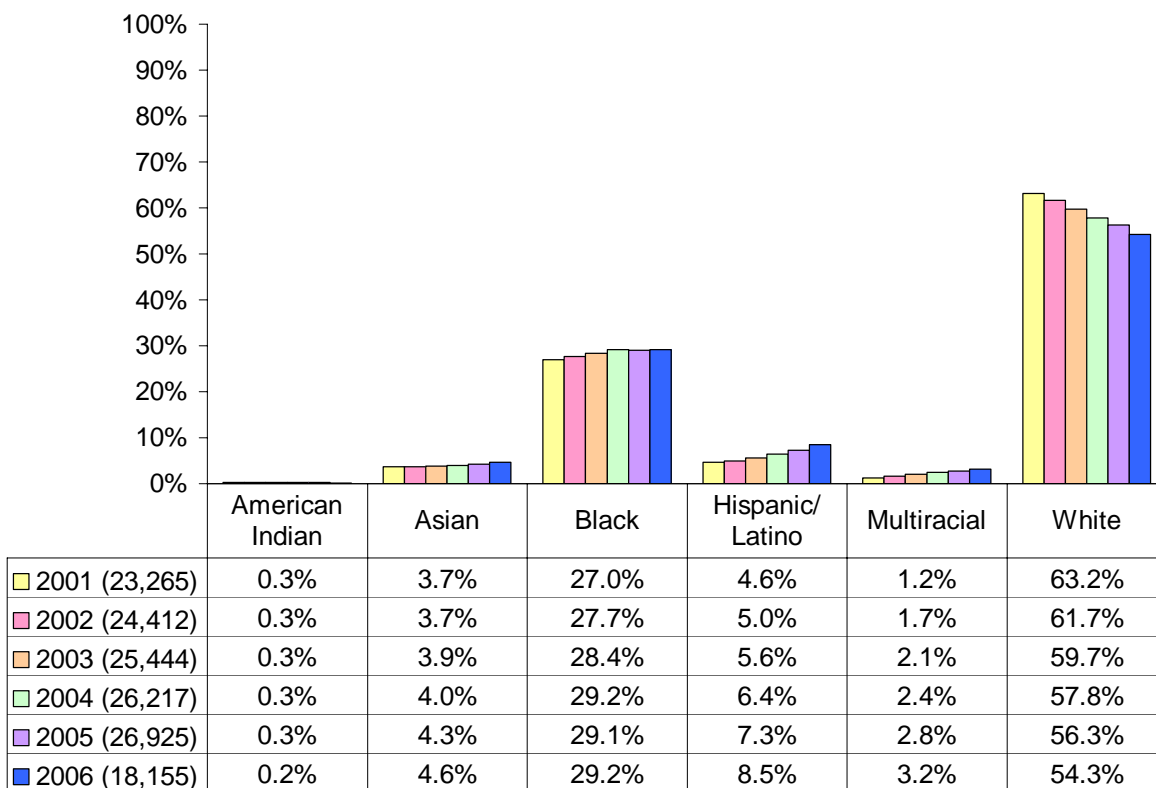
Figure 5
Increase in Membership by Ethnicity, Spring 2001-06 Comparison, Grades 6-8



Note: Counts shown in Table 4.

While Figure 5 shows that all ethnicities have increased, Figure 6 shows a decreasing percentage of White students relative to the total middle school population. With other ethnic groups growing at a faster pace, White students represent a gradually decreasing percentage of the overall membership (as is true of the K-12 population).

Figure 6
Percentage of Student Population by Ethnicity, Spring 2001–06, Grades 6–8



By Academic Risk Factor

Almost 5,000 more students have entered WCPSS middle schools since 2001, a 33% increase. Table 5 shows the number of middle school students in membership by free and reduced lunch (FRL), students with disabilities (SWD), and limited English proficiency (LEP) academic risk factors in the spring of each year as well as combinations of these academic risk factors.

Enrollments increased for all academic risk subgroups between spring of 2001 and 2006, but those students with the FRL academic risk factor increased the most in number. Figure 7 shows that, when the number within each academic risk group in spring 2006 is compared to spring 2001, the percentage of LEP and FRL students increased more than the system overall, while the percentage of SWD students increased just slightly more. LEP students showed the greatest increase at 74% (from 778 in May 2001 to 1,355 in May 2006), while the number of FRL students increased 60% (from 5,297 in May 2001 to 8,450 in May 2006).

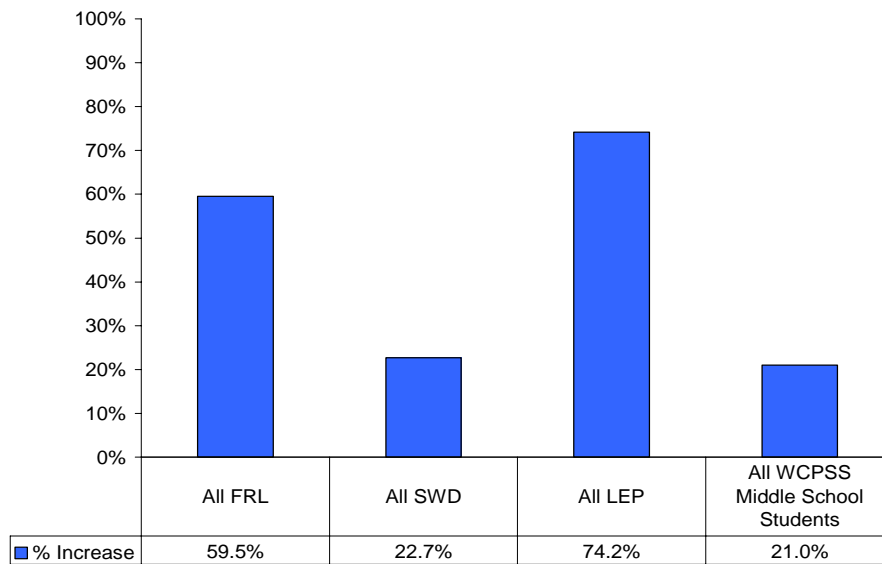
Table 5
Enrollment of Students by Academic Risk Factor, Spring 2001-06, Grades 6-8

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
All FRL	5,297	6,005	6,457	7,069	7,570	8,450
All SWD	3,767	4,121	4,358	4,578	4,639	4,623
All LEP	778	974	1,189	1,000	1,111	1,355
FRL and LEP	465	600	730	687	751	912
FRL and SWD	1,459	1,618	1,679	1,807	1,834	1,965
LEP and SWD	13	21	25	22	22	34
FRL and LEP and SWD	43	56	82	70	92	119
All WCPSS Middle	23,265	24,412	25,444	26,217	26,925	28,155

Data Source: Analysis of WCPSS Student Locator annual May data

Note: Top section are duplicated counts. Bottom section unduplicated.

Figure 7
Percent Increase in Membership by Academic Risk Factor, Spring 2001-06 Comparison, Grades 6-8

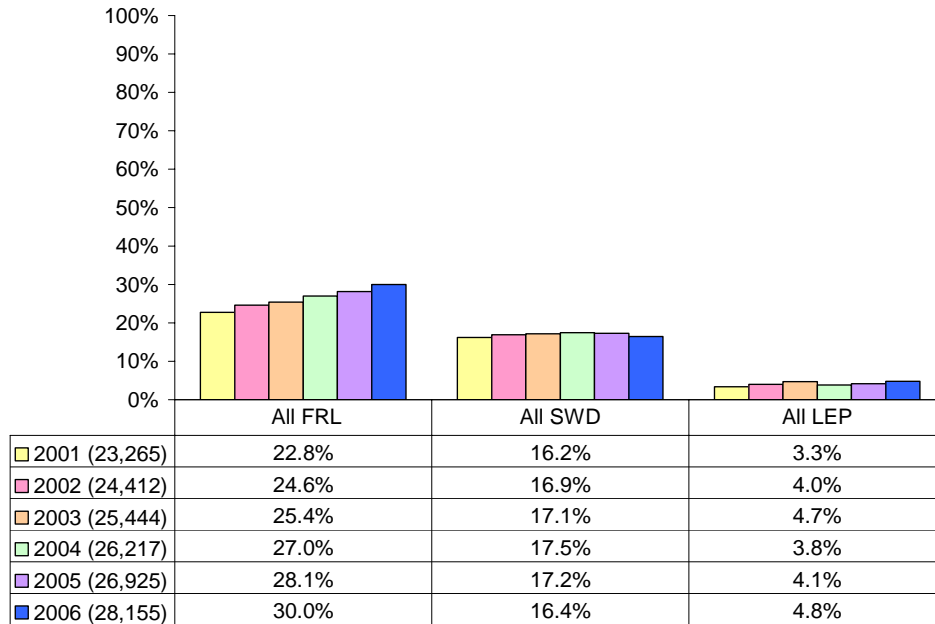


Data Source: Analysis of WCPSS Student Locator annual May data

Note: Counts shown in Table 5

The following figure displays the percentage of the overall middle school population each year for all FRL, SWD, and LEP students. The figure indicates a marked, steadily increasing percentage of free and reduced lunch (FRL) students compared to the other two academic risk factors, with the LEP and SWD student growth percentages fluctuating slightly over the period.

Figure 8
Percentage of Student Population by Academic Risk Factor, Spring 2001-06, Grades 6-8



Data Source: Analysis of WCPSS Student Locator annual May data

Most FRL, SWD, and LEP students tend to have only one academic risk factor. However, 11% have multiple risks. (See Multiple-Risk Factors later in this section.) The percent increase for some combinations greatly increased between Spring of 2001 and 2006. The largest increases have been for FRL/LEP and LEP/SWD students.

- FRL and LEP: 96%.
- FRL and SWD: 35%.
- LEP and SWD: 162%.
- FRL, LEP, and SWD: 21%.

The table below shows the percentage of multi-risk students at the middle school level by gender over different ethnicities. Of note, the data indicates approximately twice the number of males versus females for FRL-SWD students for all ethnic groups except Asian. The number of males exceeded females for the other categories where multiple academic risk factors included SWD. This was not evident in the FRL-LEP multiple academic risk factor group.

Table 6
Students with Academic Risk Factors by Gender and Ethnicity, Spring 2006, Grades 6-8

		Amer. Indian	Asian	Black	Hispanic /Latino	Multi- Racial	White	Total
FRL-SWD	Female	2	6	489	23	17	101	638
	Male	4	5	913	75	45	212	1,254
	Total	6	11	1,402	98	62	313	1,892
FRL-LEP	Female	0	28	45	372	3	16	464
	Male	0	33	37	395	3	12	480
	Total	0	61	82	767	6	28	944
SWD-LEP	Female	0	0	0	13	1	3	17
	Male	0	3	1	16	2	4	26
	Total	0	3	1	29	3	7	43
FRL-SWD-LEP	Female	0	2	5	46	1	2	56
	Male	0	5	3	95	0	2	105
	Total	0	7	8	141	1	4	161

Data Source: May 2006 (5/1/06) Student Locator merged into July 2006 End-of-Year Summary¹

Note: Counts do not match those based on student locator because of record updates

Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Students (FRL)

School systems are required to monitor the achievement of lower-income students for various purposes, including The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) regulations. Currently, students' FRL status is used as an indicator of socio-economic status. While it is the best indicator available, it is not without problems, and federal officials are exploring other ways to monitor low-income status.

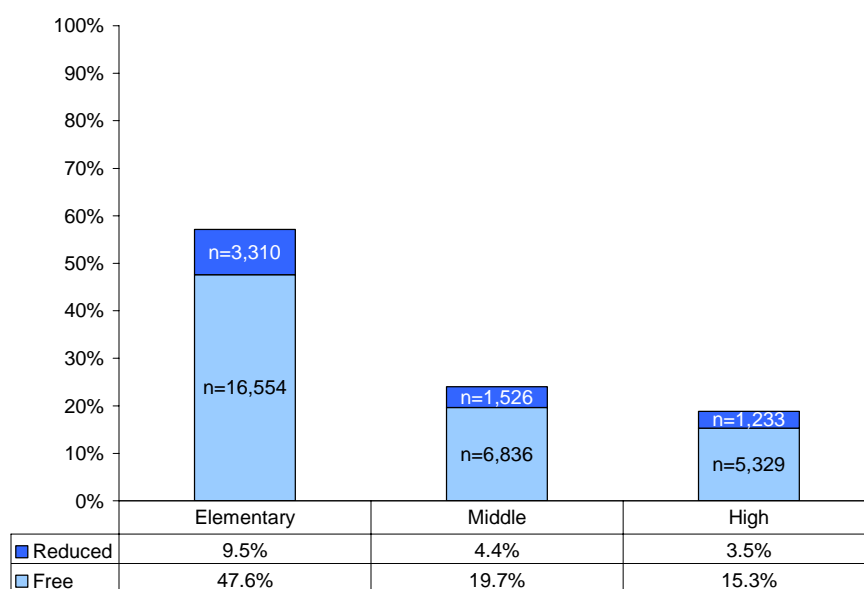
- One issue is that qualifying for FRL is not synonymous with meeting federal poverty level guidelines. To qualify, families must have an income at or below 130% of the federal poverty level for free meals or 185% of the federal poverty level for reduced-price meals. Family size is also considered; the maximum income for a family of two is \$24,420, while a family of five can earn \$43,290.
- Another issue is that families of elementary school students are more likely to apply for FRL than are families of middle or high school students. The reason for this disparity may be due in part to a perception of being singled out – even though individual students' status is kept confidential.

¹ Throughout this section, figures without a data source listed came from this source

Families have the opportunity to apply for FRL annually. In May 2006, there were 34,788 students enrolled in the FRL program. This represented approximately 29% of the 121,114 WCPSS students. Within each level, FRL students represent 33% of the elementary, 30% of the middle, and 20 % of the high school students enrolled.

Looked at in another way, within the FRL students, 57% were at the elementary level, 24% were at the middle school level, and 19% were at the high school level. The following figure also illustrates that most students who qualify at all three levels qualify for free lunch or breakfast rather than reduced-price lunches.

Figure 9
Percentage of FRL Students at Each Level, Spring 2006



n=34,788

Data Source: May 2006 (5/1/06) Student Locator merged into July 2006 End-of-Year Summary

As shown in the following table, within each level, just over 80% of the students received free meals and under 20 % received reduced-price meals.

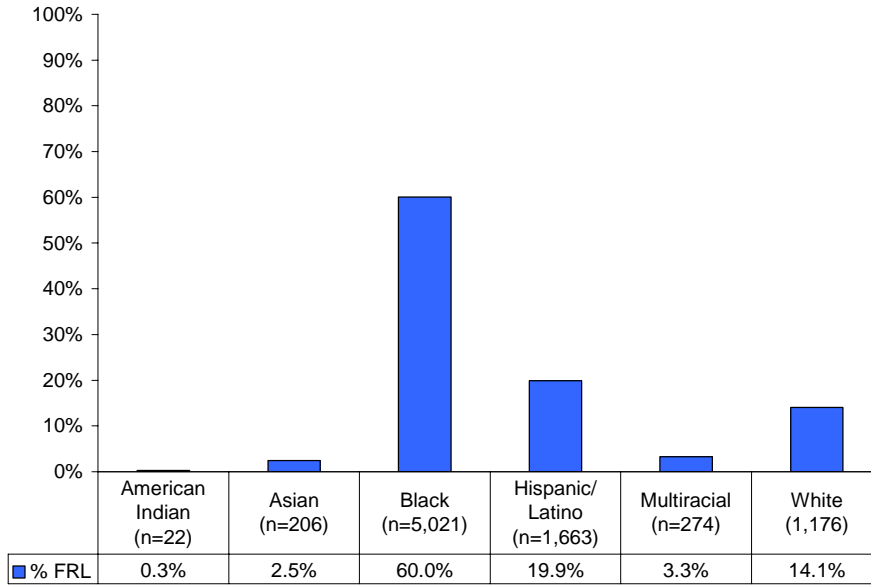
Table 7
FRL Trends by Level, Spring 2006, Grades K-12

Level	Free	Reduced	Total
Elementary	83.3%	16.7%	19,864
Middle	81.7%	18.2%	8,362
High	81.2%	18.8%	6,562
WCPSS Total	28,719	6,069	34,788

Data Source: May 2006 (5/1/06) Student Locator merged into July 2006 End-of-Year Summary

In middle schools, the percentage of FRL students slightly decreases as the grades increase. Of the 8,362 middle FRL students, 34% are in sixth grade, 33% are in seventh grade, and 31% are in eighth grade. The following figure shows the distribution of FRL students at the middle school level by ethnicity. The largest percentage (60%) of FRL students are Black/African American.

Figure 10
Percentage of FRL Students of Each Ethnic Subgroup, Spring 2006, Grades 6-8

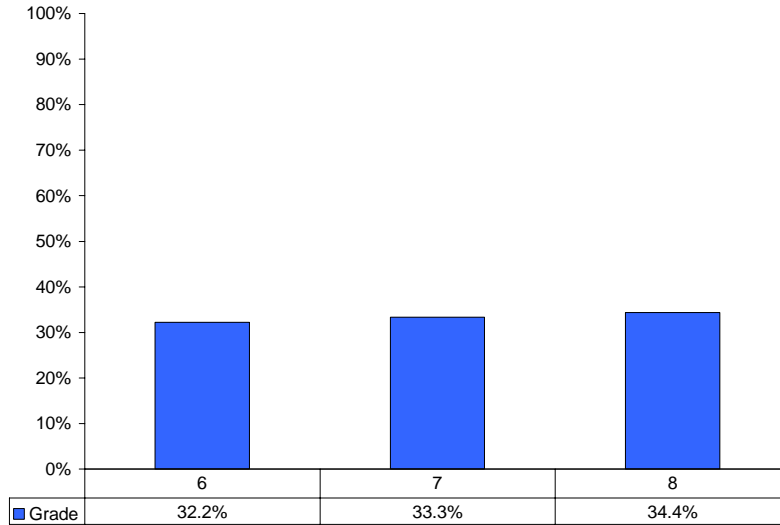


n=8,362

Students With Disabilities (SWD)

The number of SWD students in all grades of WCPSS was 17,073 in May 2006. Of those, 4,577 (26%) students were enrolled in grades 6-8.

**Figure 11
SWD Students, Spring 2006, Grades 6-8**

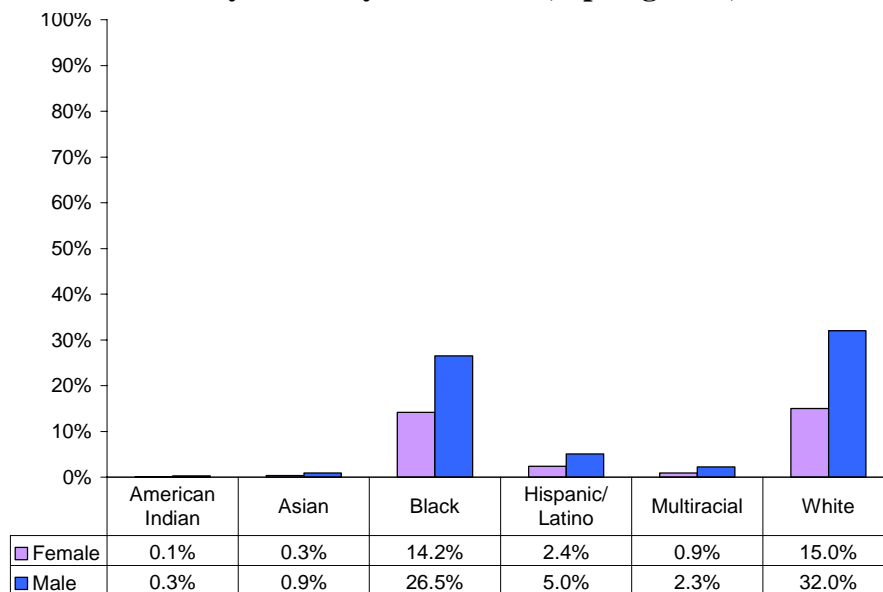


n=4,577

Note: Total n is slightly different from earlier tables that used only the locator because data was combined with another file.

As shown in the following figure, the majority of SWD students at the middle school level were White (47%) or Black/African American (41%). More males than females are SWD, with males comprising 67% of the SWD population.

Figure 12
SWD Students by Ethnicity and Gender, Spring 2006, Grades 6–8



n=4,577 Ethnicity data missing for SWD students

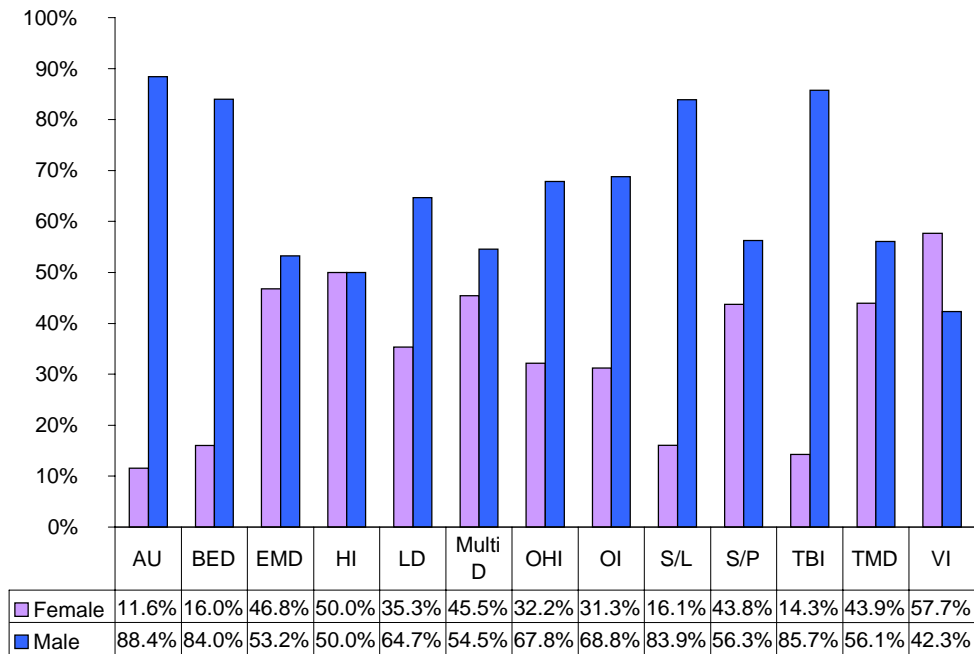
Although there are many classifications within the SWD status, most SWD students are classified as learning disabled (LD) or other health impaired (OHI). As shown in Table 8.

Table 8
SWD Students by Disability, May 2006, Grades 6–8

Code	Name	Total Percentage of Middle School SWD Population	Number of Students
AU	Autistic	4.8%	216
BED	Behaviorally/Emotionally Disabled	5.6%	256
EMD	Educable Mentally Disabled	5.5%	248
HI	Hearing Impaired	0.6%	28
LD	Learning Disabled	50.7%	2302
Multi D	Multi-Disabled	0.5%	22
OHI	Other Health Impaired	28.1%	1278
OI	Orthopedically Impaired	0.4%	16
S/L	Speech/Language Impaired	1.2%	56
S/P	Severely/Profoundly Mentally Disabled	0.4%	16
TBI	Traumatic Brain Injured	0.3%	14
TMD	Trainable Mentally Disabled	1.5%	66
VI	Visually Impaired	0.6%	26

males are over-represented in a number of SWD categories. Males made up over 80% of the autistic, behaviorally/emotionally disabled population, speech and language impaired, and traumatic brain injured students (see following figure). In addition, males represented over 64% of the learning disabled, other health impaired, and orthopedically impaired groups. In only one category – visually impaired – did girls make up a larger percentage than boys.

Figure 13
SWD Students by Gender and Disability, Spring 2006, Grades 6-8



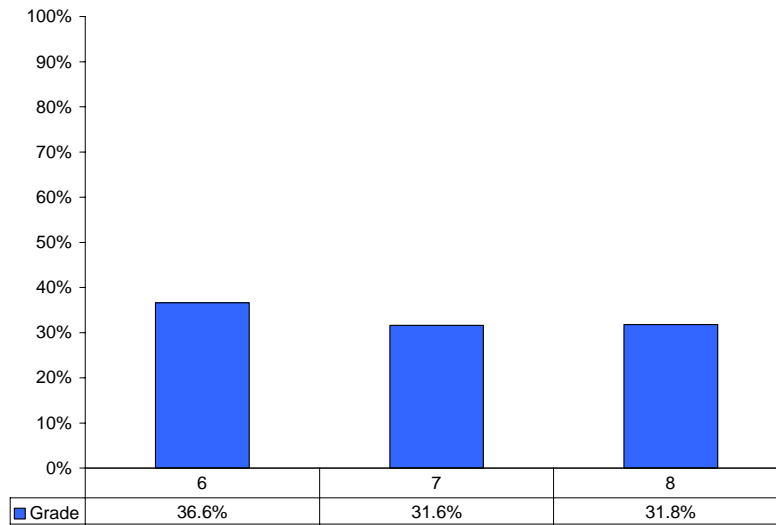
n = 4,544 labeled with a specific learning disability; missing data for SWD students
 See Table 8 for number of students in each SWD category.

Limited English Proficient Students (LEP)

The number of LEP students has been increasing in recent years. In May 2006, 8,264 LEP students were enrolled in all grades in WCPSS. Of those, 1,455 (18%) students were enrolled in grades 6-8.

In K-12, the number of LEP students decreased from kindergarten through twelfth grade. The middle school LEP population was equally distributed across grades, with a slightly higher percentage of the LEP students in sixth grade (37%). The following graph displays the distribution of LEP students across middle school grades.

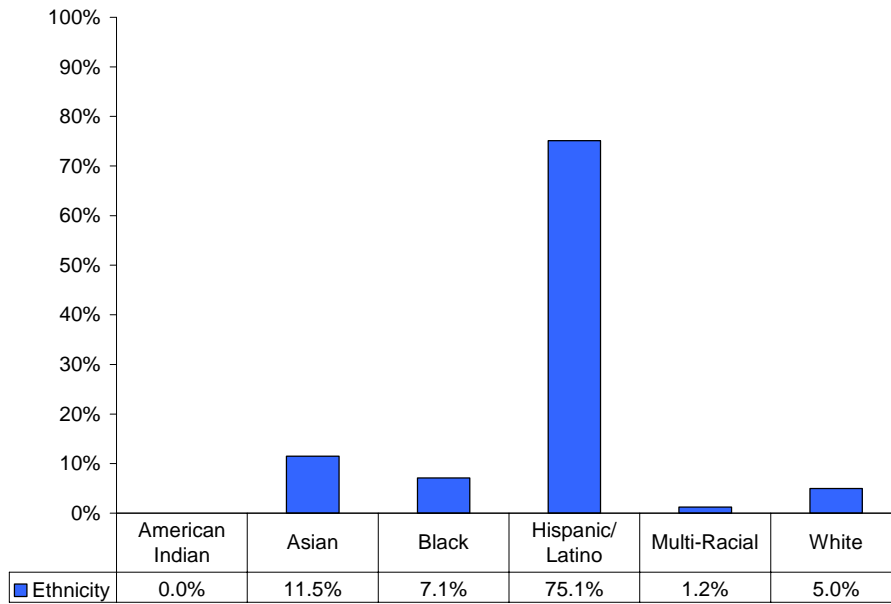
Figure 14
LEP Students by Grade, Spring 2006, Grades 6-8



n= 1,455

While most LEP students were Hispanic/Latino (75% at middle school), the LEP population represented a very diverse group with over 90 different languages. The following figure represents the ethnic make-up of the LEP population at the middle school level. The percentage of students who were male and female within each ethnic group was similar (within 5%).

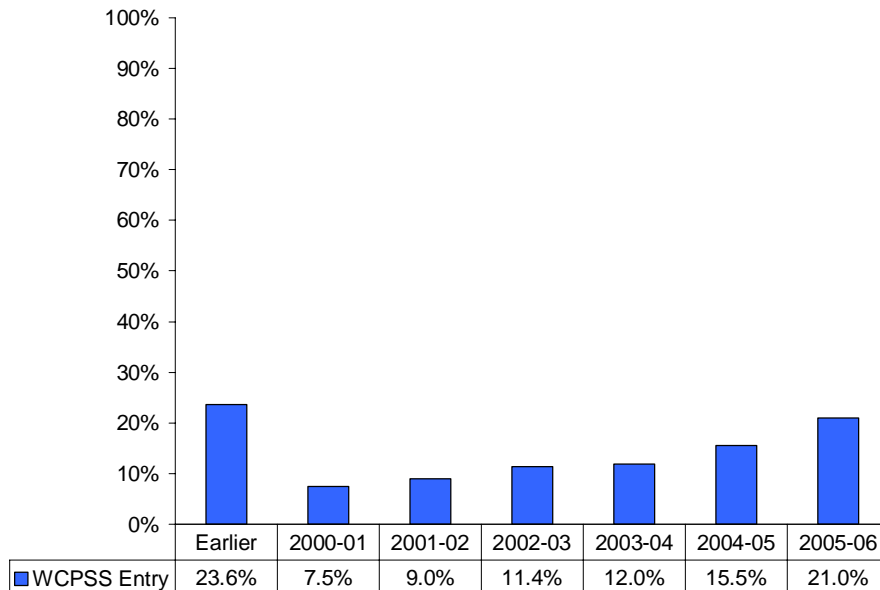
Figure 15
LEP Students by Ethnicity, Spring 2006, Grades 6-8



n=1,455

The following figure illustrates the school year in which LEP students enrolled in WCPSS. The lesser percentages in earlier years can be attributed to the increasing numbers of LEP students entering the school system in recent years and to LEP students achieving English proficiency (and exiting LEP status). Slightly less than half of the current middle school LEP population entered WCPSS four or more years ago and still had not achieved English proficiency in May 2006. Students' proficiency in English varies upon entry to WCPSS. Research states that it takes four to ten years to become English proficient (Cummins, 1981; Thomas and Collier, 2002).

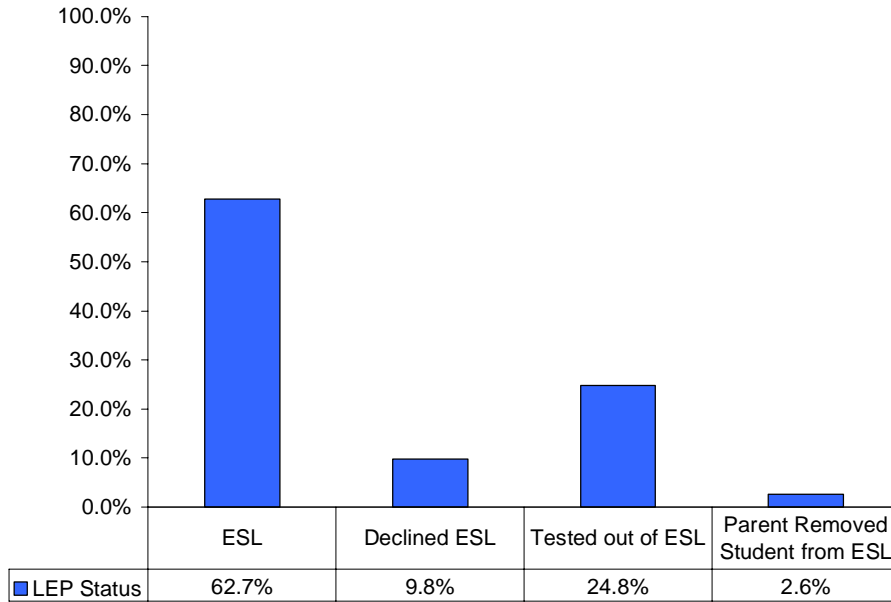
Figure 16
Entry of LEP Students, Spring 2006, Grades 6-8



n=1,372

The following figure illustrates that the majority of LEP students in WCPSS in May 2006 were enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) services (63%). About 10% declined service, and 25% scored high enough on the IDEA Proficiency Test (IPT) to test out of ESL (but not out of LEP status).

Figure 17
Status of LEP Students, Spring 2006, Grades 6-8



n=1,385

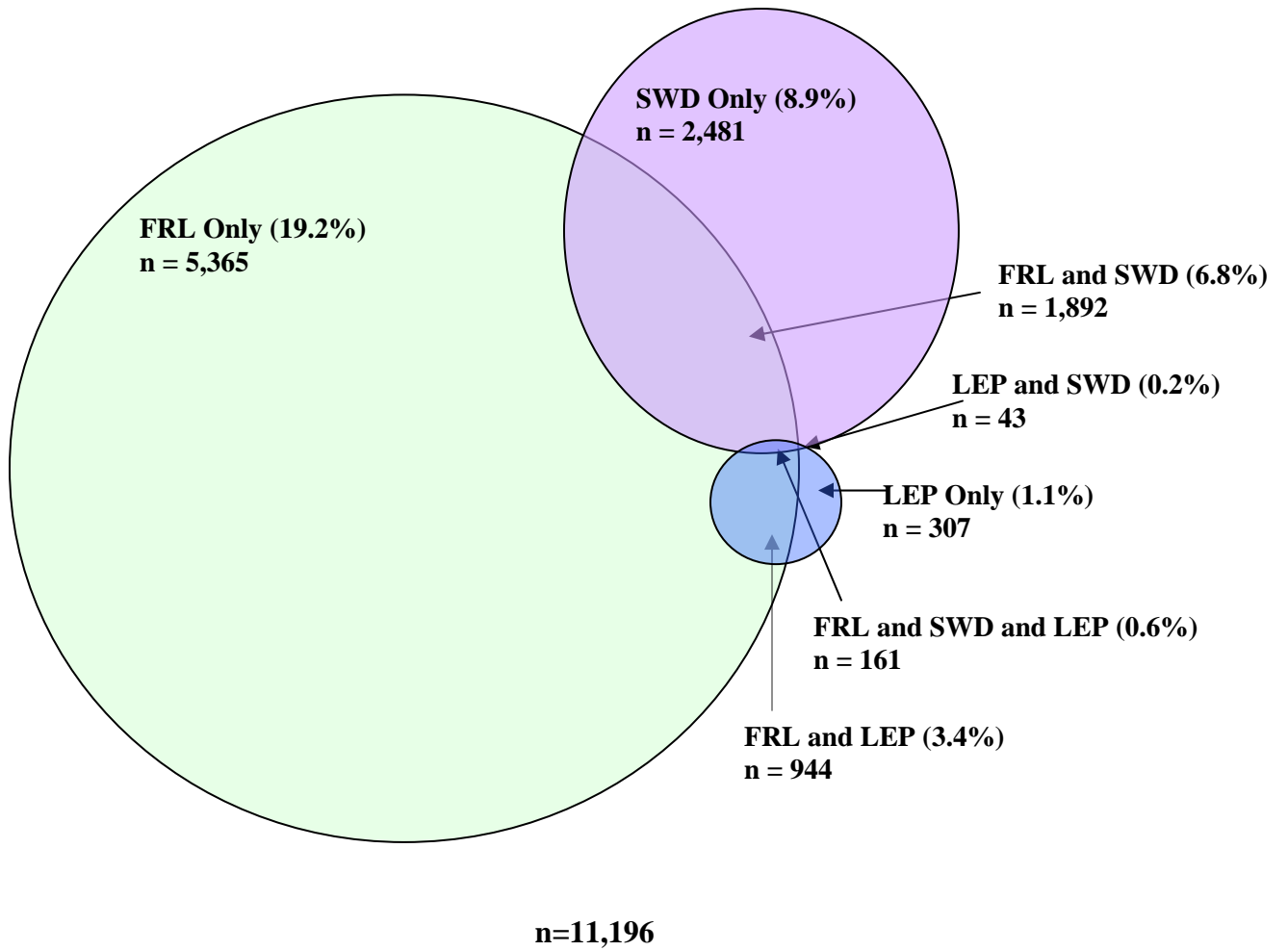
For information on English proficiency of WCPSS LEP students, see the section on the IDEA Proficiency Test.

Multiple Academic Risk Factors

Figure 18 displays the distribution of FRL, SWD, and LEP students at the middle school level. Overall, 11,196 (40%) middle school students were identified with FRL, SWD, or LEP academic risk characteristics in May 2006. Of these, the most common academic risk factor was FRL at 8,362 (30%); 1,455 (16%) were SWD, and 4,577 (5%) were LEP. Some of these students (10%) had two of the academic risk characteristics. Less than 1% of these students were identified as having all three of the academic risk characteristics.

- Most FRL students had this as their only academic risk factor. Of the students in WCPSS, 5,365 (19%) were identified as having FRL as a single academic risk characteristic; 7% were identified also with SWD as an additional academic risk factor, and 6% were identified with LEP as an additional academic risk factor. A small percentage (0.6%) had all three of the academic risk characteristics.
- Most SWD students also had this as their only academic risk factor. Of the students in WCPSS, 2,481 (9%) were identified as having SWD as a single academic risk characteristic; 8% had other academic risk characteristics. Few SWD students were also LEP (0.2%).
- Most LEP students were also FRL. While 5% of WCPSS middle school students were LEP, only 1% had LEP as a single academic risk characteristic.

Figure 18
Students with at least one Academic Risk Factor, Spring 2006, Grades 6-8



TESTING OUTCOMES – LITERACY

END OF GRADE (EOG) MULTIPLE CHOICE TEST READING RESULTS

EOG tests are given to students in reading and mathematics at the end of each school year. The achievement level score categorizes student performance on EOG tests according to four broad levels, defined by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI). General descriptions are shown below, with more specifics available at the DPI Web site, Accountability section (www.ncpublicschools.org). Levels III and IV are considered proficient. Scale scores are also given, but these are not discussed here.

Table 9
Achievement Levels for the North Carolina Testing Program

Level I: Students performing at this level do not have sufficient mastery of knowledge and skills in this subject area to be successful at the next grade level.	Level III: Students performing at this level consistently demonstrate mastery of grade level subject matter and skills and are well prepared for the next grade level.
Level II: Students performing at this level demonstrate inconsistent mastery of knowledge and skills in this subject area, and are minimally prepared to be successful at the next grade level.	Level IV: Students performing at this level consistently perform in a superior manner clearly beyond that required to be proficient at grade-level work.

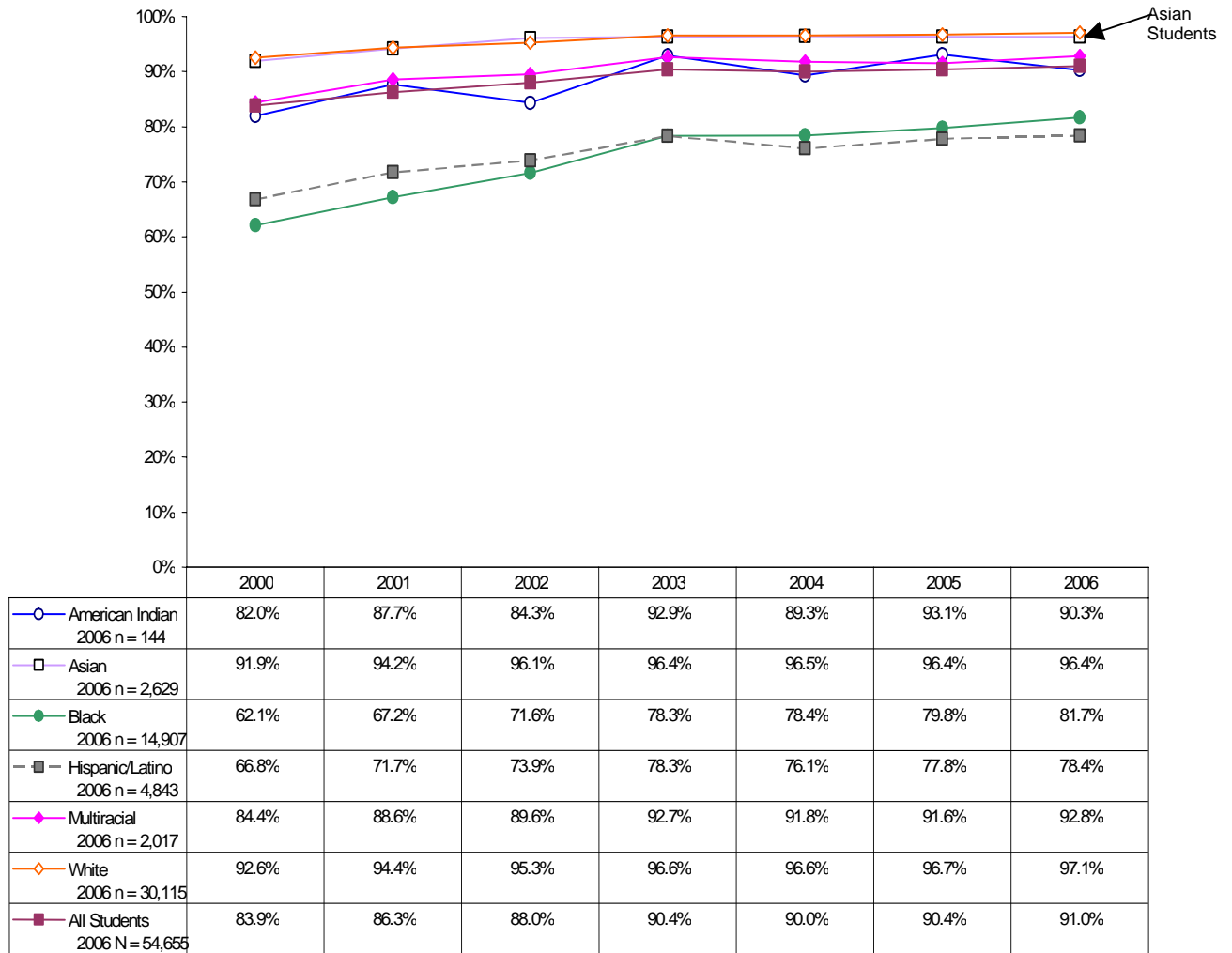
Grades 3-8

We have monitored achievement gaps by ethnicity for many years. We also include trends for groups with special learning needs such as low income (FRL), SWD, and LEP later in this section. Overlap exists between these groups, with higher percentages of Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students being FRL and LEP (for Hispanic/Latino students) than is true for other subgroups. While some students in all of these academic risk groups show high achievement, overall proficiency results are lower.

Long-term trends can only be monitored for reading this year because of the changes in mathematics tests and level cut scores. The next table shows positive trends by ethnicity across grades 3-8.

- The percentage of students in all ethnic groups scoring at grade level has improved over time, with Black/African American students showing the most improvement (close to 20 percentage points).
- In spring 2006, the achievement gap between Black/African American and White students was 15 percentage points, with a 19 percentage point gap between Hispanic/Latino and White students. These gaps are considerably smaller than was the case in 2000-01 (when gaps were 31 percentage points and 26 percentage points, respectively).

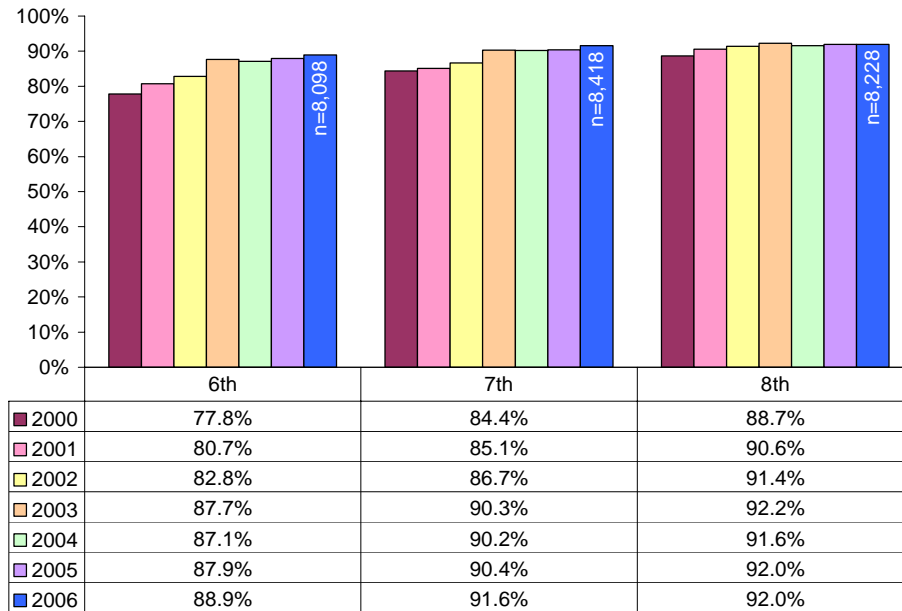
Figure 19
Students Proficient on Spring Reading EOG by Race,
Spring 2000–06, Grades 3-8



Grades 6-8

The percentage of middle school students scoring at grade level in reading has increased over time at each grade. Proficiency was similar across grades in 2005-06, with grade 8 being the highest (92%). Overall, 91% of students in grades 6 through 8 tested proficient.

Figure 20
EOG Reading Trends by Grade Level,
Spring 2000–06, Grades 6-8

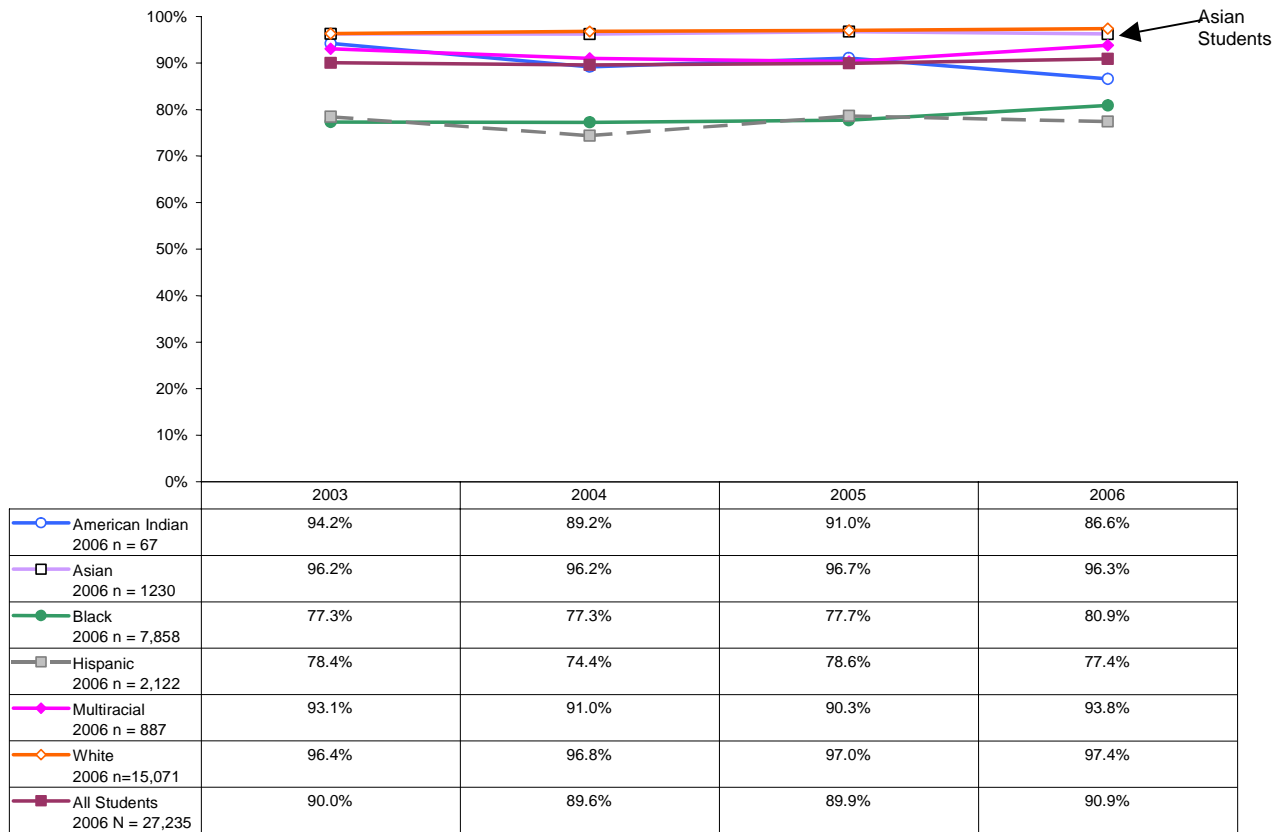


As previously discussed, ethnic achievement gaps closed somewhat across grades 3-8 between 1999-2000 and 2005-06 (see Figure 19). However, ethnic trends have only been monitored separately for grade 6-8 since 2002-03, and less progress has been evident during that time (see next figure). At the middle school level, Black/African American students increased the most (3%) between spring of 2003 and 2006. However, the gaps between American Indian and Hispanic/Latino students and White and Asian students slightly increased. Two factors may have contributed to the relatively stable status.

- Some groups had improved to high proficiency levels by spring 2003, with only a little room for improvement.
- The WCPSS population has been increasing rapidly, especially for FRL and LEP students, who have traditionally showed lower proficiency and need the most support to reach grade level.

In spring 2006, White students showed the highest proficiency, with Hispanics showing the lowest.

Figure 21
Students Proficient on Reading EOG by Ethnicity, Spring 2003-06, Grades 6-8



Within each ethnic group, the percentage of females who scored proficient was higher than for males. Middle school FRL, SWD and LEP students were less likely than other students to score proficient on the EOG in reading, with smaller percentages of LEP students scoring the at/above grade level.

Figure 22
Percentages of Students Proficient on Reading EOG by Ethnicity and Gender
Spring 2006, Grades 6-8

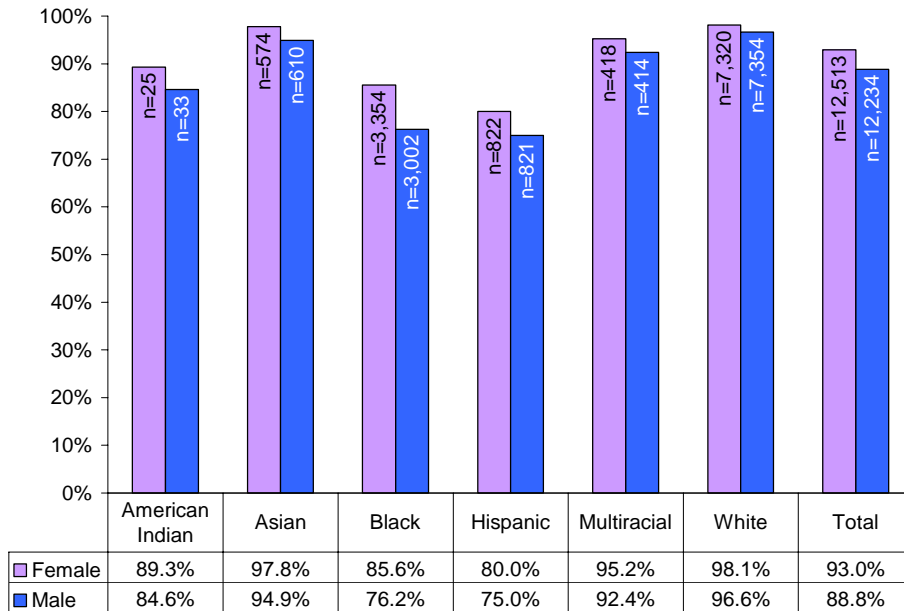
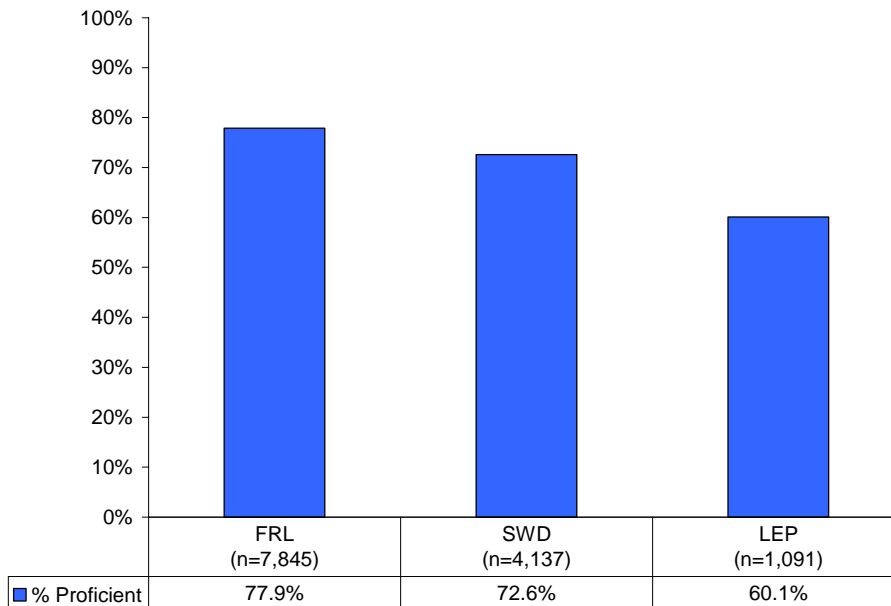
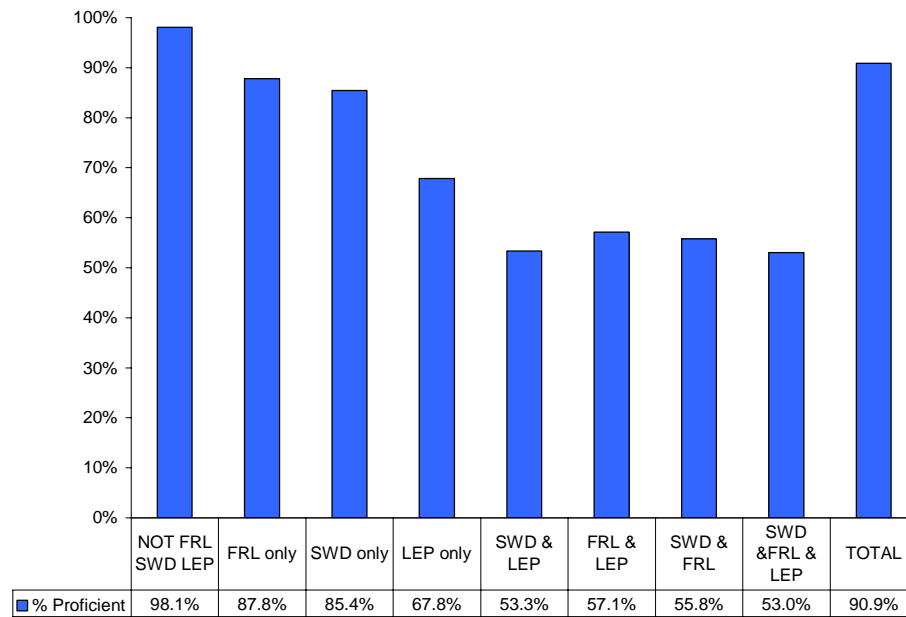


Figure 23
Reading EOG Performance by Academic Risk Factors,
Spring 2006, Grades 6-8



Note: Duplicated count

Figure 24
Percentage of Students Proficient on Reading EOG by Academic Risk Factors
Spring 2006, Grades 6-8



Note: Total n for academic risk subgroups = 27,235

GRADE 7 WRITING ASSESSMENT RESULTS

North Carolina began its statewide writing assessment in the 1983-84 school year with tests administered to students in grades 6 and 9. From the beginning, the North Carolina Writing Assessment emphasized student composition skills, and scoring rubrics were designed to holistically assess students' abilities to create good written compositions in standardized single session testing environments. In 1995-96, testing shifted to grades 4, 7, and 10. In 2001, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) staff began a process that resulted in new writing assessments and scoring procedures for grades 4, 7, and 10. The new procedures were approved by the State Board of Education (SBE) on January 9, 2003, and statewide pilot testing occurred in March 2003.

NC Writing Assessment Scoring Procedures

New administration and scoring procedures for the writing assessment went into effect during the 2002-03 school year. Scoring was significantly different from the model previously used. Therefore, comparisons to previous years are inappropriate. As in previous years, two individual readers evaluated content (focus, organization, support and elaboration, and style). However, beginning in 2002-03, readers also rated the convention (sentence formation, usage, and mechanics) displayed in the writing sample. Each reader gave a content score from 1 to 4 or a no score (NS) for essays that were off topic and could not be evaluated. A conventions score ranging from 0 to 2 was also given by each reader.

The major change in scoring procedures incorporated the conventions score into the total writing score for each student. The total writing score is computed by combining the content scores and the conventions scores from both scorers using the following equation:

The Total Writing Score = (the sum of the content scores from the two independent readers multiplied by 2) plus (the sum of the conventions scores from the two readers).

The new scoring method results in student scores ranging from a low of 4 (in a case where both readers gave content scores of 1 and conventions scores of 0) to a high of 20 (where both content scores are 4 and both conventions scores are 2).

As is true for most other North Carolina state tests, total scores from the writing test are distributed into four achievement levels (I, II, III, and IV). The level definitions are similar to those used for End-of-Grade (EOG) and End-of-Course (EOC) testing. Level I scores are considered far below grade level, Level II slightly below grade level, Level III at grade level, and Level IV well above grade level (Table 10). Prior to 2003, conventions ratings were not part of the total writing score, and the content scores of two readers were averaged, resulting in final scores ranging from 1.0 to 4.0.

Table 10
Writing Test Total Score Ranges by Level, 2005-06

Level I	4-7
Level II	8-11
Level III	12-16
Level IV	17-20

Types of Writing

Writing scores tend to fluctuate from year to year based, at least in part, upon the type of writing and subject matter of the prompt. Based upon the recommendations of the North Carolina Writing Assessment Task Force and the State Board of Education Ad Hoc Writing Committee, the grade 4 prompt currently takes the form of a personal narrative or imaginative narrative. The grade 7 prompt requires an extended argumentative response, and the grade 10 prompt asks students for an extended informational response either in the form of a definition or a cause/effect relationship. The figure below shows the prompt utilized by NCDPI for the 2005-06 writing assessments at grade 7.

Figure 25
Grade 7 Writing Prompt, 2005-06 School Year

A school committee is creating a mural (wall painting) that will feature students' favorite book or movie characters. Only a limited number of characters can be included. Each student has been asked to nominate a character from a book or a movie.

Select a character to be featured as part of the mural and write a letter to the school committee justifying your selection.

Note: Adapted from www.rep.dpi.state.nc.us/prelimwrite0506.pdf .

Writing assessment results should be interpreted carefully, as each year, the specific prompts change. While comparisons of the percentages of students at each achievement level can be made to previous years, it must be remembered that different prompts are used each year, students tested changed, and students may find some prompts more difficult than others.

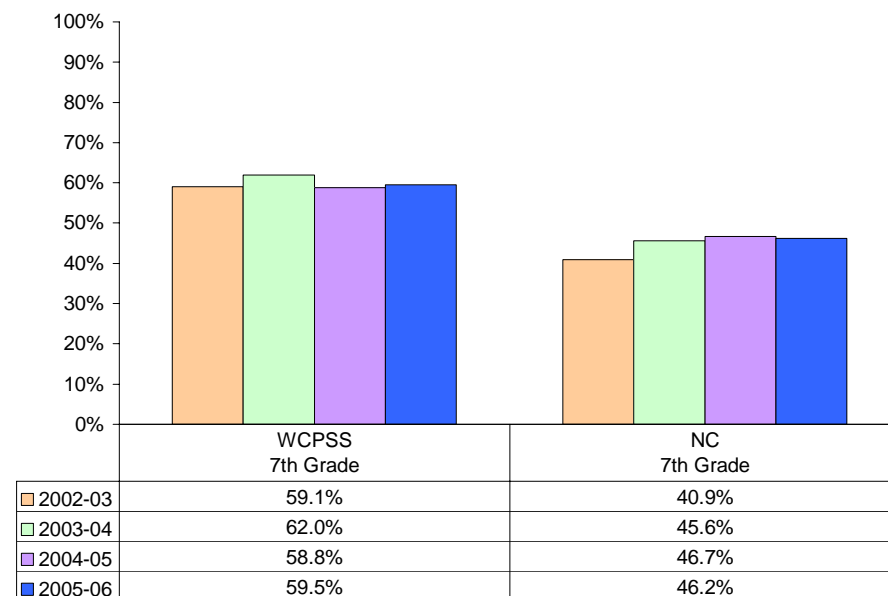
Exemptions from the writing assessment are slightly different than for the EOG, with additional alternative assessments available. LEP students, for example, are exempt if they first entered a United States school in 2005-06, and they scored below intermediate high on their reading IPT. These students are tested in writing with the IPT instead. Students who qualify for NC CLAS testing, who are LEP and who are in their first or second year in the United States are also exempt from the writing test.

Writing Assessment Results

WCPSS writing results at the middle school level show results above the state level but with room for improvement.

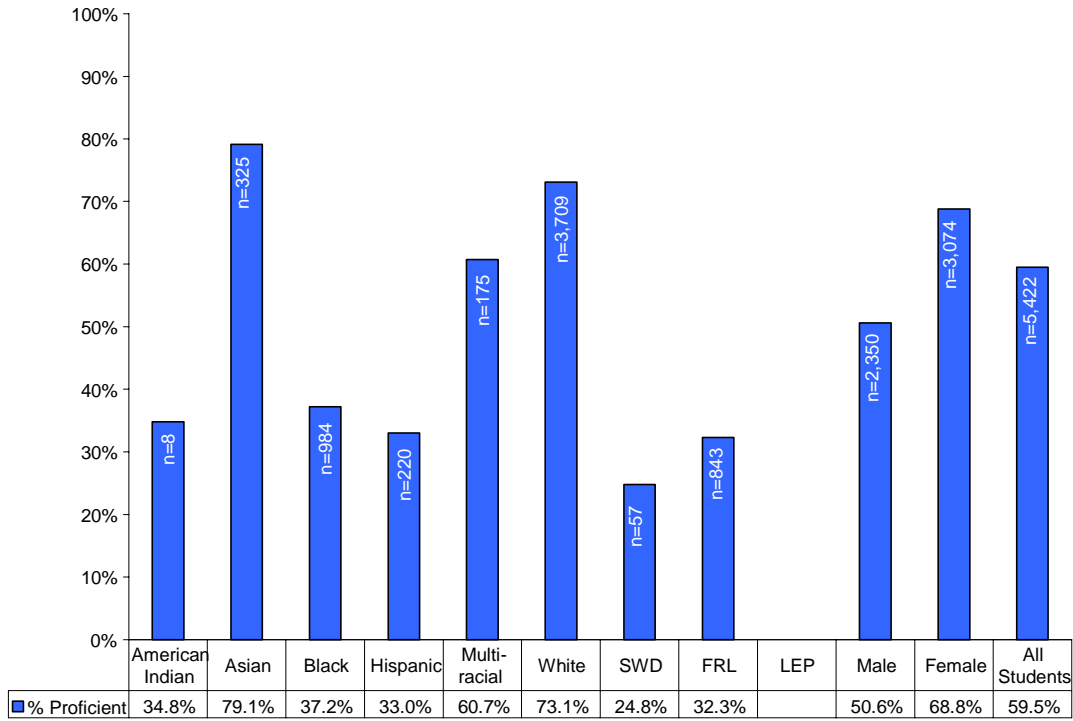
- For the past four years, WCPSS proficiency rates on the state’s grade 7 Writing Test results have been consistently higher than those for the state as a whole. However, the gap between the state and WCPSS has closed slightly over that time, as the statewide rate has risen slightly (about 5 percentage points) while the WCPSS rate has fluctuated around 60%, see Figure 26.
- Over time, a clear pattern of improvements has been shown by North Carolina students as a whole. In WCPSS, however, no pattern of sustained improvement has been seen.
- Grade 7 writing proficiency rates remain among the lowest across all of the tests that are part of the state’s testing and accountability program. Writing scores count in ABCs performance composites, which impacts the overall percentage of students considered proficient when Schools of Excellence and Distinction are determined.
- Among various student subgroups in WCPSS, Asian, White, and female students were the only groups to reach a proficiency rate above 60% in 2005-06. The lowest proficiency rates in 2005-06 (for groups that had at least 25 tested students) were found among the FRL, SWD, Black/African American, and Hispanic/Latino subgroups, all of whom had rates lower than 50%. Females outperform males on this assessment at grade 7 by a substantial margin.

Figure 26
Percentage of Students Proficient on Writing Assessment, Spring 2003-06, Grade 7



WCPSS n=9,113

Figure 27
Writing Test Results Disaggregated, 2005-06, Grade 7



Source: July 2006 DPI report. (LEP data was not available at that time.)

IDEA PROFICIENCY TEST (IPT) SCORES

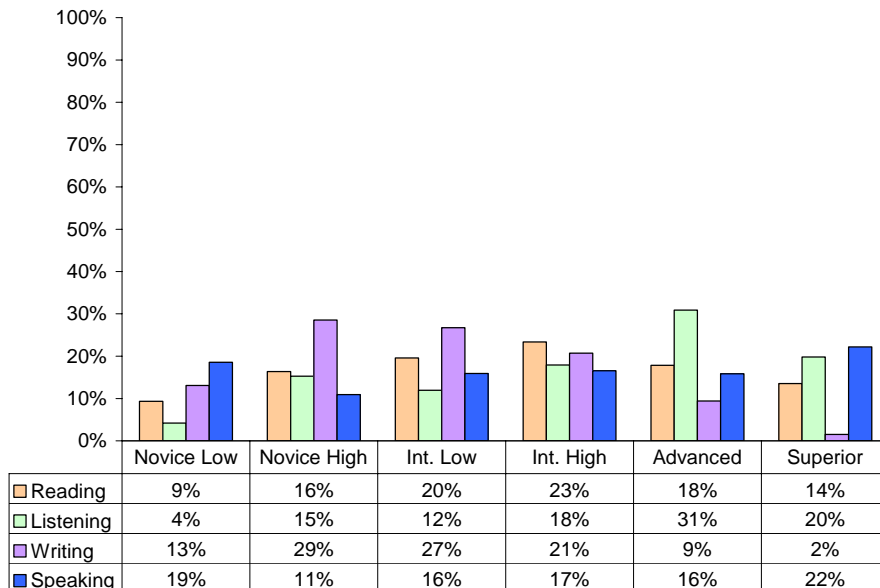
The IDEA Proficiency Test (IPT) is the state assessment of English language proficiency. Any student whose home language survey indicates English is not the only language spoken in his or her home is assessed with this test. The IPT consists of four sections: Reading, Listening, Writing, and Speaking. Students can receive one of six levels of scores for each section: Novice Low, Novice High, Intermediate Low, Intermediate High, Advanced, and Superior. The results of the IPT are used to determine a student’s LEP status. Any student not scoring Superior in all four sections of the test is classified as LEP. Students are retested each spring to monitor their progress.

WCPSS administered a new IPT to students in spring 2006. The test was changed to meet the requirements of an English language proficiency test under Title III of NCLB. The new test differs from previous tests in that:

- All grade levels are administered the Reading, Listening, Writing, and Speaking sections of the test.
- There is a greater focus on academic language.
- It is more difficult than previous versions of the IPT.

The following graph represents the distribution of test scores for each section of the IPT. In general, students tended to achieve the highest levels of proficiency (Advanced or Superior) on the Listening section of the test (51%). About one third of WCPSS LEP students scored superior or advanced on speaking and reading skills (38% and 32% respectively). Students were least likely to attain the highest levels of proficiency on the Writing section of the test (11%).

Figure 28
IPT Scores LEP Students, Spring 2006, Grades 6-8



n=1,263

Data Source: May 2006 (5/1/06) Student Locator merged into July 2006 End-of-Year Summary

All ethnic groups had the highest percentage of their students scoring in the top categories (advanced and Superior) for the Listening test of the IPT. White, Black/African American, and Hispanic/Latino students had Speaking as their second strongest area, with Asian students showing similar results on Reading and Speaking (46% scored Advanced or Superior in both categories). Across ethnic groups, White students showed the highest percentages of students in these two categories (69% and 49% respectively). Hispanic/Latino students consistently were most likely to score in the Novice range.

Table 11
Performance LEP Students by Ethnicity and Gender on the IPT,
Spring 2006, Grades 6-8

Reading IPT (n=1,252)	Novice Low	Novice High	Int. Low	Int. High	Advanced	Superior
Asian (n=134)	6.0%	14.2%	14.9%	18.7%	27.6%	18.7%
Black (n=91)	9.9%	13.2%	19.8%	22.0%	25.3%	9.9%
Hispanic/Latino (n=966)	10.0%	17.6%	20.4%	24.1%	15.5%	12.3%
White (n=61)	4.9%	9.8%	14.8%	26.2%	21.3%	23.0%
Listening IPT (n=1,252)	Novice Low	Novice High	Int. Low	Int. High	Advanced	Superior
Asian (n=134)	3.0%	11.2%	7.5%	15.7%	33.6%	29.1%
Black (n=91)	6.6%	7.7%	5.5%	19.8%	39.6%	20.9%
Hispanic/Latino (n=966)	4.5%	17.2%	13.6%	18.1%	29.6%	17.1%
White (n=61)	0.0%	8.2%	6.6%	16.4%	31.1%	37.7%
Writing IPT (n=1,250)	Novice Low	Novice High	Int. Low	Int. High	Advanced	Superior
Asian (n=134)	7.5%	17.2%	26.9%	23.9%	17.9%	6.7%
Black (n=91)	9.9%	19.8%	28.6%	29.7%	12.1%	0.0%
Hispanic/Latino (n=963)	15.0%	31.3%	26.6%	19.2%	7.5%	0.5%
White (n=62)	3.2%	25.8%	24.2%	25.8%	14.5%	6.5%
Speaking IPT (n=1,251)	Novice Low	Novice High	Int. Low	Int. High	Advanced	Superior
Asian (n=134)	11.9%	11.2%	16.4%	14.9%	18.7%	26.9%
Black (n=91)	11.0%	3.3%	22.0%	20.9%	15.4%	27.5%
Hispanic/Latino (n=965)	20.7%	12.0%	15.6%	16.0%	15.4%	20.2%
White (n=61)	13.1%	4.9%	9.8%	23.0%	19.7%	29.5%

TESTING OUTCOMES—MATHEMATICS

END OF GRADE (EOG) MULTIPLE CHOICE TEST MATHEMATICS RESULTS

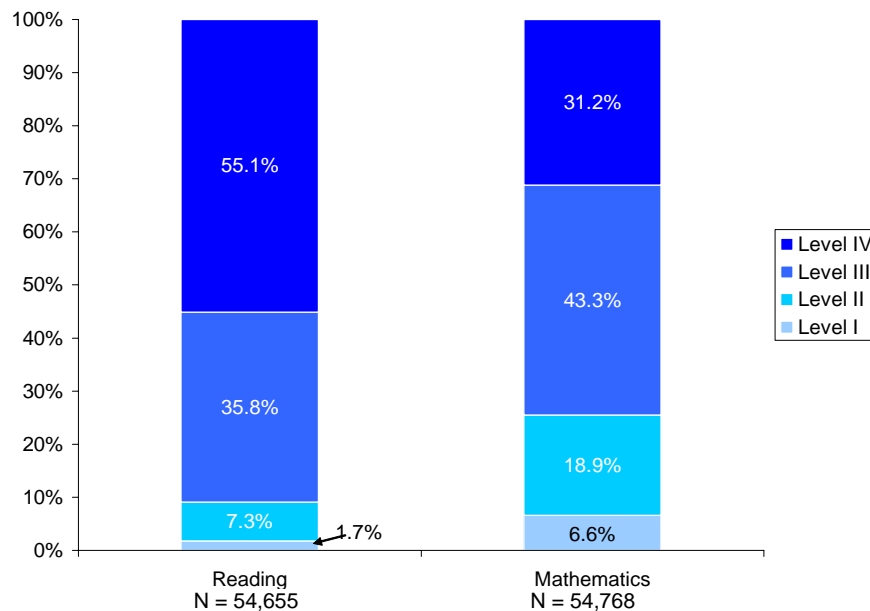
The achievement level score categorizes student performance on EOG tests according to four broad levels, defined by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI). More detail on the definition of each level is included in the reading part of this Testing Outcomes section. In general, Levels III and IV represent mastery of grade-level work or beyond, while Levels I and II represent non-mastery or inconsistent mastery, respectively.

EOG Scores by Achievement Level Across Subjects Grades 3-8

New mathematics tests were used in 2005-06 for the first time, with new cut scores for proficiency set in November, after the May test results were available for analysis. These new level cut scores were set based on the “reasoned judgment” method, which set the highest standard of the four methods reviewed. Thus, the mathematics standard is more rigorous than in past years. Therefore, results from 2005-06 do not reflect a drop in performance, but rather a new standard for grade level that is more difficult to reach based on a new curriculum and test. Comparisons to past years cannot be made validly. In this report, results are shared over time for reading only because of this change.

In previous years, reading and mathematics proficiency levels were similar. An analysis of all grade 3-8 EOG scores by achievement level for 2005-06 shows the mathematics proficiency standard is more difficult to meet than the reading standard. In reading, 91% (49,753 of 54,655) of students scored as proficient, while 75% (40,804 of 54,768) students scored at the level considered proficient in mathematics.

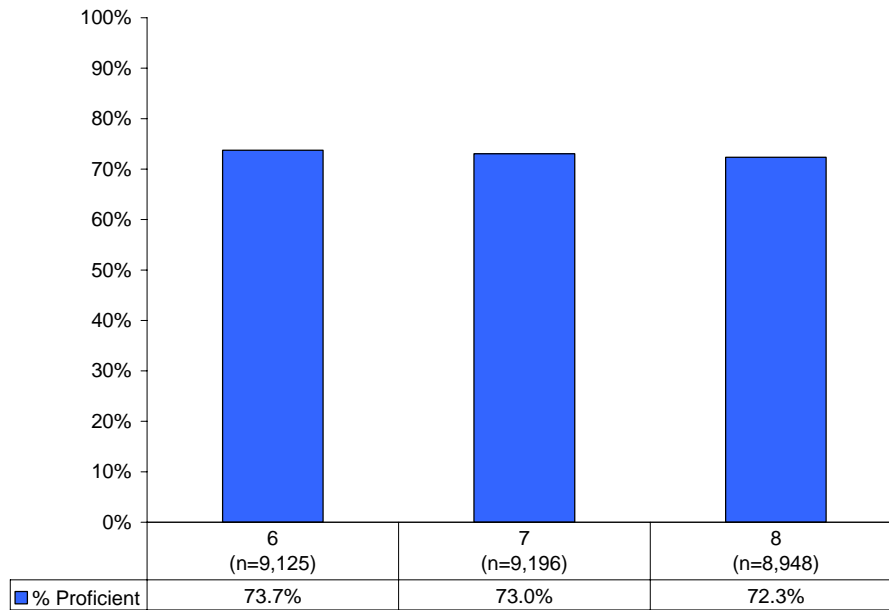
Figure 29
Reading and Mathematics, EOG Scores by Achievement Level, Spring 2006, Grades 3–8



Middle School Mathematics EOG Results

With the new standards set for mathematics, the overall percent of middle grades students who scored proficient was 73%. Overall, 19,917 of 27,269 students in grades 6 through 8 tested proficient. As may be seen in Figure 30, about the same percentage of students in each of the middle grades was proficient in mathematics. Higher percentages of WCPSS students met grade level standards than was true across the state (73% compared to 62% statewide).

Figure 30
EOG Mathematics by Grade Level, Spring 2006, Grades 6-8



By ethnicity in 2005-06:

- The percent proficient varied from 46% to 92% for ethnic subgroups, with the highest percentages proficient among Asian and White students, and the lowest among Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students.
- Achievement gaps across ethnic groups were much larger with the new level cut scores probably because larger numbers of Hispanic/Latino and Black/African American students had been scoring just slightly above the old Level II/ Level III cut. The achievement gap between Black/African American and White students, for example, was 42 percentage points.

Figure 31
EOG Mathematics by Ethnicity, Spring 2006, Grades 6-8

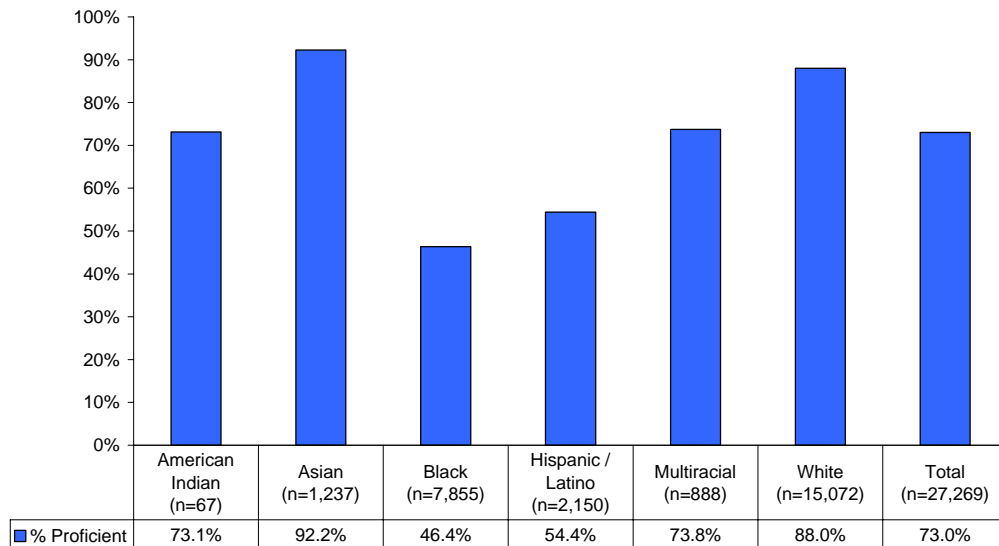
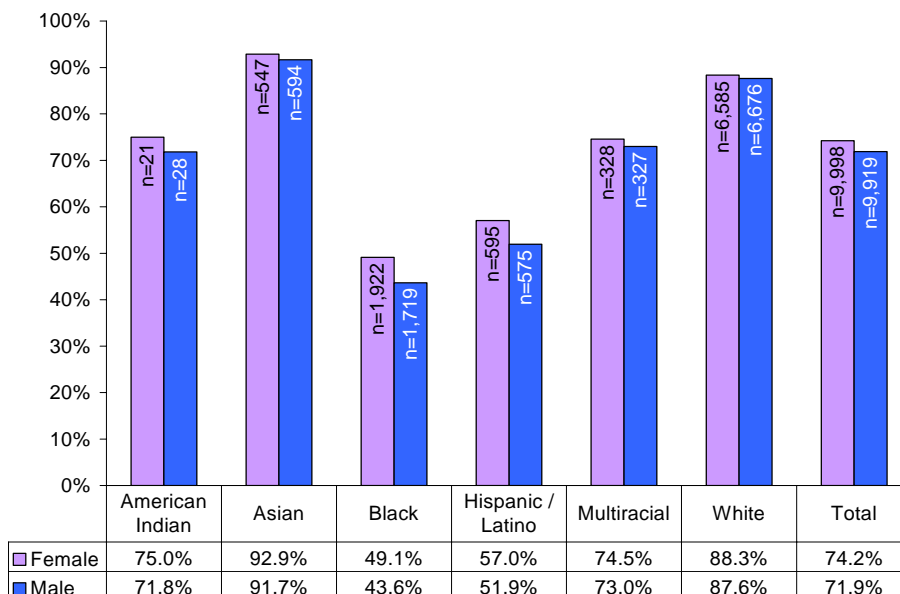
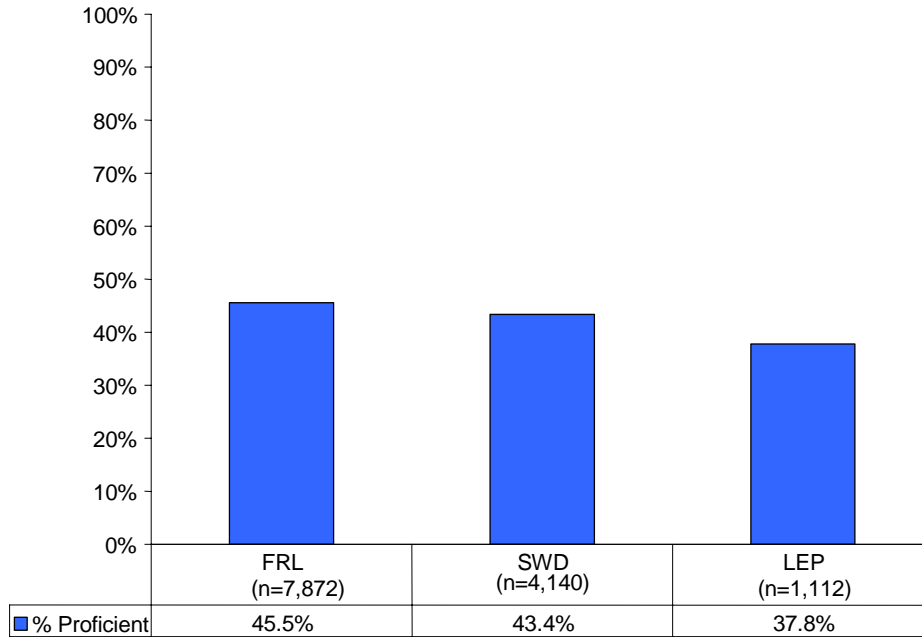


Figure 32
By Ethnicity and Gender, Spring 2006, Grades 6-8



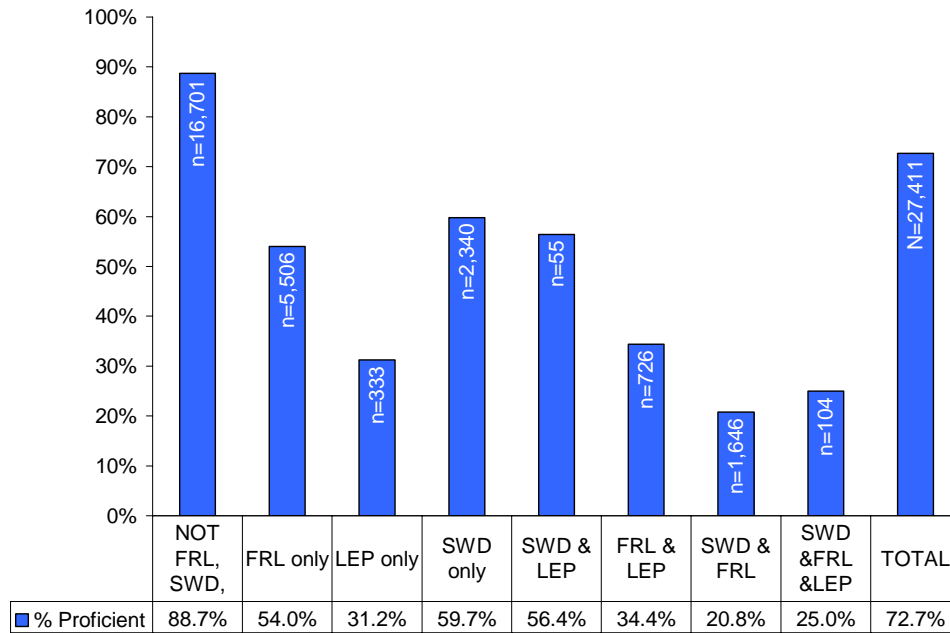
Lower percentages of students who were FRL, SWD, or LEP scored at grade level than students without such characteristics. FRL, SWD, and LEP students all showed proficiency rates around 40% (37% to 45%). Students with limited English proficiency showed the lowest percentage of students at grade level of the three groups.

Figure 33
EOG Mathematics Performance by Academic Risk Factors, Spring 2006, Grades 6-8



As shown in the figure below, when these results are broken down further, the percentage of students scoring proficient on the EOG in mathematics was higher for students with only one of these academic risk factors than for students with more than one. Only 21-25% of middle school students who were SWD and FRL or SWD, FRL, and LEP scored at proficient levels in mathematics.

Figure 34
EOG Mathematics Performance by Subgroup Combinations, Spring 2006, Grades 6-8



END-OF-COURSE (EOC) ALGEBRA I RESULTS

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) requires that all schools administer multiple-choice End-of-Course (EOC) tests to students enrolled in any of ten courses. The tests are aligned with the Standard Course of Study in each of the subjects tested (Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, English I, Biology, Chemistry, Physical Science, Physics, U. S. History, and Civics & Economics) and use a multiple-choice format. While most courses and tests are taken by high school students, the Algebra I course and test are taken by a large enough number of middle school students to be included here. Under the state’s ABCs of Public Education accountability program, EOC tests must be given during the last two weeks of the course. Results are then used for state accountability programs.

Student performance on EOC multiple-choice tests is measured by both a scale score and an achievement level. The four broad achievement levels each represent a different level of competency in a subject area (Table 12); general level descriptions are consistent with those used for EOG tests in the earlier grades.

Table 12
Achievement Levels for the North Carolina Testing Program

<p>Level I: Students performing at this level do not have sufficient mastery of knowledge and skills of the course to be successful at a more advanced level in the content area.</p>	<p>Level III: Students performing at this level consistently demonstrate mastery of the course subject matter and skills and are well prepared for a more advanced level in the content area.</p>
<p>Level II: Students performing at this level demonstrate inconsistent mastery of knowledge and skills of the course, and are minimally prepared to be successful at a more advanced level in the content area.</p>	<p>Level IV: Students performing at this level consistently perform in a superior manner clearly beyond that required to be proficient in the course subject matter and skills and are very well prepared for a more advanced level in the content area.</p>

Note: Official descriptions actually vary by course as listed in NC State Board of Education Policy HSP-C-010 (<http://sbepolicy.dpi.state.nc.us/policies/HSP-C-010.asp?pri=01&cat=C&pol=010&acr=HSP>).

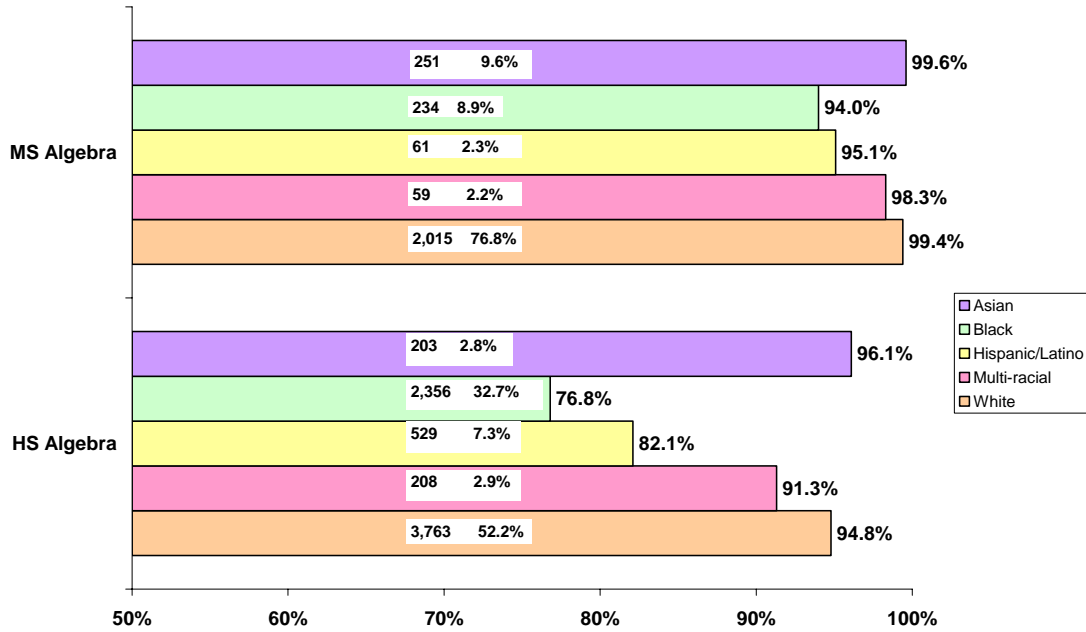
Overall 27% of all Algebra I EOCs in WCPSS were taken by students at the middle school level. At the middle school level, those taking the course and test tended to show high mathematics achievement in previous years. This trend continued in 2005-06 with 98% of middle school students in WCPSS who took Algebra I scoring proficient.

- Achievement gaps were not evident, with at least 94% of students in each ethnic group scoring proficient.
- White and Asian students are more likely to take Algebra in middle school than Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students are. Overall, 86% of middle school Algebra I students are White or Asian.

At the high school level, 87% of students who took Algebra I scored proficient overall. Over 90% of Asian, White and Multiracial students scored proficient, with Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students showing lower levels of proficiency (76% and 82% respectively). Gaps among ethnic/ racial groups were smaller in Algebra I than in other EOC areas.

Note: the numbers inside the box are totals. For Example, 251 Asian students took Middle School Algebra I. They were 9.6% of all the middle school students taking Algebra I and 99.6% of these Asian students scored proficient.

Figure 35
Algebra EOC Proficiency by Level and Ethnicity, 2005-06



Notes: Middle School (MS) n=2,623 (American Indian n=3 – not shown).
High School (HS) n= 7,059.

The percentage inside the bar shows the percentage of middle school and high school Algebra I students from that ethnic/racial group. The percentage to the right of the bar represents the percent of students in Algebra I from that racial/ethnic group who scored proficient

OTHER STUDENT OUTCOMES

PROMOTION/RETENTION 2005-06

Background

The WCPSS Board of Education's Promotion and Intervention policy, adopted in February 2000, requires students to demonstrate proficiency in grade-level competencies in English/language arts and mathematics in order to be promoted each year. Additionally, the State Board of Education (SBE) Student Accountability Standards policy requires students in grades 3, 5, and 8 to demonstrate grade-level proficiency on the state End-of-Grade (EOG) tests in reading and mathematics. WCPSS has extended this to all grades 3-8. Course grades are also used to assess grade-level competency in English/language arts and mathematics, with middle school students required to earn a passing course grade in English/language arts, mathematics, either social studies or science, and a minimum of 50% of remaining courses taken. The WCPSS policy recognizes the statutory authority of the principal to make all final promotion decisions. Additional details regarding the Promotion and Intervention policy can be found on the WCPSS Web site (<http://www.wcpss.net/promotion-intervention>) and in Board Policy 5530.²

In 2005-06, due to a delay in the reporting of the mathematics EOG scores based on the new test and curriculum, promotion/retention decisions were not based on student performance on the mathematics EOG. The state allows districts to consider a test score within one standard error of measurement as proficient, but WCPSS has not done so to date. As has been mentioned, the new mathematics standards are considerably more difficult than previous standards. The number of students considered for retention, and ultimately retained, may rise at grades 3 through 8 due to the more rigorous standards.

Overall Retention Rates

At the end of 2005-06 school year, students were identified by schools as promoted, graduated, or retained, and this information was submitted to the Department of Public Instruction. Graduates are considered promoted. (Any changes in status as of fall 2006 are not reflected in these data.) Based on this definition, 96% of WCPSS' students K-12 were promoted in 2005-06, while 4% were retained (4,876 students). Thus, WCPSS students are promoted at a high rate, but differences exist in the percentage of students promoted by grade level, ethnicity, academic risk factors, and gender.

Grade Level

The following table displays the promotion and retention rates of WCPSS students by grade level. While all grade levels had high promotion rates, ranging from 85% to 99%, there were distinct differences among grade levels.

² Further information on the other key components of the WCPSS Promotion and Intervention Policy can be found in our report *Promotion/Retention of Students in Grades K-8 2000-01* (Report No. 02.08).

- The two highest retention rates were at the high school levels. By grade, 9th-grade students had the highest rate of retention (15%), followed by those in grade 10 (9%).
- Kindergarten, grade 1, and grade 11 had the next highest rate of retention (5%).
- The middle school grades had the lowest retention rate, with just over one percent of students retained at each grade.

Table 13
Promotion/Retention, 2005-06, Grades K-12

Grade	Number Retained	Percent Retained	Number Promoted	Percent Promoted	Total
KI	513	4.8%	10,206	95.2%	10,719
1	495	4.8%	9,881	95.2%	10,376
2	278	2.8%	9,780	97.2%	10,058
3	134	1.4%	9,636	98.6%	9,770
4	80	0.9%	9,215	99.1%	9,295
5	49	0.5%	9,286	99.5%	9,335
6	125	1.3%	9,223	98.7%	9,348
7	127	1.4%	9,303	98.7%	9,430
8	135	1.5%	9,093	98.5%	9,228
9	1,489	15.0%	8,473	85.1%	9,962
10	756	8.9%	7,733	91.1%	8,489
11	402	5.3%	7,240	94.7%	7,642
12	293	4.1%	6,790	95.9%	7,083
Total	4,876	4.0%	115,859	96.0%	120,735

Data Source: WCPSS Student Information Systems data file of K-12 students flagged as promoted, graduated, or retained as of the end of the 2005-06 school year.

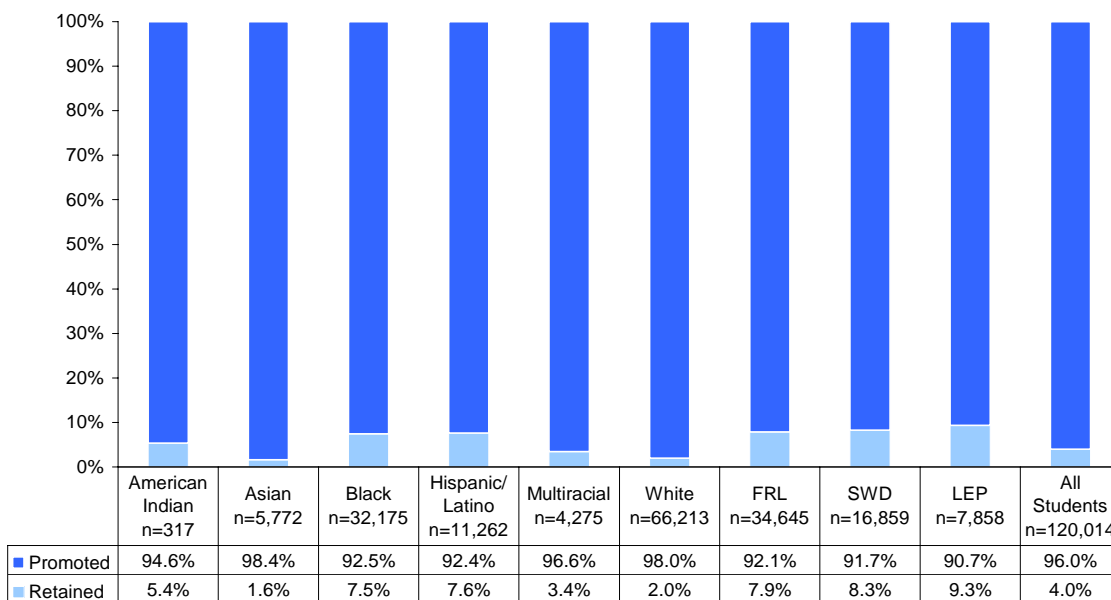
The higher rate of retention at grades 9 and 10 probably reflects the different criteria used to determine promotion to the next grade at the high school level. High school promotion/retention decisions are based on successful completion of specific required courses and not on the principal to make the final promotion decision, as in the lower grade levels. At the elementary level, higher rates of retention at kindergarten and grade 1 may reflect the belief that retention is preferable in the early grade levels to ensure that students have mastered basic skills, the belief that there is less stigma attached to retention in the early grades, maturation considerations, and/or local standards for grade-level status.

Ethnicity and Academic Risk Factors

More than 90% of students in all NCLB subgroups (ethnicity, FRL, LEP, SWD) in WCPSS are promoted (see following figure). Remember that many students are represented in more than one subgroup and that the overall retention rate in WCPSS was 4%.

- LEP students had the highest rate of retention (9%), as compared to non-LEP students (4%).
- SWD and FRL students also had higher retention rates (about 8%) than other subgroups.
- Among racial groups, Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students had the highest rate of retention (approximately 8%).
- At the middle school level, American Indian and Black/African American students had the highest rate of retention.
- At the middle school level, similar to the K-12 results, SWD and FRL students had higher retention rates (about 3%); however, LEP and Hispanic/Latino students had retention rates similar to the overall middle school population.

Figure 36
Promotion/Retention by NCLB Groups, 2005-06, Grades K-12



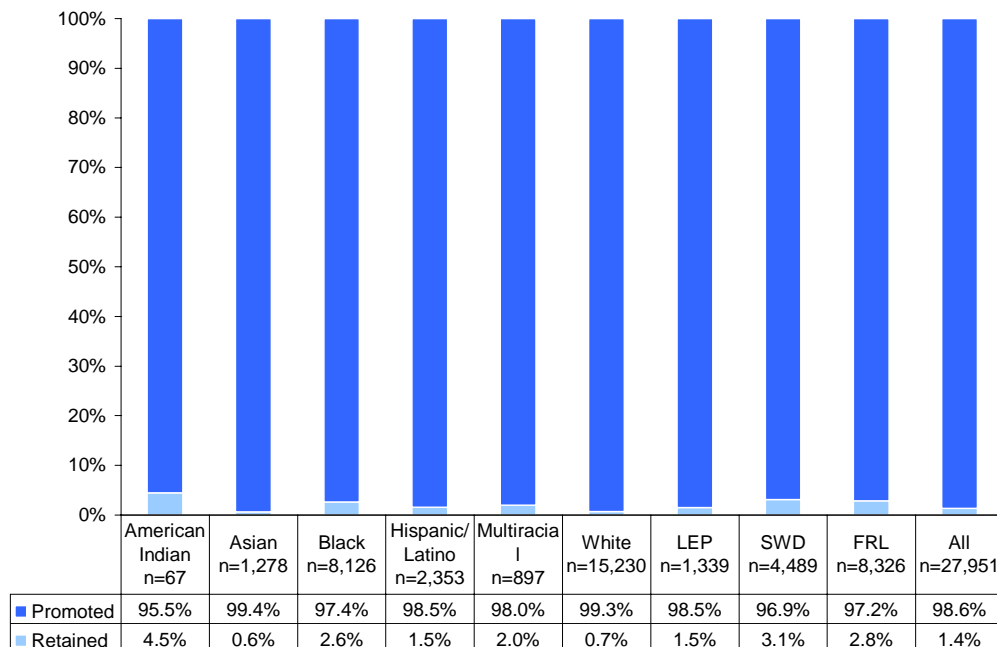
N =120,014

Data Source: WCPSS Student Information Systems data file of K-12 students flagged as promoted, graduated, or retained as of the end of the 2005-06 school year.

Note: Ethnic counts are unduplicated, but other counts are duplicated.

Note 2: 721 students were missing subgroup information

Figure 37
Promotion/Retention by NCLB Groups, 2005-06, Grades 6-8



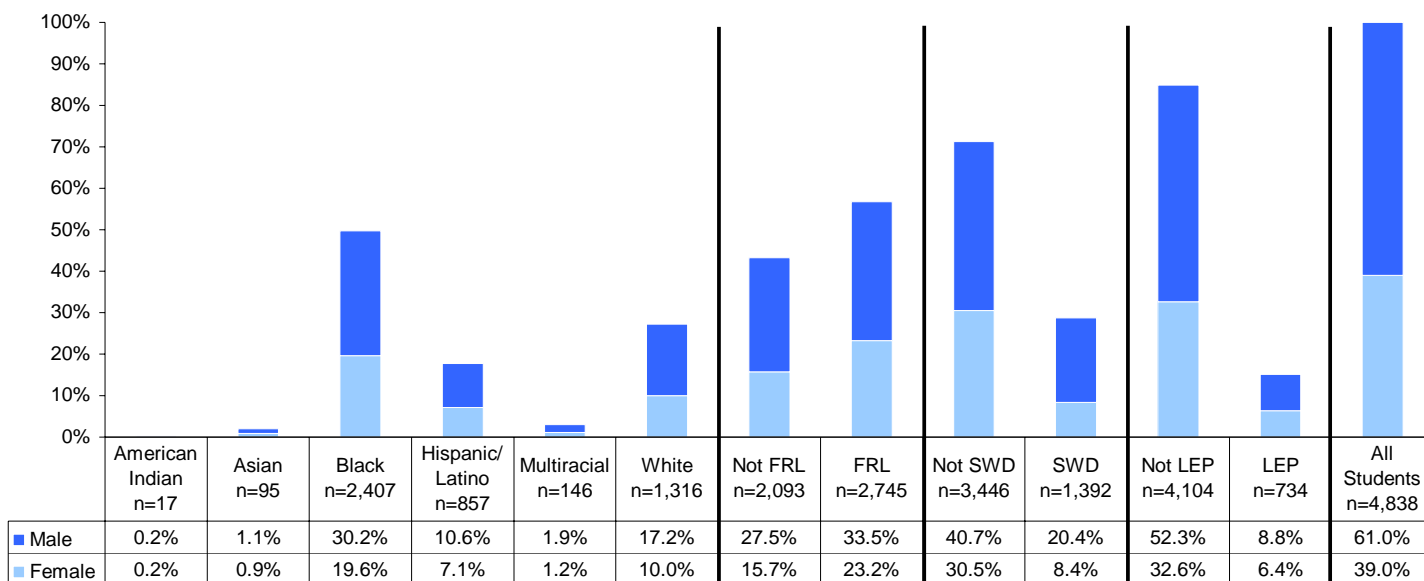
Characteristics of Retained Students

Subgroups and Gender

Another way to examine retention is the characteristics of those who are retained. The next figure displays the percentage of those retained at the end of 2005-06 by gender within subgroups. Each section of the graph totals the number of all students retained. Overall, a higher percentage of retained students were male (61%) than female (39%). This pattern is repeated across all NCLB groups with the exception of American Indian students. The proportion of retained students is not equally distributed across NCLB groups.

- By ethnicity, Black/African American students represent the highest percentage of retained students (at approximately 50%). White students represent the second highest percentage (27%). Black/African American students are over-represented and White students under-represented relative to the percentage of the population each represents (27% and 55%, respectively).
- LEP students represent about 15% of those retained, with SWD students representing 28%. This illustrates the importance of group size and perspective when examining retention. Because there are fewer WCPSS students who are categorized as LEP or SWD than other groups, they represent smaller percentages *relative to all those retained* while having a higher *rate* of retention within their student group.
- FRL students constitute a higher percentage of retained students (57%) than students who do not receive free or reduced-priced lunch (43%). FRL students are over-represented among retainees relative to the percentage of the population they represent (29%).

Figure 38
Students Retained by Gender and NCLB Groups, at the End of 2005-06
Grades K-12



Data Source: WCPSS Student Information Systems data file of K-12 students flagged as promoted, graduated, or retained as of the end of the 2005-06 school year.

Note: Bold lines indicate student groups that total to 100%.

Note 2: 38 students are missing LEP and FRL status and are not included in this figure.

The pattern of retention rates remained the same among NCLB subgroups at the elementary, middle and high school levels. At the middle school level, the percentages of retained students who were Hispanic/Latino or LEP were lower than at the elementary and high school levels. Although in the overall middle school population there are fewer Hispanic/Latino and LEP students than at the elementary school level, these groups represent a higher percentage of the middle school population than at the high school level.

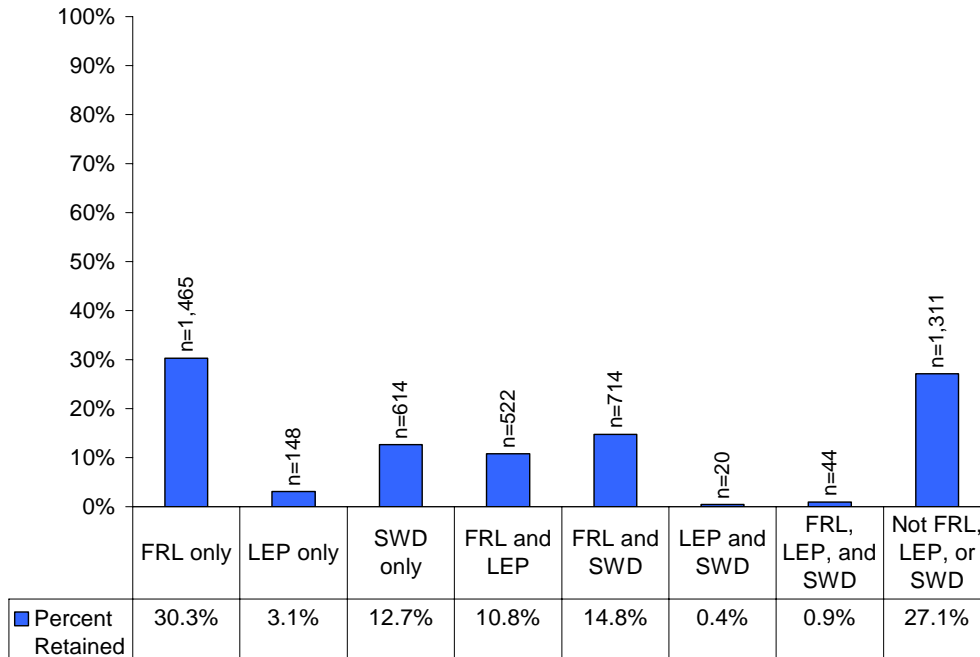
Academic Risk Factor Combinations

Figure 39 displays students retained at the end of 2005-06 for all possible combinations of FRL, SWD, and LEP students. Each student is represented in only one of the categories in the figure.

- Across K-12, more than half of those retained were FRL. Close to 75% were FRL, SWD, or LEP. About one third (30%) were only FRL. Students who were FRL and SWD represented the most common combination of academic risk factors.
- Only 27% of retained students did not fall into the FRL, SWD, or LEP academic risk categories.
- 16% of those retained were LEP or SWD but not FRL.
- The patterns of students retained by subgroup at the elementary, middle, and high school levels were consistent with the overall K-12 results.

The percentages of students retained within academic risk subgroups was approximately twice as high as WCPSS overall. Students with FRL, LEP, or SWD status as well as Black and Hispanic students were over-represented among retained students relative to their percentage of the population. Within all subgroups, with the exception of American Indian students, male students were retained at a higher rate than female students.

Figure 39
Students Retained by Academic Risk-Group Combinations, at the End of 2005-06, Grades K-12



n =4,838

Data Source: WCPSS Student Information Systems data file of K-12 students flagged as promoted, graduated, or retained as of the end of the 2005-06 school year.

Note: 38 students are missing LEP and FRL status and are not included in this figure.

RESULTS OF NORTH CAROLINA ONLINE TEST OF COMPUTER SKILLS

Test Description

The North Carolina Computer Skills Test is a high school diploma requirement that is designed to measure the North Carolina Standard Course of Study for Computer/Technology Skills (DPI, 2007). This course of study is a K-12 curriculum. Students are administered the test beginning in grade 8, with a maximum of two opportunities to score proficient on the test during the year. The test is also used in 8th grade Performance Composite in the state ABCs. Beginning in grade 9, students are offered remediation and opportunities to retest throughout high school until they score proficient on the test and therefore meet this diploma requirement. Each high school develops strategies as to how they will remediate students.

Any student who meets all state and local graduation requirements but does not meet the computer proficiency standard will receive a certificate of achievement, rather than a diploma. Any student who exits high school without a diploma may return to the school and participate in retesting opportunities beyond the maximum school age.

Beginning in 2005-06, students entering grade 8 for the first time were assessed with the new Online Test of Computer Skills during a fall and/or spring testing window. This test is not administered with computer software with which students are familiar, such as Microsoft Office or Microsoft Works. The program that is used is NCDESK, which was developed through North Carolina State University, and which can be downloaded for student use at any grade level (NCSU, 2006). The online test is secure and password protected.

The Computer Skills Alternate Assessment is available for students whose school does not have Internet capabilities or for students who are blind. This test is a combination of a paper and pencil (multiple-choice test) and a performance test. During the performance test, students complete various tasks that are scored by the test administrator with a DPI-developed rubric. The test administrator will then fill in “Yes” or “No” for each task on the student’s bubble sheet – “Yes” (per the rubric, the student has mastery of this task.) or “No” (the student does not have mastery of this task). Bubble sheets are forwarded to the NCDPI for scoring. Only six WCPSS students were assessed with this alternative test in 2005-06. The alternate assessment is consistent with the Online Test of Computer Skills and uses the same scale scores and cut scores as the online test. Results are included in overall system results. Because 2005-06 was the first year that the online test was administered, all results are baseline data that will be used as a comparison in future years.

Two groups of students were not required to take the test (722 students, or 8.5% of the eighth graders in membership at the end of the spring testing window).

- One group was made up of students assessed with the Alternate Assessment Portfolio (AAP) in 2005-06. These students are identified as students with most significant cognitive disabilities and will receive a certificate upon completion of their high school requirements rather than a regular diploma.

- The second group included students identified as limited English proficient (LEP) who were in their first year in a U.S. school and scored below intermediate high on their initial IDEA Proficiency Test (IPT). LEP students, however, must meet the computer skills requirement in order to receive a diploma.

The test measures the six strands defined by the K-12 North Carolina Standard Course of Study for Computer/Technology Skills adopted by the State Board of Education in 2004. The six strands are: 1) Societal/ Ethical Issues, 2) Database, 3) Spreadsheet, 4) Keyboard Utilization/Word Processing/Desk Top Publishing, 5) Multimedia /Presentation, and 6) Telecommunications/Internet. Strands identify objectives such as:

Societal/Ethical Issues Strand

- Respect for the work of others – security, privacy, passwords, personal information
- Responsible, safe, and ethical behaviors online
- Trouble-shooting common hardware/software problems/issues

Database

- Create/modify databases, recognize how and why databases are used to collect, organize, and analyze information
- Identify and use database terms including sort, search/filter strategies
- Cite sources of information used in content area databases.

Spreadsheet

- Create/modify spreadsheets and graphs/charts to analyze and interpret data
- Create/modify spreadsheets to test simple “what if...” statements to solve problems and make decisions
- Use spreadsheets and graphing terms/concepts

Keyboard Utilization/Word Processing/Desk Top Publishing

- Use proper keyboard techniques to improve accuracy, speed, general efficiency
- Use menu/toolbar to edit/ modify/revise

Multimedia/Presentation

- Identify and use multimedia tools
- Personal safety issues when developing, selecting, and using personal information, images, and content in presentations/online.

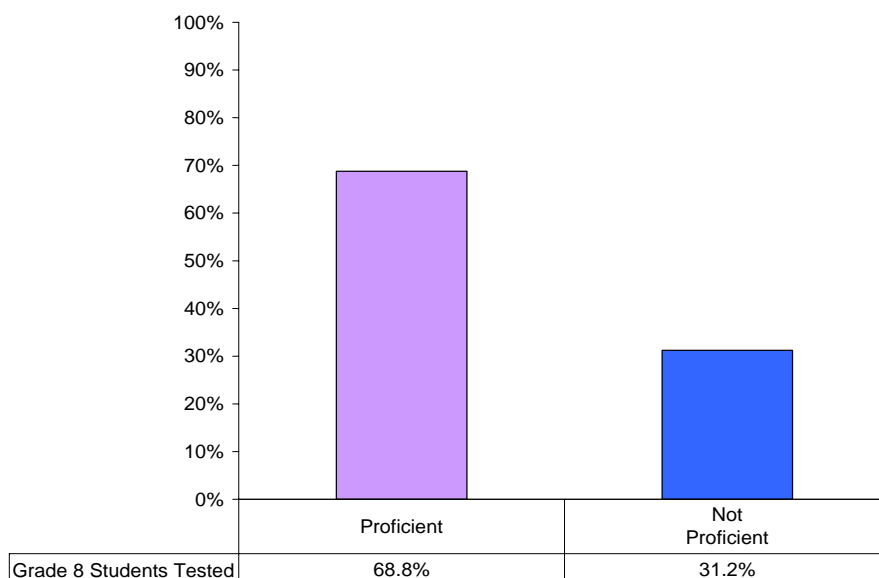
Telecommunications/Internet

- Responsible, safe, and ethical behaviors online
- Evaluating quality of resources and information online
- Collaborative tools
- Advantages and limitations of collecting/disseminating information/ideas online

Test Results

Of the 8,433 8th grade students who were administered the Online Computer Skills Test during the regular 2005-06 school year, 69% of students tested passed the test.

Figure 40
Proficiency on Online Computer Skills Test for All Students, 2005-06, Grade 8



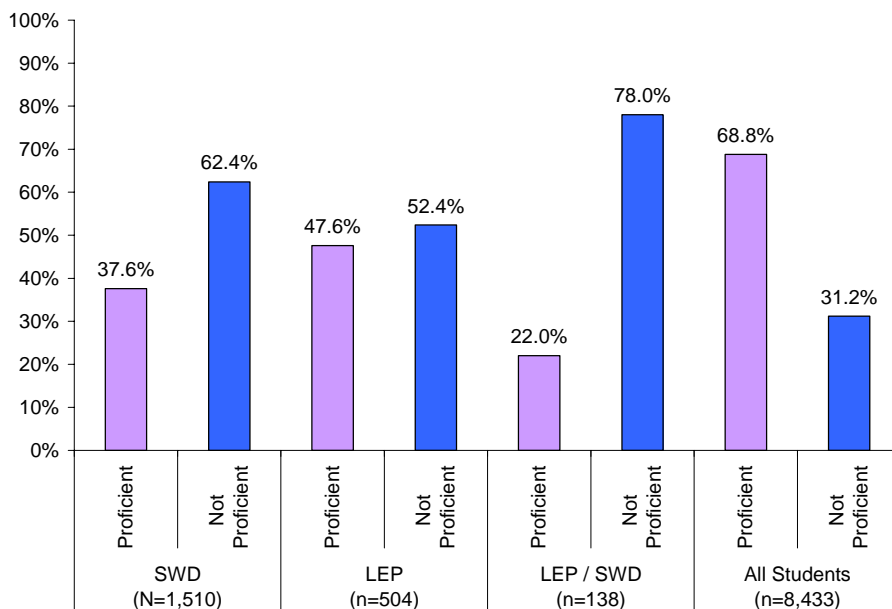
N=8,433

Students with disabilities, not identified as students with a most significant cognitive disability were administered the online test with or without accommodations per their IEP or 504 plan. Of the 1,510 SWD 8th grade students, 37% scored proficient, while 62% did not score proficient. Two-hundred forty-eight (248) students were not tested. Thus, SWD students had more difficulty meeting this new standard.

Students identified as LEP were also administered the test with or without accommodations. Of the 504 LEP students tested, 48% scored proficient on the test by the end of the school year. Thus, LEP students had less difficulty meeting this requirement than SWD students, but more difficulty than the overall population tested.

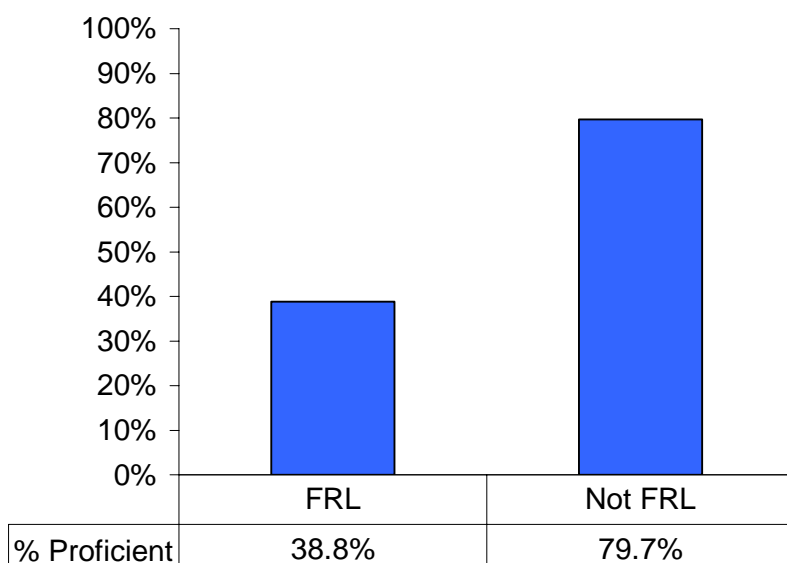
One group of 138 students was identified as both LEP and SWD. Students identified within both academic risk factors scored proficient on the test much less often than did students in either subgroup by itself with only 22% of this subgroup scoring proficient by the end of the year.

Figure 41
Proficiency on Online Computer Skills Test by Academic Risk Groups, 2005-06, Grade 8



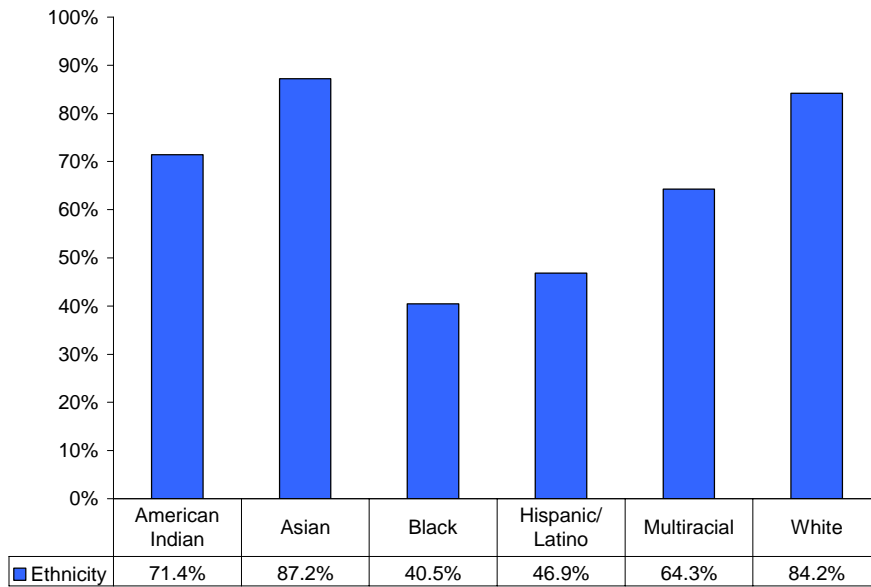
Economically disadvantaged students, defined as those who receive FRL, showed much lower proficiency percentages (39%) than those who were not economically disadvantaged (80%). The percentage of FRL students who were proficient was similar to that for SWD students.

Figure 42
Proficiency on Online Computer Skills Test by FRL, 2005-06, Grade 8



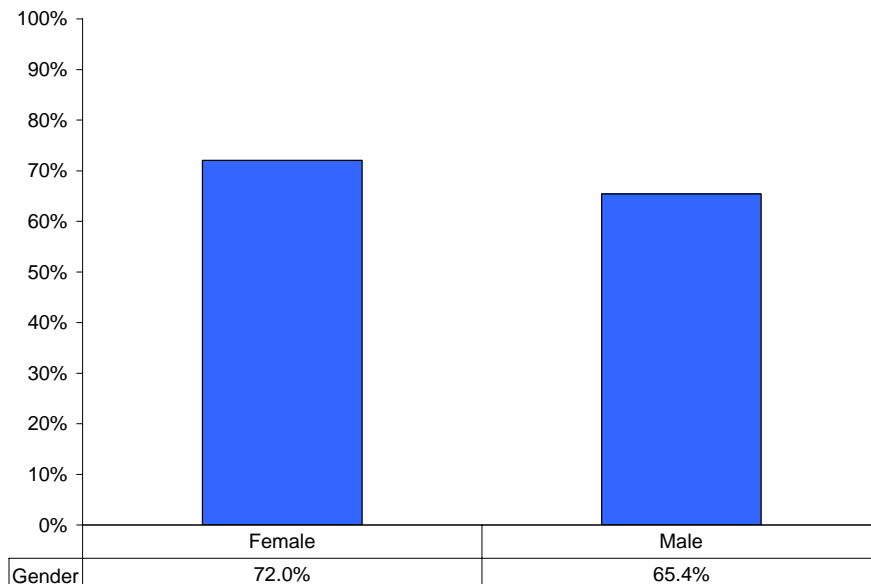
By ethnicity, the Asian and White NCLB subgroups demonstrated the highest proficiency on the online computer skills test (87% and 84%, respectively). Black and Hispanic/Latino students showed the lowest proficiency (41% and 47%, respectively).

Figure 43
Percent Proficient Online Computer Skills Test by Ethnicity, 2005-06, Grade 8



Females are somewhat more likely to score proficient on the computer test than males. Seventy-two percent (72%) of females scored proficient on the online test compared to 65% of males.

Figure 44
Percent Proficient Online Computer Skills Test by Gender, 2005-06, Grade 8



ACCOUNTABILITY OUTCOMES

ABCs RESULTS

The ABCs of Accountability Model for elementary and middle schools was first implemented in the 1996-97 school year. During 2005-06, major changes in the ways the school growth is calculated were implemented. The model however, has always included a performance component and a growth. See DPIs Web site for more information on NCLB and AYP in North Carolina public schools (<http://abcs.ncpublicschools.org/abcs/>). While ABCs results still represent the extent to which WCPSS schools are meeting state standards, extreme caution must be taken when comparing the results across years. Results for 2005-06 will therefore be emphasized as a baseline for the coming years.

- The performance component addresses the percentage of test scores at or above grade level (Levels III or IV), and it includes all students tested (including alternate assessments). Reading, mathematics, computer skills, and End of Course tests (Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II) were the subjects included the last two years. In 2005-06, writing was added back into the calculations, and mathematics standards were revised to be more rigorous.
- The growth component deals with students' scores from one year to the next, and includes only students with both scores in a subject who attended a school for 140 days or more. The method used for this calculation changed in 2005-06.

Based on these two components, plus the federal Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standards, the state has created various recognition categories for schools. Since mathematics standards were designed to be more rigorous and difficult to meet, a decrease in the percentage of schools qualifying for recognitions was not unexpected.

ABCs Growth Standards

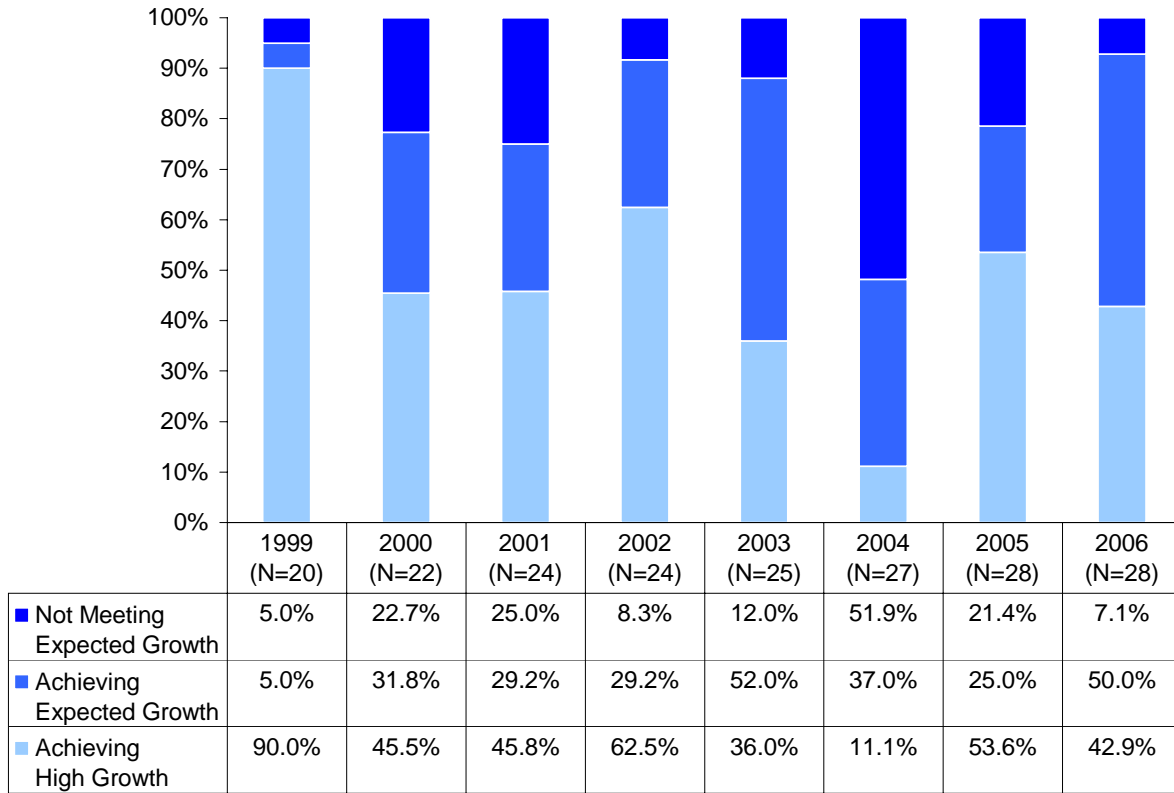
A completely new method of computing growth was introduced in 2005-06. While the terms Expected and High Growth continue to be used, the definition has changed for both. The basic assumption of the *new* ABCs growth component is that a student should be expected to do at least as well on various End-of-Grade tests as s/he has done on prior EOG tests compared to all other students who took the test in the standard-setting year. The standard-setting year is typically the first year that a test becomes operational and students receive scores for the test.

- For a school to meet the Expected Growth Standards, the average of the academic change of the current year tests has to be greater or equal to 0. That is, the actual score should be equal to or greater than the predicted score.
- For a school to meet the High Growth Standards, first it has to meet the Expected Growth Standards. Second, 60% or more of the students have to meet expected growth on their tests.

Caution should be taken when comparing the results across years because in 2006, a completely new method of computing growth was introduced as well as new test and new standards for mathematics. Overall, 14 middle schools met their Expected Growth Standards and 12 met their

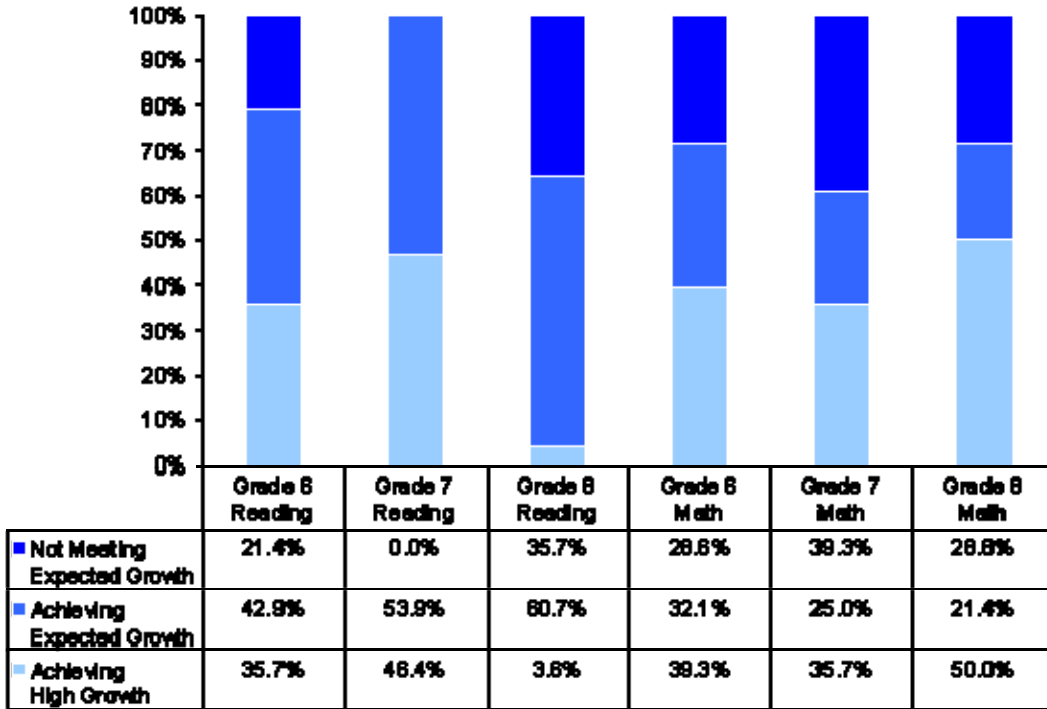
High Growth Standards in WCPSS in 2005-06, for a total of 93%. That represents an increase of 14 percentage points from 2004-05. The percentage of schools that met the High Growth standard was slightly lower in 2005-06 compared to 2004-05.

Figure 45
WCPSS ABCs Growth Summary Over Time, Grades 6-8



When examined by grade, reading results were strongest at grade 7, with all schools achieving Expected or High Growth. Mathematics results were more even across grades, with 61% to 71% of schools meeting their Expected or High Growth standards. Grade 8 showed the strongest results for high growth.

Figure 46
Percentage of WCPSS Students Meeting Growth Targets by Subject
Grades 6-8, 2005-06

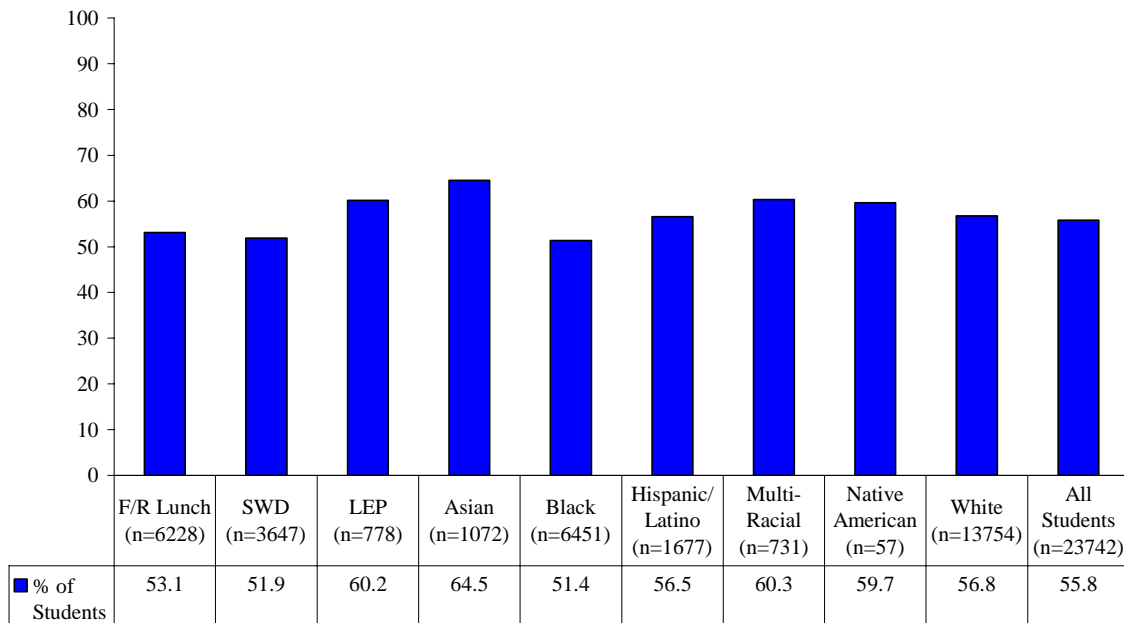


N=28

As demonstrated in the following figure, the overall percentage of WCPSS students reaching their growth target for ABCs in reading was 56%. Most groups did not meet the High Growth Standard of 60%.

- The percentage of each group meeting their growth target varied from 51% to 64%.
- The highest percentage of students meeting their growth targets was found for LEP, Asian, Native American, and Multiracial students (60% or more in each group). The lowest percentage of students meeting their growth targets was evident for FRL, SWD, and Black/African American students (51-53%).

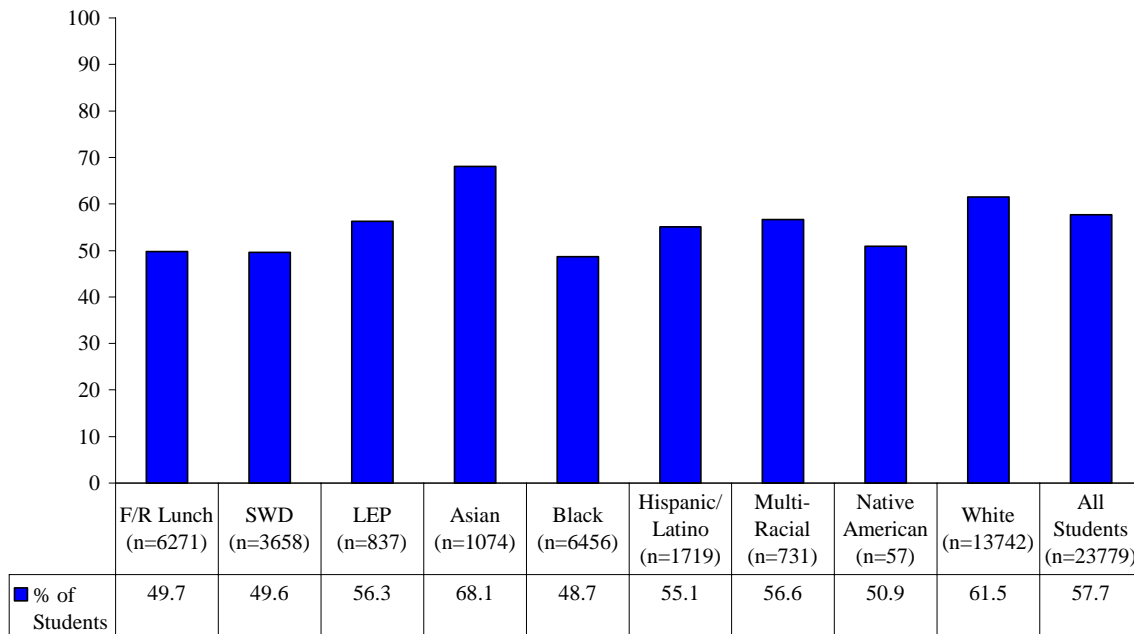
Figure 47
Percentage of Students by NCLB Subgroups Meeting Growth Targets in Reading
Grades 6-8, 2005-06



As demonstrated in the following figure, the overall percentage of WCPSS students reaching their growth target for ABCs in mathematics was 58%. Most groups did not meet high growth.

- The percentage of each group meeting their growth target varied from 49% to 68% (a wider range than was true in reading).
- The highest percentage of students meeting their growth targets was found for Asian and White students (over 60% in each group). The lowest percentage of students meeting their growth targets was evident for FRL, SWD, and Black/African American, and Native American students (49-51%).

Figure 48
Percentage of Students by NCLB Subgroups Meeting Growth Targets in Mathematics
Grades 6-8, 2005-06



ABCs Performance Standards

The second component of the ABCs Accountability Model is the performance component. Performance is based on the percentage of scores, across subjects, which are at grade level (Levels III and IV). Definitions of these levels are described in the Testing Outcomes (EOG) section of this report. This year, recognitions were more difficult to reach given the higher standards for the mathematics and computer skills test, as well as the return of writing scores to the calculations. The percentage of students scoring proficient in writing was lower than in reading, so it decreased the performance composite for most schools.

ABCs Recognitions and Awards

State recognitions are based on both the growth and performance components. In order to be awarded a state recognition, a school must both make at least the Expected Growth standard and have a certain percentage of their test scores fall into the Level III or Level IV range. Some awards also incorporate meeting the federal AYP standards. The following table provides the definition for each recognition category the state applies to schools under this accountability program, and the number of WCPSS schools that earned each recognition in 2005-06.

Table 14
ABCs Awards and Recognitions 2005-06

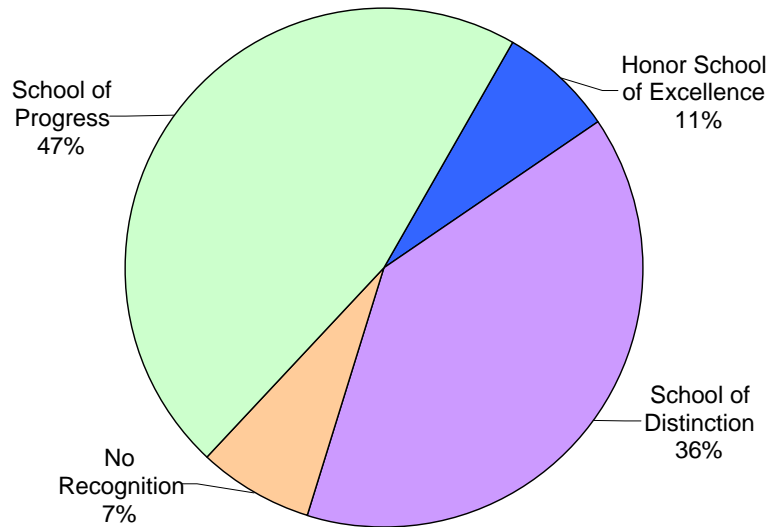
Recognition Category	# Middle Schools N=28
<i>Schools Making High Growth</i> attained their high growth standard. Certified staff members each receive up to \$1,500 and teacher assistants up to \$500.	12
<i>Schools Making Expected Growth</i> attained their expected growth standard (but not their high growth standard). Certified staff members each receive up to \$750 and teacher assistants up to \$375.	14
<i>Honor Schools of Excellence</i> are schools that made at least expected growth, had at least 90% of their test scores at or above Achievement Level III, and met federal Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standards. These schools receive banners, certificates, and incentive awards for expected or high growth.)	3
<i>Schools of Excellence</i> are schools that made at least expected growth and had at least 90% of their test scores at or above Achievement Level III but did not make AYP. These schools receive banners, certificates, and incentive awards for expected or high growth.	0
<i>Schools of Distinction</i> are schools that made at least expected growth and had at least 80% of their test scores at or above Achievement Level III (but were not Honor Schools of Excellence or Schools of Excellence). They receive plaques, certificates, and incentive awards for expected or high growth.	10
<i>Schools of Progress</i> are schools that made at least expected growth and had at least 60% of their test scores at or above Achievement Level III (but were not Honor Schools of Excellence or Schools of Excellence or Distinction). They receive certificates and incentive awards for expected or high growth.	13
<i>Schools Receiving No Recognition</i> did not make their expected growth standards but had at least 60% of their test scores at or above Achievement Level III.	2
<i>Priority Schools</i> are schools that had less than 60% of their test scores at or above Achievement Level III, irrespective of making their expected growth standards, and are not Low-Performing Schools.	0
<i>Low-Performing Schools</i> are those that failed to meet their expected growth standards and had significantly less than 50% of their test scores at or above Achievement Level III.	0

Note: Adapted from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/accountability/reporting/abc/2005-06/execsumm.html> . Schools may be counted in top section above the shaded row as well as bottom section. One school counted here as an honor school of excellence was a late addition to the list; approval of this status change has been submitted for approval by the State Board of Education.

With the changes in the performance component in mathematics, as well as the addition of writing for grade 7, fewer WCPSS schools met the standards for the highest recognitions in 2005-06 than in previous years. This was the trend statewide as well. Results are shown in the previous table and the following graph.

- In spring 2005, 13 of 28 WCPSS middle schools (46%) earned the highest Performance Recognitions of *School of Excellence* or *Honor School of Excellence*. In 2006, only three middle schools met these high standards (11%).
- In spring 2006, 36% of WCPSS middle schools (10 of 28) met the standard for *School of Distinction*, meaning schools met at least Expected Growth and had at least 80% of their test scores at or above grade level.
- Thus, 47% of WCPSS schools met the standards for ABCs *School of Excellence* or *Distinction* in spring 2006.
- In spring 2006, *School of Progress* was the most common designation (46%), meaning schools made at least expected growth and had between 60% and 79% of their test scores at or above grade level.

Figure 49
Percent of WCPSS Schools by ABCs Designation, 2005-06, Grades 6-8



N=28

AYP RESULTS

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is a series of targets that schools, school districts, and states must meet each year to fulfill the requirements of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (also referred to as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001). The ultimate goal is for 100% of students to score proficient in reading and mathematics by 2013-14.

In North Carolina, the primary measures used are End-of-Grade (EOG) tests for grades 3-8 and selected End-of-Course (EOC) tests for high schools. In 2005-06, high school measurements were based on Algebra I (for mathematics) and a combination of English I EOC tests and the 10th-grade Writing Test (for reading). The 10th-grade High School Comprehensive Test was also used for a small number of students who had not taken Algebra I and/or English I course.

Each public school may have up to ten student subgroups that must meet the prescribed targets in both reading and mathematics; these include all students plus students who are American Indian, Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Multiracial, White, economically disadvantaged (defined as FRL), students with limited English proficiency (LEP), and students with disabilities (SWD).

The achievement of these targets is measured by the percentage of students who take certain tests as well as the percentage of students who pass those tests. Proficiency targets are set to increase incrementally every three years until they all become 100% in 2013-14. In order for a school to be designated as achieving AYP, all subgroups of students must have met the following targets:

- 95% participation rate in the school's appropriate reading assessment
- 95% participation rate in the school's appropriate mathematics assessment
- Proficiency target in reading (76.7% in grades 3-8; 35.4% in grade 10 as of 2005-2006)
- Proficiency target in mathematics (65.8% in grades 3-8; 70.8% in grade 10 based on Algebra I as of 2005-06)

In addition to the four participation and performance targets for each subgroup, the school as a whole must also show progress on another "academic indicator." Schools that have 12th graders use the graduation rate, while all other schools use attendance rate.

Thus, a school could potentially have as many as 41 targets, including participation targets, proficiency targets, and the school-wide academic indicator. All targets must be met for a school to meet AYP. If a school misses even one of those targets, the school fails to make AYP. Whether a school makes AYP each year influences the performance categories into which the state classifies schools each year (see the ABCs section of this report for further details). Also, for schools that receive certain federal funding under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, failing to make AYP for multiple consecutive years can result in mandatory interventions such as supplementary tutoring, offering students the option to transfer to other schools, or even reconstituting the school with a new staff in more extreme cases. (See DPI's Web site for more information on NCLB and AYP in North Carolina Public schools at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/nclb/>.)

For AYP proficiency calculations (i.e., passing rate) at the school level, schools are responsible for the performance of any subgroup for which there are at least 40 students in grades 3-8 or grade 10 who have been in membership for a full academic year. (A full academic year is defined by the state as 140 of the 180 possible days in membership during the school year.) AYP subgroups with a minimum of 40 students enrolled on the first day of testing (regardless of how many of those students meet the membership requirement) must also meet the “95% tested” requirement for both reading and mathematics assessments.

If a particular subgroup meets the 95% participation rate but does not meet the percent proficiency for a subject area, the subgroup can still meet AYP through what is referred to in the law as the “Safe Harbor” provision. The Safe Harbor provision is invoked if the subgroup has reduced the percentage of students not proficient by 10% from the previous year for that subject area *and* if the subgroup shows progress on the other academic indicator (attendance or graduation rate). However, Safe Harbor is not available if the subgroup did not have 40 students in both the current and the previous year.

Changes in mathematics standards made AYP more difficult to reach this year. Adjustments to targets by DPI did not fully compensate for the change. WCPSS’ mathematics 3-8 EOG proficiency went from 92% in 2004-05 to 75% in 2005-06. This was a drop of 17 percentage points. The mathematics target was dropped 15 percentage points. AYP will also be more difficult to reach in future years, since the overall goal of 100% of students meeting targets in 2013-14 has not changed.

AYP Middle School Results

Slightly fewer middle schools met AYP in 2005-06 than the two previous years:

- Overall, 29% (8 out of 28) middle schools made AYP by meeting all of their targets. In 2004-05 and 2003-04, about 40% of schools met AYP, see Figure 50.
- Another 25% missed only one or two targets. However, 25% of the schools missed four or more targets, see Figure 51.

Figure 50
Schools Making AYP, Spring 2003–06, Grades 6–8

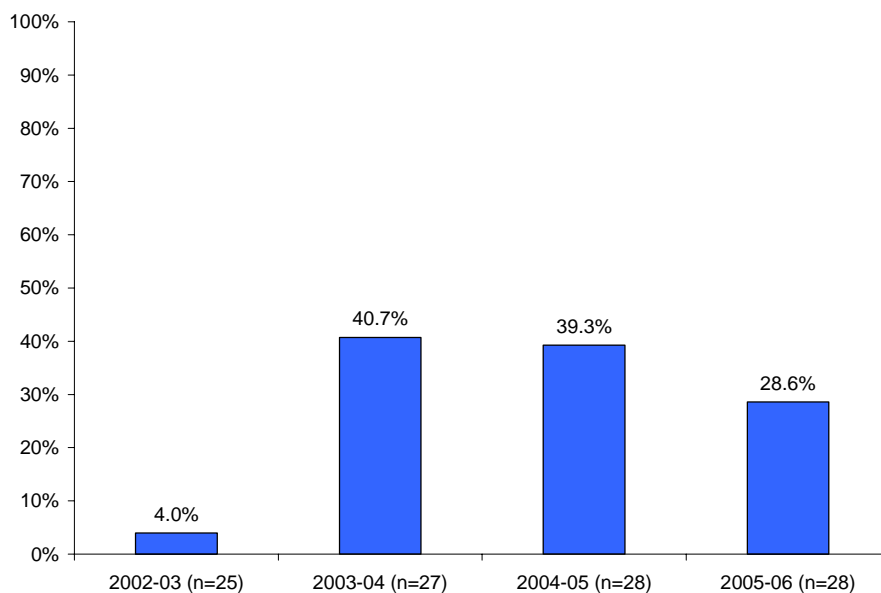
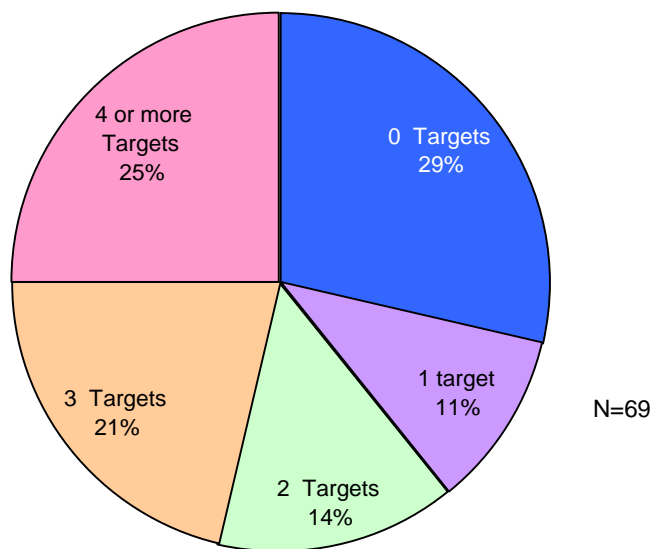


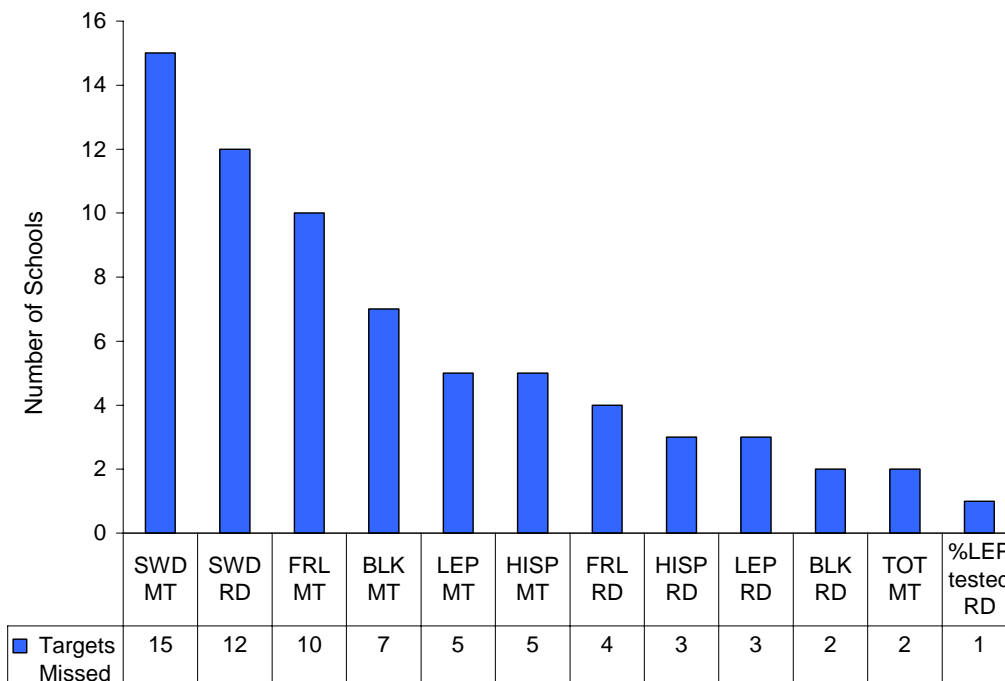
Figure 51
AYP Targets Missed, 2005-06, Grades 6–8



Overall, over 90% of the middle school targets were met (725 of 794). When disaggregated by subject and subgroup:

- Unlike previous years, mathematics targets were missed more often than reading targets (44 vs. 25).
- Of the 69 targets missed, the subgroups most likely to miss targets were SWD and FRL students, see following figure.

Figure 52
Number of Targets Missed by Subgroup, 2005-06, Grades 6-8



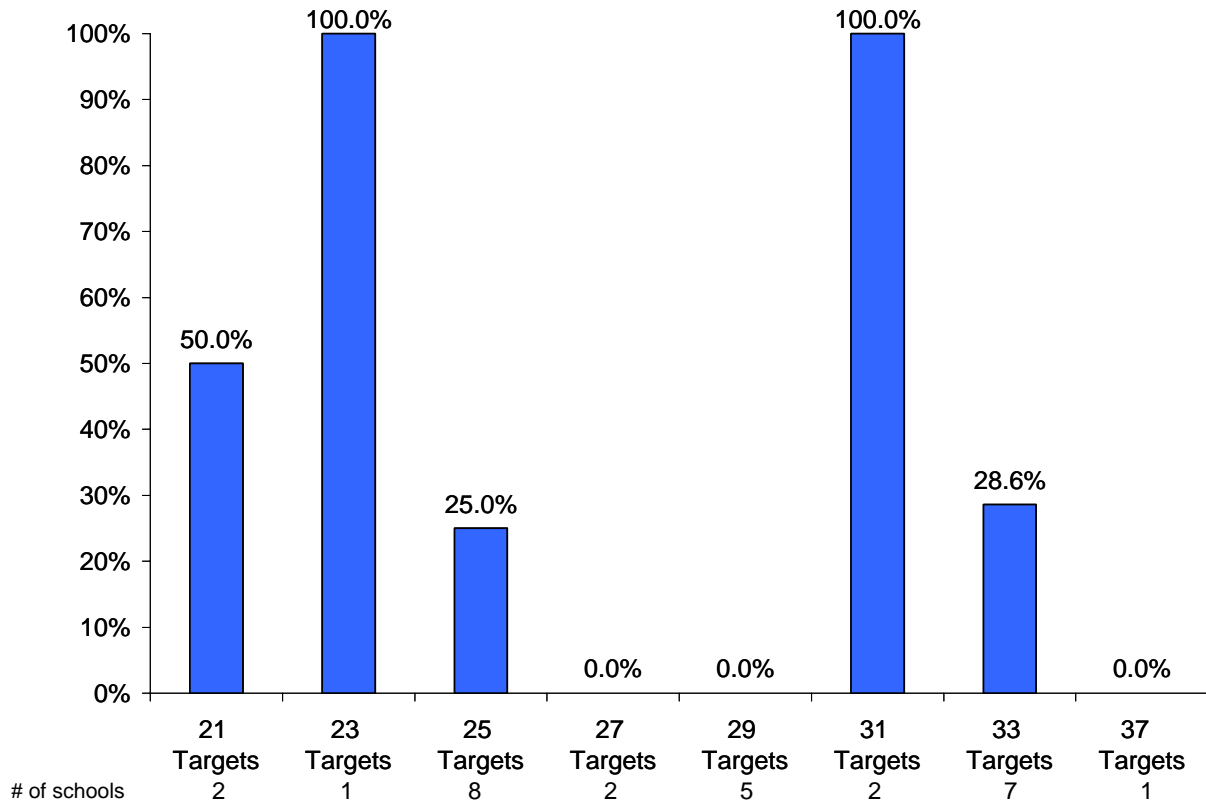
Note: MT=math; RD=reading 69 targets were missed overall.

In 2005-06, the number of targets per middle school ranged from 21 - 37, higher than the elementary range of 9 -29. The most common number of targets was 25 (for eight schools) and 33 (for seven schools). Results reveal that:

- Of the 20 schools that missed AYP, 15 missed reading and mathematics targets, and 5 missed only mathematics targets Also note that 5 schools missed only SWD targets.
- Unlike the elementary level, middle schools with more targets were about as likely to meet AYP as those with the fewest targets; 40% of those with 31 to 37 targets made AYP while 36% of schools with 21 to 25 targets made AYP. Recall that some elementary schools had fewer targets overall compared to middle school.

Across the elementary, middle, and high school levels, despite meeting over 90% of the targets, WCPSS entered systemwide improvement because reading targets were missed in all of three levels (3-5, 6-8, and 10) for two consecutive years (2004-05 and 2005-06). Students who transfer within the district and have less than 140 days in any one school will not be included in any school AYP report but will be in the district report. Thus the district is held accountable for more students than the total of students in individual schools. The minimum group size is 40 students or 1% of total enrollment. The reading targets were missed with SWD and LEP subgroups.

Figure 53
Schools Making AYP by Number of Targets, 2005-06, Grades 6-8



EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

The previous sections clearly show the successes of WCPSS as well as the continuing needs. This section provides a brief overview of recent E&R studies, which focus on practices to promote students' achievement. We begin with a definition of Professional Learning Communities, a promising national practice, which has links to effective schools research. We then summarize key findings from studies E&R has conducted that address ways to promote achievement. References are provided to full reports posted on E&R's web pages. The text boxes highlight key factors found in national effective schools research that are highlighted in each study.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY DEFINITION

PLCs are one way to build collaboration among school faculties, which can lead to improved school outcomes for students (Reichstetter, 2006).

WCPSS is searching for ways to hold higher expectations for students, improve instructional practices, and increase student learning and achievement outcomes. One of the WCPSS superintendent's four strategic directives focuses on teaching and learning, and professional learning communities (PLCs) are being stressed as a method to promote improvement. PLCs could support the following practices that are related to effective schools and successful improvement initiatives:

- indicators of a productive school culture
 - tendency toward student-centered instruction, high expectations for students, and focus on improvement
 - work behavior that centers on collaboration
 - professional productivity
 (Georgiades et al., as cited in DuFour & Eaker, 1998, pp. 70-71)

- characteristics of effective schools
 - safe and orderly environment of cooperation and respect that is purposeful and businesslike
 - climate of high expectations for success incorporating a variety of instructional strategies
 - communicative and widely dispersed instructional leadership
 - clear and focused mission, responsive to student needs
 - opportunity to learn and student time on relevant and valued tasks
 - student progress frequently monitored through a variety of evaluation measures
 - trusting and communicative home-school relations
 (Lezotte, as cited in DuFour & Eaker, 1998, pp. 71-72)

- High Expectations and Positive Attitudes
- Challenging Learning Experiences for All Students
- Supportive Leadership
- Collaboration
- Effective Use of Data
- Curriculum and Resources

WCPSS is emphasizing the development and implementation of PLCs. Schools are at various stages of implementation. The first step has been to gain a clear understanding of the characteristics, elements, and attributes of PLCs. A recent review of the literature by the

WCPSS Evaluation and Research Department focused on defining the term *professional learning community* (Reichstetter, 2006). Through principals' meetings and discussions, a system-wide definition was agreed upon by using the review as a guide:

“A professional learning community is made up of team members who regularly collaborate toward continued improvement in meeting learner needs through a shared curricular-focused vision. Facilitating this effort are:

- supportive leadership and structural conditions,
- collective challenging, questioning, and reflecting on team-designed lessons and instructional practices/experiences, and
- team decisions on essential learning outcomes and intervention/enrichment activities based on results of common formative student assessments.”

E&R will be monitoring school status in terms of implementation of PLCs.

PROJECT ACHIEVE

Project Achieve has been an effective practice in WCPSS; it has shown a positive impact on academic performance in participating schools, particularly schools with the lowest initial percentage of students at grade level on EOG (Baenen, Carpenter, & Dudley, 2006). The use of Project Achieve has had a positive impact on the percentage of middle school students able to meet grade level standards.

Project Achieve was begun in the 2001-02 school year to help schools reach the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) goal of having 95% of students at or above grade level as measured by the State of North Carolina End-of-Grade (EOG) tests. This instructional initiative is based on quality management principles and processes as applied in Brazosport, Texas. This model, which has been nationally recognized, led to substantial narrowing of achievement gaps by ethnicity. WCPSS tailored the approach to meet local needs and the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*. The eight basic steps of the model (based on

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | High Expectations and Positive Attitudes |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Challenging Learning Experiences for All Students |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Supportive Leadership |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Collaboration |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Effective Use of Data |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Curriculum and Resources |

Baldrige approaches and quality tools) represent a cyclical instructional process:

- 1) *Disaggregating test scores* to identify weak and strong areas of performance
- 2) *Developing a pacing calendar* for instruction
- 3) *Delivering instructional focus lessons* (designed to last 15-20 minutes)
- 4) *Assessing student mastery* of the focus lessons through mini-assessments
- 5) *Refocusing instruction* for students in areas of nonmastery
- 6) *Enriching instruction* for students in areas of mastery
- 7) *Maintaining and re-teaching throughout the year* to ensure continued mastery
- 8) *Continuously monitoring the process.*

The process entails restructuring of the school day for (a) uninterrupted blocks of instructional time in reading and mathematics and (b) a separate 30-to-45-minute period called “team time” for re-focusing or enrichment of targeted instructional objectives with students based on assessment results. Teachers also meet periodically to study results and plan. Project Achieve schools found the assessments were useful in informing their instruction, and most other middle schools in the WCPSS have adopted use of the assessments as well.

Original participants were six elementary schools and two middle schools. All but one school was invited to participate based on low past achievement patterns. Early results were quite promising, and the program grew from eight to 25 schools between 2001-02 and 2005-06. Middle schools seemed to have a more difficult time scheduling all components of Project Achieve than elementary schools, but they did work out ways to incorporate the model in their schools.

Effects of Project Achieve

Key desired outcomes for Project Achieve have been an increase in the percentage of students scoring at or above grade level on the EOG tests and high growth based on the ABCs accountability model. Outcomes for past years at the middle school level were not quite as positive as elementary, but clearly positive in terms of the percentage of students scoring at or above grade level. In 2005-06, two out of three Project Achieve middle schools increased the percentage of students at or above grade level, and two Project Achieve middle schools met Expected Growth.

In reading, all three continuing Project Achieve middle schools had a higher percentage of students at or above grade level than before entering the project. Because the cut points for mathematics changed for the 2005-06 school year, comparing mathematics results to past years is not informative. The following table contains reading performance composites for schools from the year prior to a school entering Project Achieve to spring 2006. Mathematics performance composites were included for spring 2006 only.

Table 15
Performance of Project Achieve Middle Schools
Percent of Schools Proficiency

School	Reading					
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
East Wake	75.9	78.8	82.5	82.4	82.7	87.8
North Garner		77.5	79.0	81.0	83.5	86.9
Carroll			81.4	83.6	89.3	85.6

Note: bold indicates the first year of participation in Project Achieve

Project Achieve did not appear to positively impact the middle schools status on ABCs for 2005-06. Two schools (67%) met the state ABCs Expected Growth standard, while no schools achieved High Growth. Among WCPSS middle schools, 14 of 28 schools (50%) achieved Expected Growth and 12 schools (43%) achieved High Growth. No Project Achieve middle schools met AYP, compared to eight of 28 WCPSS middle schools (29%).

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES FOR MULTI-RISK STUDENTS

Staff attitudes, instructional leadership, instructional practices, collaboration, training, and use of resources can make a difference to the learning progress of students with multiple needs.

Analysis of WCPSS EOG performance results indicates that those students who have the most difficult reaching accountability standard in WCPSS schools were those with more than one of the following characteristics: were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRL), have disabilities (SWD), and/or have limited English proficiency (LEP).

Our study compared characteristics and practices of schools that were having greater and lesser success in promoting students with multiple academic risk factors (Baenen et al., 2006). We first analyzed student demographics, teacher characteristics, resource allocations, the overall percentage of students performing at grade level, and school climate. The populations served by the schools that were more successful with multiple-risk students actually had more challenging populations, but also had more resources to address their needs.

We also collected data in the schools through observations (of the whole school and individual teachers), staff interviews, and staff checklists. An analysis of middle school trends suggest that higher-growth schools, compared to lower-growth schools:

- focus more on how to address student needs and less on barriers to addressing needs,
- have more informal administrator visits in classrooms,

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	High Expectations and Positive Attitudes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Challenging Learning Experiences for All Students
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Supportive Leadership
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Collaboration
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Effective Use of Data
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Curriculum and Resources

- have more training in working with at-risk groups, and more frequently use resources such as assessment data, extra adults in classrooms, technology, and instructional pacing guides.

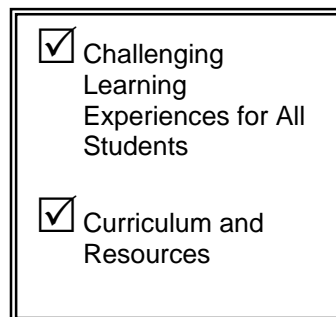
Surveyed schools mentioned the use of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NC SCoS) to guide their work, and most mentioned modifying the curriculum to meet student needs. Stronger schools used the C&I Web site resources more often and expressed more opinions that were positive about their ability to adapt the curriculum to their students.

Both the higher- and lower- growth middle schools mentioned school-based barriers to learning such as the need for extra adults, the fast pace of the curriculum, class size, and insufficient technology resources. The primary difference between the two sets of schools was that higher-growth school staff focused more on how they were addressing these challenges, while lower-growth schools tended to use them as reasons for their limited success with these students. Lower-growth schools also mentioned scheduling and teacher quality issues more often than lower-growth schools. Finally, schoolwide observations suggest higher-growth schools let students take the lead on their instruction more often than the lower-growth schools (working individually or in groups). These initial results merit further study and discussion.

ACADEMICALLY GIFTED (AG) BASICS PROGRAM

WCPSS AG students show positive achievement regardless of the school type they attended.

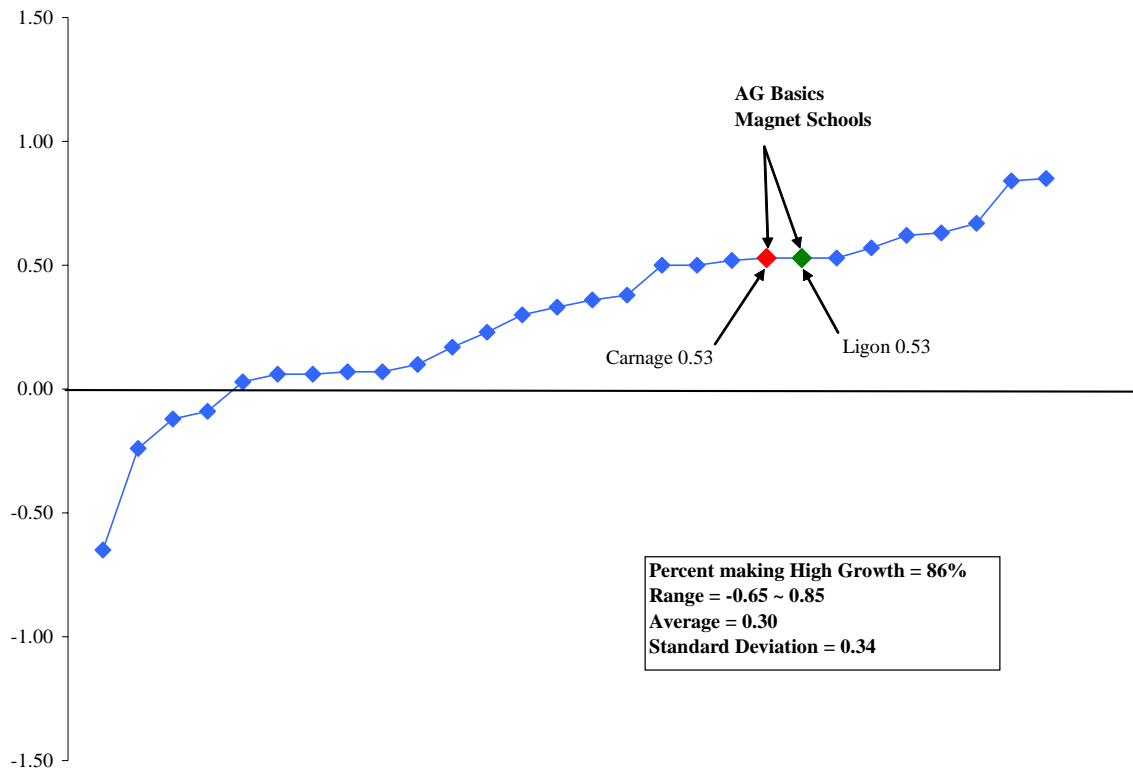
The AG Basics Program is offered at grades 6, 7, and 8 in conjunction with the Gifted and Talented (GT) Program at Carnage and Ligon middle schools. Students participating in the AG Basics Program must qualify for differentiated services in Gifted Education, i.e., they must have been identified as Academically Gifted.



Similar achievement patterns are seen when comparing the high growth composites for AG students who attend AG Basics schools versus those who attend other schools (Rhea and Regan, 2006).

- Overall, the high growth composites of AG students attending AG Basics schools versus those in other WCPSS schools do not appear to be very different.
- Carnage and Ligon had the same high growth composite, which was above the average for WCPSS middle schools, but still within one standard deviation of the mean.
- AG students achieved high growth on Reading and Mathematics EOG exams at 24 of the 28 middle schools (86%).

Figure 54
High Growth Composites for AG Students
at WCPSS Middle Schools, 2004-05



Note: Schools that have a high growth composite of zero (0.00) or greater met high growth

The AG Basics Program has been effective in promoting academic achievement among AG students at Carnage and Ligon. However, WCPSS students’ performance in reading and mathematics is strong regardless of the school they attend. It is important to keep in mind that EOG scores represent only one measure of academic achievement, and thus should not be relied on exclusively to draw conclusions about the quality of instruction in the AG Basics Program.

DISCUSSION

This report departs from the past traditions of the Evaluation and Research Department of WCPSS. In the past, we have primarily produced reports that presented and analyzed results from single tests. That is a given report would present and analyze data for End of Grade tests, while another report would be devoted to Advanced Placement tests. This year, however, we have shifted the unit of analysis from specific tests to levels of schooling. That is, we bring together a variety of measures of performance for each of the three levels of school: elementary, middle, and high. We believe that by presenting a comprehensive look at a variety of outcomes, the reader of this report will be better able to create a synthesis of information about the schooling outcomes. WCPSS continues to show strong performance on most student outcome measures, despite the rapid population growth and increasingly diverse population served in WCPSS. However, continuing and new challenges must be addressed.

This new approach to analysis of school outcomes is being undertaken in an environment that has experienced major changes in measurement of school performance. Of particular importance are changes originating at the state level. It is widely known, for example, that the State Board of Education has taken a policy position that is intended to bring about greater rigor in both the curricula offered to North Carolina students and greater rigor in the tests that measure mastery of those curricula. The initial effects of this policy shift may be seen in the outcomes for mathematics in grades 3 through 8.

During 2004, the mathematics Standard Course of Study was overhauled to increase the rigor of learning objectives at all grades. This new curriculum required the development of End of Grade tests, since the tests are linked directly to curriculum objectives. The new tests were used for the first time in 2005-06. Simultaneously, the State Board of Education raised the “cut scores” for achievement levels. That is, a higher score was required to meet the “at grade level” standard. Thus, instead of about 85% of students passing each of the grade level mathematics EOG tests, the new standard led to a percent passing of about 65%. In Wake County Public Schools, about 75% of students at all grade levels passed the mathematics EOG tests, as opposed to the 90% that had been passing in the years between 2003 to 2005. In terms of the percentage of students scoring at proficient levels, the new standards increased the overall percentage of our students who scored below grade level to 26%, while creating larger achievement gaps by ethnicity, income, special education status, and English proficiency than we have seen in many years.

One consequence of the setting of new cut scores for mathematics in 2005-06 was that many schools failed to meet the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) target required by No Child Left Behind. When the State Board set the new cut scores, they knew that only about 65% of students would achieve passing scores. Thus, many schools, by definition, would fail to achieve the AYP target of 81% passing. To ameliorate this situation, the State Board requested authorization to revise its AYP goal for 2005-06 to 65.8%. While this adjustment offered short-term relief for schools, it did nothing to help in the long-term. The federal goal of 100% of students at grade-level in 2014 remains unchanged. Schools will have to accelerate the passing rates in the years between now and 2014 in order to achieve the federal goal.

This raising of the standard for passing End of Grade and End of Course tests may be expected to continue into the future. In 2006-2007, new standards have been instituted for End of Course

tests in English I and all high school mathematics tests. Similarly, in 2007-08, a new series of reading EOG tests will be utilized. It can be anticipated that the relatively high levels of student test scores that have become traditional in Wake County Public Schools will decline, at least temporarily.

These new cut scores for End of Course tests are important for another reason. The State Board of Education adopted rules in 2005 that require all students who entered high school during the 2005-2006 school year to pass five End of Course tests—English I, Algebra I, biology, U.S. history and civics and economics—as a condition of graduation. In the past, students were required to pass these *courses* in order to graduate and teachers were required to count the EOC test score as 25% of the final course grade. Now, however, students will be required to pass the test *and* the course. Examination of the test scores for these courses in 2005-2006 indicate that this new requirement will result in a number of students having to re-take the EOC test and, perhaps, having to re-take the course. Likely consequences of this new rule by the State Board will include a likely increase (if only temporarily) of the drop-out rate, as students become discouraged by their apparent inability to pass the tests and an increase in the cost of educating at least some students, since students who do not pass the tests may be required to take the course again.

Two measures have already been taken to help students deal with these new challenges. First, WCPSS has taken advantage of a rule created by DPI that has not been previously used in WCPSS. Because all test scores are estimates of a student's competence, and the amount of error can be estimated, it is standard practice in high stakes tests like these to add points equal to the standard error of measurement. Thus, students who score at the top of the Level II score range (not at grade level) have two points added to their score, sometimes placing the score in the acceptable range. Second, schools have set up review/remediation programs to help students who have passed the associated course to prepare for a re-test opportunity.

While both of these innovations will reduce the impact of these higher standards to some extent, it is unlikely that they will, by themselves, overcome the effect. Therefore, schools must find additional means to help students prepare for these EOC courses. It may also be seen from examination of the disaggregated test scores that students with various academic risk factors are more likely to be impacted negatively by these policy changes than are students who do not present these same risks. In addition, students of color are more likely to score relatively low on these EOC tests and thus are more likely to fail to achieve the needed higher score, thus increasing the likelihood that drop-outs among these sub-groups will increase.

Another important change instituted by the State Board of Education is a revision of the methods for calculating expected and high growth as part of the ABCs of Education, the state accountability program. In the past, the goal of the ABCs was to ensure that every student achieved one year of academic growth for one year of school participation. Beginning in 2005-06, however, this goal was redefined. Now, every student will be expected to make progress relative to his/her position in comparison with students in the norming distribution, i.e., the year that the test is first administered. In other words, instead of an absolute standard of growth (one year of growth for one year of attendance) the standard is now relative, where the student's position is expected to, minimally, remain the same relative to other students. This represents a major departure from a criterion-based to a norm-based system.

The formula for calculating high growth has also been changed. In the past, high growth was calculated as about 10% more than expected growth. Now, in order to achieve high growth, 60% of students in a school must meet or exceed their predicted growth score. It can be expected that fewer schools will attain high growth in the future.

These changes in methods of calculating and reporting student achievement may divert attention from another phenomenon that has been witnessed in WCPSS over the past few years. While it has been noted in many places that the number of students served by WCPSS schools has been increasing dramatically over the past several years, it has been less commonly observed that these increases have not been uniform across all student subgroups. That is, in 2005-06, the percentage of students in the population who were White has declined since 2000-2001. Simultaneously, the percentages of students who are Hispanic/Latino, multi-racial, and Black/African American has increased. Moreover, the percentages of students in categories often identified with academic risk factors—students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals and students with limited English—have increased. While the percentage of students who are identified with disabilities has remained more or less constant, the sheer number of such students has increased the pressures confronted by schools to maximize the success of every student.

One of the implications of this shift in demographics is that schools will have to work harder and smarter to ensure that all students have the opportunity and the support that they will need to meet at or above grade level standards. Schools have historically been able to meet these challenges. Examination of percentages of students achieving grade level or above in reading, for example, show that, over time, the achievement gap associated with different racial/ethnic subgroups has been shrinking in WCPSS. For example, between 1999-2000 and 2005-06, the difference between the percent of Black/African American students in grades 3-8 who were proficient in reading and the percent of White students in the same grades who were proficient has shrunk by 15 percentage points. Importantly, larger percentages of both groups were proficient in reading in 2005-06 than in 1999-2000. Thus, all ethnic/racial groups were successful at increasing the percentage on/above grade level during this period.

Similarly, students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals or who are students with disabilities, or who are students of limited English proficiency taken as separate groups tend to perform better on all measures of achievement than do students who have more than one of these characteristics. It is highly likely that the number of students with these combination of risk factors is increasing in WCPSS and so the challenges confronting schools is increasing. Finally, it should be noted that girls, as a group, are more likely to be successful on most measures of achievement than are boys in elementary and middle schools. However, these trend reverses in high schools, with boys, as a group, outscoring girls, as a group, on many high school measures of achievement. Importantly, this reversal is completed by the time that students take SAT tests, with the result that boys outscore girls on average on both the verbal and mathematics sections of the SAT. This fact, of course, has important implications for college attendance and financial aid, since many university admissions committees and scholarship donors take SAT scores into account when making their decisions.

Another challenge illuminated by this analysis of student achievement lies in the area of writing teaching and learning. By our own measures and by those used by the state, over 40% of our

students fail to demonstrate proficient levels of writing when content and conventions are considered. While the state writing test measures students' responses to just one prompt on one day with one set of standards, results have been consistent enough to suggest that we must search for ways to help more students accomplish proficiency in their writing.

Both the changes in the math standards and our writing results had a direct impact on our accountability results this year for our state ABCs results. New growth formulas resulted in more elementary schools meeting expected growth rather than high growth in 2005-06. Fewer schools were able to reach the higher recognition levels based on ABCs, because performance composites (based on the percentage of scores at grade level) were lower in mathematics and writing scores were also included (after a two year absence). This pattern is likely to happen each time a new test is given and normed, because it is the reference year against which future scores will be compared.

The Superintendent of the Wake County Public Schools has articulated a vision calling for all students to graduate on time prepared for the future. In support of this vision, the first strategic directive in the Superintendent's goals stresses teaching and learning. A number of important program responses to this call for improved teaching and learning have been reinforced or are being launched. Many schools in the district are supporting professional learning communities, a structure that can provide ways for teachers to collaborate more fully around the needs of their students. Project Achieve has been a successful model in increasing grade level proficiency, and formative assessments and other methods used as part of that program are being shared with schools that did not make AYP. Data teams are being encouraged in all schools to utilize data more effectively to inform instruction. Evaluation and Research staff carried out a study to identify effective practices for teaching multi-risk students, and further research is being carried out on this topic in spring 2007.

But, in a larger sense, teaching and learning are impacted by all staff of WCPSS, by all parents, and by the entire community. While this report has focused on the outcome measures of student achievement, and this discussion has attempted to underscore some of the conditions that confront our schools, teachers, and students, the unacknowledged assistance of all those whose work supports student learning—whether support staff in schools or the district, parents, or community members—will be required to ensure that our students continue to learn at ever higher levels.

WCPSS MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT OUTCOMES 2005-06

Editors

Nancy Baenen
David Holdzkom

Contributing Staff

Anne-Sylvie Boykin
Donna Eaton
Kevin Gilleland
Glenda Haynie
Amy Huebeler
Sarah Ives
Richard Innis
Brad McMillen
Juliana Muli
Colleen Paepflow
Edie Pierce
Rosemary Reichstetter
Anisa Rhea
Carol Speas
Phyllis Spencer
Wendy Stevens
Megan Townsend
Wanda Whisnant
Kimberly Yaman

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Department of Evaluation & Research
WAKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM
Raleigh, North Carolina
www.wcpss.net/evaluation-research
(919) 850-1863