

**Yale University Child Study Center
School Development Program
Academic Achievement**

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Prepared for

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Founder and Chair**

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New York District 13

- Community School District 13 located in Brooklyn, NY, began systemic implementation of the Comer Process in September 1995.
- It is predominantly a poor, minority district with more than 79% of its student population being Black and more than 83% of its student population eligible for free lunch. Comparable numbers for New York City are 34% and 74%.
- District 13 has improved in both mathematics and English Language Arts from 1999 to 2001. During that time, its growth in achievement exceeded the growth for New York City as a whole in both subject areas.
- The percent of students attaining proficiency on the state tests in mathematics, grades 3-8, increased for District 13 by 1.6%, more than 5 times the growth (0.3%) for New York City.
- In English Language Arts, grades 3-5, 7 and 8, the percent of students attaining proficiency on the state tests increased by 5.6% for District 13 and by 4.2% for New York City.

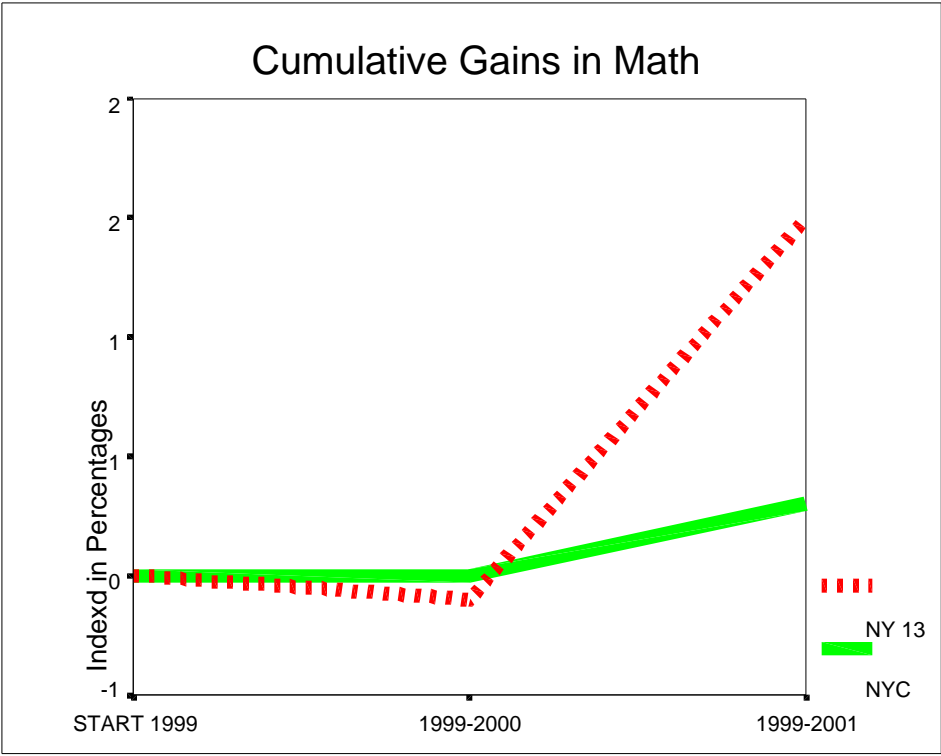


Figure 1: Cumulative change in percent of students attaining proficiency in NY math state tests, grades 3-8

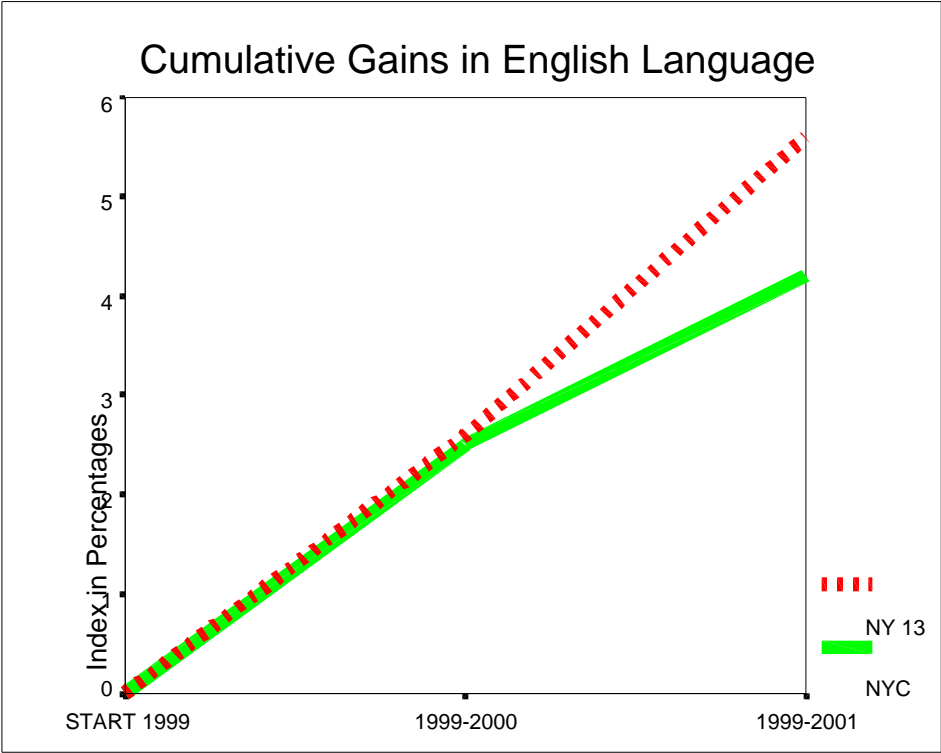


Figure 2: Cumulative change in percent of students attaining proficiency in NY English Language Arts state tests, grades 3-5, 7 and 8

New Haven

- New Haven, the district in which the Comer Process was first developed, began a phased-in renewal of the Process in September 1995.
- New Haven is predominantly a poor, minority (88.4%) district. Its student population is about 57% Black and 29% Hispanic. About 67% of its student population is eligible for free lunch. Only 24% of Connecticut's student population are eligible for free or reduced lunch.
- New Haven School District has improved in grade 4 mathematics, reading and writing from 1995, the year that the renewal of the Comer Process began, to 1999, the last year during which this test was administered. The State of Connecticut began administration of a different test in 2000.

Increased Academic Achievement: Grade 4

- Students scoring at the highest level increased by 8% for math, by 8% for reading and by 14% for writing.

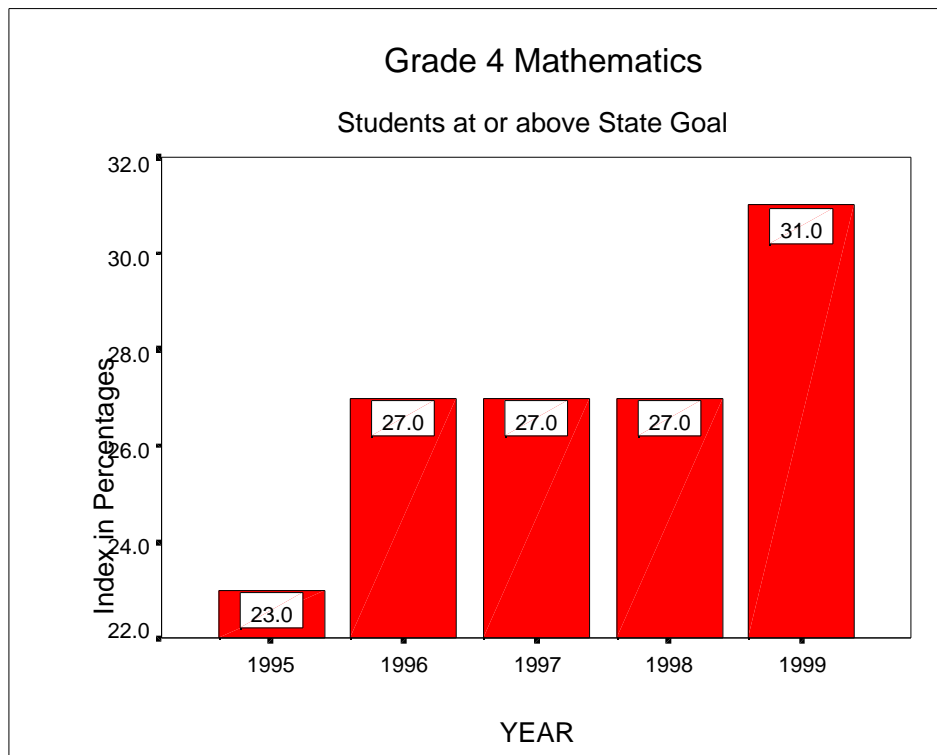


Figure 3: Percent of students at or above the state goal¹ on grade 4 mathematics, New Haven Public Schools

¹ "Students scoring at or above the state goal are capable of successfully performing appropriate tasks with minimal teacher assistance." Strategic School Profile 2000-2001, New Haven School District, page 3. Connecticut State Department of Education.

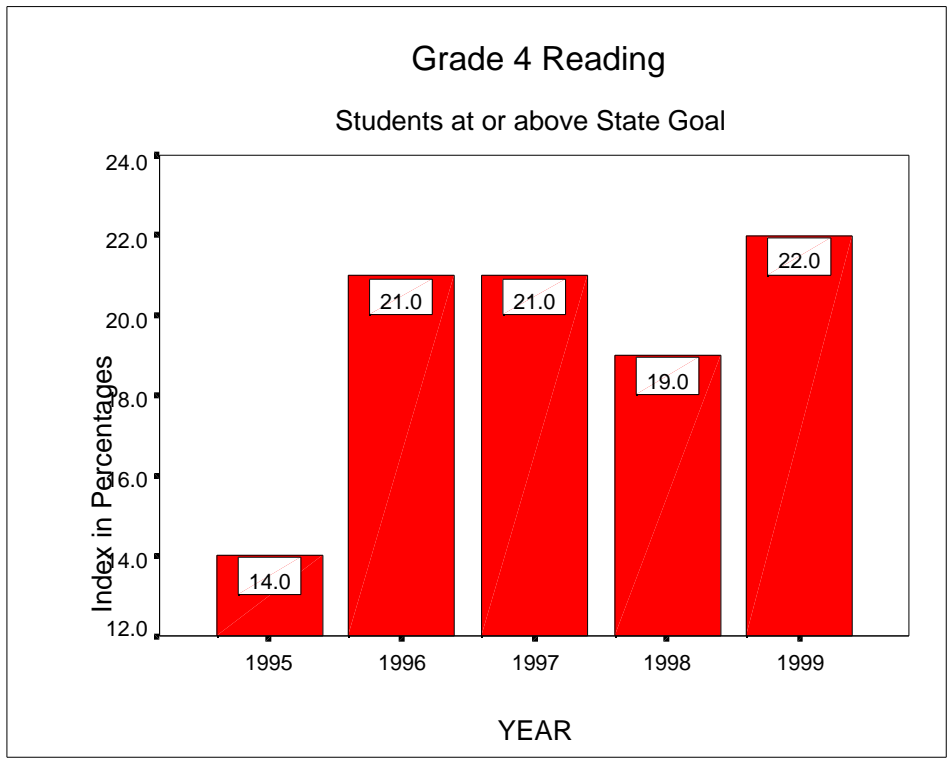


Figure 4: Percent of students at or above the state goal on grade 4 reading, New Haven Public Schools

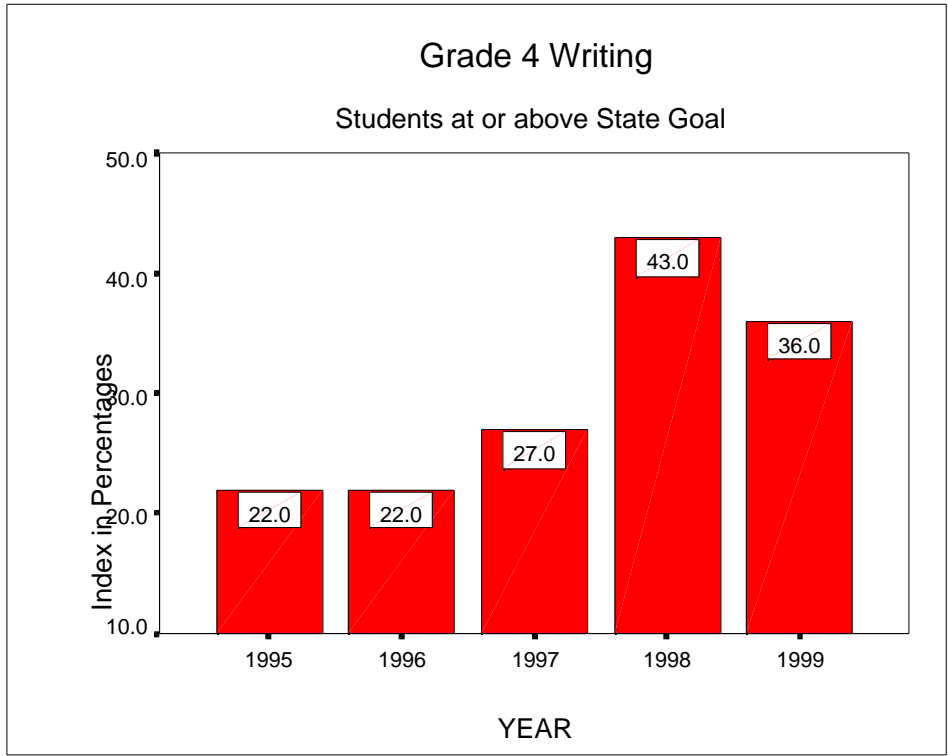


Figure 5: Percent of students at or above the state goal on grade 4 writing, New Haven Public Schools

Reduction in Students Needing Intervention: Grade 4

- From 1995, the year that the renewal of the Comer Process began, to 1999, the last year during which this test was administered, the New Haven School District dramatically reduced the number of students scoring at Level 1, the intervention level, in grade 4 mathematics, reading and writing.
- Students needing intervention decreased by 16% for math and reading and by 30% for writing.

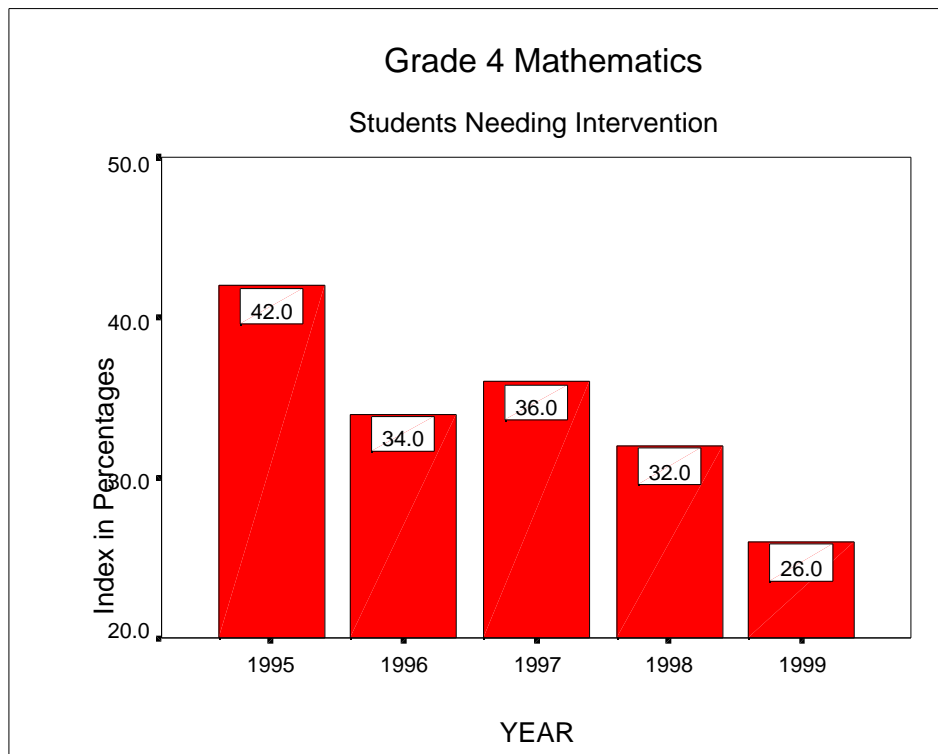


Figure 6: Percent of students at intervention level on grade 4 math, New Haven Public Schools

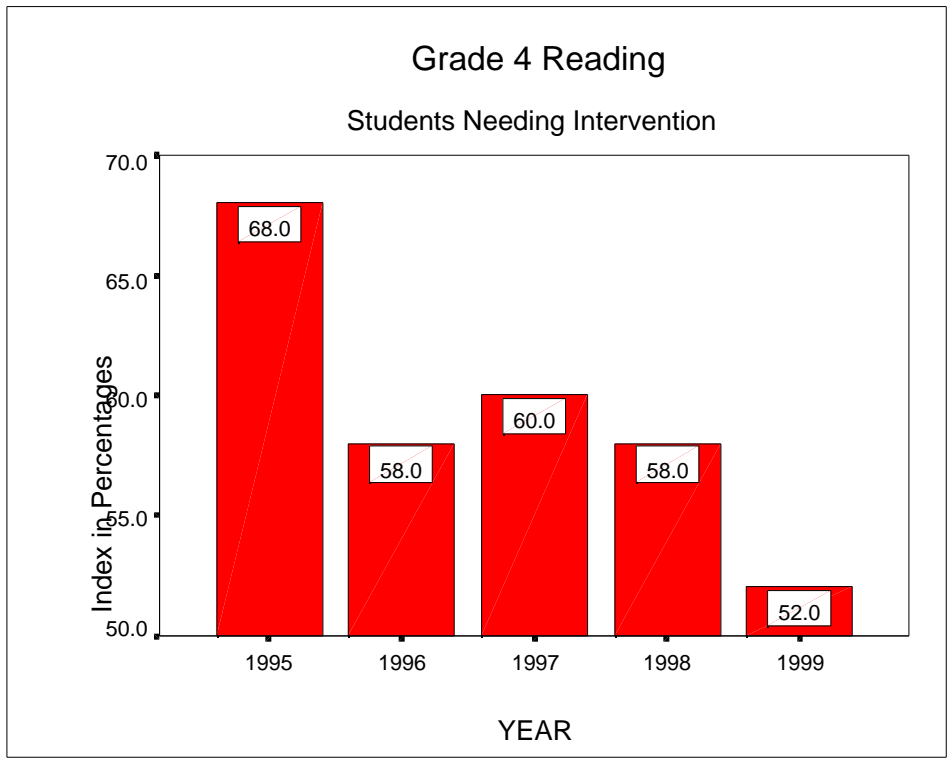


Figure 7: Percent of students at intervention level on grade 4 reading, New Haven Public Schools

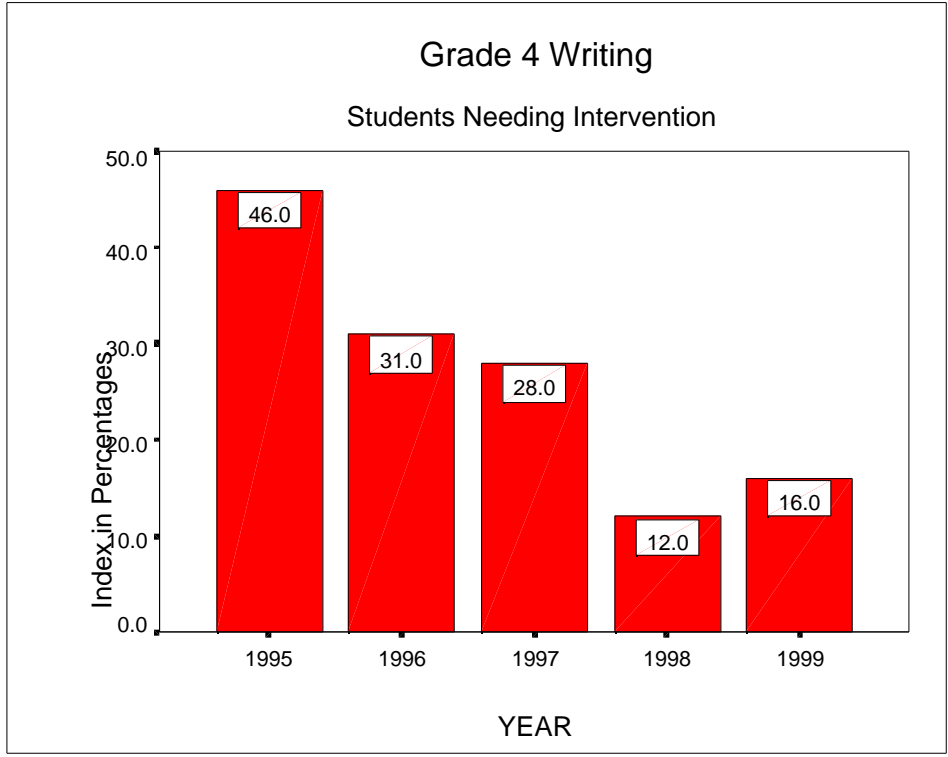


Figure 8: Percent of students at intervention level on grade 4 writing, New Haven Public Schools

Increased Academic Achievement: Grade 6

- New Haven School District has improved in grade 6 mathematics, reading and writing from 1995, the year that the renewal of the Comer Process began, to 1999, the last year during which this test was administered. The State of Connecticut began administration of a different test in 2000.
- Students scoring at the highest level increased by 7% for math, by 8% for reading and by 28% for writing.

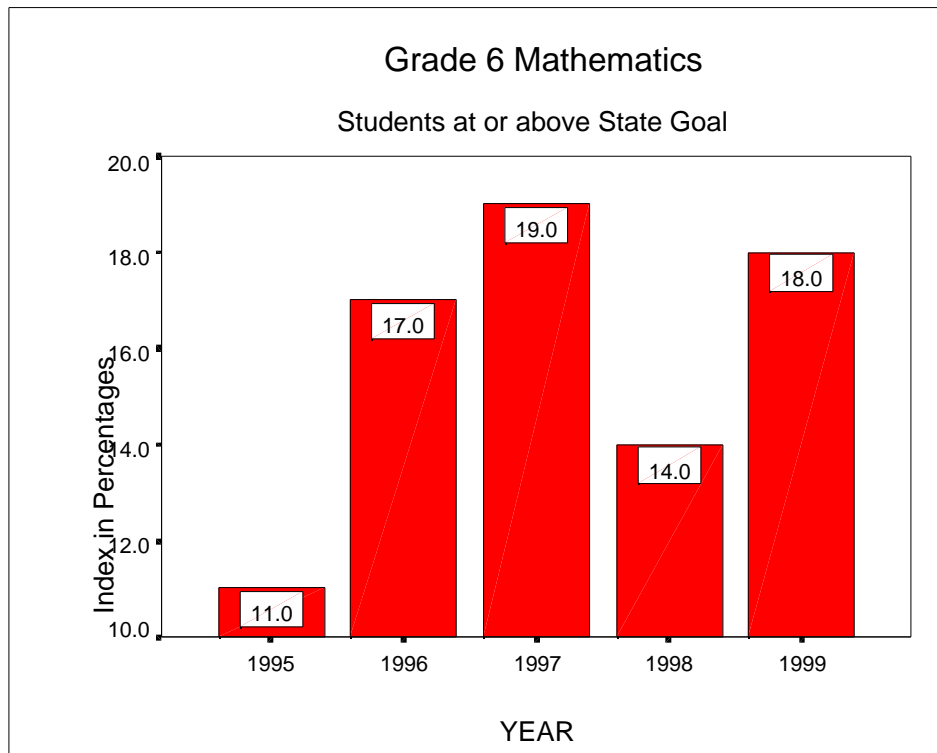


Figure 9: Percent of students at or above the state goal on grade 6 mathematics, New Haven Public Schools

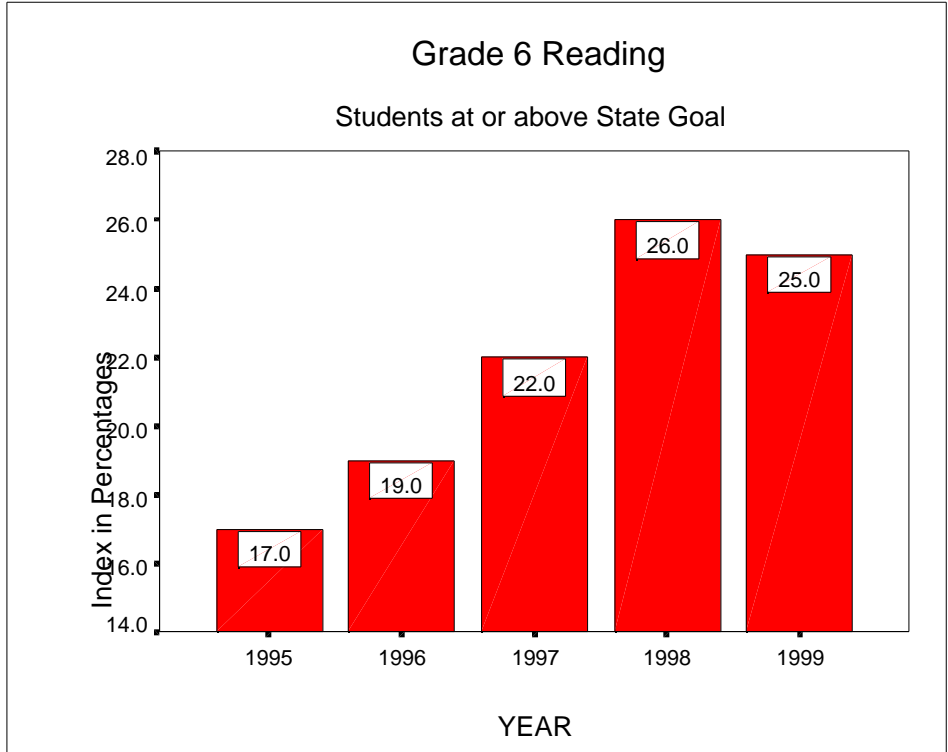


Figure 10: Percent of students at or above the state goal on grade 6 reading, New Haven Public Schools

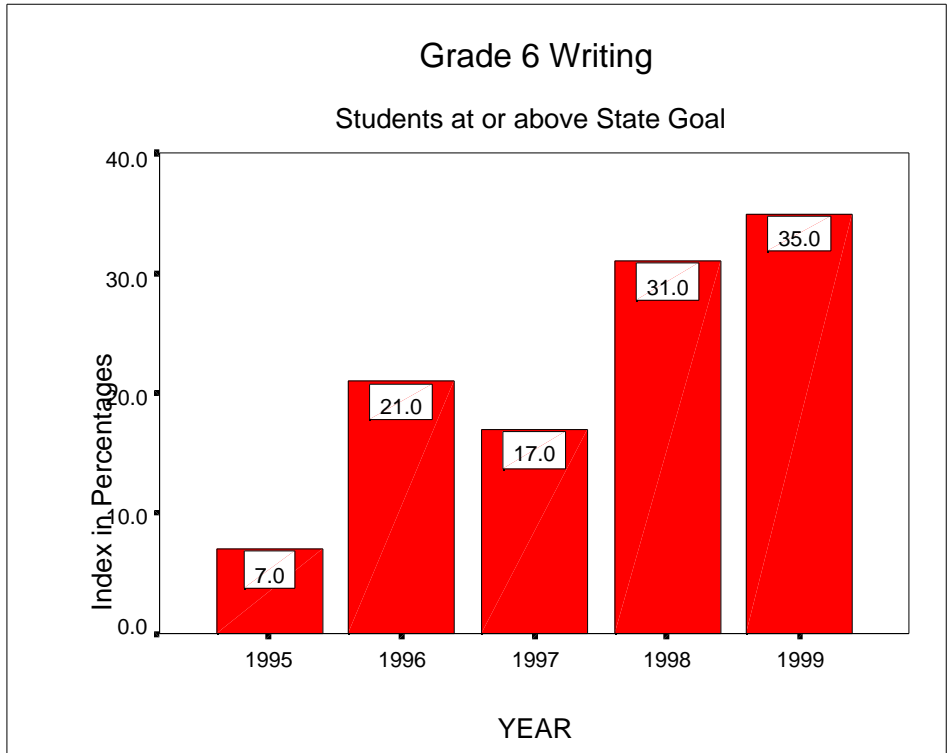


Figure 11: Percent of students at or above the state goal on grade 6 writing, New Haven Public Schools

Reduction in Students Needing Intervention: Grade 6

- From 1995, the year that the renewal of the Comer Process began, to 1999, the last year during which this test was administered, the New Haven School District reduced the number of students scoring at Level 1, the intervention level, in grade 6 mathematics, reading and writing.
- Students needing intervention decreased by 6% for math, by 15% for reading and by 43% for writing.

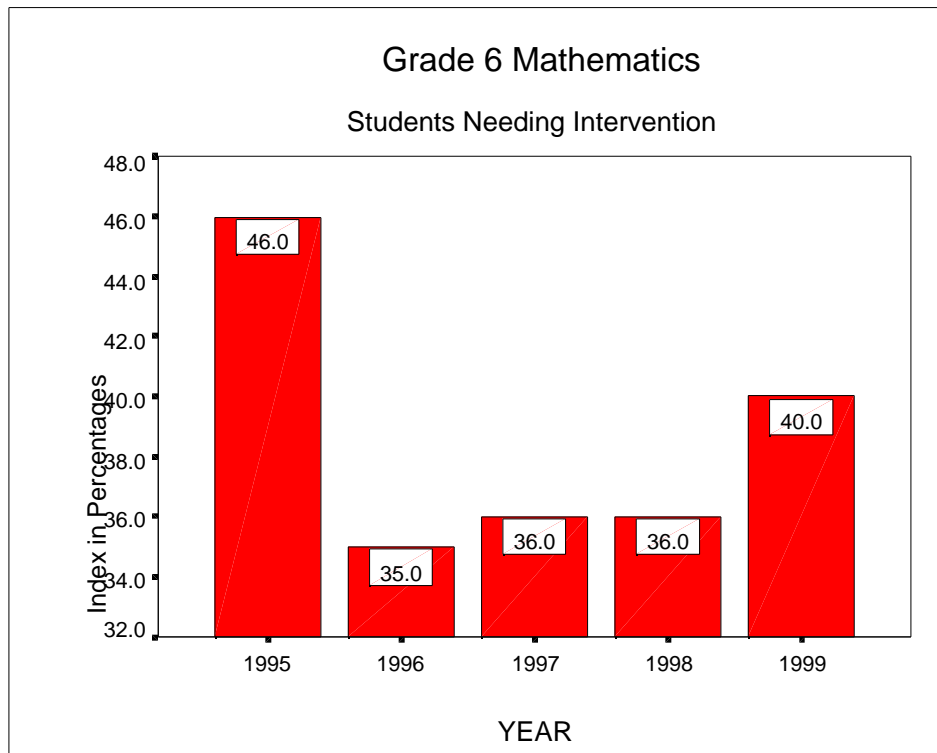


Figure 12: Percent of students at intervention level on grade 6 math, New Haven Public Schools

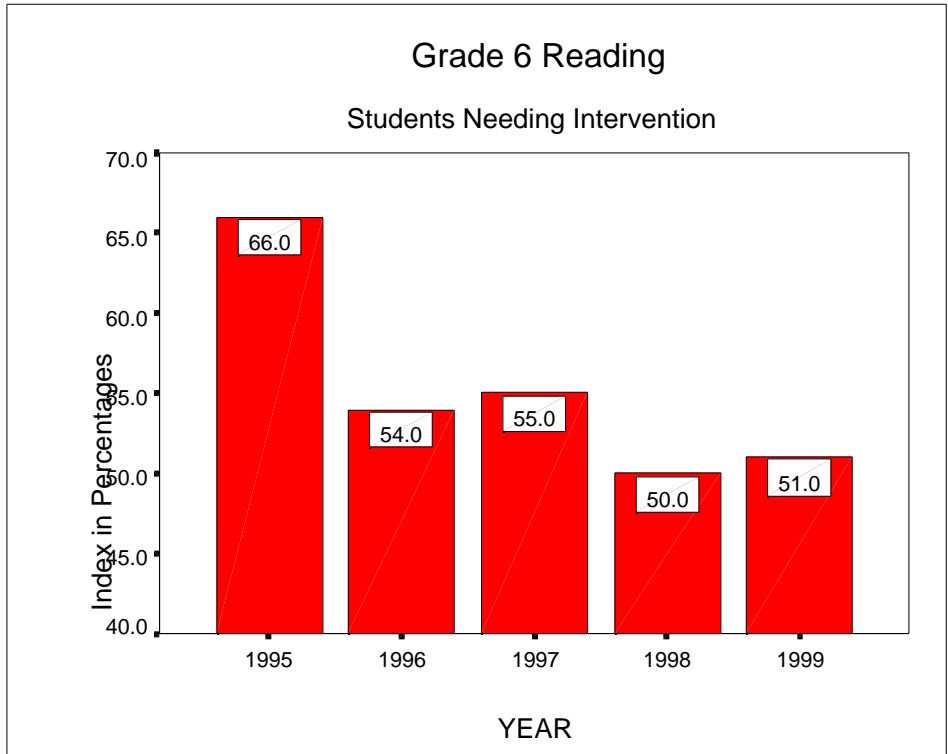


Figure 13: Percent of students at intervention level on grade 6 reading, New Haven Public Schools

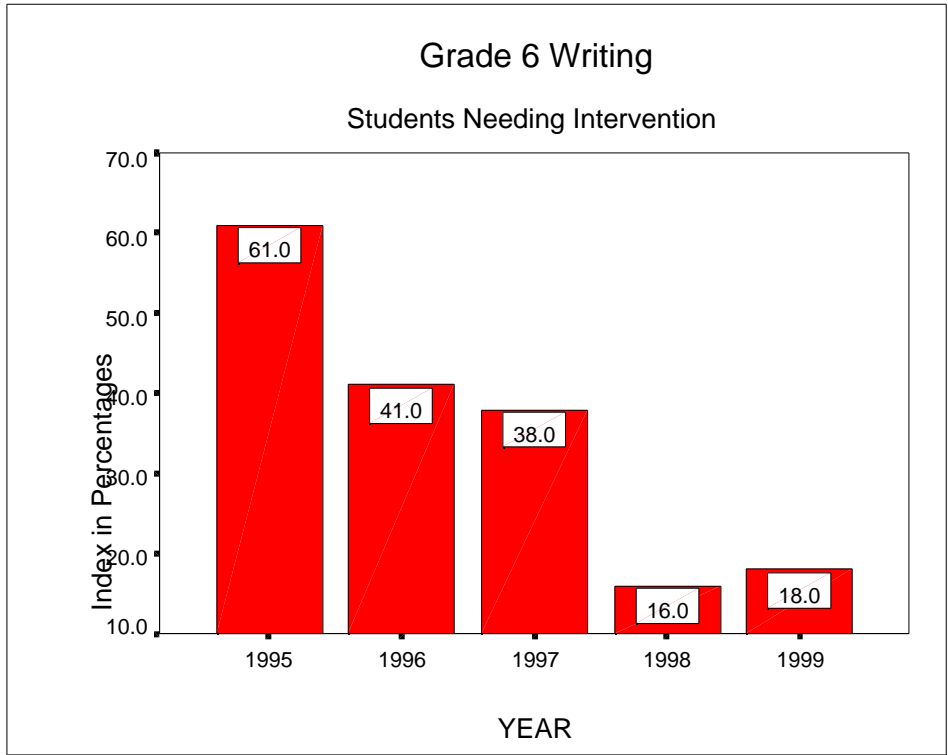


Figure 14: Percent of students at intervention level on grade 6 writing, New Haven Public Schools

Charlotte/Mecklenburg

- Although four schools began implementation of the Comer Process in 1991, implementation on a large scale did not begin until 1996. There are currently 47 Comer schools in Charlotte/Mecklenburg: 36 elementary, 9 middle and 2 high schools.
- Charlotte/Mecklenburg, with more than 102,000 students in 134 schools, is a multi-ethnic district with a student population that is about 44% Black and Hispanic, and 36% eligible for free or reduced lunch.
- On average, the Comer schools are 56% Black and Hispanic, with 40% of these schools having combined Black and Hispanic student populations ranging from 60% to 91%. On average, 50% of students in the Comer schools are eligible for free or reduced lunch. In 35% of these Comer schools, student eligibility for free or reduced lunch ranged from 60% to 84%.
- The Charlotte/Mecklenburg Comer schools have made considerable gains in academic achievement over the past four years, especially at the elementary and middle school level.
- The Comer high schools show achievement gains while the non-Comer high schools show a decrease in achievement.

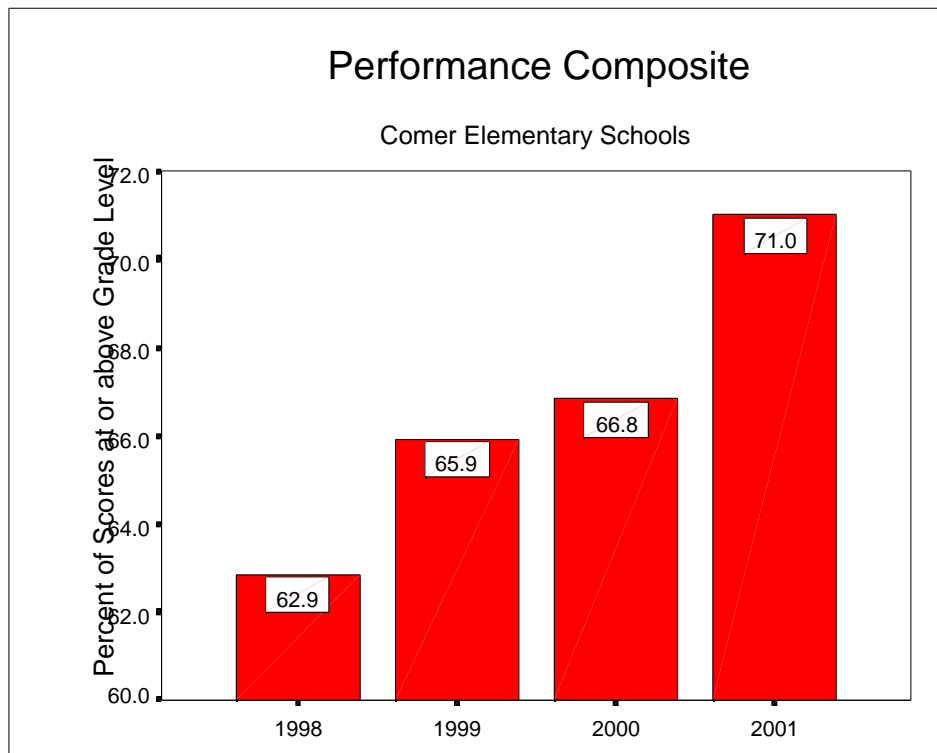


Figure 15: Performance composite scores for Comer elementary schools in Charlotte/Mecklenburg.

The performance composite is the total number of scores at or above achievement Level III in each subject area included in the End of Grade and End of Course tests set by the State of North Carolina. Students performing at Level III “consistently demonstrate mastery of the course subject matter and skills and are well prepared for a more advanced level in the content area.”

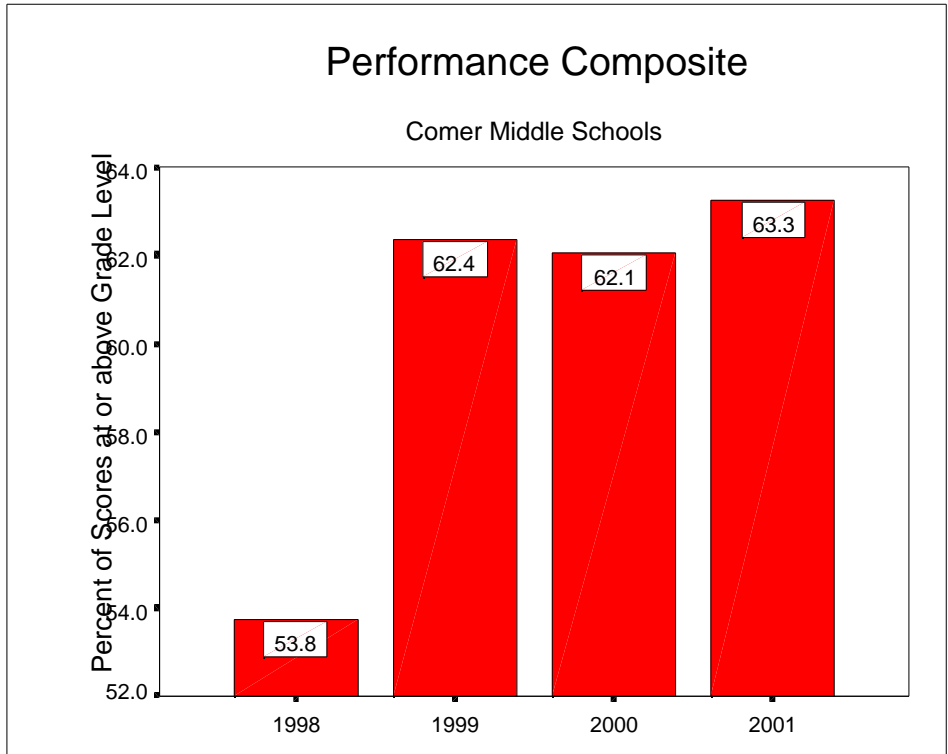


Figure 16: Performance composite scores for Comer middle schools in Charlotte/Mecklenburg.

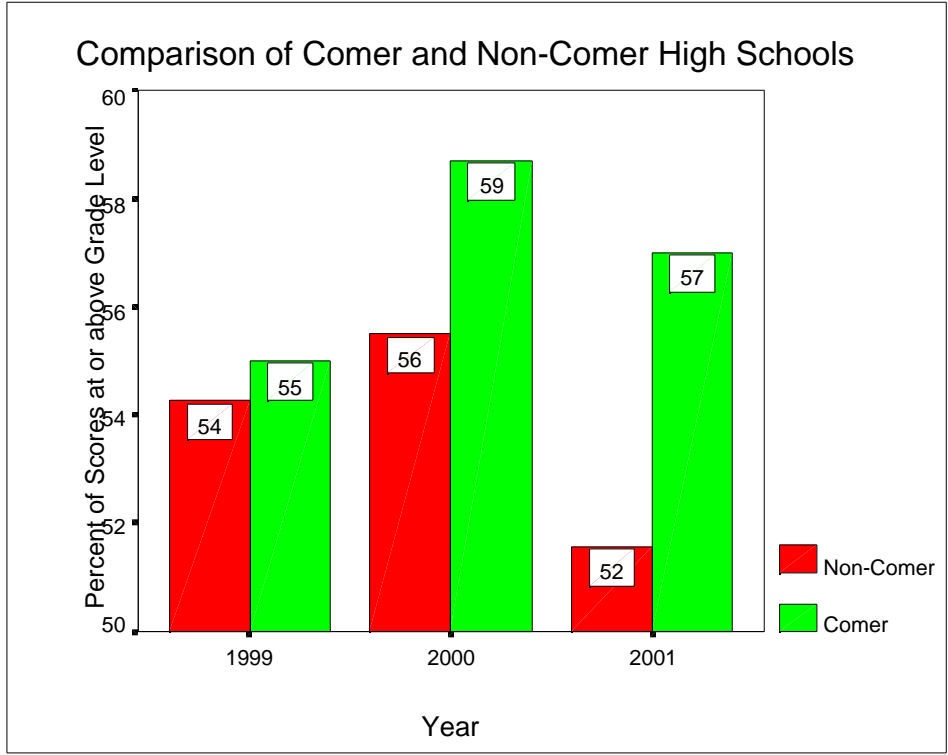


Figure 17: Performance composite scores for Comer and non-Comer high schools in Charlotte/Mecklenburg.

Chicago

General information

- Implementation of the Comer Process began in selected schools in Chicago in 1990. There are now 19 Comer schools in Chicago. Except for one school that is PK-6, they are all PK-8 or K-8 schools.
- Chicago, with 435,470 students in 629 schools, is a predominantly poor and minority school district. About 87% of students are African-American or Latino, and 85.6% of the student population are from low-income families.
- Except for one, all the Comer schools are more than 90% minority. About 74% of the Comer schools are 100% minority. With exception of three schools, the percent of students eligible for free or reduced lunch in Comer schools ranges from 92% to 99%.
- Despite the higher minority and poverty rates, the Comer Schools have improved in both mathematics and reading at a faster rate than the district.

Influences on Achievement

Changes in test

- Chicago schools administer two different tests within one month of each other in the spring of each year. Prior to 2000, these tests were the Illinois Goal Assessment Program (IGAP) and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS).
- In 2000, a new test, the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) replaced the IGAP. Students then had to deal with a new test as well as the ITBS. The format of the ISAT is different from the format of the ITBS.

Reduced Services

- When the Comer Process began in Chicago in the 1991-92 school year, at least one staff member from Youth Guidance, which was responsible for shepherding the process, worked with each school four days a week, sometimes five days a week.
- Schools added in 1992-93 and 1993-94 received a similar level of service.
- However, with additional schools and decreasing funds, they could not sustain this level of intervention. When the last set of schools were added in 1998-99, no additional funds were given and the level of intervention dropped to about one day a week, a 75% decrease in service.
- Figures 18 and 19 show that the schools that began the Comer Process in the 1993-94 school year or earlier were better able to sustain their achievement growth than the schools that began the Process later.

High Stakes Testing

- About six years ago the Accountability Office started high stakes testing. Schools were put on probation if only 15% or less of the student population performed at or above the national norm.
- The pressure for improved test scores increased in 1999, with the institution of the new test in the 1999-2000 school year. Pressure from the state was passed on through the city to the schools. This resulted in a lot of teaching to the new test and a climate of high stress.
- Chart 18 shows that the more mature Comer schools that had received a high level of intervention were able as a group to maintain their growth in reading.
- Chart 19 shows that the more mature Comer schools were able to maintain higher achievement growth than the school district on math as well.

- The Comer schools improved by 10.25 percentage points in reading from 1996 to 2001. The district improved by 8.50 percentage points during that period. The Comer schools that began implementation prior to 1994 improved by 13.23 percentage points in reading from 1996 to 2001.
- These mature Comer schools continued to improve in academic achievement despite a 75% decrease in level of intervention service by the Youth Guidance staff due to lack of funds.

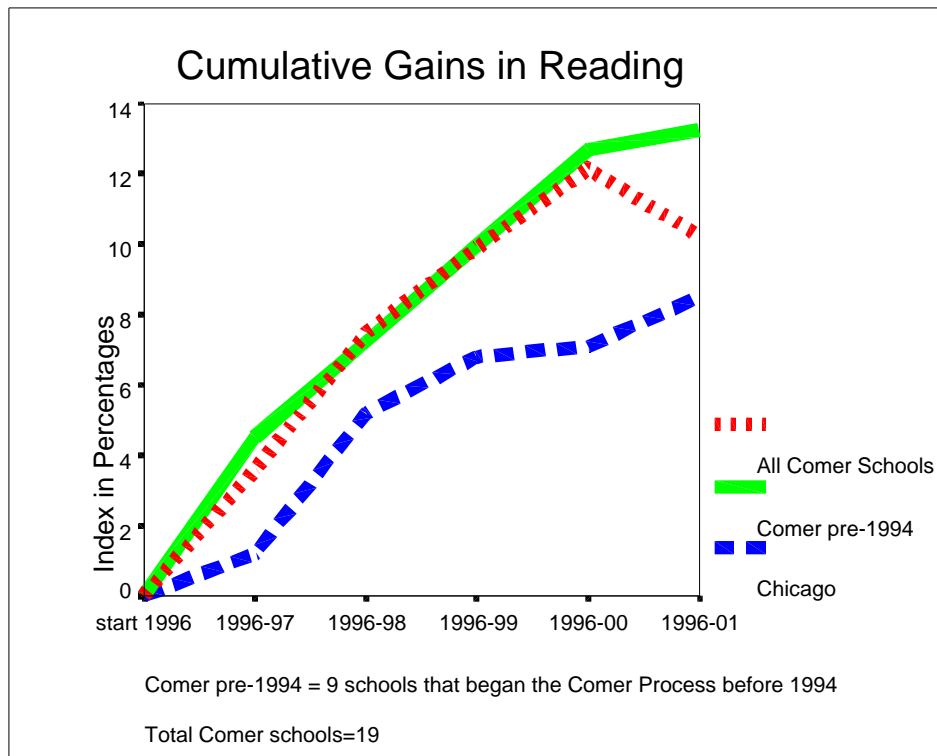


Figure 18: Cumulative change in percent of students, grades 3-8, at or above grade level on ITBS reading scores, 1996 to 2001

- The Comer schools improved by 13.61 percentage points in math from 1996 to 2001. The district improved by 12.60 percentage points during that period. The Comer schools that began implementation prior to 1994 improved by 15.57 percentage points in math from 1996 to 2001.
- These mature Comer schools continued to outperform the Chicago Public schools despite a 75% decrease in level of intervention service by the Youth Guidance staff due to lack of funds.
- Despite the high-pressured climate to increase test scores, there was a drop in math test scores in 2001.

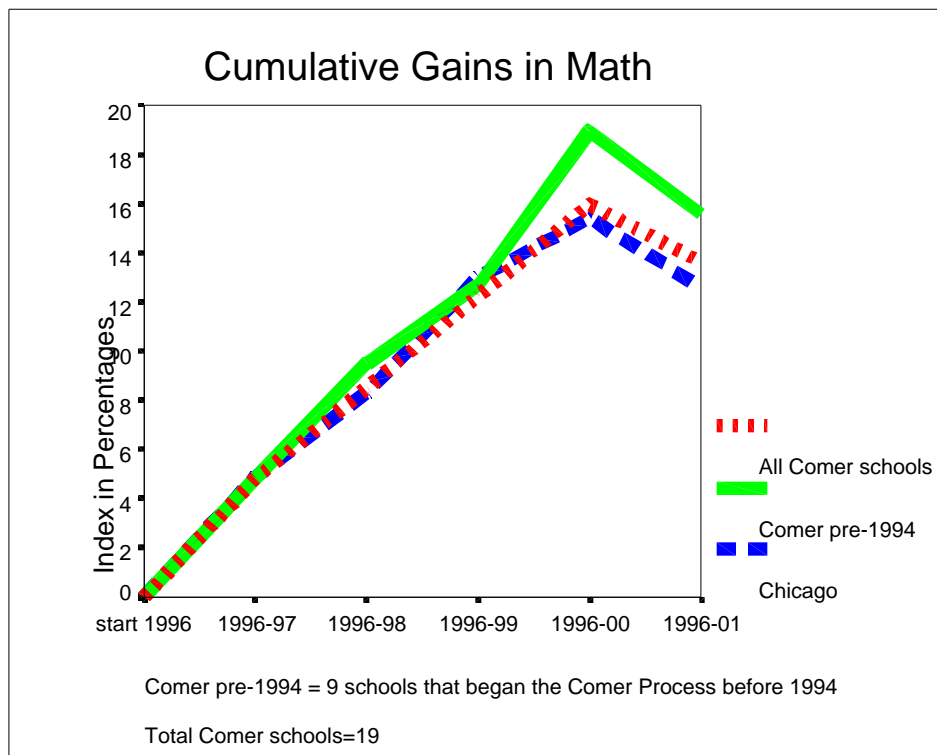


Figure 19: Cumulative change in percent of students, grades 3-8, at or above grade level on ITBS math scores, 1996 to 2001

Data Sources

New York, District 13:

“Results on the State ELA and the City CTB-Reading Test,” New York City Board of Education, 2002, Available at http://www.nycenet.edu/daa/test_results/

“Results on the State Mathematics and the City CTB-Mathematics Test,” New York City Board of Education, 2002, Available at http://www.nycenet.edu/daa/test_results/

New Haven, CT:

“CMT Longitudinal School-Level Data,” Office of Assessment and Planning, January 24, 2002.

“Connecticut Mastery Testing Data,” Connecticut State Department of Education: Division of Evaluation and Research. Available at <http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/der/s-t/index.htm>

Charlotte/Mecklenburg, NC

“Student Testing Results,” North Carolina Public Schools: Department of Public Instruction. Available at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/reportstats.html>

Chicago, IL

Data provided by Youth Guidance in Chicago, IL (<http://www.youth-guidance.org/>)

Additional information obtained through the Illinois State Board of Education website (<http://www.isbe.state.il.us/>), Chicago Public Schools website (<http://www.cps.k12.il.us/>), and personal correspondence with Youth Guidance staff.