

Chapter 2 – Student Performance Analysis

Introduction

This chapter describes student performance in the Clark County School District (CCSD) and compares it to that of three peer districts that have similar student populations but higher academic achievement. It highlights the findings from an extensive analysis of student scores over the past six years on state proficiency exams and English fluency assessments. This description of proficiency rates, achievement gaps among student subgroups, and trends over time shows that student performance remains far below state standards and CCSD’s own targets, and substantial achievement gaps have persisted.

In addition, this chapter describes the factors that peer districts attribute to their success. These are offered as recommendations to assist CCSD in taking dramatic steps to significantly improve student academic achievement.

Findings included in this chapter summarize two separate research reports regarding student performance in CCSD. The report, *Analysis of Student Performance*, provides detailed analyses of CCSD student proficiency rates and English fluency results, broken down by student subgroups and grade levels. The *Comparative Analysis of Academic Performance* describes how the three peer districts were selected and compares their student performance and trends over time with those of CCSD for reading and math, limited English proficient (LEP) students, Advanced Placement participation and test scores, PSAT scores, and graduation and dropout rates. It also provides a detailed description of peer district efforts to improve their students’ performance.

Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations

The analysis of CCSD student performance data and the experiences of peer districts clearly justify the CCSD Board of Trustees’ recent decision to take dramatic steps to significantly improve student achievement. Superintendent Jones has outlined an aggressive strategy to accelerate the pace of growth in *A Look Ahead, Phase I: Preliminary Reforms Report*⁶, and many initiatives were underway before this study commenced. The review team endorses the direction of the district’s new leadership, and believes that the recommendations contained in this report will help support a new era of educational reform at CCSD.

Based on an extensive examination of the CCSD student achievement data and the comparative analysis of CCSD performance and that of peer districts, the review team makes the following recommendations for future CCSD efforts:

⁶ *A Look Ahead: Phase 1 Preliminary Reforms Report – Improving Achievement in the Clark County School District* Superintendent of Schools Dwight D. Jones (May 2011)

1. **Curriculum consistency and alignment.** A common success factor of the peer districts was the consistency and alignment across its schools in curriculum and programs offered. As stated by one interviewee: “We were spending millions and getting very inconsistent results...It is a fiduciary responsibility [to select a program] and go with it—implement it with fidelity, and give it three to five years to evaluate it over time.” Even in the districts that were more decentralized, it was their structure of networks and consistent communication that helped to keep schools and teachers moving in the same direction. Based on findings contained in *Chapter 3 – Academic Programs and Services* of this report, CCSD’s lack of alignment and consistency are critical issues and several recommendations are made in that chapter to develop cross-functional teams, reduce the number of academic programs and interventions, and align professional development with the curriculum.
2. **Focused professional development and support.** Considered critical to peer districts’ improved performance, high quality professional development is offered through ongoing sessions, coaching, support from experts, and resources provided in-person and on-line. Professional development is focused on specific programs and student populations, including LEP students. As discussed in *Chapter 3 – Academic Programs and Services*, CCSD was found to have overlapping and sometimes conflicting professional development coming from multiple, uncoordinated sources. Recommendations are made to better align and streamline professional development offerings to serve the needs of teachers and students more efficiently and effectively. The district is also realigning its educational support structure from a geographic orientation to one based on performance zones. This will better match and focus district resources and school needs.
3. **Use of data.** In peer districts, assessments are used to identify students in need of support and monitor their progress as well as to determine the most appropriate instruction and interventions. Data are made available to teachers and administrators through generated reports and web portals, and the results of these assessments are regularly discussed. CCSD is already moving in this direction with the development of an academic data dashboard that should help facilitate the types of analysis already taking place in the peer districts. In *Chapter 5 – Operational Cost Efficiency Review, (Section 4, Technology)* of this report, a recommendation is made to develop a comprehensive data management framework to ensure that CCSD data going into the dashboards are clean, accurate, and rigidly defined.
4. **Intensive attention to particular subject areas and student subgroups.** The analysis of CCSD data indicates that achievement in science is particularly low and specific subgroups are having the most difficulty attaining proficiency status on state assessments. Redoubled efforts to support their academic achievement is merited for:
 - **Hispanic students.** Hispanic students are the largest subgroup in the CCSD student population. Although the achievement gap between Hispanic and White students has narrowed somewhat over time, it is still substantial. Given that more than one-third of Hispanic students who took the CRT are either non- or limited-English

speakers, increased efforts to support these students in learning English as well as subject matter content could decrease this achievement gap.

- **Black/African American students.** The achievement gap between Black/African American and White students is very large across all subject areas and does not appear to be decreasing over time. Focused attention on the needs of this subgroup is warranted.
- **LEP students.** Additional attention to the needs of the LEP student population is necessary, especially to factors that peer districts report have contributed to their success:
 - **Intense professional development:** In the peer districts, teachers who instruct LEP students receive extensive professional development, both internal to the district and through state certification/endorsement specifically related to this student population (required by law in Florida).
 - **Consistent curriculum and oversight of implementation:** Peer districts ensure that schools have a consistent curriculum and supplemental materials available to all LEP students. Monitoring also takes place to ensure that these programs are implemented as planned and are moving students towards English fluency.
 - **Students in grades kindergarten through two:** Data analysis revealed that these students are the least likely of all grade levels to be fluent in English within CCSD. The proportion of children in grades K–2 who are fluent in English is much smaller in CCSD than in the peer districts. These districts cite their intensive intervention programs for young LEP students as a factor in their overall success.
 - **Students with disabilities.** Generally less than one-fourth of grade 3–8 students with IEPs are proficient in math, reading, and science. For high school, math and science proficiency rates are 15 percent or lower.
- **Retained high school students.** The cohort analysis of the HSPE data revealed a remarkable group of high school students who persisted in retaking the HSPE reading and math exams even after they were retained in grade 10 for one or two years. More than 3,000 students took the math and reading tests in their second tenth grade year and more than 100 took them again in their third tenth grade year. Such perseverance could be acknowledged and rewarded with intensive assistance to help them pass the exams.

5. **Preschool education.** In examining the data used to select the peer districts, it became clear that their grade 3 students perform much better during their first statewide assessments of reading and math than those in CCSD. One potential focus of future efforts

could be on preschool education. In contrast to the 9 percent of CCSD students enrolled in preschool, peer districts enroll from 27 to 68 percent. Given the research on the success of quality preschool in preventing later learning difficulties,⁷ CCSD should consider investing in this area, especially given that many of its youngest students are non-English or limited English speakers.

6. Successful high school completion and college/career readiness. A consistent theme in the peer districts is the effort to engage students early on in their high school education. By focusing on grade 9 students, dropout rates are lower and students are better prepared for college and careers. As one interviewee stated, “If we lose them in the ninth grade, we lose [them] in graduation.” Peer districts have a variety of student engagement, mentoring, and credit recovery programs that begin with identifying at-risk students using an early warning system. CCSD would benefit by adopting some of these practices:

- **Ninth grade monitoring:** Given that there is no Nevada state assessment for grade 9 students (unlike in Florida and Texas), CCSD could consider analyzing interim assessment and Criterion Referenced Test (CRT) data from grade 8 students as one step toward an early warning system. Analysis of CRT data indicates that the math proficiency rate of grade 8 students is consistently lower than that of other grades and recent results for reading and science show that less than half the students are proficient. In addition, monitoring the proportion of grade 9 students who move on to grade 10 could provide another measure of student engagement in high school.
- **Positive alternative environments:** In all of the peer districts, staff emphasized the importance of addressing students’ needs through choices and a variety of settings. Whether it was through online learning, small learning communities, or specialized magnet school options, providing alternative settings can help motivate students who might otherwise dropout from the traditional high school setting. With the addition of support from mentors and community members, more students can reach graduation in these alternative settings if they are seen as positive environments instead of as a punishment for misbehavior.

Highlights of CCSD Student Performance

CCSD schools’ lack of progress in making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), a requirement of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, is reason for concern. In Nevada, AYP classifications are made annually based on the

⁷ See for example: a) Schweinhart, L. J., Montie, J., Xiang, Z., Barnett, W. S., Belfield, C. R., & Nores, M. (2005). *Lifetime effects: The HighScope Perry Preschool study through age 40*. (Monographs of the HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 14). Ypsilanti, MI: HighScope Press.

b) Reynolds, A. J., Temple, J. A., Ou S. R., Arteaga, I. A., White, B. A. B. (2011). School-based early childhood education and age-28 well-being: Effects by timing, dosage, and subgroups. *Science*. Published online June 9, 2011. doi: 10.1126/science.1203618

percentage of students tested, the percentage of students tested who score at or above the proficient level on annual statewide tests, and school attendance or graduation rates.

Table 2.1 describes CCSD schools' 2009–10 AYP status. A total of 44 percent of the schools listed in the Clark County report (not including district charter schools) had the lowest possible AYP rating that the state assigns (“in need of improvement”).

Table 2.1. CCSD schools rated *In Need of Improvement* by Level, 2009–10

Type of School	Total Number of Schools	Number <i>In Need of Improvement</i>	Percent <i>In Need of Improvement</i>
Elementary Schools	219	91	42%
Middle Schools	77	40	52%
High Schools	71	31	44%
Total	367	162	44%

Source: Nevada Department of Education

This section depicts key findings from grades 3–8 on the Nevada Criterion Referenced Test (CRT), grades 9–12 on the High School Proficiency Examination (HSPE), and grades K–12 on the English fluency exams. For most findings, data were available for six years (2005–06 through 2010–11), although for others data were available for only four years (2005–06 through 2008–09).

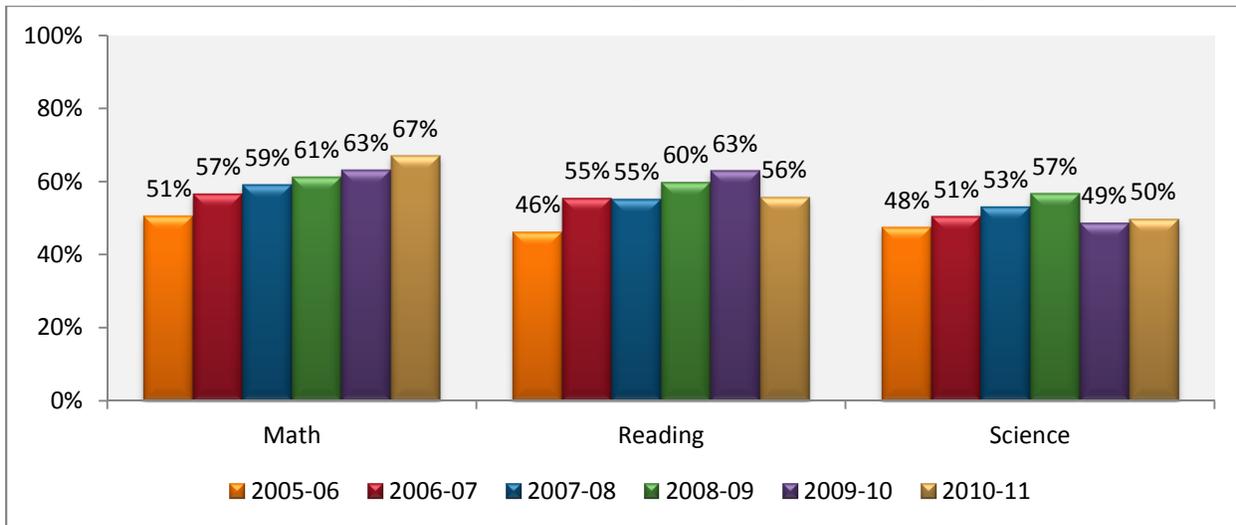
Grades 3–8 Student Performance

To provide an overview of student performance in the elementary and middle school grades, the CRT proficiency rates of students in grades 3–8 have been combined. As shown in Figure 2.1, the overall proportion of CCSD students scoring proficient in math across the years ranged from 51 to 67 percent. For reading, the range was 46 to 63 percent, and for science 48 to 57 percent. Although the tests have been revised in recent years, which resulted in some fluctuation in scores, the overall finding is that many students are not meeting the Nevada standard for performance, which is not rigorous.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, Nevada’s reading tests do not reach the standard for either the Basic or Proficiency level of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). In math, Nevada’s tests reach the Basic level of performance compared to the NAEP standard.⁸

⁸ From <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pubs/studies/2011458.asp>, retrieved August 10, 2011.

Figure 2.1. CRT proficiency rates, grades 3–8, by subject and year, 2005-06 through 2010-11



Source: Criterion Referenced Test data files provided by CCSD, 2005-06 to 2010-11

Note: The CRT reading and mathematics tests are given each year; the science test is given in grades 5 and 8. The mathematics and science tests were revised in 2009–10, and the reading test was revised in 2010–11.

Note: Sample size = 843,673 (math, all years combined); 843,789 (reading, all years); 278,561 (science, all years).

For the most recent year (2010–11), of students in grades 3 through 8:

- 67 percent were proficient in math
- 56 percent were proficient in reading
- 50 percent were proficient in science

Furthermore, across the grade levels, math proficiency rates have been lowest in grade 8; reading proficiency rates have been lowest in grade 5 (until test revision in 2010–11); and science proficiency rates have been consistently low in both grade 5 and grade 8.

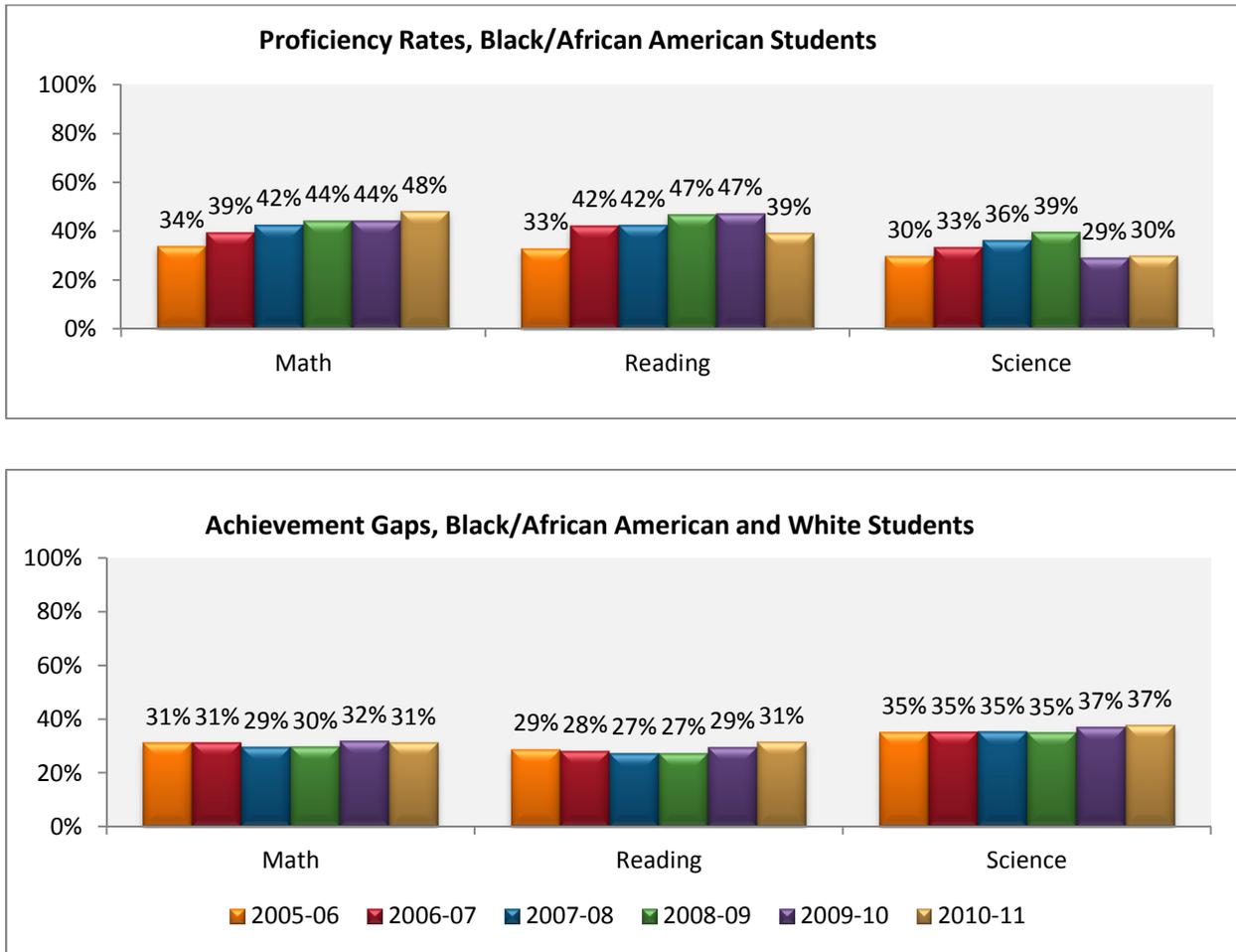
Achievement Gaps

Large gaps in academic performance are evident for racial/ethnic groups and for students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (FRPL), as well as those designated as LEP and those who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Race/Ethnicity

As displayed in Figures 2.22 and 2.3, across all six years grade 3–8 Black/African American and Hispanic students have consistently lower proficiency rates than White students in math, reading, and science.

Figure 2.2. CRT proficiency rates and achievement gaps between black/African American students and White students, by year and subject



Source: Criterion Referenced Test data files provided by CCSD, 2005-06 to 2010-11

Note: Achievement gap is the difference between the proficiency rate of black/African American and White students in each year. The CRT mathematics and science assessments were revised in 2009–10, and the CRT reading assessment was revised in 2010–11. The definition of the race/ethnicity classifications was revised in 2009–10.

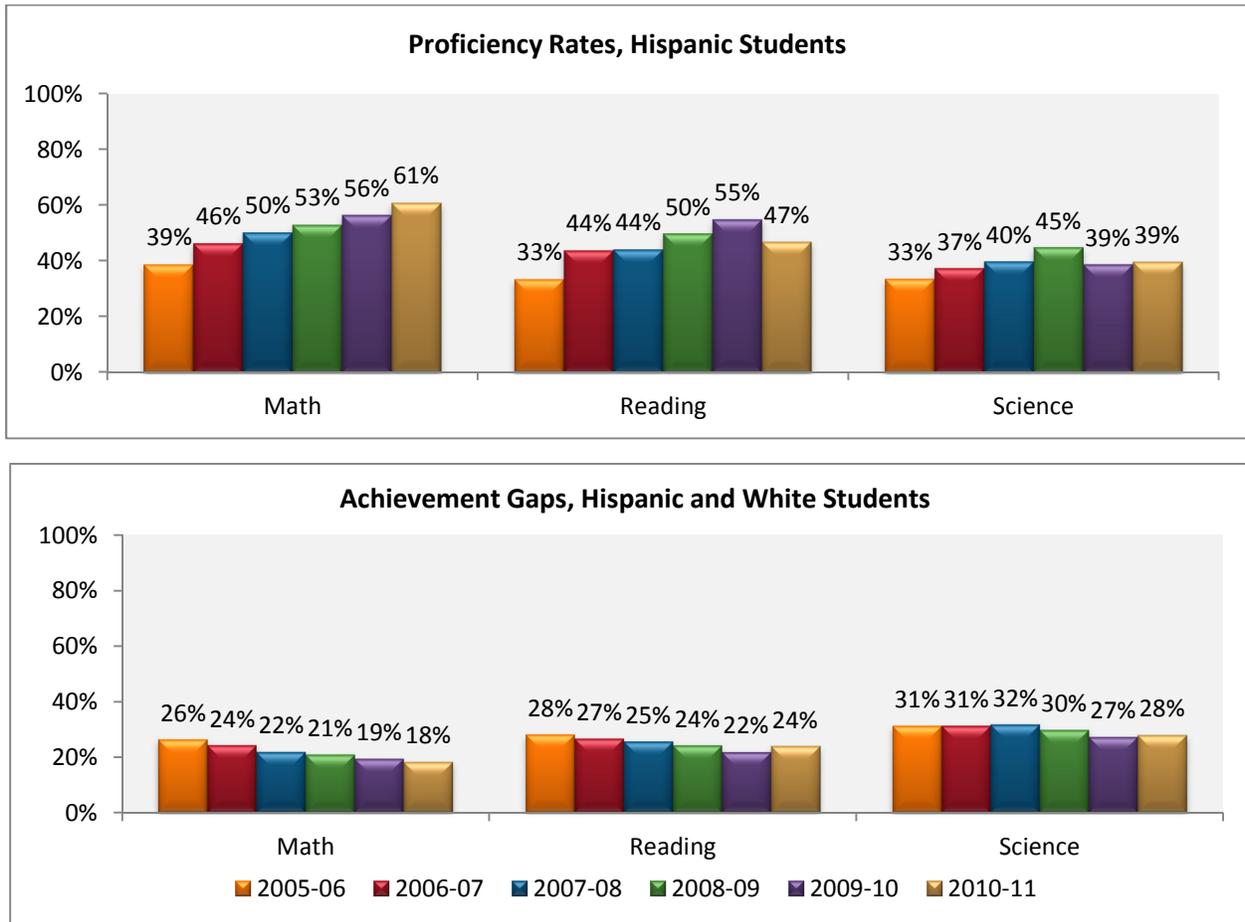
Note: Sample size: Proficiency = 110,861 (math, all years combined); 110,895 (reading, all years); 37,097 (science, all years); Gaps = 394,970 (math, all years); 395,027 (reading, all years); 132,355 (science, all years).

In 2010–11, Black/African American students made up 12 percent of the CCSD student population taking the CRT. The proficiency gap between this subgroup and that of white students was:

- 31 percentage points in math
- 31 percentage points in reading
- 38 percentage points in science

These gaps do not appear to be closing, and may have widened slightly in reading in recent years.

Figure 2.3. CRT proficiency rates and achievement gaps between Hispanic students and White students, by year and subject



Source: Criterion Referenced Test data files provided by CCSD, 2005-06 to 2010-11

Note: Achievement gap is the difference between the proficiency rate of Hispanic and White students in each year.

Note: Sample size: Proficiency = 342,983 (math, all years combined); 342,985 (reading, all years); 110,725 (science, all years); Gaps = 627,092 (math, all years); 627,117 (reading, all years); 205,983 (science, all years).

In 2010–11, Hispanic students comprised 43 percent and White students 30 percent of the CCSD students taking the CRT. The proficiency gap between Hispanic and White students was:

- 18 percentage points in math
- 24 percentage points in reading
- 28 percentage points in science

In general, this gap appears to have narrowed slightly in all subjects across the years, with the greatest gains evident in math. However, the gap widened slightly in 2010–11 from the previous year for reading and science.

Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

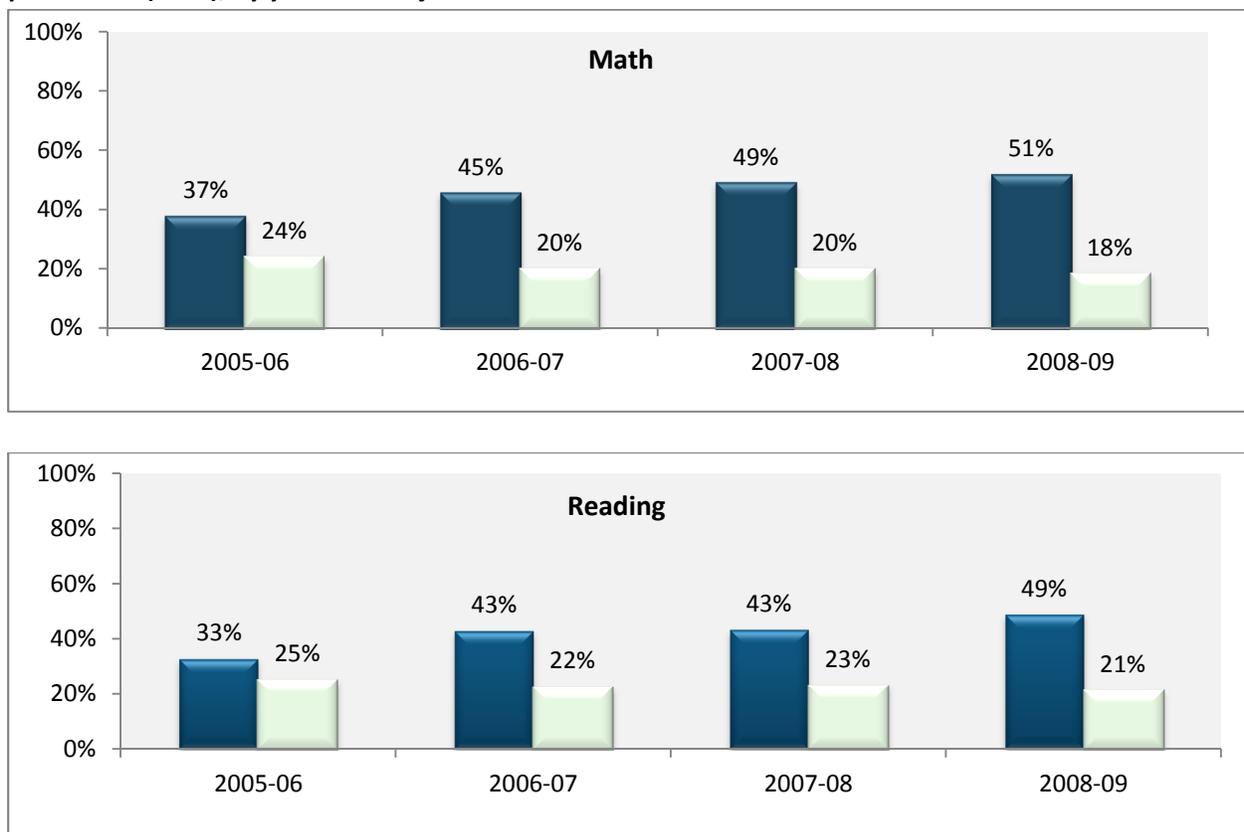
Nearly half (45 percent) of CCSD students taking the CRT were eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (FRPL) in 2008–09, and their performance lagged behind that of their more economically advantaged peers. Figure 2.4 displays both the proficiency rate for FRPL students and the achievement gap between them and their non-eligible peers across the years.

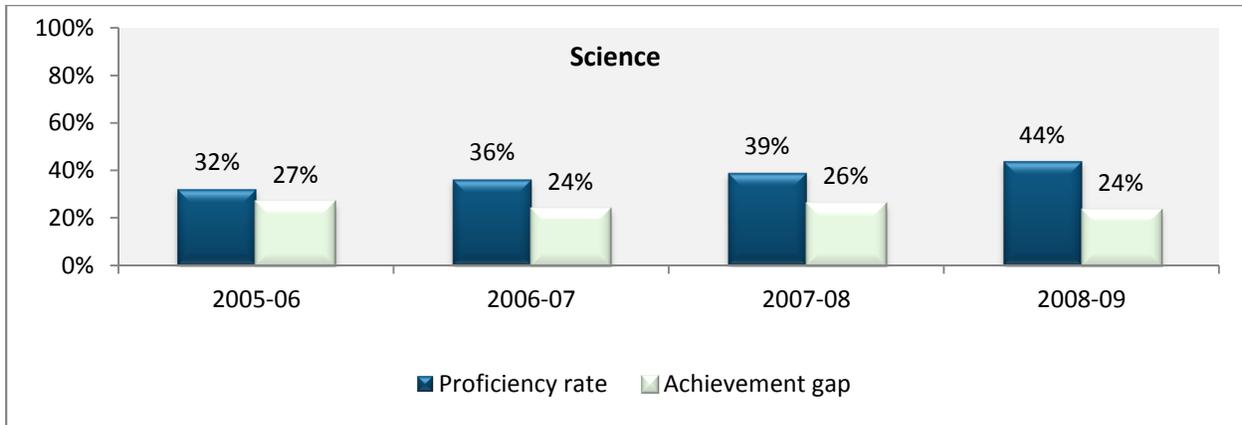
For the most recent year of available data (2008–09), the FRPL-Not FRPL gap was:

- 18 percentage points in math
- 21 percentage points in reading
- 24 percentage points in science

This gap appears to have narrowed somewhat in both math and reading and has fluctuated for science across the years. Although there has been progress, the gaps are still substantial for CCSD students.

Figure 2.4. CRT proficiency rates and achievement gaps for students qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch (FRPL), by year and subject





Source: Criterion Referenced Test data files provided by CCSD, 2005-06 to 2010-11

Note: Achievement gap is the difference between the proficiency rates of students qualifying and not qualifying for FRPL in each year. FRPL data were only available until 2008-09.

Note: Sample size: Proficiency = 257,266 (math, all years combined); 257,319 (reading, all years); 81,918 (science, all years); Gaps = 569,978 (math, all years); 570,011 (reading, all years); 188,285 (science, all years).

Limited English Proficient

Across six years of available data, students who were either non- or limited-English speakers made up about 16 percent of those taking the CRT and they had consistently lower proficiency rates in math, reading and science.⁹ Figure 2.5 presents both the proficiency rate for LEP students and the gap between this subgroup and their English-speaking peers.

In 2010-11, of LEP students in grades 3 through 8:

- 37 percent were proficient in math
- 18 percent were proficient in reading
- 7 percent were proficient in science

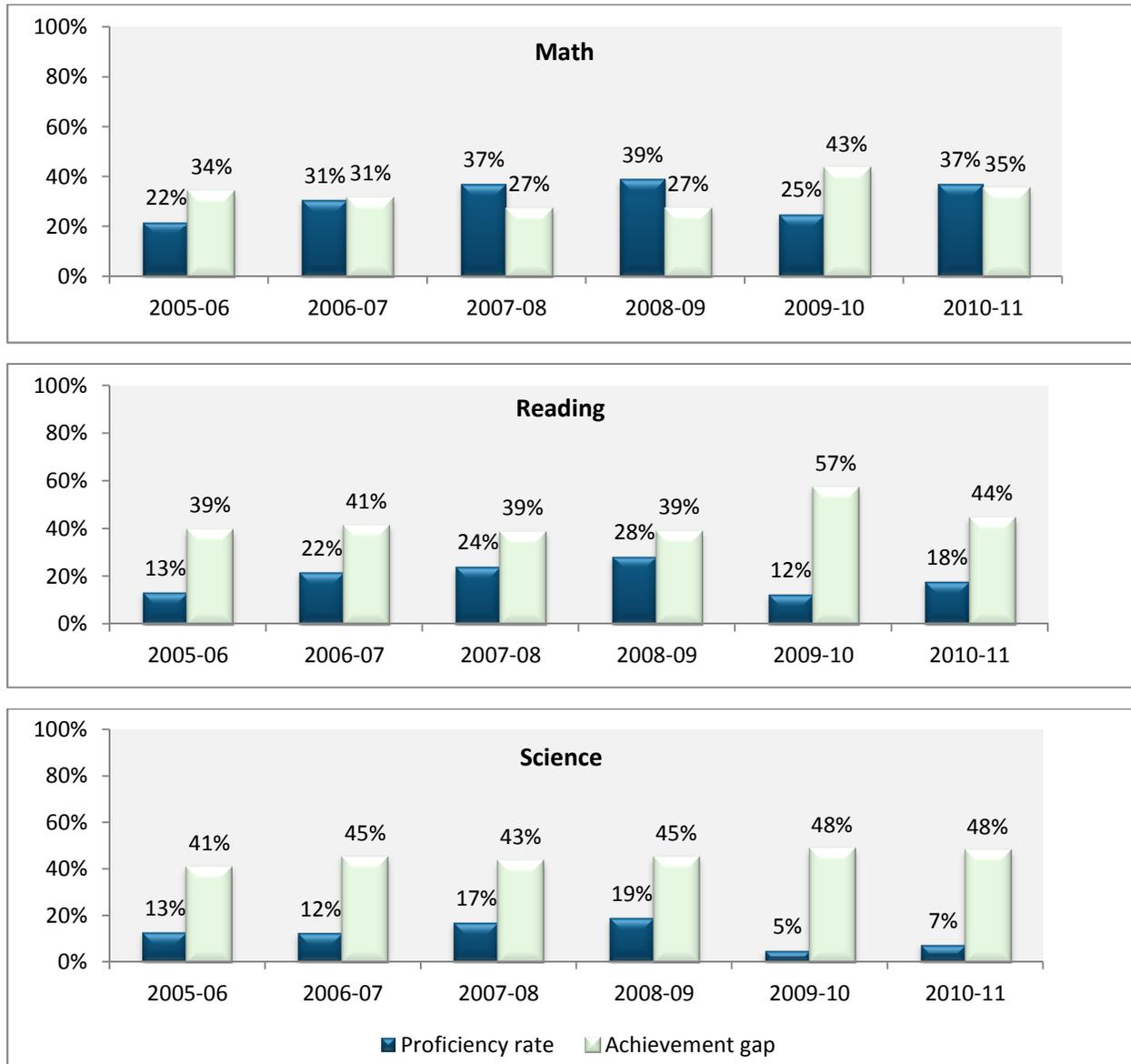
There were also large achievement gaps between LEP and non-LEP students:

- 35 percentage points in math
- 45 percentage points in reading
- 48 percentage points in science

In math and reading, the gap between LEP and non-LEP students became much larger in 2009-10, after the definition of LEP was revised. In science, the gap has remained fairly constant.

⁹ The definition of the LEP designation was revised in 2009-10, and the percentage of students designated as LEP in 2009-10 and 2010-11 was lower than it had been in previous years. For example, in 2008-09, roughly 19 percent of students taking the CRT in grades 3-8 were designated as LEP, compared to about 11 percent in 2009-10.

Figure 2.5. CRT proficiency rates and achievement gaps for students designated as LEP, by year and subject



Source: Criterion Referenced Test data files provided by CCSD, 2005-06 to 2010-11

Note: Achievement gap is the difference between proficiency rates of students designated and not designated as LEP.

Note: The CRT math and science exams and the definition of LEP were revised in 2009–10. The CRT reading exam was revised in 2010–11.

Note: Sample size: Proficiency = 133,105 (math, all years combined); 133,085 (reading, all years); 35,628 (science, all years); Gaps = 832,156 (math, all years); 832,249 (reading, all years); 274,421 (science, all years)

Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

Approximately 10 percent of CCSD students taking the CRT over the years had been identified as having a disability and had been provided an individualized education program (IEP). As shown in Figure 2.6,

these students consistently had low proficiency rates in math, reading, and science, and may be falling further behind students without IEPs in math and reading.

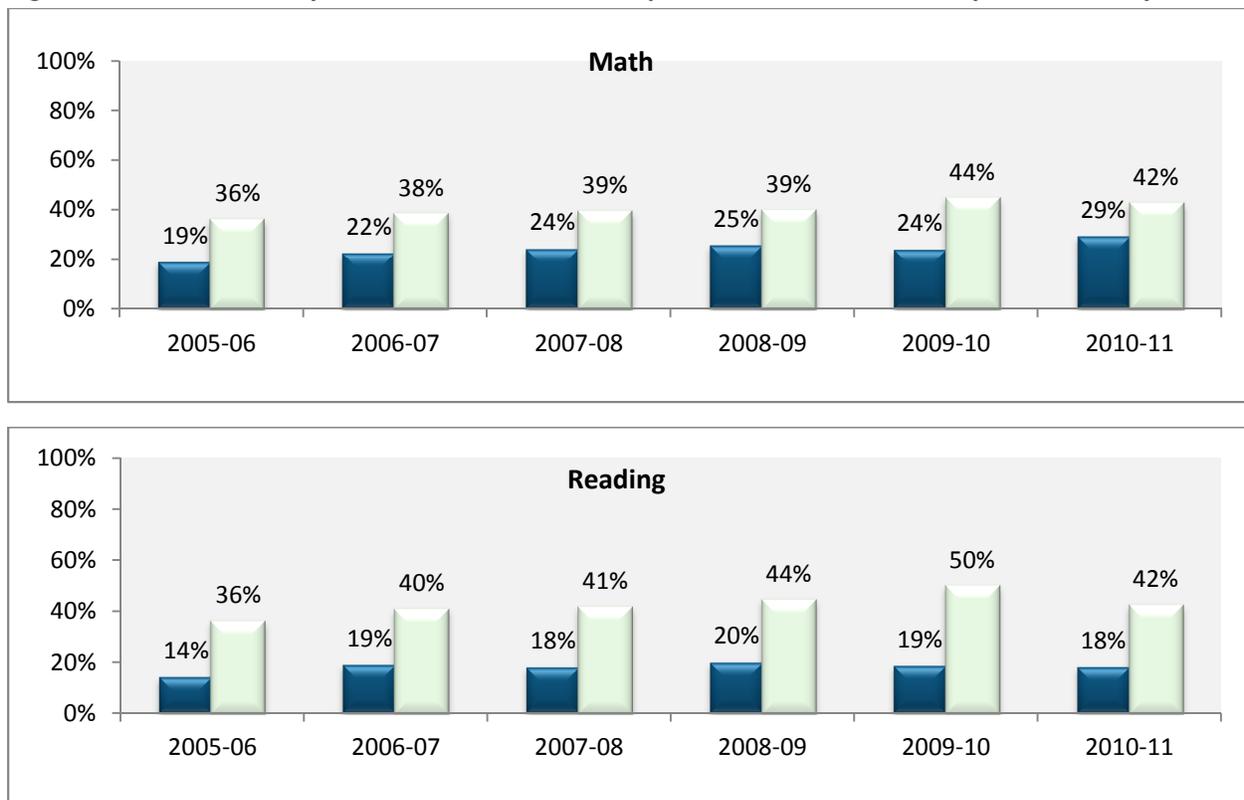
In 2010–11, of students with IEPs in grades 3 through 8:

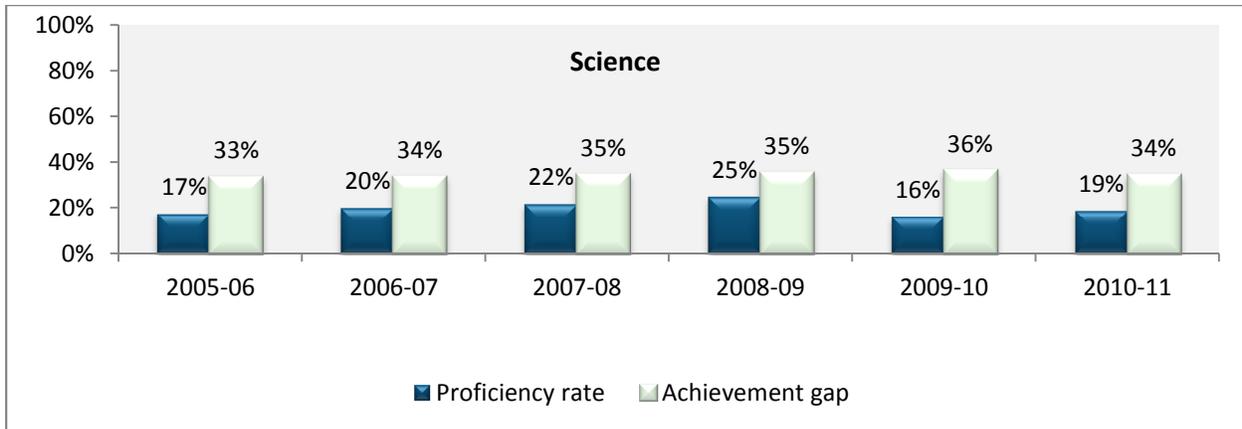
- 29 percent were proficient in math
- 18 percent were proficient in reading
- 19 percent were proficient in science

There were also large achievement gaps between students with and without IEPs:

- 42 percentage points in math
- 42 percentage points in reading
- 34 percentage points in science

Figure 2.6. CRT Proficiency Rates and Achievement Gaps for Students with IEPs, by Year and Subject





Source: Criterion Referenced Test data files provided by CCSD, 2005-06 to 2010-11

Note: Achievement gap shown is the difference between the proficiency rates of students with and without IEPs.

Note: The CRT math and science exams were revised in 2009–10. The CRT reading exam was revised in 2010–11.

Note: Sample size: Proficiency = 79,295 (math, all years combined); 79,321 (reading, all years); 25,955 (science, all years); Gaps = 832,156 (math, all years); 832,249 (reading, all years); 274,421 (science, all years).

Grades 10–12 Student Performance

In Nevada, the mathematics, reading, and science High School Proficiency Exams (HSPE) are administered for the first time to grade 10 students. Students who either did not pass or missed the test in grade 10 are then re-administered the test multiple times throughout grades 11 and 12; until they earn a proficient score (that is, the student meets or exceeds the state standard). The writing HSPE follows a similar pattern, except it is administered for the first time to grade 11 students.

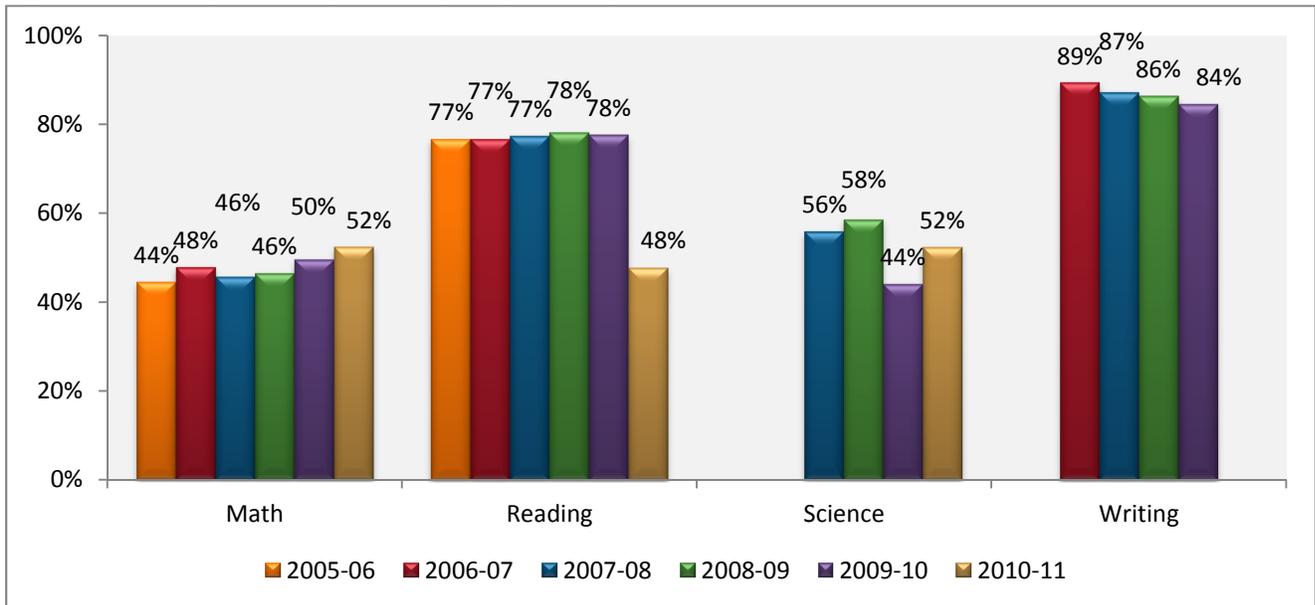
Two types of analyses were conducted on the high school data: 1) an analyses of first year performance on the mathematics, reading, science, and writing exams; and 2) a cohort analyses for students over a three-year period for the subjects of mathematics and reading to see how many students eventually passed these exams. For most students, this covers their grade 10, 11, and 12 high school careers.

First Year Performance

The first year analysis describes the percent of grade 10 students who passed the HSPE mathematics, reading, science tests on their first attempt, because the goal is for them to pass during their first year and then move on to master the curriculum for grades 11 and 12. For writing, grade 11 results are analyzed because this is the first year that exam is offered.

As shown in Figure 2.7, across all years, approximately 50 percent of grade 10 students passed the math and science exams on their first attempt. Until the reading test was changed in 2010–11, three-fourths of the students were passing. On the new test, only 48 percent passed. For writing, the findings are more positive, with a passing rate of 84 percent or more; however these rates have declined each year the writing test has been administered.

Figure 2.7. HSPE proficiency rates, by subject and year



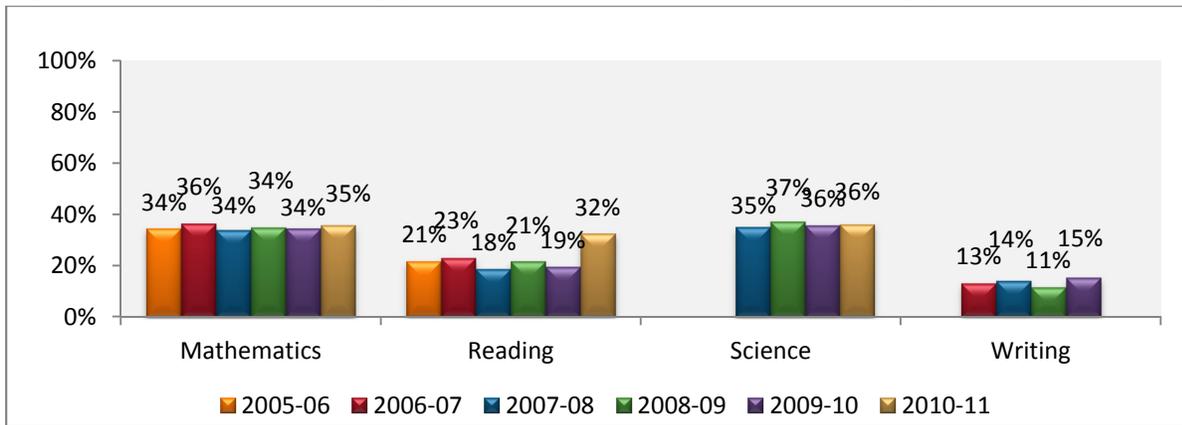
Source: High School Proficiency Exam data files provided by CCSD, 2005-06 to 2010-11

Note: The HSPE reading, mathematics, and science tests are given to grade 10 students; the writing test is given to grade 11 students. The HSPE mathematics test was revised in 2009–10; the HSPE reading test was revised in 2010–11.

Note: Sample size = 128,493 (math, all years); 126,035 (reading, all years); 85,689 (science, all years); 72,160 (writing, all years).

Similar to the elementary and middle school grades, large achievement gaps are present for grade 10 students. Figures 2.8 and 2.9 present the proficiency rates and achievement gaps for Black/African American students and Hispanic students on the four HSPE exams across the years. The gaps are more pronounced in math and science and do not appear to be closing.

Figure 2.8. HSPE achievement gaps for Black/African American students, by year and subject

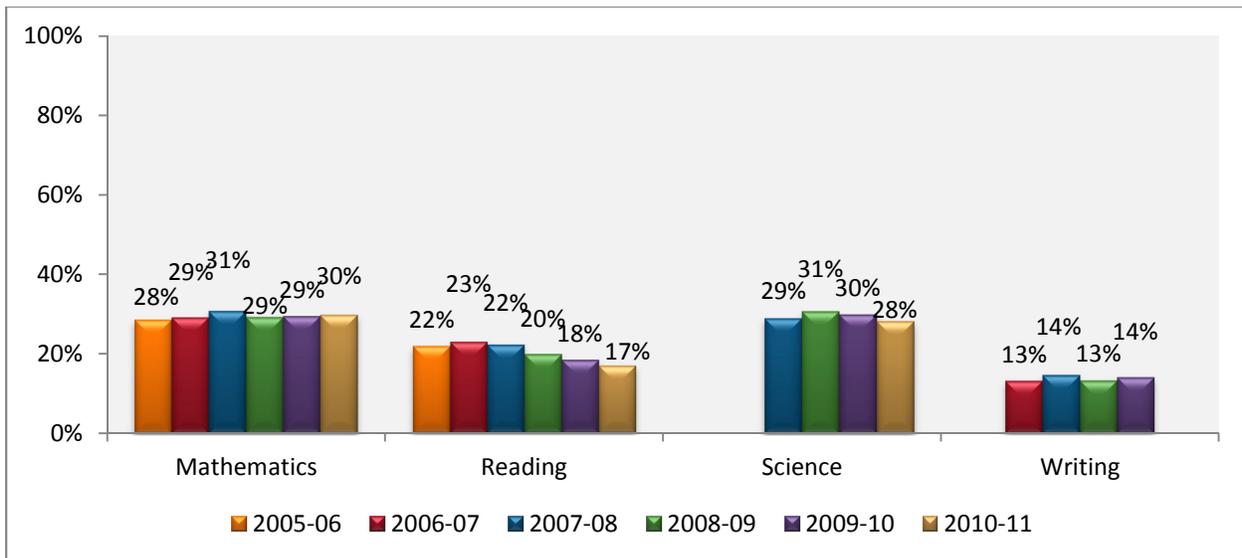


Source: High School Proficiency Exam data files provided by CCSD, 2005-06 to 2010-11

Note: Achievement gap shown is the difference between the proficiency rate of Black/African American students in each year and the proficiency rate of White students in the same year.

Note: The HSPE mathematics assessments was revised in 2009–10, and the HSPE reading assessment was revised in 2010–11. The definition of the race/ethnicity classifications was revised in 2009–10.

Figure 2.9. HSPE achievement gaps for Hispanic students, by year and subject



Source: High School Proficiency Exam data files provided by CCSD, 2005-06 to 2010-11

Note: Achievement gap shown is the difference between the proficiency rate of Hispanic students in each year and that of White students in the same year.

Note: The HSPE mathematics assessments was revised in 2009–10, and the HSPE reading assessment was revised in 2010–11. The definition of the race/ethnicity classifications was revised in 2009–10.

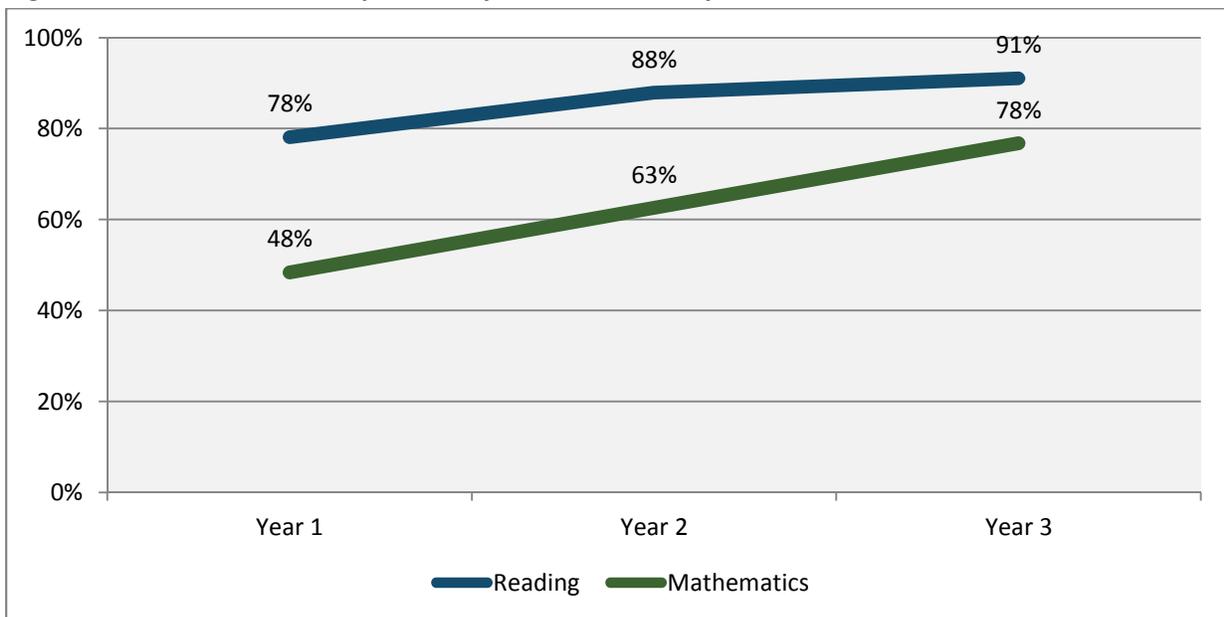
The achievement gaps for high school students designated as eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, LEP, and with an IEP have a similar pattern to those reported above for grade 3–8 students. The gaps are substantial and, although there are fluctuations, they do not appear to be closing in any significant way.

Three-Year Performance

As another way to examine high school reading and mathematics achievement, two cohorts of students who started in grade 10 were followed through grades 11 and 12: Cohort 1 includes students who entered grade 10 in the 2006–07 school year; Cohort 2 includes those who entered grade 10 in the 2007–08 school year. For ease of reporting, the results of the two cohorts have been combined in these findings.

This analysis follows students who did not pass the tests on their first attempt to see how many of them passed on subsequent attempts. As Figure 2.10 illustrates, although the first year passing rates are low, especially in math, the rates do improve for students who persist in taking the test multiple times. By the end of grade 12, 91 percent had passed the reading test and 78 percent had passed the math test.

Figure 2.10. Increase in HSPE proficiency rates over three years



Source: High School Proficiency Exam data files provided by CCSD, 2005-06 to 2010-11

Note: Figure reads: For students in the reading cohorts, 78% passed the reading HSPE after one year, 88% of students passed after two years, and 91% of students passed after three years.

Note: Sample Size = reading 39,321 (Cohort 1: 19,166; Cohort 2: 20,155); mathematics 39,518 (Cohort 1: 19,258; cohort 2: 20,260).

A revealing feature of the cohort analysis is the number of high school students who persist at staying in school and taking the test, even though they are not succeeding. As shown in Table 2.2, there are 2,135 students who were retained in grade 10 who took the math exam again in their second grade 10 year. There are 74 students who were retained a third time in grade 10 and took the exam yet again. It is evident that this group is in need of intensive assistance to help them pass these exams.

Table 2.2. Total number of students who took the mathematics HSPE at least once, by grade level, by eligible year

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Grade 10	39,518	2,135	74
Grade 11		13,394	432
Grade 12			8,527
<i>Total</i>	39,518	15,529	9,033

Note: Table reads: Across both cohorts, 39,518 students took the mathematics HSPE exam the first year they were in grade 10. Of this group of students, 13,394 took the HSPE at least once the following year in grade 11, as did 2,135 students who were held back.

Note: Students who took the mathematics HSPE in their third eligible year did not necessarily take the exam in their second eligible year.

Note: Sample size = 39,518 (overall); Cohort 1: 19,258; Cohort 2: 20,260

Grades K–12 English Fluency Performance

In CCSD, LEP students are given the *Language Assessment Survey* (LAS Links) and the *English Language Proficiency Assessment* (ELPA), depending on their grade level and when they entered the district. Based on these scores, the district assigns one of four English proficiency status (EPS) codes to indicate students' level of English fluency.

In 2010–11, 31 percent of CCSD students currently in the district had qualified for LEP services at one point in time. Of these:

- 30 percent were considered fluent English speakers and had exited LEP services.
- 16 percent were considered fluent English speakers but were still on monitor status¹⁰.
- 47 percent were considered limited English speakers.
- 6 percent were considered non-English speakers.

To provide a sense of how long students are in need of services, Figure 2.11 displays the English fluency rates of nine cohorts of LEP students from prior to 2002–03 through 2010–11. If one reads the figure from right to left, a dramatic picture emerges.

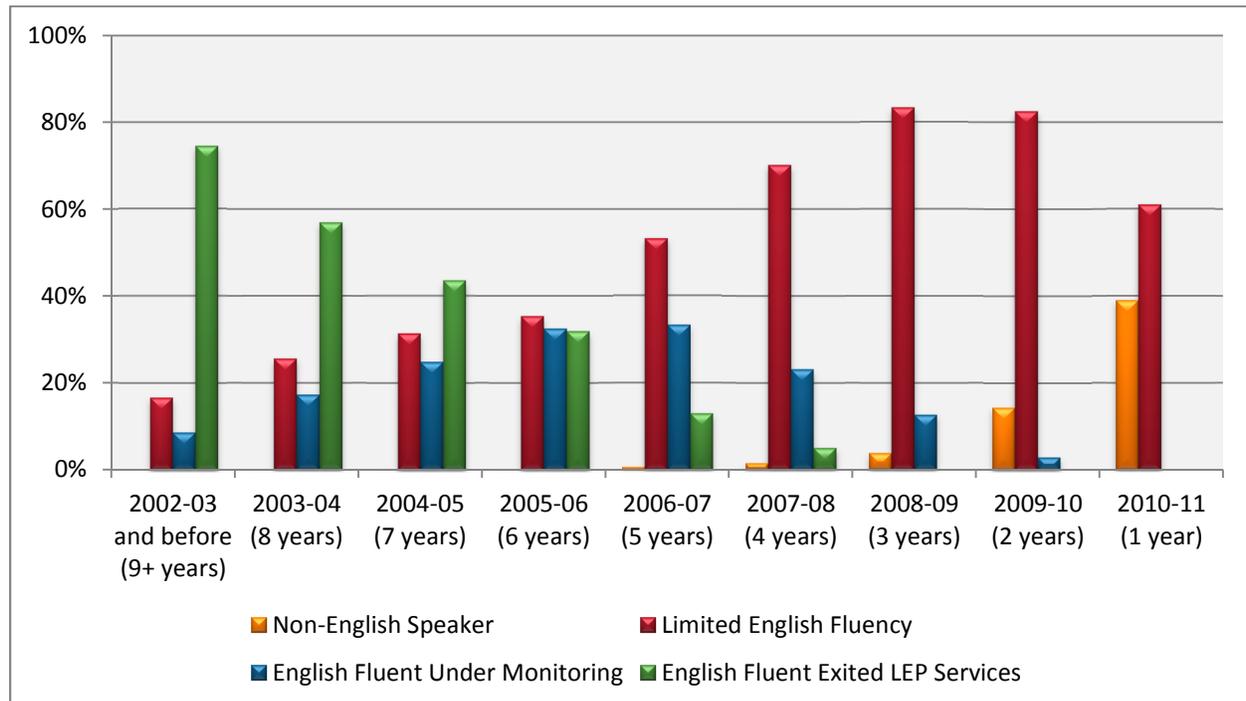
Students who had just entered in 2010–11 were all either non- or limited English speakers. For those who had been in the district two years (2009–10 cohort), a few had attained fluency but the vast

¹⁰ In 2009–10 it was determined that all LEP students in CCSD must be monitored for two years after meeting language proficiency to ensure academic success. Previously, students were exited immediately upon meeting language proficiency. This change may have affected the results of the LEP cohort analysis.

majority have not. A few more students became fluent in the third year, but notable improvement was not seen until students had been in the district for four years (the cohort that entered in 2007–08). By the seventh year, the majority had exited LEP services and the fluency rates continued to rise in the subsequent years.

In effect, there is slow progress in the attainment of English fluency by LEP students and this affects these students' academic achievement in core subject areas. The next section reports that generally LEP students in peer districts make much more rapid progress in attaining English fluency.

Figure 2.11. LEP student English fluency rates, by the school year in which student cohorts entered the district, as of June 2011



Source: 2010-11 English proficiency results based on English Proficiency Status (EPS) data provided by CCSD

Note: Sample size (overall) = 97,354.

Note: Sample size (by year) = 23,440 (2002–03 and before); 6,250 (2003–04); 7,778 (2004–05); 10,522 (2005–06); 10,629 (2006–07); 9,152 (2007–08); 9,319 (2008–09); 9,669 (2009–10); 10,595 (2010–11).

Given that Hispanic students comprised 42 percent of CCSD students in 2010–11, a review of their performance is warranted. Of the LEP students that had been in the district for four years, Hispanic LEP students had noticeably lower English fluency levels than other racial/ethnic LEP groups.

For LEP students in the 2007–08 cohort, the proportion that had exited services or were considered fluent English speakers was:

- 25 percent for Hispanic LEP students

- 52 percent for Asian/Pacific Islander LEP students
- 45 percent for White LEP students
- 37 percent Black/African American LEP students.

Continued focus on the Hispanic LEP population is necessary to find successful strategies to increase their English fluency levels more quickly.

Comparison of CCSD with Three Peer Districts

As part of the Educational and Operational Efficiency Assessment, CCSD requested a comparison of its student academic performance with that of similar districts. This comparative analysis was guided by two primary questions:

1. How does CCSD student performance compare with that of its peer districts?
2. What do the peer districts believe are the contributing factors to their higher performance in certain areas, and how could CCSD benefit from this information?

Selection Process

A multi-stage approach was used to select three districts similar to CCSD in demographic composition and spending, but with higher student achievement in certain areas than CCSD. Three districts were selected based on having similar demographic characteristics, such as district locale (city/suburban), size, percentage of students with free or reduced-price lunch eligibility, percentage of limited English proficient students, and percentage of students receiving special education services. Teacher-pupil ratio, percentage of Title I schools, and total per-pupil revenue and expenditure also were examined. In addition to looking at the demographic composition of comparison districts, the team examined academic performance.

Two of selected peer districts were in Florida and the third was in Texas. Broward County, FL Public Schools (BCPS) was chosen primarily because it had the highest graduation rate and lowest dropout rate of the comparison districts. Houston Independent School District (HISD) had the best performance for students in elementary grades in the areas of both reading and mathematics. Although Palm Beach County, FL Public Schools was originally selected as the third district, CCSD district leadership instead chose Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) in order to have one comparison district of larger size than CCSD. In addition to analyzing their student performance data, officials in the peer districts were interviewed to identify factors that contributed to their success.

Tables 2.3 and 2.4 include the demographic, financial, and student performance data used to select the peer districts.

Table 2.3. Demographic and financial information for comparison districts (2009–10)

District Information	CCSD	BCPS	HISD	M-DCPS
State	Nevada	Florida	Texas	Florida
Locale type	Suburb, Large	Suburb, Large	City, Large	Suburb, Large
Number of schools	370	325	309	546
Number of students	307,059	256,137	202,773	345,804
Percent FRPL eligible students	43.8%	52.8%	59.3%	68.0%
Percent LEP students	16.8%	9.5%	28.5%	17.2%
Percent SPED students	10.5%	12.3%	8.1%	11.0%
Teacher-to-pupil ratio	19.95	16.92	16.9	15.98
Percent Title I schools	53.5%	61.2%	88.0%	67.2%
Total per-pupil revenue (2008–09)	\$11,859	\$11,569	\$9,867	\$13,282
Total per-pupil expenditure (2008–09)	\$6,877	\$7,838	\$7,485	\$8,826

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD)

To consider how CCSD student performance compares with that of its peer districts, the most recently available data were compiled for BCPS, HISD, and M-DCPS from the Common Core of Data and district or state websites (See Table 2.4). When data were unavailable from these sources, the peer districts were asked to share any additional information that might help this analysis.

Table 2.4. Student performance information for comparison districts (2009–10)

Student Performance Indicator	CCSD	BCPS	HISD	M-DCPS
District AYP status	Met ¹¹	Not met	Not met	Not met
% proficient, all grades, reading	66.2%	63%	84%	59%
% proficient, all grades, math	63.5%	72%	81%	66%
% proficient, Grade 3, reading	59.8%	72%	89%	68%
% proficient, Grade 3, math	65.3%	80%	83%	78%
% proficient, Grade 4, reading	64.1%	72%	81%	70%
% proficient, Grade 4, math	65.6%	76%	87%	72%
% proficient, Grade 5, reading	52.3%	70%	89%	66%
% proficient, Grade 5, math	65.6%	68%	92%	60%
% proficient, Grade 6, reading	62.7%	69%	81%	62%

¹¹ For the 2009–10 school year CCSD made AYP, but for the 2010–11 school year the district failed to make AYP and has been designated as a “watch” district.

Student Performance Indicator	CCSD	BCPS	HISD	M-DCPS
% proficient, Grade 6, math	61.1%	64%	79%	53%
% proficient, Grade 7, reading	72.9%	68%	82%	64%
% proficient, Grade 7, math	63.7%	65%	78%	59%
% proficient, Grade 8, reading	64.9%	60%	91%	51%
% proficient, Grade 8, math	55.4%	72%	83%	63%
% proficient, Grade 9, reading	—	48%	88%	42%
% proficient, Grade 9, math	—	72%	64%	63%
% proficient, Grade 10, reading	77.6%	39%	87% (ELA)	37%
% proficient, Grade 10, math	49.6%	73%	68%	73%
% proficient, Grade 11, reading	93.5%	—	90% (ELA)	—
% proficient, Grade 11, math	70.6%	—	87%	—
NAEP score, Grade 4, reading ^a	211 (NV)	—	211	221
NAEP score, Grade 4, math ^a	235 (NV)	—	236	236
NAEP score, Grade 8, reading ^a	254 (NV)	—	252	261
NAEP score, Grade 8, math ^a	274 (NV)	—	277	273
Mean PSAT total score	110.8	121.5	118.0	—
PSAT participation rate	81.6%	81%	88%	82%
Mean SAT total score	1423	1456	1388	1426
SAT participation rate	30.6%	51%	54%	48%
Mean ACT total score	21.1	18.6	18.8	17.5
ACT participation rate	20.6%	57%	27%	54%
% AP exams scored 3–5	45.1%	45%	38%	39%
AP exam participation rate ^b	11.3%	29%	24%	29%
Four-year graduation rate	68.1%	78%	74%	72%
Single-year dropout rate (Grades 9–12)	4.8%	1.6%	3.7%	4.0%

Sources: See the *Comparative Analysis of Academic Performance* report for references to all data sources

^a National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores for the full state of Nevada are used as a proxy for CCSD; Houston ISD and Miami-Dade County are part of the NAEP Trial Urban District Assessment. NAEP scores available for 2008–09.

^b AP exam participation rates are used as a proxy for AP course enrollment.

Student Performance Trends

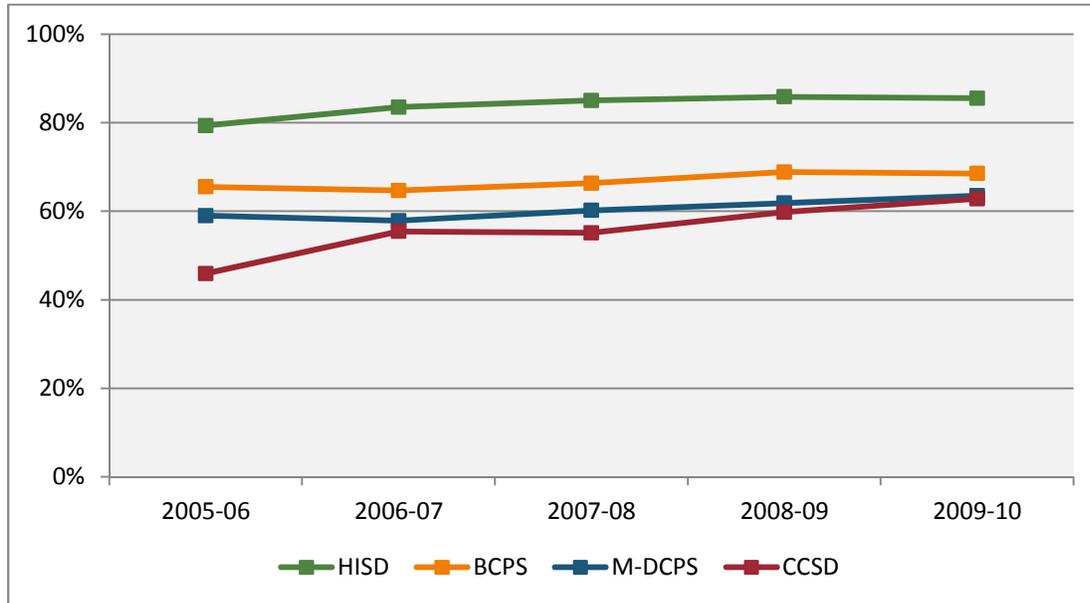
Once the comparison districts were selected, an analysis was conducted on how their students performed over time. Trend findings are presented for reading and math proficiency, English fluency

attainment, and graduation and dropout rates. Additional findings are available in the full report, *Comparative Analysis of Academic Performance*.

Reading and Math Proficiency Trends

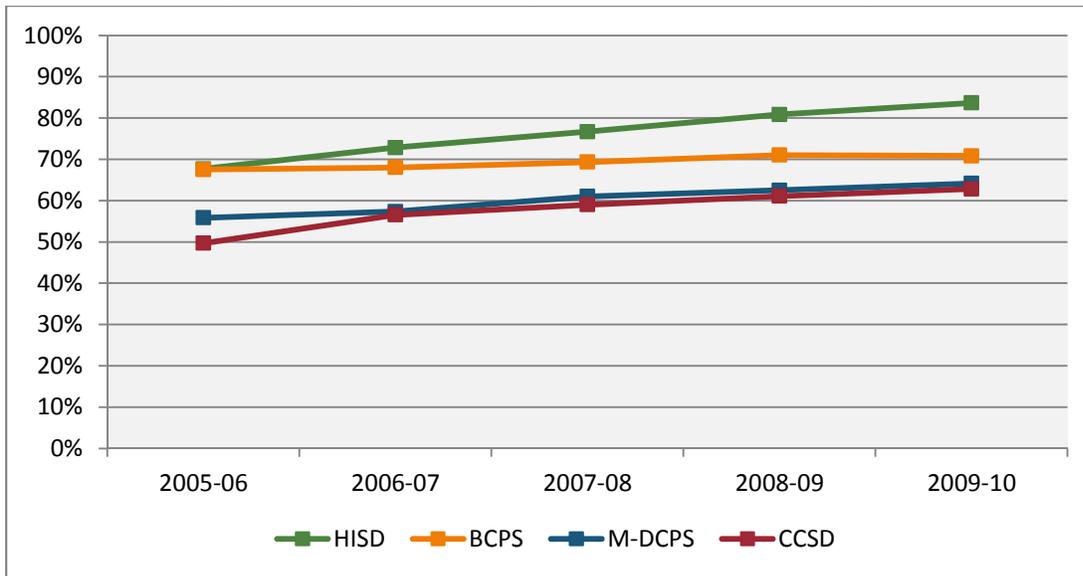
To examine the reading and math trends, the most recently available data were compiled for CCSD, BCPS, HISD, and M-DCPS using the proficiency rates for students in grades 3–8 on their state exams. Figures 2.12 and 2.13 show the reading and math proficiency rates for each of the districts over time.

Figure 2.12. Reading proficiency rates for comparison districts over time (grades 3–8)



Sources: CCSD data from <http://www.nevadareportcard.com>; BCPS and M-DCPS data from <http://fcat.fldoe.org/fcinfo.asp>; HISD data from <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment>.

Figure 2.13. Math proficiency rates for comparison districts over time (grades 3–8)



Sources: CCSD data from <http://www.nevadareportcard.com>; BCPS and M-DCPS data from <http://fcat.fldoe.org/fcinfo/g.asp>; HISD data from <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment>.

From 2005–06 to 2009–10, the reading proficiency rates in all districts increased slightly, with HISD demonstrating the highest reading proficiency rate (86 percent) compared to CCSD (63 percent) in 2009–10. Of note, CCSD had the largest improvement in reading proficiency rates, with an increase of 17 percentage points from 2005–06 to 2009–10.

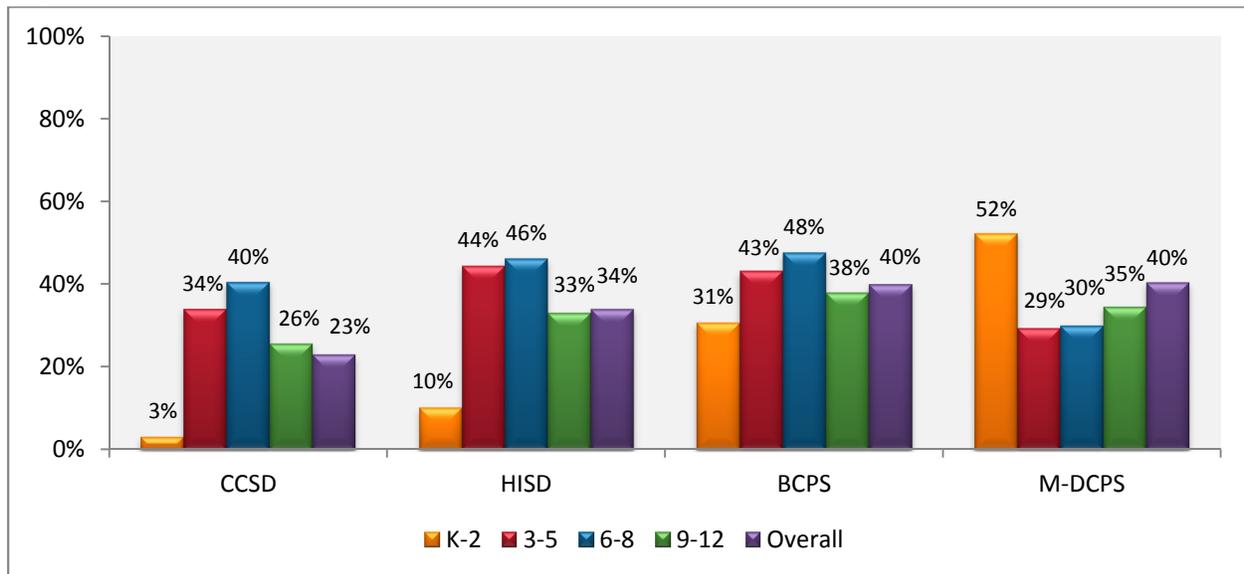
For the math proficiency rates, there was a more noticeable upward trend for all districts, with HISD again demonstrating the highest math proficiency rate (84 percent) compared to CCSD (63 percent) in 2009–10. From 2005–06 to 2009–10, the CCSD math proficiency rates increased approximately 13 percentage points.

This comparison of reading and math proficiency data comes with the caveat that each state sets its own standard for both the difficulty of the items on its state assessment and the number of items that a student must answer correctly to be designated proficient. As a consequence, the proportion of students at or above a proficiency level is not necessarily comparable across states.

English Fluency Trends

In 2009–10, the proportion of students designated as LEP in CCSD was 17 percent and ranged from 10 to 29 percent in the peer districts. Figure 2.14 displays the percent of LEP students who had achieved fluency in English according to the various assessments used in each district. The findings are broken down by grade spans, which reveal different patterns of fluency attainment across the districts.

Figure 2.14. Percentage of LEP students considered English proficient in CCSD and peer districts (2010–11)



Sources: LEP English proficiency results based on data provided by districts for 2010–11

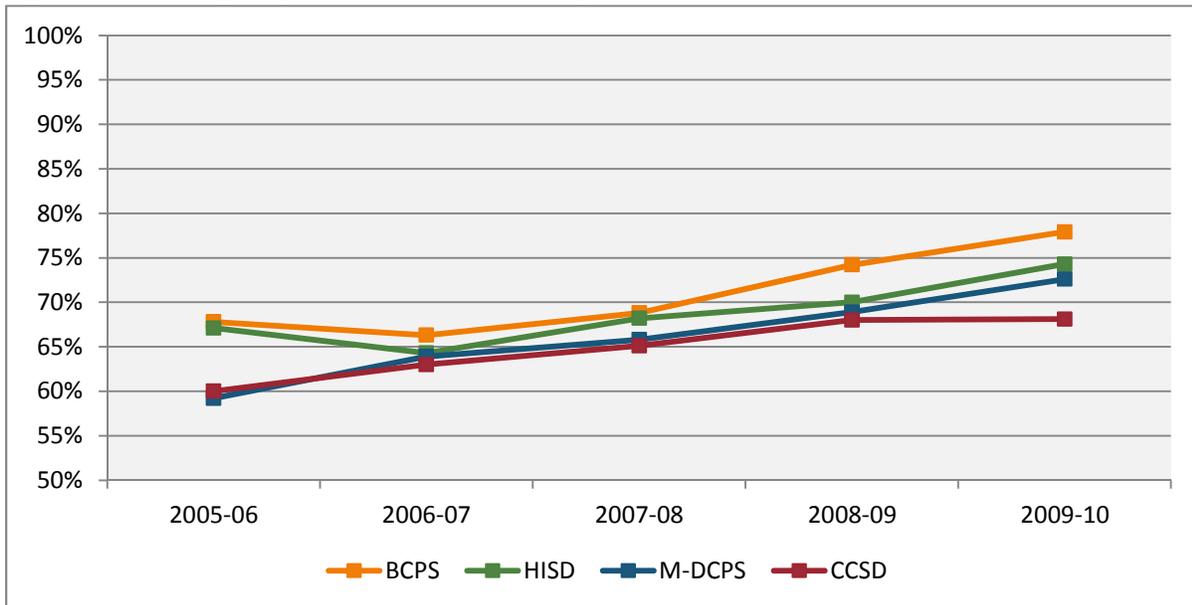
As noted in the findings above, CCSD students in their first years of schooling are not learning English very quickly. This is reinforced by the very small proportion of the K–2 LEP students (3 percent) considered proficient. In contrast, 52 percent of the M-DCPS K–2 LEP students are considered proficient in English.

According to interviews, M-DCPS has a large immigrant population, with more than 60,000 students enrolled in the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) district programs. As evidence of their success, M-DCPS recently conducted a longitudinal study and found that LEP students who had entered the district in kindergarten were outperforming native English speakers on state tests by the time they reached grade 3. District staff have put great emphasis on helping the youngest LEP students become fluent in English.

Graduation and Dropout Trends

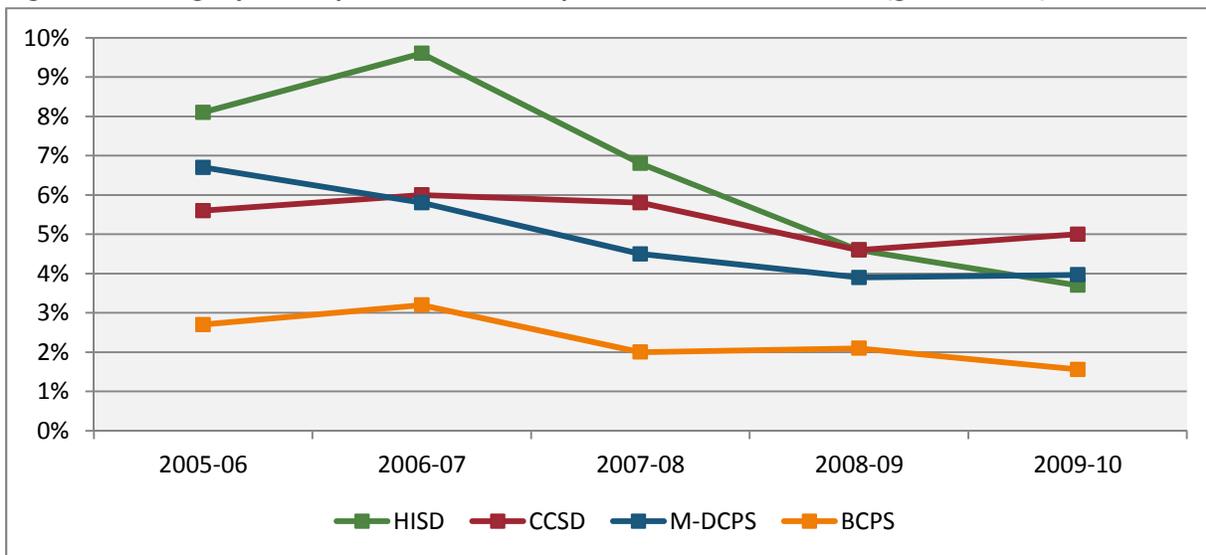
To examine the trends of high school graduation and dropout rates over the past few years, the most recently available data were compiled for CCSD, BCPS, HISD, and M-DCPS. Figure 2.15 shows the four-year graduation rates for each of the districts for the 2005–06 through 2009–10 school years, and Figure 2.16 shows the single year dropout rates for students in grades 9–12 for the same time period.

Figure 2.15. Four-year graduation rates for comparison districts over time



Sources: CCSD data from <http://www.nevadareportcard.com>; BCPS and M-DCPS data from <http://www.fldoe.org/eias/eiaspubs/xls/graddroprate0910.xls>; HISD data from <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/acctres/dropcomp/years.html>.

Figure 2.16. Single year dropout rates for comparison districts over time (grades 9–12)



Sources: CCSD data from <http://www.nevadareportcard.com>; BCPS and M-DCPS data from <http://www.fldoe.org/eias/eiaspubs/xls/graddroprate0910.xls>; HISD data from <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/acctres/dropcomp/years.html>.

Since 2005–06, all districts have shown an increase in four-year graduation rates, with BCPS having the highest graduation rate (78 percent) compared to CCSD (68 percent) in 2009–10. Of note, HISD has shown the sharpest decrease in dropout rates since 2006–07, with a lower dropout rate (3.7 percent) than M-DCPS (4.0 percent) and CCSD (4.8 percent) in 2009–10. BCPS has maintained a consistently low

dropout rate compared to the other districts, reaching their lowest dropout rate most recently in 2009–10 (1.6 percent).

Factors Contributing to Program Success

To determine what the peer districts believe are the contributing factors to their most successful programs, the review team contacted district leadership at Broward County, Houston ISD, and Miami-Dade County to identify available staff members for phone interviews. A total of 19 staff members across the three districts were interviewed during July and August 2011. The highlighted program areas were selected because these districts appear to be succeeding in areas where CCSD is struggling.

CCSD leadership identified the area of LEP students as a concern, so each of the comparison districts was asked about the programs it offers for this population of students. Based on earlier interviews with CCSD staff, the review team learned that CCSD had no district-funded preschool programs. Given that the peer districts had higher grade 3 proficiency rates, each of the districts was asked about the preschool and other early childhood programs offered that they felt successfully prepared students to be “school ready.” (Because no standardized data were available for students in grades K–2, the grade 3 proficiency rates in reading and math served as a proxy for the success of early childhood programs in the peer districts.) In addition to questions related to LEP and preschool programs, district staff were asked what overall factors had contributed to their recent successes.

Broward County Public Schools

Across the eight interviews conducted for BCPS, key personnel repeatedly mentioned the following four qualities that they believed have been major contributors to their district’s success.

- **Consistency.** BCPS is an aligned district in which teachers and students receive the same educational materials and hear a unified message. One interview respondent noted that for a district its size, consistency was critical for BCPS students and teachers. Another respondent added that the district’s cohesive nature helps mitigate the negative effects of teacher and student transience among schools. Consistency in BCPS is maintained through online Web portals, curricular alignment, and three area offices, each of which is led by its own superintendent.
- **District organization.** According to interview respondents, relying on the area offices is a key factor to ensuring that the district runs smoothly. The three area offices are geographically organized: north, south, and central. Each area has its own superintendent, three or four area directors responsible for a different school zone, and support staff (e.g., exceptional student education coordinator, technology specialist, etc.). The area offices are essential to providing oversight and support to the schools and serving as a point of contact for students and parents.
- **Professional development.** BCPS offers regular, continuous professional development and training to teachers during the school year, as well as during the summer. The type of trainings

offered are specific to different program areas and may take place at the school, a district training center, or online. One interview respondent said that leaving quality professional development out of the discussion would mean leaving out “a critical component for success.” According to BCPS staff, excellent professional development produced excellent teachers, and this was cited as an important factor in the high teacher quality found in the district.

- **Data collection and usage.** Each school in BCPS collects academic and behavioral data on all of its students. Using these data, the district research department generates regular reports for the district and schools. The research department also conducts in-depth analysis by identifying national research that is relevant to the district and then trying to replicate it in BCPS schools. Resources cited as support for different programs include the What Works Clearinghouse, the Florida Center for Reading Research, and the Consortium on Chicago School Research.

Houston Independent School District

Across the eight interviews conducted for HISD, key personnel repeatedly mentioned the following three qualities that they believed have been major contributors to their district’s success:

- **Aligning services despite decentralization.** HISD is a decentralized district with a strong belief for school autonomy. Although all district staff reported this viewpoint as a challenge to aligning district services, all reported that they are finding ways to monitor student and school progress and provide appropriate professional development. For example, the district has School Improvement Officers (SIOs) who monitor clusters of schools for progress and support, vertically aligned standards for Prekindergarten through grade 12, and state- and district-mandated curricula for LEP students and preschool programs.
- **Data-driven decisions.** To help monitor student performance throughout the district, HISD relies heavily on a centralized student data system. At elementary schools, formative assessments are regularly given throughout the year, which drives the interventions provided to struggling students. At secondary schools, students who do not succeed on the state tests are flagged in the district data system to alert teachers and school staff of areas of concern. Additional assessments can be given to these students to pinpoint what skills need to be targeted for interventions. The HISD data system is available to all staff throughout the district, which staff report has been useful given the district’s high student mobility rates.
- **Support and professional development focused on improvement.** The district’s 22 SIOs are responsible for a cluster of schools at the elementary, middle school, or high school level. Each SIO is supported by specialists in key areas such as LEP, numeracy, and literacy. The SIO and specialists are responsible for identifying areas in need of improvement based on data, aligning the curriculum, aligning academic systems with special education, providing support and professional development, and getting schools back on track.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools

Based on the three interviews conducted for M-DCPS and other research, the following four qualities were identified as major contributors to the district's success:

- **Consistency.** It is important to M-DCPS to have a consistent curriculum throughout the whole district. The same reading and math programs are offered at all schools, and LEP students are also taught using the same curriculum as the general population, with select supplemental materials. Pacing guides and other curriculum materials are provided to all teachers to ensure that students receive consistent instruction, no matter what school they are attending. In interviews, district staff emphasized that they had a highly mobile student population, and that a single curriculum minimized the difficulties students may have transitioning between buildings. M-DCPS also ensures consistency through weekly briefings from the various offices within the district department of education to the school principals and staff.
- **Network structure.** Unlike most districts, M-DCPS services about 40 different municipalities, each of which has its own needs and goals. According to interviews, collaboration between the municipalities and the various community organizations within them is critical for the success of education in the district. M-DCPS has reached out to the mayors for support and formed compacts with many of them. The district also established the Office of Intergovernmental and Community Participation to serve as a liaison among the main district and the network of schools and municipalities. This office facilitates communication and collaboration among the various stakeholders. One benefit of strong community ties has been offsetting district budget cuts. For some programs, community organizations have been able to supplement district funds.
- **Data-driven decisions.** Student data from state tests, formative assessments, and interim assessments drive the district's decisions about the student support services needed as well as where more teacher support is needed. Based on student assessment data, struggling students are provided with targeted interventions to address their specific areas of deficiency. It is also through these data that district staff are able to monitor programs and identify areas of concern where the district may need to step in to get a school back on track.
- **Teacher support.** To promote excellence in teaching, the district supports teachers with professional development, instructional coaches, and paying for educators to attain the certificate endorsements that are required by the state. For example, any teachers who have LEP students in their classrooms must be properly certified or endorsed in this area, therefore M-DCPS offers free endorsement courses to all teachers. The district also provides support through visiting classrooms and modeling lessons to ensure that instruction is meeting district and state standards.