

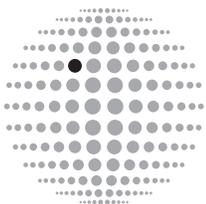
Partnership for New York City

Progress Report

on New York City School Reform



September 2005



Partnership for New York City

Partnership for New York City

With a mission to maintain the city's position as a global center of commerce and innovation, the Partnership for New York City is an organization of the leaders of New York City's top corporate, investment, and entrepreneurial firms. They work in partnership with city and state government officials, labor groups, and the nonprofit sector to enhance the economy and culture of the city. The Partnership focuses on research, policy formulation, and issue advocacy at the city, state, and federal levels by leveraging its network of CEO partners. Through its affiliate, the New York City Investment Fund, the Partnership directly invests in economic development projects in all five boroughs of the city.

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Introduction

A public education system that prepares New York City students to compete in the global economy is the top civic priority of business leaders, who rely on the schools to educate their future workforce. The Partnership for New York City has a long history of mobilizing the business community to assist individual schools and to support system-wide initiatives aimed at improving overall student performance. Until recently, these efforts produced anecdotal success stories, but no meaningful change in systemic outcomes.

Frustrated by the seemingly intractable failures of the city's education system, the Partnership for New York City became a leading advocate for Mayoral control of the schools. In 2002, New York State enacted legislation that made Mayor Michael Bloomberg the first New York City mayor to be solely accountable for management of the education system. Mayor Bloomberg, in turn, appointed Joel Klein as Chancellor. Together, in 2003, they launched the nation's largest and most comprehensive effort to reform an urban school system, which they call "Children First."

The Partnership for New York City decided it was important to begin measuring the results of school reform right away. Transforming a large organization—whether a business or a school system—requires risk-taking and experimentation. To succeed, the Mayor, and his successors, will need objective measures of how various programs and allocation of resources are affecting student performance and other outcomes.

In April 2005, the Partnership for New York City commissioned a team of researchers from the Steinhardt School of Education at New York University to carry out an independent, third-party assessment of what the data show about changes in performance during the two school years that the "Children First" reforms have been in place. The Department of Education gathered and made available to the Partnership for New York City a body of data that was used as the basis for this analysis. Brad Bodwell, a vice president of A.T. Kearney and a public school parent, joined with Peter Flaherty, a former senior partner at McKinsey & Co., to help coordinate the study. Several focus groups were held with parents, teachers and principals to provide a reality check on the findings.

This Progress Report has limitations. For one thing, it is too early in the reform process to have conclusive results. For another, the data that has historically been collected does not permit thorough examination of some key areas, including special education, teacher instructional assignments and levels of parent engagement. Nor was it always possible to tie results to specific investments in reform.

What the Progress Report does accomplish, however, is to identify emerging trends and create a baseline for ongoing evaluation of how the school system is doing. Consider this the first installment on a long-term project that will continue to track the performance of the New York City schools and the impact of reforms. The Partnership for New York City intends to publish updated progress reports periodically.

Executive Summary

At the beginning of the 2005–2006 school year, there is good reason to be pleased by the progress of New York City’s public school system and optimistic about the future. Dramatic changes in governance and wide-ranging reforms have been put in place over the past three years of Mayoral control. This report describes interim results of these efforts and outlines eight of the Department of Education’s most important reform initiatives: new core curriculum; additional charter schools; greater parent involvement; school safety Impact initiative; capital program efficiency and investment; end of social promotion; the NYC Leadership Academy; and additional small schools.

The Partnership for New York City believes that the findings in this report demonstrate that these reforms are contributing to a pattern of overall improvement in public education. There is much more to be done and progress in some areas is still uncertain, but New Yorkers have reason to conclude that their school system is finally on the right track.

To prepare this report, researchers from New York University’s Steinhardt School of Education analyzed data supplied to the Partnership for New York City by the Department of

Education and provided third-party objectivity.

The Progress Report details what the researchers discovered about system-wide performance during the past two school years that the “Children First” reform agenda has been in place, including the following highlights:

- A greater share of school resources was spent on instruction.
- School construction costs dropped.
- The new high school choice process succeeded in placing more students into their most preferred schools.
- There are more certified teachers in the city’s classrooms.
- The percentage of students in overcrowded schools has been reduced.
- The retention rate among brand new teachers has begun to increase.

Most important, the researchers found some key indicators of improved student performance:

- The number of New York City schools designated as “low performing” by the state or the federal government decreased.
- Test scores improved in both reading and math.
- Graduation rates rose.

The Partnership for New York City concludes that the cumulative effect of Mayoral accountability and the initiatives introduced under the Administration's "Children First" reform agenda is contributing to this improvement, as are the redoubled efforts of managers and professional educators on the front lines, and even the critics of the Administration who continue to hold their feet to the fire.

Continued improvement in the schools requires ongoing, independent evaluation and sustained efforts on the part of educators, parents, the business community and the public at large. Among the areas identified as needing particular attention are the following:

- Despite a decrease in reported criminal incidents and gains made in Impact Schools, school discipline remains an area of concern in all urban districts, requiring continuous efforts to maintain school climates that are conducive to learning.
- Experts consider high levels of parent engagement essential to improved student performance. There is evidence that parent outreach is a priority of the Administration, but additional measures or periodic surveys of parental involvement are needed, along with continuing efforts to improve communication with and opportunities for feedback from parents.

- Despite an increase in graduation rates, significant numbers of students still do not finish high school, and there is little reason for optimism about their future employability. The Administration has created new small secondary schools to increase high quality options for students and improve graduation rates. In addition, it has recently introduced a "Learning to Work" initiative that seeks to identify and educate those students who are not on a college track. This initiative needs to be assessed, and if effective, scaled to insure that the system provides realistic education options for all students.

The members of the Partnership for New York City are business leaders who rely heavily upon performance measurements to guide their business investments and decisions. This Progress Report on School Reform is an attempt to apply that same discipline and accountability to measuring the performance of public schools. Given the importance of education to New Yorkers and to the future of New York City, the Partnership for New York City issues this report in the hope that it will encourage continued and expanded educational partnerships and increased investment in reform efforts.

Methodology

In order to track the progress in the New York City public schools, data supplied by the Department of Education were reviewed and validated by third-party experts. The Partnership for New York City commissioned researchers at the New York University Steinhardt School of Education to carry out this function. They developed a framework for this assessment process and determined what data would be required from the DOE. NYU researchers who worked on the project were Professors Richard Arum, Amy Ellen Schwartz and Lawrence Aber.

For this first progress report, NYU's educational researchers have identified a set of measures — based on their professional judgment, consideration of evaluation reports in the educational literature and available data — that serve as early indicators of trends in performance. The Partnership for New York City intends to commission a periodic review of performance, using these and additional indicators that will track progress over time.

The measures that NYU researchers established as the basis for system-wide school performance, the first section of this report, fall broadly into four categories: 1) level of efficiency in the utilization of resources; 2) quality of student experience and school climate; 3) equity and adequacy; and 4) student achievement. Each of these categories includes multiple indicators of performance that need

to be understood in a system-wide context and in relation to the key initiatives that have been introduced since Mayoral control was granted.

For all these measures, ideally a three-to-five year prior observation window would be identified to track change over time, and data analysis would be conducted by an independent research entity. This initial report relies on data and analyses available from the New York City Department of Education, often with a shorter observation window, but one that provides a baseline to track future progress. Taken together, these measures provide the basis for a macro-level assessment of school system performance — or a kind of “report card” on the New York City public schools.

In addition to identification of the four broad categories of school district performance, the report also includes a second section that documents recent and current Department of Education reform initiatives in terms of stated objectives, policy background, initiative design and implementation. This latter section relies largely on Department of Education reports, which have not been in the public domain for very long; as a result, only preliminary conclusions are possible. Finally, the report closes with an appendix that provides the NYU researchers' recommendations for improved ongoing evaluation of the school system.

Key Findings on the Performance of New York City's Public Schools

FINDING

Important efficiency gains have been achieved in areas of school spending, teacher credentialing and school construction.

Under Chancellor Joel Klein, the Department of Education is restructuring the system with the goal of assuring that all schools provide instruction that yields higher levels of performance (particularly on standardized tests) and higher rates of educational achievement (especially graduation from high school and the acquisition of the skills required to be successful in college, other forms of post-secondary education and the labor market). These outcomes can be reached, but only if resources are used wisely, efficiently and equitably.

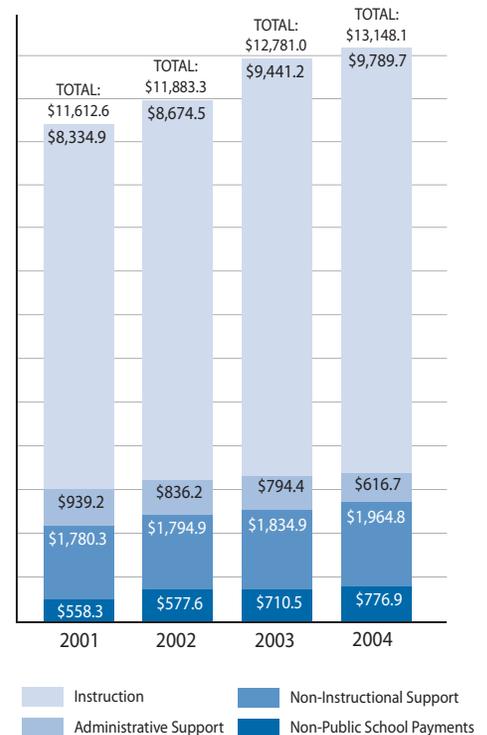
Resource Efficiency in Schools

The first broad domain for system-wide assessment involves examination of school system efficiency in terms of internal resource allocation and costs. NYU researchers examined several indicators: a) Department of Education budgetary trends over the past four years and across four broad categories; b) teacher certification rates; and c) the extent to which school construction projects are awarded at competitive prices. In general, while additional measures of resource efficiency are clearly warranted and recommended for future analysis, a review of the available data shows important efficiency gains in these areas.

Instructional and Other Spending Categories¹

An assessment of efficiency in New York City Schools intuitively begins with an examination of the DOE budget. Supporting approximately 1,350 schools, 1.1 million students, and 140,000 employees, the 2005 DOE budget exceeds \$13 billion. Working with available data, one can

Department of Education Budgets
(Dollars in Millions)



¹ New York City Independent Budget Office (IBO) Report, Analysis of the Mayor's Preliminary Budget for 2006. (March 2005). (<http://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/>) p. 65.

observe spending over time across four basic categories: 1) instruction, e.g. teacher and principal salaries and school supplies; 2) administrative support, e.g. operational costs for district offices and personnel; 3) non-instructional support, e.g. pupil transportation and food services; and 4) non-public school expenditures, e.g. mandatory payments to support alternative options for students with special needs not met by public schools.

Several trends are discernible in these data. Between 2001 and 2004, the total DOE budget grew by more than 13 percent overall, with dollar and percentage increases for instruction and non-public school expenses. Non-instructional support payments increased in dollars allocated but remained constant as percentage of total budget. Administrative spending decreased significantly, both in total

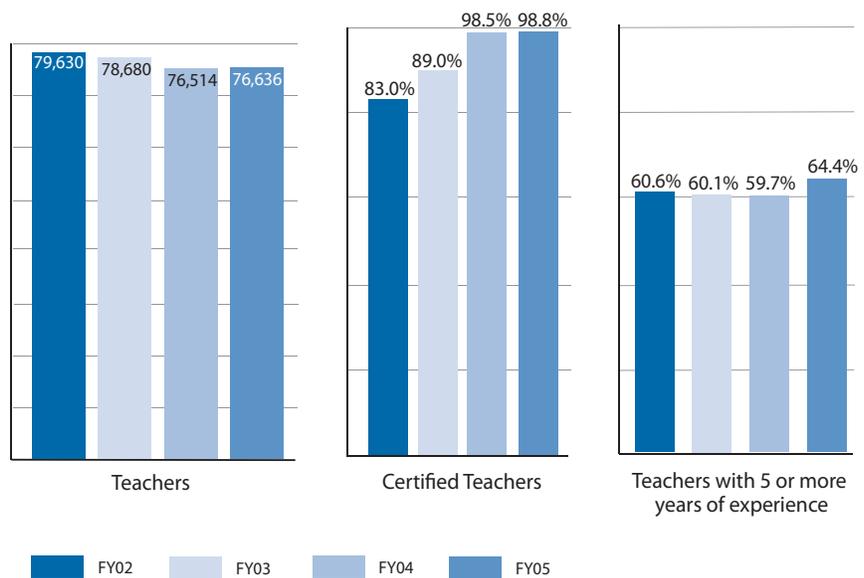
dollars allocated and as a percentage of overall DOE expenditures. (Refer to chart on prior page.)

As more data become available in the years ahead, the decline in spending on administration can be coupled with other indicators (such as the ratio of instructional personnel to other DOE staff) to provide greater certainty that decreases in administrative spending are translated effectively into increased resources for classroom instruction or otherwise are targeted to achieve optimal proportion of spending across categories.

Teacher Credentialing and Area-Specific Assignments ²

The most efficient (and effective) teaching is typically done by rigorously trained and certified teachers. In other words, math is most efficiently taught by teachers certified to teach math, English by teachers

Levels of Teacher Credentialing



² New York City Mayor's Office, Fiscal 2005 Mayor's Management Report.

certified to teach English, and so forth. Accordingly, an assessment of system efficiency looks both at teacher certification levels and subject appropriate teaching assignments.

Between 2002 and 2004, the total number of teachers on the city's payroll dropped by more than 3,000. Only in 2005 does one see a leveling off and reversal of this trend, with the addition of 122 teachers, from 76,514 to 76,636.

Between Fiscal 2002 and Fiscal 2005, the percentage of teachers with rigorous training and certification increased significantly, from 83 percent to nearly 99 percent. As of September 2005, when all teachers must meet New York State certification requirements, the DOE expects to have 100 percent of teachers certified.

In order to improve the quality of teachers and ensure that all teachers are certified, the Department has engaged in a multi-tiered effort aimed at encouraging people to become teachers, attracting existing teachers to New York City and helping uncertified teachers become certified. The Department supports alternative certification programs, such as the New York City Teaching Fellows and Teach for America. The Department has created additional shortage-area recruiting initiatives, including: adding an additional group of mid-year NYC Teaching Fellows; creating the Summer Teaching Experience Program; expanding the Call Back to Teaching program; and adjusting national and international recruitment strategies in order to source shortage-area candidates from locations in which they are in

high supply. Finally, the Department has assisted uncertified teachers in gaining certification by offering them counseling and other services. These initiatives provide teachers for traditionally hard-to-staff subjects (i.e., math, bilingual education, special education, and science). This change — in part a response to shifting state mandates — represents an important gain in instructional capacity in the city's schools. In the coming year, the Department will need to more closely review the subject area placements of its certified teachers, in order to comply with the Federal No Child Left Behind requirement that teachers must be placed in teaching positions appropriate to their certification.

Construction Contracts³

The extent to which school construction projects are awarded at competitive, market-driven prices is another important efficiency indicator. Between 1999 and 2005, the Department of Education's School Construction Authority commissioned 50 construction projects, including new schools as well as additions and renovations. Forty-two projects were commissioned prior to reforms at the SCA in 2003. These projects contracted at an average rate of \$488 per square foot (adjusted for inflation). The eight projects contracted subsequent to reforms priced out at \$355 per square foot, 27 percent lower than projects prior to reforms at the SCA.

3 New York City School Construction Authority. Capacity Projects Bid Prices. (May 2005).

Quality of the School Experience and Climate

Another broad domain for system-wide assessment involves examination of the general quality of school climate and overall school experience. In assessing this broad domain, researchers suggest that important areas to examine include: a) how students experience school in terms of being assigned to a site they have requested; b) the extent to which schools are crime-free and safe; c) the incidence of overcrowded classrooms and school sites; d) the degree to which the instructional workforce is stable; and e) the prevalence of student absenteeism and truancy. There are other areas that could be tracked in the future to help measure improvement in school climate, such as the frequency with which students have access to extracurricular activities (e.g., art programs, school bands and orchestras, clubs, etc.).

School Choice⁴

The high school admissions process annually involves approximately 100,000 students in New York City and 318 diploma-granting high schools. A new admissions system, designed to make the process more transparent and better focused on student choice, was put in place for the 2004–2005 school year. The intent is to eliminate favoritism and inequities that have often characterized admissions in the past. Under this new process, there are three steps: 1) students (and their parents) learn about their options and make their choices by ranking schools in order of their preference; 2) high schools rank the students who have

expressed interest in their schools;⁵ 3) taking into account the students' choices and the schools' rankings, students are matched to their highest ranked school that also ranked them highly.

The high school admissions process is designed to administer the various selection methods that the schools employ across three rounds of admission.

- In February, the Specialized Round fills the relatively small number of seats in the six Specialized High Schools, which admit students on the basis of test results, and LaGuardia High School, which is also a Specialized High School that admits students through a competitive audition and an academic review.
- In March, during the Main Round, DOE matches the preferences of the vast majority of students with high schools that want those students.
- Students without a high school after the Main Round are entered in the Supplementary Round in April, when every student ends up with a high school to attend.
- Students can rank up to 12 schools (or programs) under the new system, compared to just five schools under the old system. In 2003, before the current school administration made its first changes to the process, about 56,000 students were granted admission to one of their five choices. Approximately 44 percent (some 44,000 students) were rejected by all of the five schools they chose. Last year, in 2004,

4 Department of Education, High School Admissions 2005 Process.

5 In an effort to ensure equity, neither students nor schools are aware of the other party's rankings.

under a revised system, 77,428 students (84%) were matched with a school of their choice in the main admission round. Approximately 67,000 students gained admission to one of their first five choices at the end of the main admission round. In addition, many more students were matched to schools of their choice under the new process. More than 7,000 students received their first choice under the new process than under the old system.

- There were 10,517 more students (23.42%) matched to one of their top-three choices.
- 10,416 more students (18.5%) were matched to one of their top-five choices.
- 21,000 more students (37.6%) were matched to a school of their choice than had been under the previous system.

The Department of Education continued to demonstrate improvement in 2005 along this dimension. Eighty-nine percent of students (80,481) who applied for admission were matched to a high school of their choice at the end of the main admission round, and increasing percentages of students received one of their top choices.

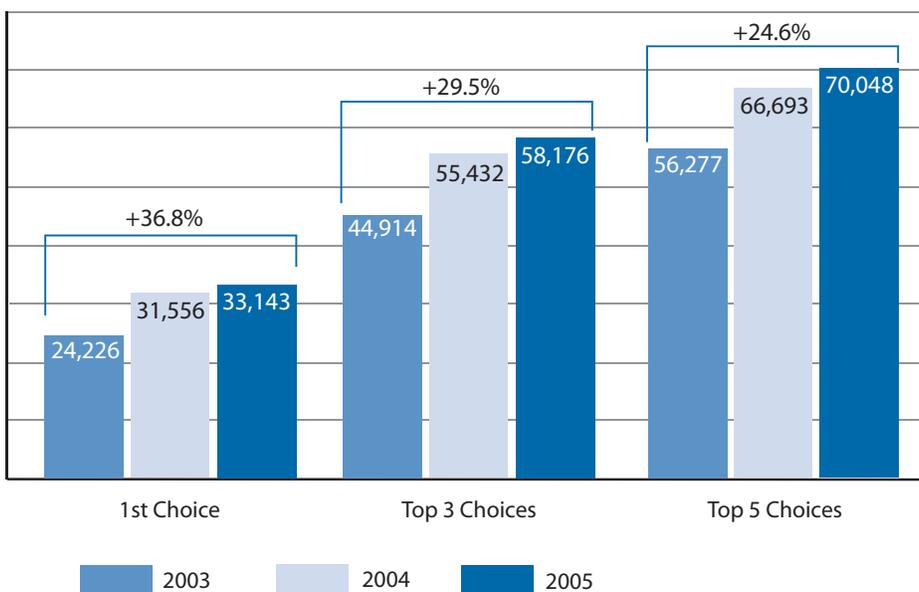
- Thirty-seven percent of those students (33,143) received their first choice.
- Nearly two thirds of students, 58,176 (64%), were granted admission to one of their top-three choices.
- More than three quarters of students (70,048 or 77%) were granted admission to one of their top-five choices.

Overall, since the new high school admissions process was established, the two-year increases in the number of students receiving their first

FINDING

There has been considerable improvement in the likelihood that every student will attend one of his or her highest-ranked schools.

Number of Students Attending Schools of Their Choice



FINDING

There has been a decrease in criminal incidents in the schools, with more research required to determine status of overall school climate.

FINDING

There has been progress in reducing the number of students in schools defined as overcrowded.

choice, one of their top-three choices, or one of their top-five choices are approximately 37%, 30%, and 25%, respectively. In addition, the number of unmatched students at the end of the main admission round decreased significantly compared to the prior year. At the end of the main admission round, 10,217 students were unmatched, a 29% decline from 2004 when 14,472 students were unmatched. Given the scale and scope of the New York City school system, it is hard to find an urban district that would serve as an appropriate comparative reference for these changes.⁶ In addition, there is no publicly available data to use for such a comparison.

School Crime and Safety⁷

System-wide improvements occurred in the level of incidents reported to the New York City Police Department from the 2000–2001 school year to the 2004–2005 school year. The number of major criminal incidents reported at public schools fell from 1,575 to 1,314, total criminal incidents occurring at school from 6,525 to 6,055, and other non-criminal incidents from 19,397 to 16,093.⁸ The decreases in major crime and total incidents reported were 17 percent over this time period.

6 Past research, for example, has compared aspects of the New York City system to statewide systems (such as Minnesota) or controlled choice systems in smaller districts (such as Cambridge or Boston, Massachusetts). See Peter Cookson and Sonali Shroff, "School Choice and Urban School Reform," Urban Diversity Series No. 110 (ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education; December 1997).

7 "Department of Education," Mayor's Management Report (2005).

8 For definitions of "major criminal incidents," "other criminal incidents" and "non-criminal incidents," see (<http://www.nycenet.edu/ourschools/SchoolSafety.htm>).

The DOE and NYPD are making significant progress in overcoming a history of failure in collaboration and sharing of data between these departments. Accurate assessment of conditions at the school level, the regional level or the system-wide level will always require a high level of cooperation between DOE and the NYPD.

Physical Capacity and Over-Crowding⁹

Overcrowding in New York City schools has been a chronic problem for several decades. The Court of Appeals decision in *CFE v. State of New York* found that the state constitution requires all schools to provide minimally adequate facilities. The Court also found that aspects of the infrastructure in New York City schools fall far short of meeting this requirement.¹⁰ Due to a chronic shortfall in capital funds for renovation and new buildings, many New York City schools are severely overcrowded and deteriorated. Some city schools also lack science labs, computers, libraries and auditoriums.

In Fiscal 2002, 45.9% of elementary and middle school students were in schools defined as overcrowded; in Fiscal 2004, 31.9% were assigned to overcrowded schools; in Fiscal 2005, 26% of elementary and middle school students were in overcrowded schools. Progress was made in reducing high school overcrowding where the level of overcrowding fell

9 "Department of Education," Mayor's Management Report (2005).

10 The Campaign For Fiscal Equity, "Making the Right to a Sound Basic Education a Reality: Final Report of CFE's Sound Basic Education Task Force," April 13, 2004.

from 73.3% to 71.4% to 69.9% over this time period.

Despite the lack of state funds to address the gap noted by the Court of Appeals, the Department of Education has made progress in reducing the number of students in schools defined as overcrowded (i.e., exceeding a school's functional capacity as determined by committees of teachers, principals, superintendents, curriculum specialists and facilities planning experts).

Teacher Attrition¹¹

Teacher attrition, particularly in urban school districts, is one of the most serious problems affecting the quality of instruction nationwide. In New York City, attrition among brand new teachers (those teachers who have not previously worked in New York City schools) declined over the last three years. In the 2003–2004 school year, 12.5 percent, or 946 out of 7,588, brand-new teachers left the system, a level of attrition that was significantly lower than the attrition rates for the two previous school years. In the 2002–2003 school year, the attrition rate reached 15.2 percent, or 1,092 out of 7,186 teachers. In the 2001–2002 school year, the rate was 17.3 percent or 1,323 out of 7,643 teachers. New York City schools' attrition rate for these years is better than the rates of attrition in many other large urban school districts. New York City's first-year attrition rate was lower than Boston's (32.0%), Houston's (27.0%) and Philadelphia's (23.0%).

The percentage of teachers with five or more years of experience remained relatively steady through 2004, at approximately 60 percent. This is

consistent with urban school districts across the country, as most have faced significant difficulty retaining teachers in their first five years of teaching.¹² The jump to 64.4% in teachers with more than five years of experience in 2005 is noteworthy and may suggest a positive new trend.

To address this dilemma, the DOE began an initiative in the 2004–2005 school year to provide mentors to teachers in their first year of teaching. The New York City Beginning Teacher Mentoring Program is based on a model developed by the New Teacher Center at the University of California, Santa Cruz; it provides training to experienced teachers, each of whom works closely with 17 teachers beginning their teaching careers in New York City schools, many of whom work in traditionally low-performing schools.

The decline in attrition among new teachers also occurs in the larger context of New York City's efforts to comply with New York State regulations requiring that all teachers satisfy rigorous certification requirements, discussed above. During the 2002–2003 school year, a total of 2,870 teachers were terminated for failing to complete these requirements. Last year, there were fewer such terminations (only 492) because New York City succeeded in hiring more certified teachers than ever before.

While there was a decline in brand new teacher attrition overall, the

FINDING

There has been improvement in the attrition rate among brand new teachers, indicating that New York City has a better chance of retaining these teachers over the long run.

11 Division of Human Resources, New York City Department of Education.

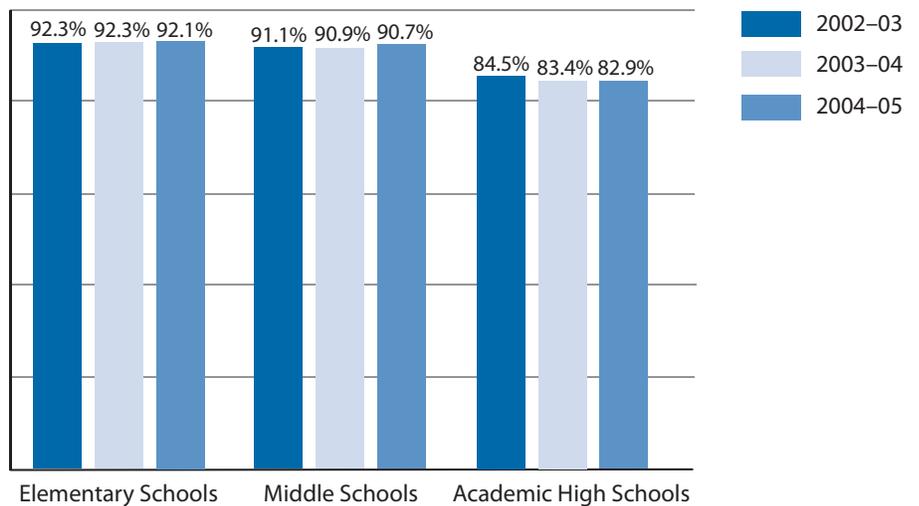
12 Richard M. Ingersoll, "Why Do High-Poverty Schools Have Difficulty Staffing Their Classrooms with Qualified Teachers?" Report Prepared for: Renewing Our Schools, Securing Our Future, A National Task Force on Public Education. Center for American Progress and Institute for America's Future. (November 2004).

number of resignations from first-year teachers (as opposed to being terminated) increased modestly: from 872 (11.4%) in 2001–2002 to 880 (11.6%) in 2003–2004. Resignations were also slightly higher in the overall teaching population: from 4,311 (5.4%) in 2001–2002 to 4,517 (5.8%) in 2003–2004. It is unclear whether these teachers resigned to accept equivalent teaching positions in other school districts or to pursue other professional opportunities. The motivations behind these resignations cannot be assessed because the data on Department of Education employee exit interviews is not available yet. The attrition rate for teachers in alternative certification programs has decreased, particularly in the New York City Teaching Fellows Program. In the 2001–2002 school year, the attrition rate for these brand new teachers in their first year was 17.1 percent; by 2003–2004, this rate had dropped to 10.6 percent.

Student Attendance¹³

Student attendance is one indicator of the extent to which students are engaged, committed and involved in schools. In the absence of other alternative indicators (such as self-reports of homework completion, refraining from cutting classes and attending class with required materials), researchers often use administrative data on attendance as a proxy for academic commitment and attachment. While at the individual level school absences can be associated with physical illness and other parentally approved determinants, such records at the aggregate level can be suggestive of the extent to which student behaviors are at a minimal and rudimentary level aligned with expectations of future positive attitudes and dispositions around participation in conventional activities (such as employment, where issues of punctuality and absenteeism are often defined as critical aspects

Annual Average Student Attendance



¹³ "Department of Education," Mayor's Management Report (2005).

of employability). In addition, individual attendance is necessary for satisfactory academic performance and is associated with improved rates of student learning.

Elementary and middle school attendance has remained basically unchanged over the last three years, with a slight decline from 92.3% in 2002–2003 to 92.1% in 2004–2005 in elementary schools and from 91.1% in 2002–03 to 90.7% in 2004–2005 in middle schools. Attendance in academic high schools has declined from 84.5% in 2002–2003 to 82.9% in 2004–2005. An alternative measure of student attendance focuses on the percentage of students that exhibit either positive attendance or chronic absenteeism. While the DOE has not identified the number of students in the latter category, the percentage of students exhibiting a 90 percent or better attendance rate has increased slightly from 69.3 percent in 2002–2003 to 70.4 percent in 2004–2005.

While educational reforms are seldom designed simply to improve attendance per se, many of the initiatives undertaken by Chancellor Klein have been designed to affect these rates indirectly by creating learning environments that are perceived by students to be safer and more intimate as well as focused on curricular designs that are perceived as more relevant and engaging. Collection and analysis of student self-reported data of attachment, commitment, engagement and behavioral climates in schools would facilitate better long-term tracking of this issue.

Adequacy and Equity

The Department of Education recently adopted an initiative to insure greater equity in resource allocations across schools. To assess equity, it is necessary to track resources/ expenditures by school with respect to school characteristics (specifically high-poverty schools) and to measure both absolute level and dispersion measures (e.g., coefficient of variation, federal range ratio) on resource inputs. Such a detailed analysis was beyond the scope of this report. In terms of achieving greater equity in educational outcomes, assessment of student achievement focuses on overall aggregate system-level achievement as well as subgroup performance. Before examining student achievement overall and in terms of equity concerns, however, two aggregate performance measures that capture the extent to which schools have achieved adequacy as defined by regulatory authorities are examined.

Adequacy can be partially identified by the extent to which schools are: a) categorized as making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as defined by federal No Child Left Behind law; or b) defined as Schools Under Registration Review (SURR) by the New York State Board of Regents. These designations suggest the percentage of schools in the system that are unable to provide students with adequate educational opportunities.

Adequate Yearly Progress¹⁴

Under the federal No Child Left Behind law, the determination of

FINDING

Little change in school attendance rates suggests the need for better understanding of factors that are influencing levels of student commitment.

14 Department of Education Analysis; and for information on Department of Education measurement of Adequate Yearly Progress see (<http://www.nycenet.edu/Administration/NCLB/Overview/default.htm>).

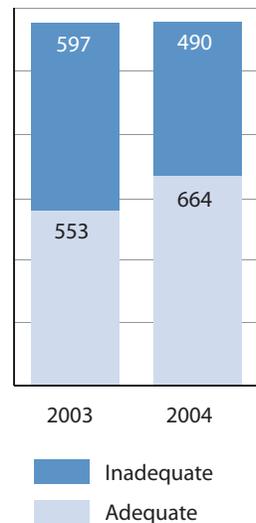
FINDING

As measured by both the number of schools designated as making Adequate Yearly Progress as well as the number of Schools Under Registration Review, the New York City schools are making steady progress in reducing the number of low-performing schools. This has important implications for improving both adequacy and equity within the system: reducing the number of poorly performing schools in the system, all else being equal, will help improve both the overall level of student performance in the district as well as reduce the gaps in student achievement.

Adequate Yearly Progress is calculated on the basis of each school's performance in meeting the state proficiency level for all students in English Language Arts, mathematics, science and/or high school graduation rate. Schools are held accountable for the achievement of students of different races and ethnic groups, students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency and low-income students. Schools must also have an average over two years of 95% of their students participating in state tests. If a school does not meet AYP requirements in any one of these categories for two years, it is placed on the New York State Education Department's Schools In Need of Improvement (SINI) list.

The total number of schools in New York City making Adequate Yearly Progress has increased by approximately 20 percent in one year. In 2003, 553 schools made AYP. In 2004, 664 schools made AYP, an

Number of Schools Making Adequate Progress (2003–2004)



increase of 111 more schools awarded the AYP rating. Given that schools can both improve and be classified as making Adequate Yearly Progress or deteriorate and be classified as Schools in Need of Improvement, it is useful to track both upward and downward movement of schools over time. From 2003 to 2004, 174 schools attained AYP status that had failed the previous year, while 75 schools lost that status during this period.

Schools Under Registration Review¹⁵

While schools making AYP provide a useful record of the number of schools that are making gains in student performance compared to those that are not, the list of Schools Under Registration Review (SURR) provides a sharper portrait of the number of schools that are fundamentally failing. The New York City Department of Education has shown dramatic improvement in the total number of schools that are functioning at such a poor level that they are at risk for losing State registration status. The number of schools on the list has dropped from 97 in the 2000–2001 school year to 35 in the 2004–2005 school year. While the Department of Education has maintained past progress in reducing the SURR list through improving school performance in 16 to 18 schools per year, the New York City schools in the past three years have also dramatically reduced the number of new schools that are defined by the State as warranting SURR status. The number of new schools annually added to the

15 Department of Education, "Schools Under Registration Review (SURR). Year-by-Year. 1997–2005." (http://www.nycenet.edu/NR/rdonlyres/E49D156A-8AA4-4360-9208-0F59B2080290/2456/199798_200405SURR.pdf)

list has been reduced to six to eight schools a year over the past three years from 12 to 18 in each of the two prior years. (Refer to chart on prior page.)

Student Achievement

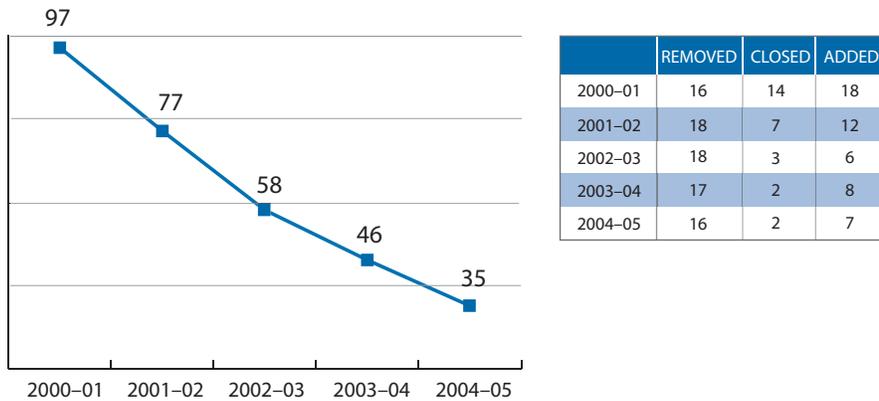
There are many approaches that can be used to measure student achievement. This report focuses on measures that are most easily interpreted. Discussion is limited to two basic performance indicators: a) achievement levels in standardized tests; and b) graduation rates.

Ultimately, it will be important to track change in individual-level student performance over time, a goal that Chancellor Klein has committed the system to achieving. This analysis is limited to the simple measurement of gains for the total student population as a whole as well as the gains of various population subgroups.¹⁶

Standardized Tests¹⁷

New York City public school children are tested annually in grades three through eight in both reading (English Language Arts) and mathematics. English Language Arts (ELA) and

Number of Schools Designated Schools Under Registration Review



16 Future research should employ methods to ensure that gains or losses in achievement for the total student population and for subgroups don't simply reflect changes in the "composition" of the student population. For example, a dramatic increase or decrease in the population of students who are new immigrants (due to changes in immigration policy) could affect the achievement scores of the total population of students without really changing the scores of students who stayed in the system.

17 For results on English and math standardized tests grades 3-8 see Department of Education, "2005 Test Results" (http://www.nycenet.edu/daa/test_results/); Regents Exam pass rates derived from Department of Education generated tables, "NYC English Regents Cohort Regents Pass Rates," and "NYC Math Regents Cohort Regents Pass Rates."

FINDING

During the past two school years, New York City's student population has been characterized by rising performance on standardized tests across population subgroups and overall gains in graduation rates. There has been general improvement in student achievement in the city's schools during the administration of Chancellor Klein.*

math tests in grade 3, 5, 6 and 7 are city tests. Fourth-grade and eighth-grade tests are state exams. New York City's Department of Education tracks progress in the percentage of students scoring at level three (indicating proficiency) or four (indicating advanced skills) on the standardized tests, which is a reasonable basis for assessment.¹⁸

System-wide Student Performance in Reading (English Language Arts)

During the past two years, New York City public school students have demonstrated steady improvement in reading performance compared to past years, according to the results of tests administered by both New York City and New York State. On city-administered exams designed to test reading abilities, the percentage of students earning proficiency or advanced scores (levels 3 or 4, respectively) on the citywide tests increased between 1999 and 2005, jumping by more than 14 percentage points in the last year alone.

The percentage of students scoring in the lowest level on the citywide tests (level 1, meaning below basic proficiency) fell by nearly half during this period. In the first years alone, the percentage of students with level 1 scores dropped to 12.9% from 21.9%.¹⁹

The same general pattern found in the summary results for the citywide English Language Arts exams (grades 3, 5, 6 and 7 together) are evident in the patterns at each grade level. Third-grade ELA performance improved fairly steadily from 1999 through 2005, measured as the percentage scoring at level three or four, with an especially notable gain last year of 7.8%. Fifth-grade ELA performance improved fairly steadily as well. The 4% dip in combined proficiency or mastery performance between 2003 and 2004 was more than offset in the last year with a gain of 19.5%. Sixth-grade and seventh-grade ELA performance increased over the 1999-2005 period, with a significant gain (of around 15%) in the percentage of students earning level three or four scores in the last year. Gains in the percentage of students scoring at proficient or advanced levels rose across grades 3, 5, 6 and 7 in the last year, although not at the same rate.

Results from the state-administered reading tests showed a similar pattern of improvement for fourth graders, but no real change for eighth graders. Fourth-grade performance has climbed fairly steadily over the six-year period. While only about a third of New York City's fourth graders achieved level 3 or 4 in 1999, by 2005, almost 60% of New York City fourth graders achieved at those levels. Additionally, the percentage of students scoring at the highest levels this year is 7% higher than the previous high achieved in 2003.

Eighth-grade performance, however, has been fairly stable and troubling: the percentage scoring in levels 3

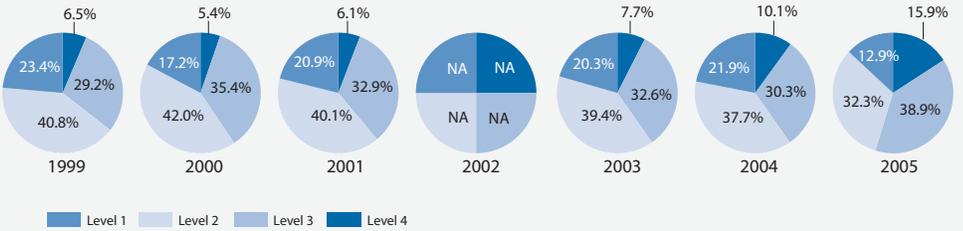
increases (change compared to previous base rate).

* New York City school performance can also be considered relative to student achievement in other settings. The most definitive study to date that provides data on such a comparison was released by the National Center for Educational Statistics in 2003 that relied on 2002 data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress Exams on reading, writing and mathematics. The research found that New York City students in general performed slightly better than students in other large cities in the study, roughly comparable to students located in central cities in general, and on average slightly below students nationally. Some of these differences are likely due to differences in student demographic backgrounds in these categories. For detailed results, see documentation identified in remarks by Associate Commissioner of the National Center for Educational Statistics Valena W. Plisko, July 22, 2003 and December 17, 2003; (http://nces.ed.gov/commissioner/remarks2003/7_22_2003.asp) and (http://nces.ed.gov/commissioner/remarks2003/12_17_2003.asp)

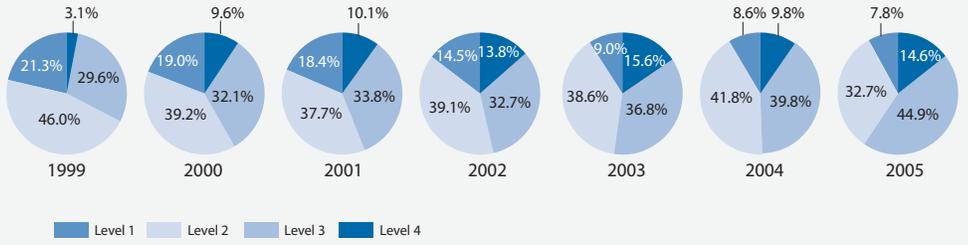
18 The New York City Department of Education defines the four performance levels as follows: level 1 (below basic), students do not meet the learning standards; level 2 (basic), students show partial achievement of the learning standards; level 3 (proficient), students meet the learning standards; and level 4 (advanced), students exceed the learning standards. When a student is at level 3 or 4, he or she is defined as having met or exceeded the standard; when a student is at level 1 or 2, he or she is defined as being below the standard.

19 All percentage increases presented in this report are absolute increases (change in the percentage of total students or subgroups), not relative

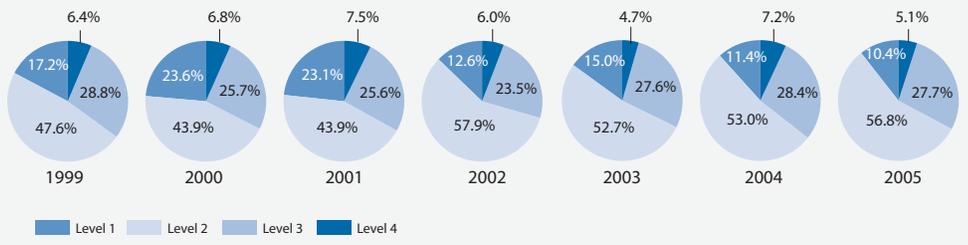
Performance on City-Administered ELA Tests (Grades 3, 5, 6, 7)



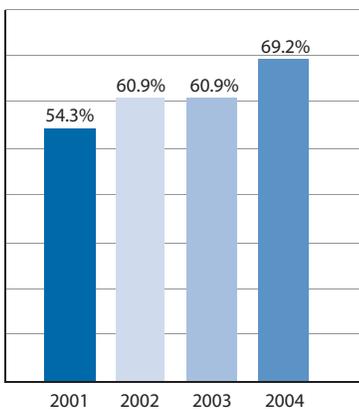
Performance on State-Administered ELA Tests (Grade 4)



Performance on State-Administered ELA Tests (Grade 8)



Results of High School Regents Exam in English (Passing at 65% Level)



and 4 has fluctuated in a relatively narrow band between 29.5% (2002) to 35.6% (2004). This year showed 32.8% scoring at proficient or advanced, which is close to average performance over this period, suggesting no significant break from the existing trend.²⁰

The results of the state-administered high school English tests (Regents Exams) also indicated improvements. Between 2001 and 2004, the percentage of students in a cohort passing the English Regents has increased, from 54.3% in 2001 to 60.9% in 2003. Between 2003 and 2004, the pass rate jumped significantly to 69.2%. (Refer to charts on prior page.)

System-wide Student Performance in Math

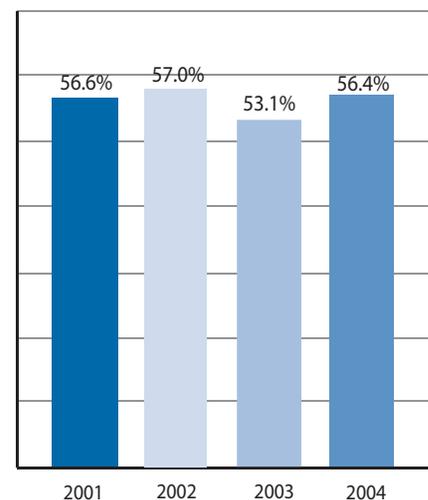
New York City students have also shown improved performance on math exams. A look at student test data shows steady improvement between 2001 and 2005 in the percentage of the students performing at levels 3 and 4, indicating proficiency and advanced skills, respectively. Increases in the last two years are particularly large — a 5.1% increase between 2003 and 2004, and a 7.5% increase between 2004 and 2005.

²⁰ A question that is likely to emerge about these scores is why the gains in fourth grade scores are not mirrored in gains in eighth grade scores four years later. While it is hard to know exactly why, part of the answer lies in understanding that a significant fraction of the eighth graders tested in a year were not fourth graders in New York City public schools four years ago. In addition, educational researchers have found in general that it is more difficult to identify the effects of schools on student test scores in later grades as test scores after elementary school become more stable over time at the individual level.

These same exams also indicate a steady decrease in the percentage of students scoring at the lowest level, level 1. In 1999, roughly one third of students in grades 3, 5, 6, and 7 achieved the lowest level on the New York City math tests. In 2004, that percentage had dropped to one quarter, and 2005 saw the percentage in this category decline to roughly one fifth of all students.²¹ Results from state-administered math tests for 2004–2005 are not yet available.

The results of the state-administered high school math tests (Regents Exams) have been relatively stable. The percentage of students passing at 65 has remained roughly constant.

Results of High School Regents Exam in Math
(Passing at 65% Level)



²¹ As more data becomes available, it will be possible to offer an in-depth explanation of these declines and other trends.

Performance in Reading and Math Across Population Groups

While the significance of gains in reading and math achievement for the total population of students in the New York City public schools cannot be discounted, these gains are more meaningful if they are consistent across subgroups defined by ethnicity, socio-economic status, students for whom English is a second language (English Language Learners), and students with learning disabilities. Results demonstrate that important student achievement gains were made by all ethnic/racial groups, English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

Differences Across Ethnic/Racial Groups

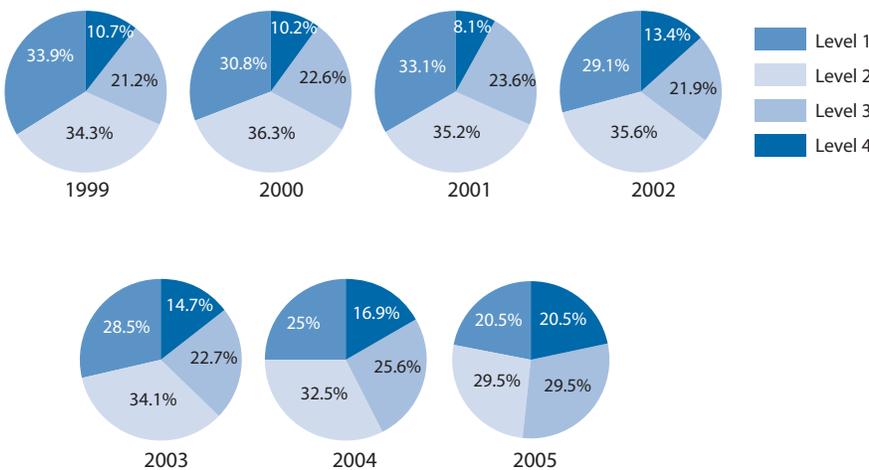
Overall, increases in the last year were seen for all racial/ethnic groups, although magnitudes differ. Gains in the percentage of students achieving levels 3 or 4 on the citywide English exams for grades 3, 5, 6 and 7 were

evident among Asians (13.2%), Blacks (14.4%), Hispanics (15.1%) and Whites (12.2%). At the same time, there were significant decreases in the percentage scoring in level 1 — a 4.2% drop among Asians, 10.5% by Blacks, 10.6% by Hispanics, and 4.1% for Whites.

Increases in the pass rates on the statewide fourth grade English test were seen for all racial/ethnic groups, although the magnitude of the increase varied across groups. In addition, the level of the pass rates varied across races — more than three quarters of Asians and Whites pass, while only about one half of Hispanics and Blacks do. Overall, however, the gains of Blacks and Hispanics were large.

Patterns in the math tests are similar. Between 2004 and 2005, the percentage of students achieving at levels 3 or 4 on citywide math tests increased in every racial/ethnic group. Here, though, the gains were fairly

Performance on City-Administered Math Tests (Grades 3, 5, 6, 7)



consistent across groups — Asians, Hispanics, Blacks and Whites each saw an increase in the percentage scoring at levels 3 or 4 — a gain of between 7.2% and 7.4%. The decline in the percentage of students scoring at the lowest level varied somewhat across racial/ethnic groups — 2.8% drop for Asians, 5.2% decline for Blacks, 4.9% for Hispanics and 2.4% for Whites.

The implication of these results is noteworthy. For some demographic groups more than others, the higher percentage of students scoring at level 3 or level 4 comes from the level 2 pool. For other demographic groups, the highest gains are found in the decline in the number of students with level 1 scores.²²

Performance by English Language Learners²³

There were increases in reading and math achievement — as measured by

the percentage earning proficiency (level 3) or advanced skills (level 4) — for English Language Learners in the last year. The percentage of English Language Learners passing the English Regents Exam increased between 2002 and 2004, evidence that English Language Learners are experiencing important gains.

Performance by Students with Disabilities

Between 1999 and 2005, the percentage of students with disabilities scoring at proficient or advanced levels on the ELA test in grades 3, 5, 6 and 7 has increased — with the bulk of the increase in the last year. In 1999, only about 6% of students with disabilities achieved level 3 or 4 on the ELA test. By 2005, 19.3% did so.²⁴ The percentage of students with disabilities scoring at the lowest level, indicating a lack of proficiency, has declined since 1999, from 62.1%, again with a significant drop in the last year of 19.3% to a six-year low of 43.2%.²⁵

A similar pattern is seen in the citywide math test. The percentage of students with disabilities achieving proficiency or advanced performance levels increased steadily between

22 These results need to be understood in the context of significant disparities in performance between racial groups. Roughly three quarters of the Asians and Whites earn proficiency or advanced levels on the math test and even more on the ELA, while less than half of all Hispanics and Blacks earn proficiency or better. Thus, there is improvement over previous years, but there are still considerable disparities that need to be addressed.

23 According to the No Child Left Behind legislation the definition of a “Limited English Proficient” or English Language Learner Student is an individual age 3-21, who is enrolled (or about to enroll) in a U.S. elementary or secondary school and meets these two requirements: 1) Belongs to one of the following categories: was not born in the United States or speaks a native language other than English; is a Native American, Alaska Native, or native resident of outlying areas and comes from an environment where language other than English has had a significant impact in the individual’s level of English language proficiency; or is migratory, speaks a native language other than English, and comes from an environment where language other than English is dominant; and 2) May be unable, because of difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language, to score at the proficient level on state assessments of

academic achievement; learn successfully in classrooms in which the language of instruction is English; or participate fully in society. See NCLB Action Brief, (http://www.ncpie.org/nclbaction/english_language_learners.html).

24 Here, again, it is important to remember that changes in the composition of the population of “students with disabilities” could affect these percentage changes. Future research is needed to examine whether these improvements in aggregate group scores are robust after considering year-to-year changes affecting student selectivity into these programs.

25 As more data becomes available, it will be possible to offer an in-depth explanation of these gains and other trends.

1999 and 2005 with a significant jump in the last year.

High School Graduation Attainment²⁶

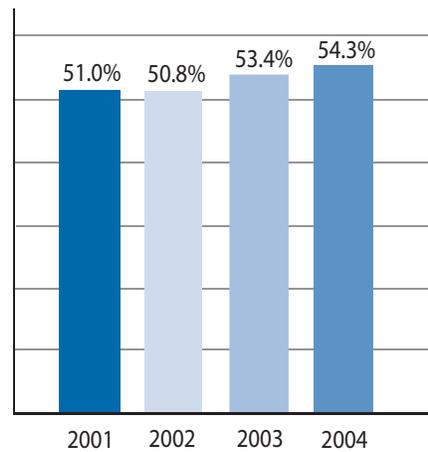
Graduation rates show positive signs of improvement, though those rates are still far below what is required to maintain a competitive and qualified labor pool for New York City’s global, knowledge-based economy. The four-year graduation rate²⁷ for the total cohort of 2004 (54.3%) is up slightly, from 2003 (53.4%) and from 2001 (51.0%). Across population groups, progress varies. Between 2001 and 2004, the four-year graduation rate for Hispanic high school students rose from 41.3% to 46.0%. During the same period, the graduation rate for Black students climbed from 44.3% to 48.8%. The four-year graduation rate for Asian students fell 1.8 percentage points from 68.7% to 66.9%. For Whites, the four-year graduation rate was virtually unchanged, going from 71.6% in 2001 to 71.9% in 2004.

Between 2000 and 2004, small gains in the graduation rate spread across current English Language Learners, former English Language Learners (students entitled to English as a Second Language or Bilingual program in the past) and English Proficient students. The highest graduation rates are consistently seen

among the former ELLs, higher even than among the English proficient students.

There is clearly a need to develop a transparent and useful measure for dropout rates, particularly in relation to Black and Hispanic students in the 8th through 10th grades. It would also be instructive to correlate increases in numbers and quality of students enrolling at the City University of New York with high school attainment.

Total Cohort Four-Year Graduation Rate



26 Department of Education, “Four-Year Outcomes for Ethnic Racial Populations in the Classes of 2001 to 2004,” and Department of Education, “Four-Year Graduation and Dropout Outcomes for English Language Learners.”

27 An alternative measure of high school graduation used by the Department of Education and educational researchers is a seven-year graduation rate. This report relies solely on the four-year graduation rate, because assessment of the current school system performance by the seven-year measure requires a larger observational time frame.

Conclusion

The overall results presented in the “Key Findings on the Performance of New York City’s Public Schools” identify a pattern of general improvement in the New York City school system.

SCHOOL EFFICIENCY

In general, NYU researchers’ review of the data currently available to index school efficiency shows important gains in several areas. Other areas are ripe for additional investigation. The drop in administrative spending as a share of overall DOE spending is an encouraging development. In addition, important progress has been made with significantly lower costs for school construction projects.

QUALITY OF SCHOOL EXPERIENCE AND CLIMATE

The analysis suggests a record of general improvement in the broad domain of the quality of school climate and overall school experience. But on indices of student attendance, no improvement has been demonstrated. In the area of school safety, there has been a decrease in reported criminal incidents. However, school discipline requires continuous efforts to maintain school climates that are conducive to learning. In the area of high school choice, there has been considerable improvement in the likelihood that every student will attend one of his or her highest-ranked schools. And despite the lack of state funds to address the gap noted by the State Court of Appeals, the Department of Education has made progress in reducing the number of students in schools defined as overcrowded.

ADEQUACY

As measured by both the number of schools designated as making Adequate Yearly Progress as well as the number of Schools Under Registration Review, the New York City schools are making steady progress in reducing the number of low-performing schools. This development has important implications in terms of improving both adequacy and equity within the system: reducing the number of poorly performing schools in the system, all else being equal, will help improve both the overall level of student performance in the district as well as reduce the gaps in student achievement.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

There has been general improvement in student achievement. During the past two years, New York City public school students have demonstrated steady improvement in reading and math performance compared to past years, according to tests administered by both New York City and New York State. Graduation rates show positive signs of improvement as well.

As encouraging as current improvements are, continuing to make new improvements and sustaining them over time will require increased evaluation, assessment, research capacity, accountability and transparency. The fact that Chancellor Klein has announced plans to establish an independent assessment organization modeled in part after successful efforts elsewhere (such as the Consortium on Chicago School Research, the North Carolina Educational Research Council and the Texas Schools Project) should provide an important assessment vehicle for assuring continued analysis as the basis for further improvement in performance.

Summary of Key “Children First” Reform Initiatives

The general progress and positive trends outlined in this report should be considered in the context of the larger reform initiatives undertaken by the Department of Education under the leadership of Chancellor Joel Klein. The precise impact of each element of the reform program is, however, extremely difficult to measure. This is due primarily to the fact that students, teachers, administrators and capital investments are not randomly distributed to programs or school sites. Instead, sorting is common and occurs along many different dimensions — for example, by ability, academic performance and residence — which typically means race/ethnicity and income are not randomly distributed. In light of these conditions, the Department of Education is preparing to undertake “value-added” measurement approaches and to invest significant resources in sophisticated methodological evaluation of its Social Promotion Initiative, in order to better measure the specific results of a particular intervention.

As a starting point for future evaluation, the Partnership for New York City asked the Department of Education to provide data on key Children First initiatives, including stated objectives, policy background,

initiative design and status of implementation.

The following section is a summary of the system-wide reforms Chancellor Klein’s Administration has pursued.

Core Curriculum

OBJECTIVE

To achieve consistency for students who move around the system and, secondarily, as the foundation for establishing a system-wide baseline for effective assessment of performance.

BACKGROUND

Prior to September 2003, New York City’s schools lacked core curricula in reading, writing, and math. Students who transferred from one school to another would often land in a school that used entirely different curricula for acquiring these fundamental skills.

Each year, some 12 percent of students transfer to different schools in the system. The difficulties transfer students encounter also exposed a larger problem: New York City’s public schools were operating without a common standard for what students in the early grades needed to master as the foundation for future learning.

INITIATIVE

To ensure that all students in the early grades master basic skills, the Department of Education adopted a citywide curriculum. The new instructional approach applies to all but a select number of schools that the Department of Education has classified as high-performing schools.

The new citywide core curriculum includes system-wide interim assessments in English and math for students in grades 3 through 8. Results of these interim assessment help teachers address students' specific needs.

The new approach to reading and writing emphasizes reading to children, reading with children, and reading by children. The new approach to mathematics instruction is designed to help every child acquire basic skills and develop conceptual, problem-solving capabilities. Students in kindergarten and grades 1 through 5 use Everyday Mathematics; every school had the option of implementing the program in September 2003 or September 2004. Students in grades 6 through 8 will use Impact Mathematics; the rollout of this curriculum change began with the 6th grade in September 2003. Students in kindergarten, first grade and second grade spend one hour each day on math; students in grades 3 through 8 will increase time spent on math to 75 minutes each day. In the fall of 2003, high school students will use New York Math A: An Integrated Approach, which places a strong emphasis on the skills needed for success in higher-level math.

IMPLEMENTATION

In kindergarten and grades 1 through 3, students spend approximately 90 minutes on reading and writing per day, and classroom libraries are being supplemented with phonics programs, such as Month by Month Phonics and Voyager Passport, as well as recommended materials for struggling readers. Students in grades 4 through 8 and those struggling to meet reading and writing standards in grades 9 through 12 receive an hour-and-a-half per day of dedicated instruction in these areas.

Students in kindergarten and grades 1 through 5 use Everyday Mathematics; every school had the option of rolling out the program in either kindergarten and grades 1 through 2 or kindergarten and grades 1 through 5 in 2003, with the expectation that all schools would be using the program in kindergarten through fifth grades in 2004. Students in grades 6 through 8 will use Impact Mathematics; the rollout of this curriculum change began with the 6th grade in September 2003. Students in kindergarten, first grade and second grade spend one hour each day on math; students in grades 3 through 8 will increase time spent on math to 75 minutes each day. In the fall of 2003, students grades 8 through 10 started to use New York Math A: An Integrated Approach, which places a strong emphasis on the skills needed for success in higher-level math.

As the DOE rolled out the new curriculum to all but high-performing schools, it also launched the following set of complementary initiatives: a nearly 20 million increase in books and materials that support the new math and literacy curricula;

the assignment of math and literacy coaches to most schools; more opportunities for teacher development and training; and a continued reduction in the use of uncertified teachers. In addition, over the past two school years, 27,263 classroom libraries have been added to grades kindergarten to 9, which make it possible for teachers to guide students in the selection of books to read. During the 2003–2004 school year, 15,194 libraries were added in grades 4 through 9. During the 2004–2005, 12,069 libraries were added in grades kindergarten through 3.

Charter Schools

OBJECTIVE

To introduce innovative, high-quality educational alternatives, primarily for students from low-income, high-need communities, and to create healthy competition that will have the effect of improving all public schools.

BACKGROUND

Charter schools are public schools run by private and non-profit entities, and are exempt from certain regulations and controls, often including union contracts. Most charter schools are designed to serve students in kindergarten through eighth grade and operate in low-income, high-need neighborhoods.

INITIATIVE

In 2003, the Department of Education introduced a plan to create 50 new charter schools in all five boroughs over five years. To assist in the creation of charter schools, the Department of Education partnered with the philanthropic community to launch

the New York City Center for Charter School Excellence.

IMPLEMENTATION

As of early 2005, New York City had 32 charter schools, including 9 that have opened as part of the Department of Education's plan to create 50 charter schools. In September 2005, 15 more charter schools are opening, bringing the total number of New York City charter schools to 47. As of the 2004–2005 school year, there were approximately 7,700 children attending charter schools in New York City. The New York State cap on charters, set at 100 schools statewide, has become a limiting factor that Governor George Pataki, Mayor Michael Bloomberg and charter advocates are asking the Legislature to lift.

Parental Involvement

OBJECTIVE

To increase outreach to parents and intensify parental participation in the education of their children and the development of their children's school.

BACKGROUND

Educational research shows that student performance is often associated with the level of parental involvement. Decentralization of the NYC school system in the 1960s was intended to maximize community and parental involvement, but seemed to have the opposite result. Disengagement was most evident in communities where poverty rates and student need were greatest. Those parents who did step forward typically received little training or information required to participate in an effective

manner. The advent of mayoral control and dissolution of the Board of Education and community school boards created a new challenge. As weak as they were, these boards and their public meetings created a forum for the expression of parents' concerns and a source of information and advocacy. State legislation replaced the community school boards with parent-dominated community education councils, which by law, are required to allocate 9 of the 11 voting members to parents of children attending the district's schools.

INITIATIVE

In the fall of 2003, the Department of Education placed a full-time, paid parent coordinator in every school to: conduct outreach to all parents; help create a welcoming school environment; assist in the resolution of parents' concerns at the school level; and work closely with school staff and parents to support children's learning at home.

The DOE opened 13 Regional Parent Support Offices to provide additional access to and support for parents. The offices have regular evening hours (until 8 p.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays during the school year and until 6 p.m. every other weekday) and weekend hours (from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. on Saturdays during the school year) for parents' convenience.

The DOE established a new Translation and Interpretation Unit, which provides translation of important documents into the major foreign languages spoken by the parents of city school children: Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Bengali, Haitian Creole, Korean, Urdu and Arabic.

Using the authority granted under reforms in state education law, the Department of Education replaced the community school boards, whose members frequently were not parents of students in the schools, with parent-dominated community education councils. The State Legislature also authorized the DOE to establish the Citywide Council on Special Education; nine of its 11 voting members must be parents of students receiving citywide special education services. The chancellor also established the Citywide Council on High Schools, with 11 voting members (10 parents and one high school student).

IMPLEMENTATION

Data for the 2004–2005 school year yielded the following results: parent coordinators responded to more than 1,060,100 phone calls; they provided assistance to 631,700 parent walk-ins; they conducted 22,900 parent-coordinator workshops for 454,600 parents. In addition, 974,500 parents attended parent-teacher conferences. Because the DOE has just begun to aggregate parent engagement data, a comparative, year-to-year analysis of parent involvement will have to wait for a future report.

Impact Schools

OBJECTIVE

To restore a climate of order and safety in schools that have a disproportionate amount of crime.

BACKGROUND

Every student has a right to learn and every teacher has a right to teach in an environment that is free of violence and other forms of

disruption. At any given time, certain schools within the system account for a disproportionate percentage of crime. This initiative focuses on three main goals: intensifying enforcement against low-level crime and disorder; rigorously enforcing the New York City Discipline Code; and correcting school conditions conducive to disorder.

IMPLEMENTATION

In conjunction with the Mayor's Office, the Mayor's Criminal Justice Coordinator and the NYPD, the DOE has: identified schools with the most safety problems; created a task force of additional police officers (initially 150 officers, expanded to 200 in January 2004) assigned to these schools; conducted comprehensive safety assessments for each school; and provided detailed "best practices" guides. During the 2004–2005 school year the DOE also provided citywide professional development in multiple areas directly related to creating and sustaining a safe and supportive school environment.

Crime and disorder have decreased dramatically at the 16 original Impact Schools. Compared to the same period last year, total crime dropped 39%; violent crime dropped 49%; and major crime dropped 39%. Follow-up inspections conducted last fall at each of the original 16 Impact Schools found the share of conditions that were approaching or meeting "best practices" standards increased from 16% to 50%. Average safety-assessment scores for each of the schools also increased by 36% overall from January 2004. The inspections were conducted by school safety intervention teams — composed of experts from the Department of Education and NYPD, and community

representatives — who used a "best practices" checklist of more than 100 variables.

In January 2005, when five of the original 16 Impact Schools demonstrated sufficient declines in crime and disorderly conditions, they were transitioned out of Impact School status. At these schools, total crime was down 51%; violent crime was down 55%; and major crime was down 49% compared to the prior year. Since being removed from Impact status, the South Bronx's MS 222 and South Shore Middle School, Franklin K. Lane, Far Rockaway, and Washington Irving High Schools have maintained a strong safety record. At the same time, six new schools that stood to benefit the most from intensive intervention entered the Impact School program (Abraham Lincoln, John Bowne, Lafayette, Springfield Gardens, Harry S. Truman, and Norman Thomas High Schools). Since January, there has been a 39% drop in total crime and a 52% decline in violent crime per day at these six schools compared to the first half of the year.

In June, Chancellor Klein announced that six more of the original Impact Schools will exit the Impact School program due to significant declines in crime and disorderly conditions. These schools are: Evander Child, where total crime fell 31%; Adlai Stevenson, where total crime fell 48%; Erasmus Hall, where total crime fell 26%; Theodore Roosevelt, where total crime fell 52%; Thomas Jefferson, where total crime fell 67%; and Springfield Gardens High School, where total crime fell 42%.

Capital Program Efficiency and Investment

OBJECTIVE

To reduce overcrowding and lower the cost of creating new seats and upgrading the physical condition of schools.

BACKGROUND

For years, the School Construction Authority (SCA) and the Board of Education’s Division of School Facilities (DSF) produced sizable cost overruns, and were unable to alleviate chronic overcrowding or adequately maintain the aging physical structure of many schools. In a February 2002 report, the New York City Independent Budget Office (IBO) found that “the cost per square foot to construct new schools in the city exceeds that of some of the most expensive new office buildings.”

In Manhattan, the average, per-square-foot price paid for commercial buildings with at least 200,000 square feet was about \$350 in 2002. In contrast, IBO reported that the median cost for building a new elementary school in the city was \$597 per square foot, or \$78,812 for each new school seat. The new high school cost per

square foot was \$657 and the total cost per seat was \$110,456.

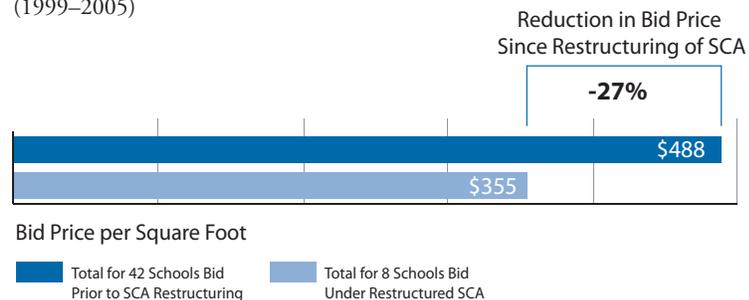
INITIATIVE

The school governance changes the State Legislature and the Governor enacted in June 2002 gave the Mayor the power to appoint all three trustees of the School Construction Authority. In October 2002, the Mayor and Chancellor functionally merged the construction responsibilities of the SCA and the Department of Education’s Division of School Facilities.

Along with these management reforms, the Mayor increased the city commitment to capital for school construction from \$4.5 billion to \$6.5 billion over five years. The \$13.1 billion Amended Capital Plan for 2005–2009 includes \$4.6 billion for restructuring about 400 schools; \$4.2 billion to build 97 new school buildings to accommodate 66,000 new student seats; and \$4.4 billion for capital improvements to existing schools.

The Department of Education has also created new seats and schools by converting former district and administrative offices into classrooms.

Bid Prices for School Construction Authority Projects (1999–2005)



NOTES

- All 50 new schools and additions were funded in 2000–2004 Capital Plan, except for five schools, which are funded in the 2005–2009 Capital Plan.
- Prime Construction Award and the Bid Price per Square Foot are in June 2005 constant dollars to adjust for inflation.

IMPLEMENTATION

Since October 2002, some 43,600 seats at all school levels have been built, converted from former DOE office space or made available for classroom use through leasing. More than 12,000 seats were created by converting former district and administrative offices into classrooms.

In addition to the use of revised specifications and value engineering, the Chancellor's construction managers are achieving cost reductions by attracting a new, more competitive group of contractors to participate in the bid process. The 2002 reforms have made it possible for the SCA to undertake innovative projects to accelerate the capital program and stretch limited funds. For the first time in many years, for example, the Educational Construction Fund that leverages private investment and expertise is being used for the construction of a 600-seat, K-through-8 school in Lower Manhattan and for a school on the Upper East Side.

By 2010, all of these programs are designed to result in elimination of temporary facilities and multiple sessions and to achieve reduced class size goals in kindergarten through third grade.

The DOE reforms have also produced a 27 percent reduction in per-square-foot bid prices. For 42 projects dating back to 1999, SCA built 27,000 new seats at a bid price of \$488 per square foot. Under the restructured SCA, eight school projects with more than 2,000 seats secured a bid price of \$355 per square foot.

Promotion/Intervention

OBJECTIVE

To end the long-standing practice of promoting students who did not meet basic academic standards, which resulted in perpetuation of failure among a significant portion of the school population.

BACKGROUND

Mayor Bloomberg ended the practice of social promotion for third graders in January 2004 and fifth graders in the fall of 2004. This ended a practice that allowed thousands of students to be routinely "promoted" without regard to their performance level. The Mayor has just announced that social promotion will end for seventh graders as well, beginning in the 2005–2006 school year.

Research suggests that students who are not reading by the third grade are unlikely to ever read at the same level as their grade-peers and will, instead, progressively fall farther behind across subjects. The problem begins with a reading skills gap but quickly becomes a wider, deeper problem. Children who cannot read at grade level by the third grade are at higher risk for dropping out and for exhibiting academic, behavioral and social problems. Fifth graders who are significantly below grade level have difficulty making the transition to having different subjects taught by different teachers, which is one of the big adjustments students make in middle school.

The Department of Education initially focused this policy in the third and fifth grades because educators have identified these two grades as critical transition points in every child's education and development. Most

educators believe that third graders are “learning to read” and fourth graders are “reading to learn.” By sixth grade, students move on to building knowledge across different subjects.

INITIATIVE

Under the new policies, third and fifth graders must achieve a score of level 2 or higher in citywide tests in English Language Arts and mathematics or demonstrate comparable level 2 performance on a review of student work based on citywide criteria before moving to the next grade.

Students identified as being at risk of not achieving at least a level 2 are offered intensive intervention services, including after-school tutoring, vacation-week classes and Saturday Preparatory Academy classes for fifth graders. Workshops for parents offer advice on how to support their children’s acquisition of academic skills.

Those students who have not achieved a level 2 score by the end of the school year are encouraged to attend a Summer Success Academy, where students receive intensive instruction for five weeks before taking the test again at the end of the program in August. In another break with past practice, the criteria for determining promotions and evaluating appeals are now uniform and administered by the school principal and the community superintendent.

IMPLEMENTATION

While roughly the same number of third-grade students were held back in 2003–2004 as in 2002–2003, those who were promoted had demonstrated that they were

prepared to do fourth-grade work. At the end of the Summer Success Academy for third graders in 2005, 55 percent of third grade students attending Summer Success Academy earned promotion by scoring at level 2 or higher, as compared to 49 percent last year and 35 percent in 2002–2003, before the implementation of the new promotion policy for third graders and the creation of Summer Success Academy. In 2005, 43 percent of fifth grade students attending Summer Success Academy earned promotion by scoring at level 2 or higher, as compared to 28 percent in 2004, before the implementation of the new fifth grade promotion policy.

The Saturday Preparatory Academy has demonstrated positive results as well. Of the fifth grade students at risk of being held back this year who attended at least eleven Saturday Preparatory Academy sessions, over 90 percent met ELA promotion standards and over 72% met math promotion standards by scoring level 2 or higher on the spring tests.

NYC Leadership Academy

OBJECTIVE

To develop principals who can efficiently manage resources, inspire teachers and engage parents. Leaders with these skills sets create a rapid and highly leveraged process for influencing the quality of the city school system and, ultimately, the performance of its students.

BACKGROUND

Thirty-five percent of the school system’s 1,300 principals are expected to leave the system between 2002–2003 and 2005–2006. This creates an opportunity to identify and prepare a

new generation of school leaders who are dedicated to delivering excellence in even the most challenging schools.

INITIATIVE

Created in January 2003, the NYC Leadership Academy recruits, trains and supports principals, with a particular focus on finding leaders for the city's most troubled schools. The Leadership Academy, was founded on the conviction that principals, as transformational and instructional leaders, are key to improving overall school and student performance.

Funded with \$69 million in start-up capital from business and foundations, including \$30 million from members of the Partnership for New York City, the Leadership Academy has taken on primary responsibility for leadership development for all of New York City's public schools. The Leadership Academy runs three programs that provide training to school leaders at different stages of their career:

- **Aspiring Principals Program (APP)** recruits individuals with demonstrated leadership potential and gives them 14 months of rigorous, intensive training, which includes an in-school residency with an experienced mentor principal;
- **New Principals On-Boarding Program (NPOBP)** supports the professional development needs of principals recently promoted from within the city's public school system and principals hired from outside the city's public school system¹; and
- **Principal Leadership Development Program (PLDP)** sharpens the skills

of incumbent principals who have been in the job for at least one year.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Aspiring Principals Program has 147 graduates, of which 139 have assumed school leadership positions. Another 84 are in the current class and will complete their residency in 2006. Thirty percent of the first class of graduates were assigned to low-performing schools designated as SURR (Schools Under Registration Review) or SINI (Schools In Need of Improvement).

The Aspiring Principals Program is attracting increasing numbers of applicants from a broad pool. In the second year of the program, 1,200 individuals applied for 91 places. More than 1,400 individuals applied for 94 places in the third year of the program. Of those currently enrolled, 16 of them are new to the Department of Education and five are from out-of-state.

The Leadership Academy provides ongoing support to new principals. In total, 609 first-year principals (225 in the 2003–2004 school year, 384 in the 2004–2005 school year) have received leadership development and mentoring.

New Wave of 150 Small Secondary Schools

OBJECTIVE

To increase quality options for students in underserved areas and to transform large, low-performing high schools with smaller schools where instruction can be personalized, teachers collaborate, and community

¹ For the 2005–2006 school year, NPOBP has been re-conceptualized as First Year Support (FYS), a new model that offers a menu of customized resources.

partners stay involved in the students' lives after school.

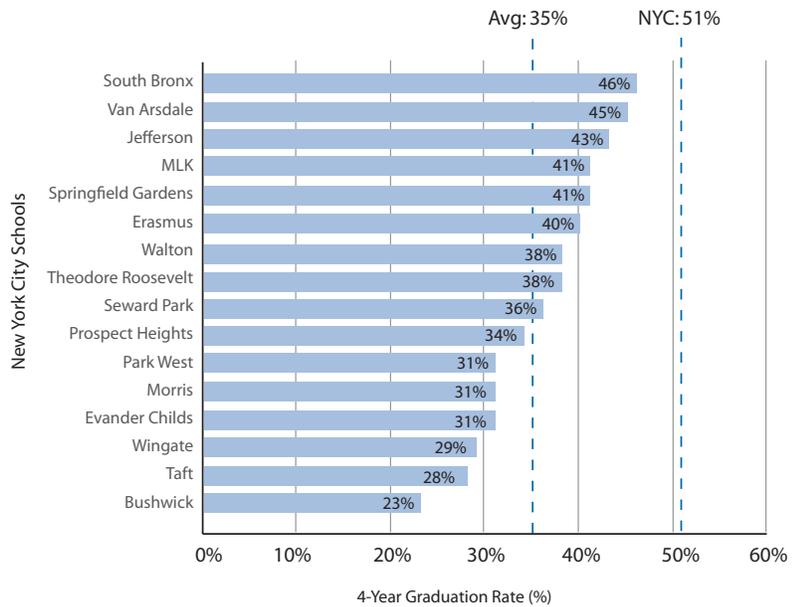
BACKGROUND

In New York City prior to 2003, the graduation rate from high school was about 51 percent.² Nationally, studies show that nearly one of every three students in urban districts who enters the ninth grade does not graduate from high school, with the graduation rates among minority students even

lower.³ Large, urban high schools are the locus of this failure.

New York City's public high schools typically have as many as 1,000 to 4,000 students — a size that some have argued contributes to a poor learning and disciplinary environment.⁴ The Department of Education decided to tackle this problem by phasing out 16 large, poorly performing high schools, in

Four-Year Graduation Rate at 16 Large, Low-Performing High Schools (Class of 2002)



Source: "The Class of 2002 4-year Longitudinal Report" available on www.nycenet.edu/daa

2 New York City Department of Education, "2002 Graduation Rates at Phase-Out Schools" Chart.

3 New York City Department of Education, "\$51 Million Grant from Gates Foundation to Support Small, Dynamic High Schools to Boost Student Achievement," Press Release, September 17, 2003. The National Center for Educational Statistics has noted that as of 2000-01, no reporting state's large city school districts had 4-year completion rates of 80 percent or more; see "Public High School Dropouts and Completers from the Common Core of Data 2000-01," (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2004/dropout00-01/>).

4 The decision of the Department of Education to invest in transforming large schools into small ones occurs in the context of the broad-based adoption of this model around the country.

which the average graduation rate for the Class of 2002 was 35 percent.

INITIATIVE

All small secondary schools share three design principles: academic rigor, personalized instruction and partnerships. All students are expected to meet high academic standards, and most grades are no larger than 108 students, which enables teachers and principals to get to know each student and offer individualized forms of instruction that meet each student’s needs. Each school partners with a non-profit institution or organization that helps create the school and contributes critical resources — including school design, curriculum and professional development for teachers. Because of their scale, small secondary schools restore the ability of teachers and administrators to focus on individual students.

The Department of Education’s small secondary school initiative is a public-private partnership, which is managed and supervised by the Office of New Schools. This initiative has been augmented by about \$100 million from foundations, donors and companies in the private sector that are committed to this initiative.

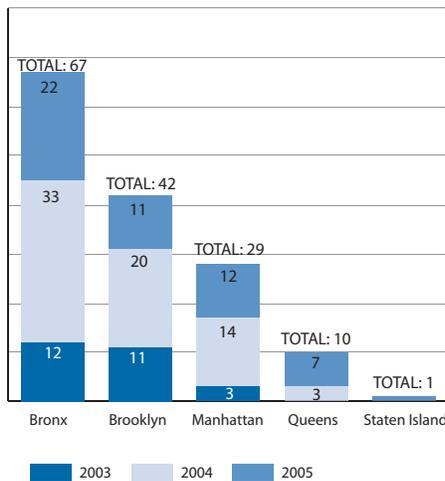
This initiative would be difficult to build and sustain without the commitment of nonprofit institutions that collaborate with DOE, starting with New Visions for Public Schools, an early model, and now including 13 nonprofit intermediary organizations. These nonprofit intermediaries serve as lead partners with DOE and provide school design, curriculum and professional development for teachers.

IMPLEMENTATION

Since the launch of the small schools initiative in September 2003, the Department of Education has opened 96 small secondary schools and has opened another 53 small secondary schools in September 2005. These start-up schools are providing thousands of students, especially those in low-income, high-need neighborhoods in the Bronx and Brooklyn, with new high-quality opportunities to acquire the skills necessary for higher education and the workplace. By the 2007–2008 school year, New York City plans to have opened 200 small secondary and charter schools. Most of these schools have opened in Regions 1 and 2 in the Bronx.

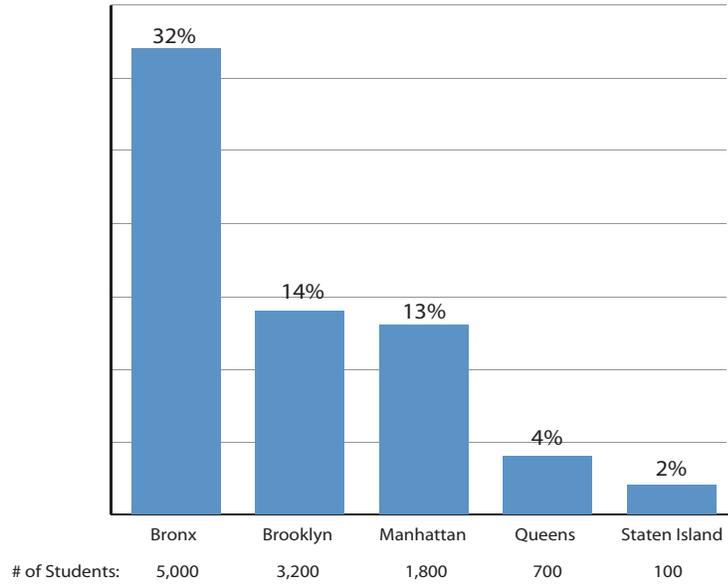
These small secondary schools have been designed to serve students in low-income, high-need neighborhoods. Of the ninth graders

New Wave of Small Secondary Schools (2003–2005)



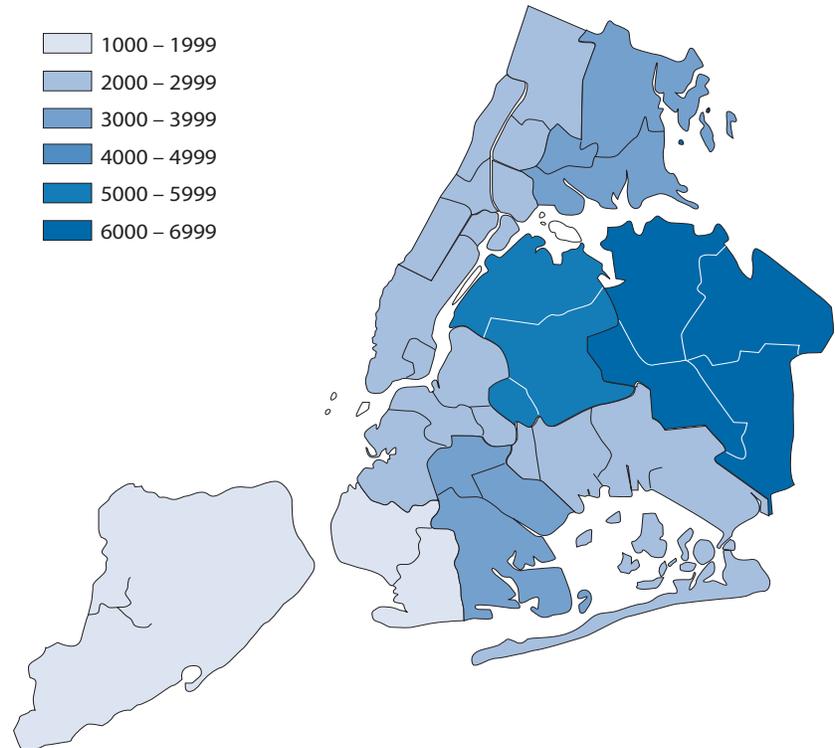
Note: Secondary Schools defined as Middle Schools, MS / HS, and High Schools
 Source: Office of New Schools (ONS)

Percent of First-Time 9th Graders Attending A New Small School
 (schools started in 2003, 2004 or 2005)



Note: Calculation excludes students who will be attending specialized schools and LaGuardia.
 Source: OSEPO on 5/5/05; Based on seats declared for the High School Admissions Process

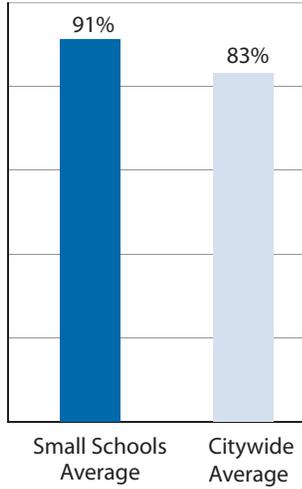
Students Attending New Small Secondary Schools Per District



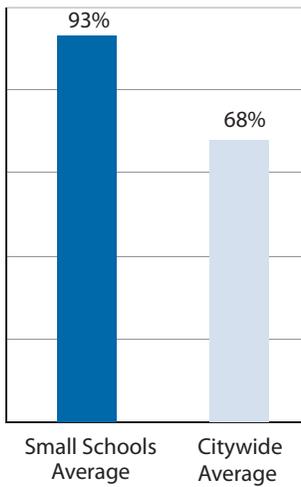
who entered new small schools in September 2004, 92 percent were Black or Hispanic, compared to a citywide average of 72 percent. Moreover, 67 percent of ninth graders entering new small schools had scored below grade level on math and English exams, compared to 60 percent of ninth grade students citywide.⁵

For the 2003–2004 school year, both the ninth grade promotion rate and the average attendance rate for all students were higher in small schools than the citywide average.

Average Attendance
(2003–2004 School Year)



Percentage of Ninth Graders Promoted to Tenth Grade
(2003–2004 School Year)



⁵ A WestEd study, released in February 2005, shows that students attending New York City's new small secondary schools are doing well relative to those in other settings. For the 2003–2004 school year, student attendance rates at the city's small schools averaged 90.5 percent, compared to 83 percent citywide and 74 percent at the city's large, low-performing schools. In addition, though the majority of students enter ninth grade unprepared for ninth grade English and math, in 2004, 93 percent of ninth graders in small schools advanced to tenth grade, compared to the citywide average of 68 percent.

New York University Researchers' Recommendations for Future Data Analysis

Data Collection

The Partnership for New York City asked NYU researchers to recommend certain areas where the availability and quality of data could be strengthened for better assessment of the success of the Department of Education in the years ahead. The following are their suggestions.

COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT LEVEL DATA ON POVERTY

Information collected about individual students now includes data on eligibility for free or reduced price lunch for students who are not in "high-poverty" school-wide Title I schools only. The reason for this data limitation is that this information has been traditionally collected following Title I regulations. The absence of data on free-lunch eligibility status for students attending the poorest schools makes it difficult to assess the school system's progress by poverty status. In addition, the quality of student and family reports of free-lunch status generally is lower in higher grades and is of very limited utility at the high school level. Given concern over disadvantaged student performance, the researchers recommend pursuing alternative measures on student socio-economic conditions from survey instruments or other government administrative sources.

TEACHER DEPLOYMENT

While there is information on where schoolteachers are assigned, and data on teacher certification, data on teaching assignment are limited. For example, are teachers teaching in their areas of certification? Are teachers assigned to administrative (or union) functions? It is difficult to assess progress toward a more efficient allocation of district resources without being able to have a more finely grained picture of how and where teachers are assigned. The Department of Education has started to gather this data.

PHYSICAL PLANT

While there is a detailed record of work orders and capital plans, it would be useful to have a set of consistent comprehensive school level measures capturing the quality and characteristics of the physical plant at school sites.

STUDENT AND TEACHER VICTIMIZATION

The Department of Education as well as local, state and federal authorities track the number of criminal incidents that occur in schools as well as the frequency of disciplinary sanctions issued by school authorities. An additional way to get valuable information is through survey data on student and teacher reports of victimization, safety and disorder.

Available data does not permit one to know whether variations in the level of reporting of crimes and school disciplinary sanctions occur due to increased monitoring and enforcement or differences in school behavioral climates. Given concern about these issues in local school communities and in the city in general, the researchers suggest collection of more data on these trends and current conditions.

The Department of Education has begun to collect systematic observational data on this measure using a Comprehensive School Rubric assessment instrument.

Longitudinal Data Analysis

All of the summary statistics provided by the Department of Education for this report were cross sectional in nature: that is, the statistics were based upon data for a single year only. Assessments of trends and changes over time were entirely based upon summary statistics. In the future, it would be helpful if the Department of Education provides for longitudinal analyses of student level data.¹ Some examples of “value-added” measurement include: change in the

level of scores between grades, the percentage of students moving up one level, the percentage of students moving from proficiency to mastery, and the percentage of students moving from levels 1 or 2 to levels 3 or 4. An additional area for analysis involves student mobility (i.e., change in schools, such as a measure of the percentage of students switching schools in a given grade). The Chancellor has recently announced plans to move toward greater use of these “value-added” measurement techniques.²

Program/Initiative Evaluation Research

Underlying many of the concerns educational researchers have expressed about improving research capacity is a desire to disentangle the causal relationships between interventions and outcome measures. Unfortunately, the analyses done for this report and even analyses that might be done with longitudinal data described above are often insufficient to weed out the impact of specific initiatives from other changes taking place in schools. It is possible to better approximate identification of causal effects of initiatives and programs, however, with rigorous empirical research. Such research efforts require:

- Considerable time and effort of experts in evaluation;
- Data must be collected, cleaned and organized in a structure that allows the use of multivariate statistical techniques; econometric models can be estimated that allow one to

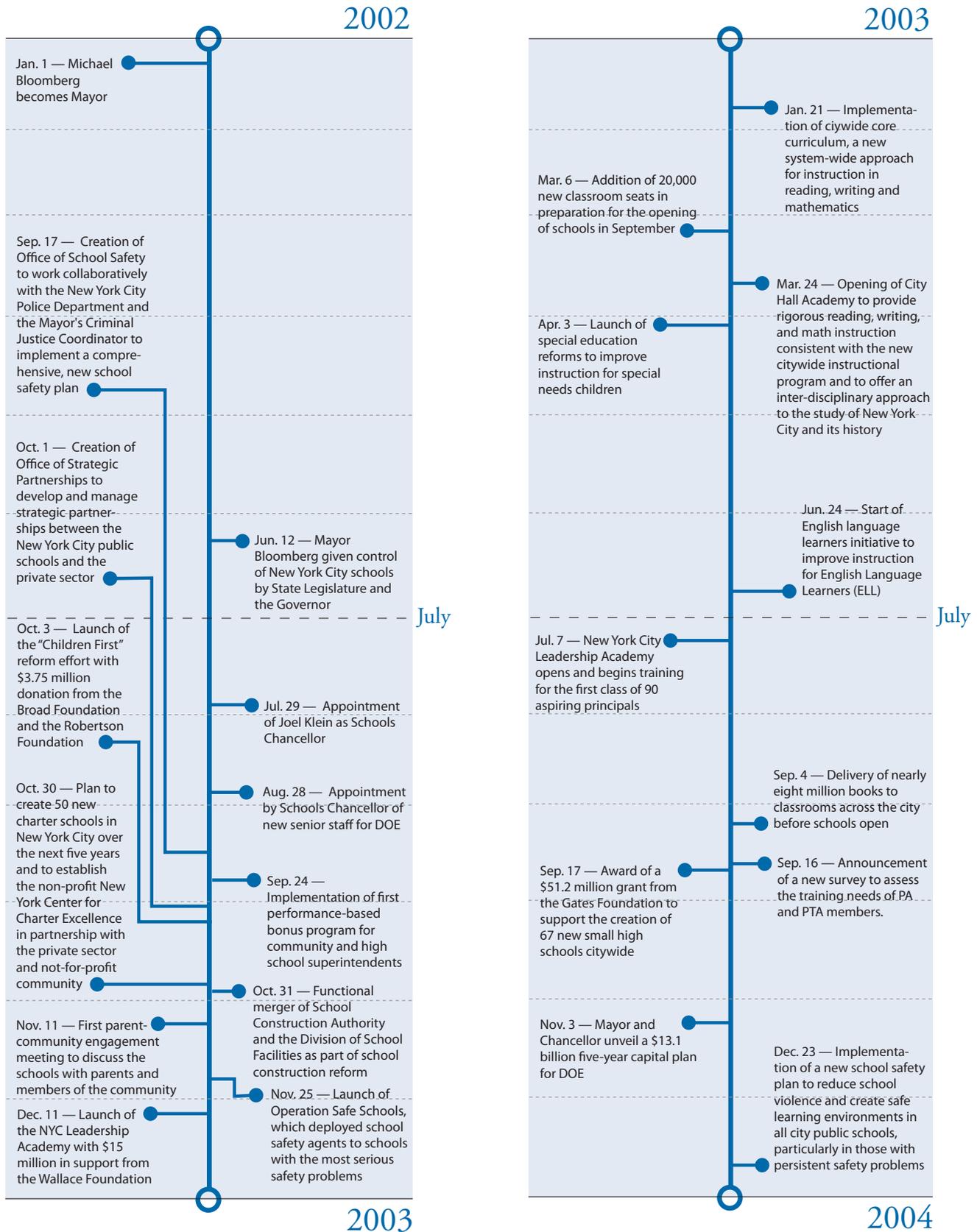
disentangle causal relationships, if suitable data has been assembled;

- In some cases, it is only possible to estimate impacts with some kind of experimental design and/or improved adherence to clear implementation rules — randomized experiments at the student, classroom or school-level; or implementation structured to allow a regression discontinuity approach to impact estimation.
- There have been many high quality evaluations of initiatives of the New York City Board of Education in the past. Some of these evaluations have been performed at the behest of the Board of Education, others initiated by outside organizations. For example, significant past research has occurred on The New York Networks for School Renewal Projects (NYNSR/Annenberg Schools), the Performance Driven Budgeting, The New York City Voucher Experiment, Small Schools Initiative, and other “whole school” reforms. These sorts of evaluations could become far more common and contribute more systematically to school improvement if they were facilitated by the concerted efforts of various institutional actors, such as the Partnership for New York City, the Department of Education, private foundations and New York City’s various research universities.

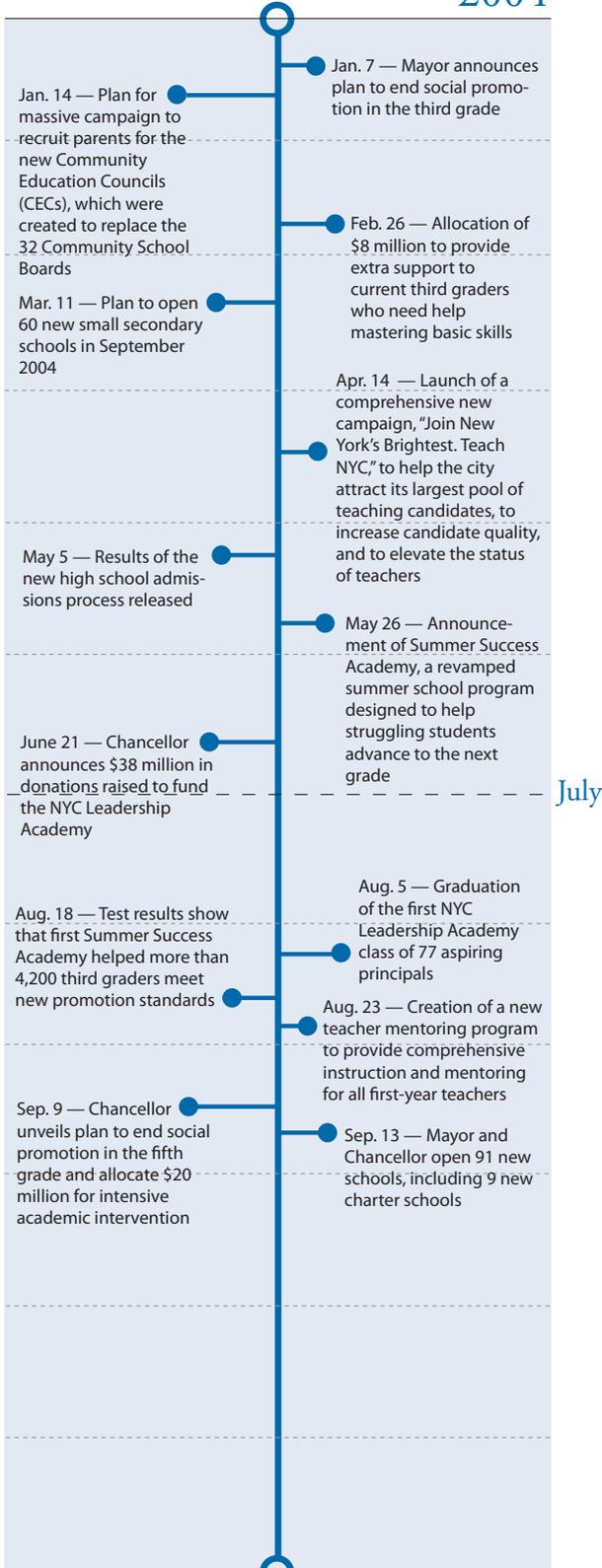
1 Notice that the Average Gain is different than the Gain in Averages (which was used in the report) because the latter compares two different groups of students, due to mobility between years. As an example, one might want to know the average gain in the score of students between grades 3 and 5. If one computes the gain for each student and then averages the score, one includes only the set of students who were in school (and in those grades) for both years. If, instead, one computes the average score in grade 3 and the average score in grade 5 two years later, all students in each grade are included — including in the former a set of students who left between grades 3 and 5 and in the latter a set of students who moved in between grades 3 and 5.

2 David Herszenhorn, “Test Scores to Be Used to Analyze Schools’ Roles,” *New York Times*, June 7, 2005.

Timeline for "Children First" Initiatives

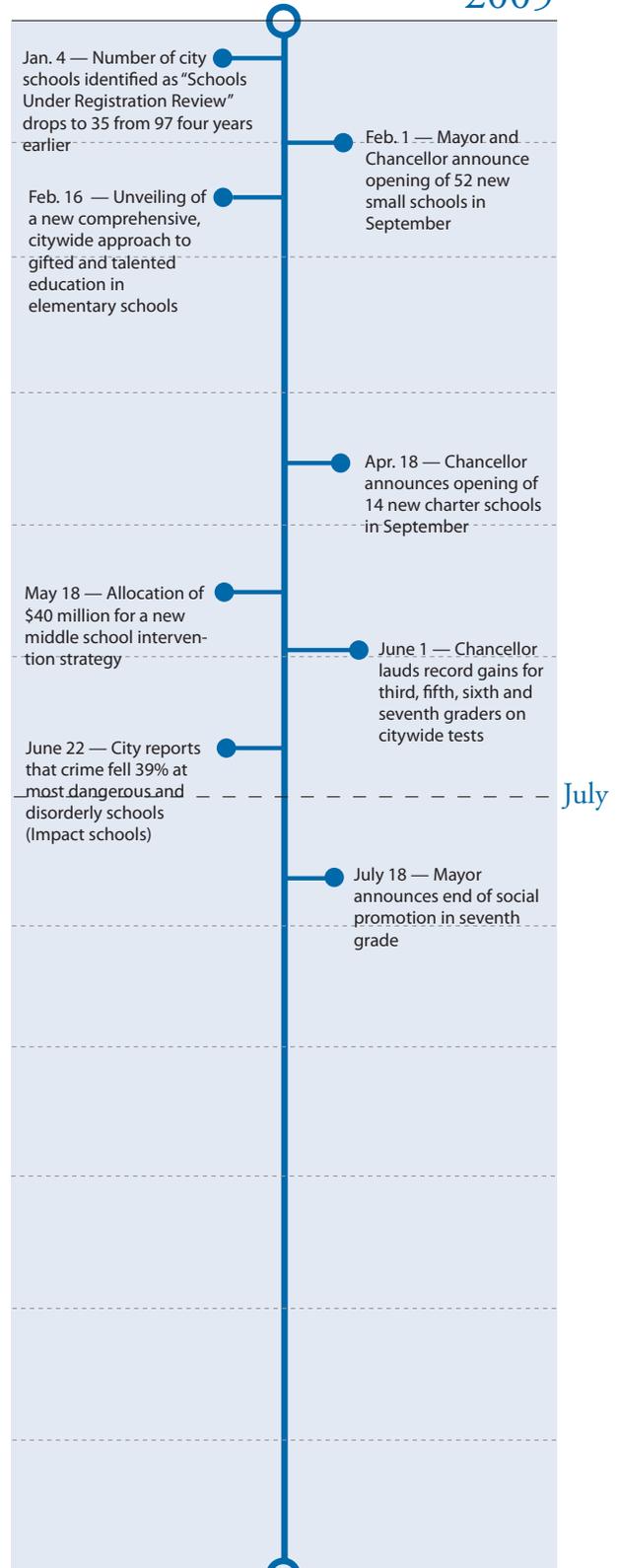


2004



2005

2005



2006

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