

ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: AN ANALYSIS OF A PROJECT MANAGEMENT
OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE AS A SCHOOL
IMPROVEMENT MODEL IN ONE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Anthony R. Alston, Doctor of Education, 2018

Dissertation directed by: David Imig, Ph.D.
Teaching and Learning, Policy and Leadership

There are persistent and significant gaps in performance between various racial and ethnic sub-groups, particularly between African American and White groups of students, on both state assessments and discipline measures (Rothstein, 2014). Effectively closing the gap requires improving the performance of all students while accelerating the achievement of low-performing student groups in order to catch up to their higher-performing peers. Researchers have found that a variety of school, community, economic and familial factors correlate with low student performance and the achievement gap, but views are mixed on how to improve performance for all and narrow the gap (Alliance for Excellence Education, 1999; Cancian & Danziger, 2009; Jacob & Ludwig, 2009; Janet, 1999; Mitra, 2011; Organization for Economic Co-Operation (OECD), 2012). Over the past decade, federal, state and local policies have made the improvement of low-performing schools and the closing of the achievement gap a top priority.

This descriptive quantitative study focused on the efforts of one Mid-Atlantic system to address low performance among certain groups of students using a Project Management Oversight Committee (PMOC) model. The model utilizes data and a heightened level of accountability to yield quick, yet sustainable growth and progress. For this study seven schools (three high schools, two middle schools and two elementary schools) were identified as a result of persistent participation in the process. The academic and discipline data were reviewed to determine trends in performance. In addition to the achievement and demographic data, a satisfaction survey was reviewed to understand the impact of the PMOC process in improving low student performance. Analysis of the data did not find any relational impact upon achievement data. Although the PMOC process did not have the promised impact, it does not diminish the possibility that there were gains that would not have occurred if the process had not been used. Based on these findings, it is recommended that the system consider allocating funding for further studies to examine the impact of the PMOC process.

AN ANALYSIS OF A PROJECT MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE AS A
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT MODEL IN ONE SCHOOL DISTRICT

By

Anthony R. Alston

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
2018

Advisory Committee:

David G. Imig, Chair, Ph.D.
Helene Kalson Cohen, Ph. D.
Lawrence Clark, Ph.D.
Margaret J. McLaughlin, Ph.D.
Stephanie Timmons-Brown, Ph.D.

|

©Copyright by
Anthony R. Alston
2018

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the matriarchs in my life: my mother, Joyce Balkum, my grandmother, Claire Alston, and my great aunt, Gerri Nicholson. Without their prayer, enduring love, support, direction and encouragement, I would not be the person I am today. Thank you for instilling in me a desire to learn and grow personally and professionally.-This dissertation is also dedicated to my wife, Isha, and children, Zachary and Ryan, for being a constant source of joy, and to my grandfather, Anthony Alston, Sr., who taught me the value of hard work. Finally, I dedicate this to my sister, Tiffany Johnson, for always being my inspiration.

Acknowledgements

It would not have been possible for me to complete this study without the support and guidance of numerous individuals. I am forever grateful to the following people:

- Dr. David Imig, my advisor, whose advice, encouragement and guidance helped me to identify a compelling research topic and then follow through to complete the study.
- Dr. Margret McLaughlin, Dr. Stephanie Timmons-Brown, Dr. Helene Kalson Cohen and Dr. Lawrence Clark, the members of my dissertation committee, for their questions, insight and advice. I am especially grateful to Dr. McLaughlin for her thoughtful feedback as I was drafting and revising my dissertation sections.
- Dr. Lucy A. Wakiaga, for her expert editing and Mrs. Connie Fuller, for her support with the data collection and display.
- My school system colleagues, who encouraged and supported my pursuit of this research, including, Dr. George Arlotto, Dr. Maureen McMahon, Mrs. Monique Jackson, Mrs. Michele Batten, Dr. Heidi Oliver-O’Gilvie, Dr. Zipporah Miller, Mr. Arlen Liverman, Mrs. Mamie Perkins, Mrs. Helen Mateosky, Mrs. Cathy Steen and Mr. Bill Goodman.
- My brothers of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., thank you for reminding me to hold up the light of Alpha. Especially Bro. Andre Dillard, Bro. Karon Wilson, Bro. Ricardo McCrary, and Bro. Dr. Tarik Harris.
- My wife Isha and our two children, Zachary and Ryan, for their wonderful patience, support and encouragement.

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Tables	vi
List of Figures.....	vii
List of Abbreviations	ix
Introduction.....	1
The Importance of Closing Achievement Gaps.....	3
ESSA and Closing the Achievement Gap.....	7
The Achievement Gap in the Target School System	8
The School System’s Efforts to Address the Achievement Gap: A Chronology.....	13
2005-2006 - Superintendent B.	17
2006-2013 - Superintendent C.	17
2013-2014 Superintendent D.	25
2014-2016 Superintendent E.....	25
The Current PMOC Model in the Mid-Atlantic K-12 System.....	26
Summary and Purpose of this Research.....	33
Section 2: Design and Methodology	36
Study Design.....	37
Data Sources	37
Measures	38
Methods	43
Section 3: Findings, Discussion, Conclusions, and Implications.....	48
Purpose.....	48
Analysis of Question 1.....	49
Proficiency on State Assessments.....	50
Graduation Rates.....	61
Grade 8 Success in Algebra I.....	63
Suspension Rates	64
Grade Point Average.....	68
Dropout Rate.....	69

Analysis of Question 2.....	71
Student Mobility	72
Teacher Mobility.....	75
Students Receiving Free and Reduced Meal Services (FARMS).....	79
Students Receiving English for Speakers of Other Languages Services (ESOL).....	81
Students Receiving Special Education Services	84
Analysis for Question 3	91
Conclusion Question 1	93
Conclusion Question 2	94
Conclusion Question 3	95
Limitations	96
Implications for the System	96
Appendices.....	98
Appendix A: Protocols.....	98
Appendix B: Sample EOC Agenda.....	103
Appendix C: Guiding Questions for the EOC Presentation Preparation.....	104
Appendix D: Sample Plan to Address Indicators.....	105
Appendix E: Sample Action Log.....	106
Appendix F: Scoring Rubric for Monitoring Scorecard.....	107
Appendix G: Indicator 2c.....	108
Appendix H: Human Subjects Review Waiver.....	109
Appendix I: EOC Evaluation.....	110
References.....	111

List of Tables

Table 1 Executive Oversight Committee Process.....	28
Table 2 Sample Monthly Reporting Tool.....	30
Table 3 Demographics of EOC Schools in 2011-2012 School Year.....	38
Table 4 Indicators Addressed in Research Questions	42

List of Figures

Figure 1. Mid-Atlantic System's Math MSA Scores for students scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grades 3-5 (SY0506-SY1213).	9
Figure 2. Mid-Atlantic System's Reading MSA Scores for students scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grades 3-5 (SY0506-SY1213).	10
Figure 3. Mid-Atlantic System's Math MSA Scores for students scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grades 6-8 (SY0506-SY1213).	10
Figure 4. Mid-Atlantic System's Reading MSA Scores for students scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grades 6-8 (SY0506-SY1213).	11
Figure 5. Mid-Atlantic System's Algebra I HSA Scores for students scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grades 9-12 (SY0506-SY1314).	11
Figure 6.. Mid-Atlantic System's Algebra I PARCC Scores for students scoring Level 4 or 5 in Grades 9-12 (SY1415-SY1516).	12
Figure 7. Mid-Atlantic Systems English HSA Scores for students scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grades 9-12 (SY0506-SY1314).	12
Figure 8. Mid-Atlantic Systems English PARCC Scores for students scoring Level 4 or 5 in Grades 9-12 (SY1415-SY1516).	13
Figure 9. Strategic Plan Indicator Charters	20
Figure 10. Trend data of Grade 3 Reading MSA.	50
Figure 11. Trend data of Grade 3 Math MSA.	51
Figure 12. Trend data of Grade 4 Reading MSA.	52
Figure 13. Trend data of Grade 4 Math MSA.	52
Figure 14. Trend data of Grade 5 Reading MSA.	54
Figure 15. Trend data of Grade 5 Math MSA.	54
Figure 16. Trend data of Grade 6 Reading MSA.	55
Figure 17. Trend data of Grade 6 Math MSA.	56
Figure 18. Trend data of Grade 7 Reading MSA.	57
Figure 19. Trend data of Grade 7 Math MSA.	58
Figure 20. Trend data of Grade 8 Reading MSA.	59
Figure 21. Trend data of Grade 8 Math MSA.	60
Figure 22. Trend data of high school graduation rates.	62
Figure 23. Middle School trend data of completion of Algebra 1 by Grade 8 with a Grade of C or Higher.	64
Figure 24. Trend data of elementary school suspension rate.	65
Figure 25. Trend data of middle school suspension rate.	66
Figure 26. Trend data of high school suspension rate.	67
Figure 27. Trend data of the percentage of students with GPA of <2.0.	68
Figure 28. Trend data of high school dropout rates.	70
Figure 29. Trend data of high school student mobility.	74
Figure 30. Trend data of middle school student mobility.	74
Figure 31. Trend data of elementary school student mobility.	75
Figure 32. Trend data of high school teacher mobility.	77

Figure 33. Trend data of middle school teacher mobility.	78
Figure 34. Trend data of elementary school teacher mobility.	78
Figure 35. Trend data of high school students receiving FARMS.	80
Figure 36. Trend data of middle school students receiving FARMS.	80
Figure 37. Trend data of elementary school students receiving FARMS.	81
Figure 38. Trend data of high school students receiving ESOL.	82
Figure 39. Trend data of middle school students receiving ESOL.	83
Figure 40. Trend data of elementary school students receiving ESOL.	83
Figure 41. Trend data of high school students receiving Special Education.	85
Figure 42. Trend data of middle school students receiving Special Education.	85
Figure 43. Trend data of elementary school students receiving Special Education.	86
Figure 44. Relationship between high school dropout rates and School Factors at High School A.	87
Figure 45. Relationship between high school dropout rates and School Factors at High School B.	87
Figure 46. Relationship between high school dropout rates and School Factors at High School C.	88
Figure 47. Relationship between middle school MSA Math Scores and School Factors at Middle School A.	89
Figure 48. Relationship between middle school MSA Math Scores and School Factors at Middle School B.	89
Figure 49. Relationship between Grade 3 MSA Reading scores and School Factors at Elementary School A.	90
Figure 50. Relationship between Grade 3 MSA Reading scores and School Factors at Elementary School B.	91
Figure 51. EOC Satisfaction Survey responses.	92

List of Abbreviations

AACPS	Anne Arundel County Public Schools
ACT	American College Testing
AP	Advanced Placement
BOE	Board of Education
CCSS	Common Core State Standards
CSSR	Center for Secondary School Redesign
ELA	English/Language Arts
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act
ETS	Educational Testing Services
F & P	Fountas and Pinnell
FARMS	Free and Reduced Meal Services
GPA	Grade Point Average
GT	Gifted and Talented
HSA	High School Assessments
IEP	Individualized Education Plans
MSA	Maryland School Assessment
MSC	Maryland State Curriculum
MSDE	Maryland State Department of Education
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
OCR	Office of Civil Rights
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PARCC	Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers
PMOC	Project Management Oversight Committee
RFP	Request for Proposal
SAT	Scholastic Aptitude Test

Section 1: Introduction and Literature Review

Introduction

With the enactment of the *No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001*, the gaps in achievement between student groups, such as minority students and students of poverty, received national attention. Increased accountability requirements caused K-12 schools to focus on helping all students meet state standards with particular attention to helping low-performing students meet proficiency targets. That accountability system called for schools to close achievement gaps as measured by the percentage of students in various subgroups who were proficient or above on state assessments, specifically in math and language arts. Among the many provisions in the 2001 reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*, state education agencies and their local school districts were required to identify and intervene in the lowest performing schools. While the 2015 ESEA reauthorization named the “Every Student Succeeds Act” of 2015 removed some of the accountability measures, the law maintained the focus on intervening in low-performing schools as measured, in part, by the gaps in achievement among subgroups of students.

This study was conducted in a single large school district in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States that continues to explore methods and strategies to address the disparities in student performance across schools. The achievement gap among groups defined by socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, and gender in the school system is persistent and long-term. The achievement gap is evident in a variety of measures used by the system, particularly standardized test scores, grade point averages, college attendance and completion, course selection, dropout rates, and disciplinary actions. It is most evident in the performance gaps between African American students and their non-

Hispanic White peers (Bailey & Dynarski, 2011; Barton & Coley 2009; Camera, 2016). Highlighting the problem faced by this school system is the fact that the school district has an Office of Civil Rights (OCR) Mediated Agreement and Complaint mandating attention to achievement and discipline gaps.

Over the course of the past twenty years, the system has sought to address the problem of achievement gaps in numerous ways. In 2004, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights against the system due to data revealing that African American students were: (a) less likely to participate in Gifted and Talented (GT) programs, Honors and Advanced Placement (AP) classes, (b) more likely to be expelled or suspended from school or referred to alternative school programs, (c) experience less educational success due to, among other factors, lower expectations demonstrated by teachers, guidance counselors and administrators' lack of encouragement, (d) more likely to be assigned to special education than their White counterparts, and (e) substantially less likely to graduate from high school, all of which contribute to the denial and limitation of educational and future employment opportunities for African American students.

In 2010, the system created a task force of school-based administrators and central office personnel to examine the issue of racial disparities in achievement and discipline. The task force produced a series of directives on how the system should address the disparities, one of which was to initiate a new model of oversight and reporting. This was a Project Management Oversight Committee (PMOC) process that was to be the primary strategy to close the achievement gaps for the ensuing two decades.

This strategy has been overseen by a PMOC that, since its inception, has been composed of ten members of the school system's superintendent's Executive Team as well as the Regional Assistant Superintendent that oversees the respective schools identified for support. These individuals act as a governing body to establish strategies, monitor progress, and resolve issues that would prevent cross-departmental cooperation (Smith, 2004). The PMOC process provides a way for coordinating actions and providing oversight to individual school improvement initiatives. Among the highest priorities of the PMOC over the past two decades has been to find ways to address the achievement gap.

The PMOC process entails a significant commitment of resources—not just the time expended by district leaders, but also fiscal resources allocated to support the identified schools. The system has invested in the PMOC as the most effective way of addressing low-performing schools. However, to date, no research or evaluations of the PMOC process has been conducted. Consequently, this study is focused on the existing system using data to examine the extent to which the PMOC model may have contributed to increasing performance and closing the achievement gap on a variety of indicators in a group of underperforming schools in the Mid-Atlantic school system.

The Importance of Improving Low-performing Schools and Closing Achievement Gaps

The term 'achievement gap' typically refers to disparities in one or more measure of the academic performance of students disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and income (Reynolds, 2002). The achievement gap generally measures differences between high-performing student groups and low-performing student groups. It can also compare student performance to the standard, as well as to differences in performance by disability

|

status and English language proficiency (Bailey & Dynarski, 2011; Chubb & Loveless, 2002; Reardon, 2011).

The achievement gap between students of different races and ethnicities and the gap between low-income and other students are longstanding national challenges (Rothstein, 2014). Further, the evidence points to an achievement gap in practically every dimension of student educational performance or outcomes. Some of the measures that continue to show disparities by race, ethnicity, income, disability status, and English language proficiency are rates of students who drop out, students enrolled in college preparatory courses (e.g., Advanced Placement), identification as being gifted and talented or as having a disability, as well as attaining college degrees (Bailey & Dynarski, 2011; Chubb & Loveless, 2002; Reardon, 2011).

While the achievement gap represents a longstanding issue in American education, concerted attention to it didn't occur until the 1960s, when it garnered great and sustained attention with the release of the Coleman Report in 1966 (Camera, 2016). That report illuminated what would later become known as the achievement gap. Those survey results demonstrated that while resources may be relatively equal within regions, educational outcomes were not. African American students were testing several grade levels below their White counterparts in math and reading. Coleman used test score disparities as being indicative of unequal opportunities and sought to find the sources, looking beyond indicators of school quality.

Closing the gap is widely seen as important to the economy, social stability, and moral health of the country and the state (Evans, 2005). Achievement gaps are both causes and consequences of resource disparities. Gaps in achievement and attainment

between Whites and minority groups suggest the presence of untapped human potential or human capital that could be harnessed for the benefit of both individuals and society (ECONorthwest, 2010). The literature documents many ways that education improves individual outcomes. Increases in the amount and quality of education generate higher incomes, reduces unemployment, and creates better health outcomes for individuals (Oreopoulos & Salvanes, 2009). The literature also supports the importance of having a well-educated workforce in improving regional economic outcomes, increasing economic growth and regional incomes, improving the quality of life, and reducing crime (Alliance for Excellence Education, 1999; Cancian & Danziger, 2009; Jacob & Ludwig, 2009; Janet, 1999; Mitra, 2011; Moretti, 2004; OECD, 2012).

The achievement gap, specifically between White students and those identified as African American and Hispanic/Latino, is particularly troublesome and reducing that gap has been a core consideration in designing national educational policies for the past half century. Long-term trend assessment data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) indicates that the achievement gap in math and reading proficiency among 4th graders narrowed between White and African American and Hispanic/Latino students during the 1970s and 1980s. For example, the White-African American achievement gap in reading for 9 year-olds declined from 1973 to 1990 as did the gap in math among 9 and 13 year-olds. Similarly, the White-Latino achievement gap in reading for 9 year-olds narrowed during the 1970s and 1980s; the gap in math narrowed more beginning in 1999. However, the gaps remain and are significant. As an example, the White-African American gap in reading proficiency in the 2015 NAEP is 28 percentage points for 4th graders and 26 percentage points for 8th graders, the largest gap among any

of the ethnic/racial subgroups, but it is followed closely by Hispanic/Latino students with gaps of 25 and 23 percentage points respectively (Center for Public Education, 2012; Education Commission of the States, 2015; National Center for Education Statistics, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

While reading and math achievement as measured by state assessments or NAEP have typically been used to highlight gaps among student groups, the gaps extend far beyond standardized test scores and can be seen in Advanced Placement (AP) course participation, high school graduation rates, college enrollment rates, and earned income (Legler & Kiley, 2004). As such, it is imperative that K-12 schools seek creative ways to help disadvantaged students succeed in the elementary, middle, and high school classrooms (Stuart, Fox, & Cordova-Webb, 2016).

Researchers have consistently noted since Coleman that school, community, socioeconomic, and familial factors all contribute to the achievement gap. For example, Barton and Coley's synthesis of the research on achievement gaps using the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP), Educational Testing Service (ETS) identified 16 factors related to life experiences and conditions that are correlated with cognitive development and academic achievement (Barton & Coley, 2009). Examples of the factors included are: investment in early education, course tracking, and class sizes. Darling-Hammond (2010) describes the achievement gap as an "opportunity gap" because when the evidence is examined, it is clear that educational outcomes for low-performing student subgroups are at least as much a function of their unequal access to key educational resources, both inside and outside of school, as they are a function of race, class, and culture. This conclusion is supported by a report issued by the U.S.

Department of Education (Bohrnstedt, Kitmitto, Ogut, Sherman, & Chan, 2015) that explored the relationship of African American-White 2011 8th grade NAEP scores and the racial composition of the schools the students attended. Results indicated that nationally, White students attended schools that were 9% African American while African American students attended schools that were 48% African American and that both White and African American students' NAEP scores were lower in schools that had high proportions of African American students. As Darling-Hammond (2010) and Lee and Burkman (2002) have documented, many students of color attend schools that are not only more racially segregated, but also under-resourced with fewer experienced teachers and more restricted curriculum (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, Rockoff & Wychoff, 2008; NCES, 2015; Sass, Hannaway, Xu, Figlio & Feng, 2012).

ESSA and Improving Low-performing Schools

With the transition from NCLB to the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) of 2015, the Mid-Atlantic school system, along with other school systems around the nation, continue to wait for guidance on the equity and equality provisions of the new law. The state guidance that has been provided requires states and districts to build accountability systems that include a number of indicators and will result in a scoring system to communicate how well a school is performing. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) developed a *Consolidated State Plan* that addresses the equity provisions in ESSA. The State Plan includes an accountability mandate that maintains the emphasis on schools and districts reporting student assessment data for each of the major racial and ethnic groups (i.e., American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, White, Multi-Racial) as well as

three service groups (i.e. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Free and Reduced Meals Services (FARMS), Special Education). The MSDE is moving to categorize schools based on an aggregation of their framework scores and the assignment of stars to each school, with one star being the lowest and five stars the highest. Factors regarding proficiency levels and growth measures and their impact on a school's total scores, along with the credit to be assigned to factors like chronic absenteeism, school climate, and access to "a well-rounded curriculum" are benchmarked (MSDE, 2017). Helping school principals and teachers understand the new accountability framework for systems in the Mid-Atlantic region will be a major challenge, but will also continue the pressure to reduce the disparities across groups.

Low Student Performance in the Target School System

The performance of poor and minority students has been a concern in both the Mid-Atlantic state and the school system that was the focus of the study. Figures 1- 8 show the extent of the overall low student performance among different student groups in the school system. In reviewing these data over the past 8 school years, easily recognizable is the trend that the African American student group has consistently ranked lowest in achievement in math and reading or tied with Hispanic students. Despite some growth, the gap between the African American student population and other subgroups has not closed and overall these students are underperforming relative to proficiency targets. African American students were the worst performing group as measured by state assessments in all tested areas with the exception of the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) Reading, in which the African-American student group outperformed all other groups.

The academic performance of the African American student group has been cause for alarm among parents and the public in the Mid-Atlantic school system and despite fiscal restraints, the school system has made significant investments of limited resources to attempt to address this performance gap. In the following sections, a chronology of those initiatives, with a particular focus on efforts to improve data quality and data driven decision making, will be provided.

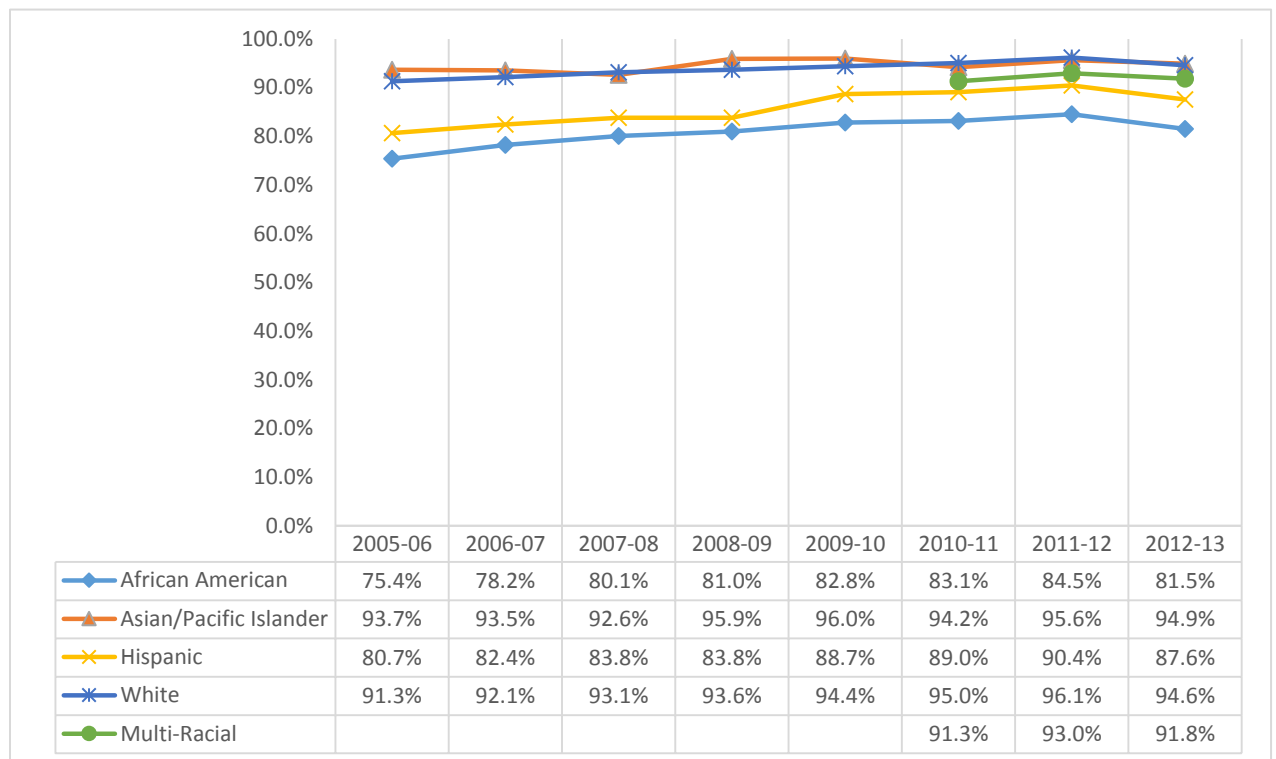


Figure 1. Mid-Atlantic System’s Math MSA Scores for students scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grades 3-5 (SY0506-SY1213).

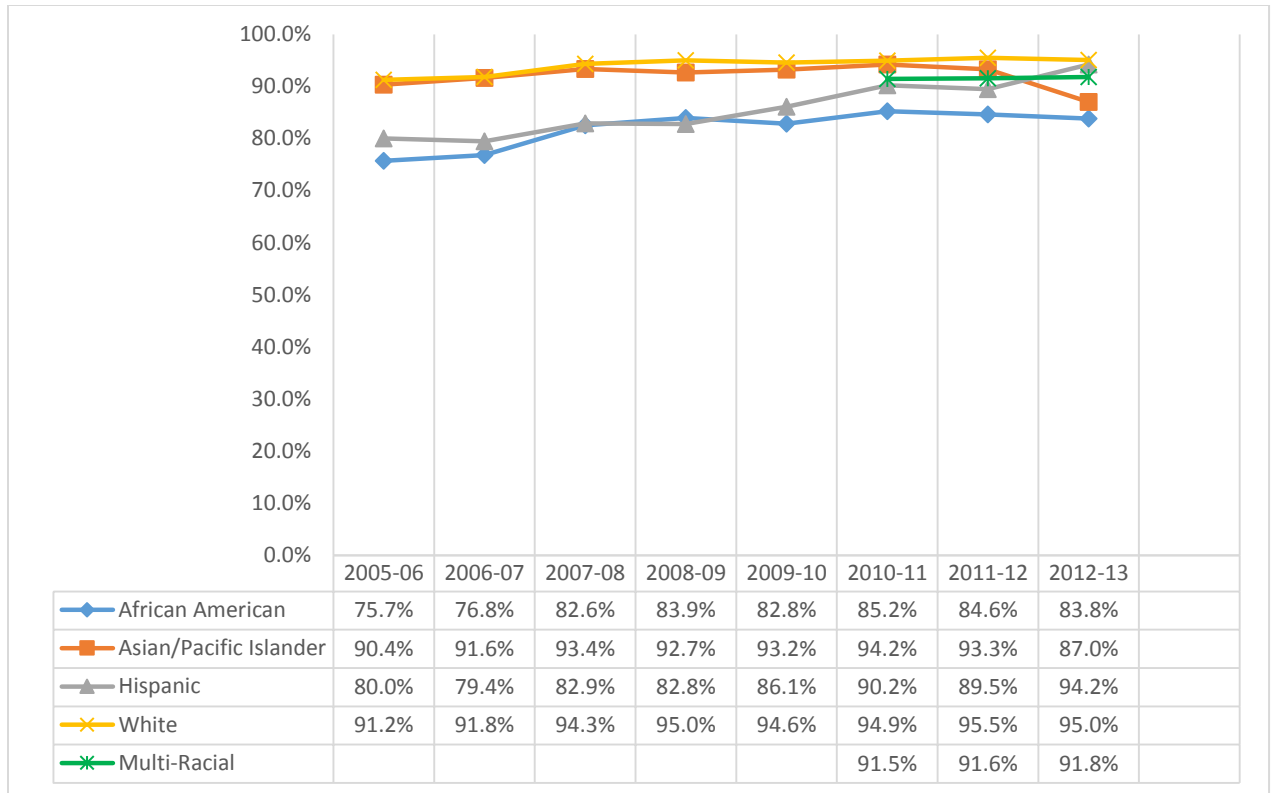


Figure 2. Mid-Atlantic System's Reading MSA Scores for students scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grades 3-5 (SY0506-SY1213).

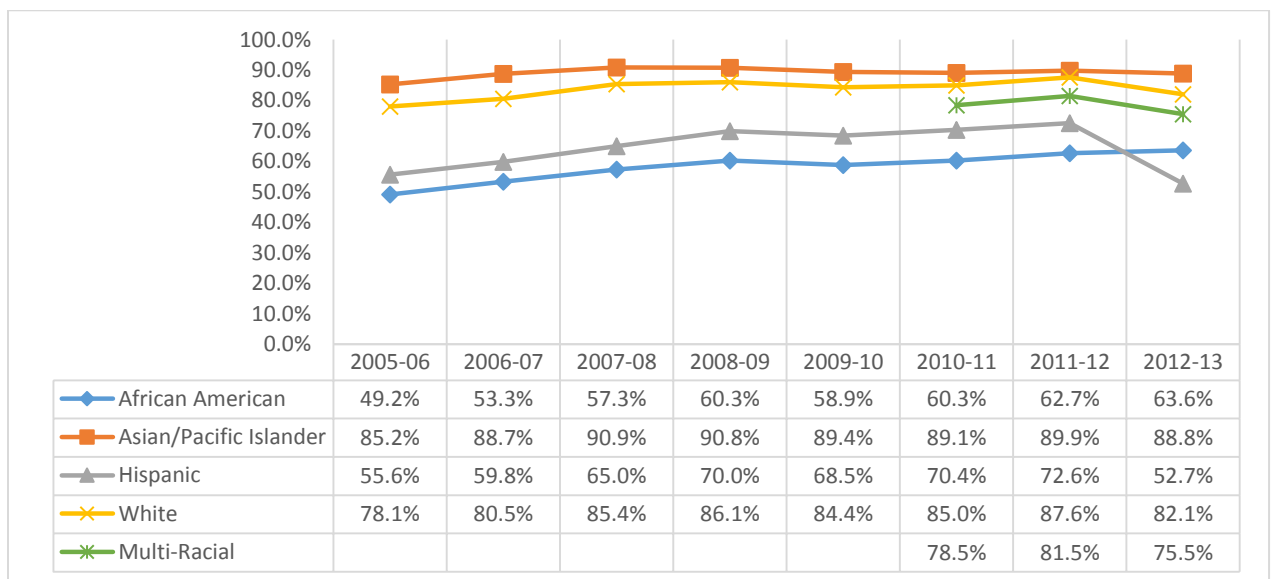


Figure 3. Mid-Atlantic System's Math MSA Scores for students scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grades 6-8 (SY0506-SY1213).

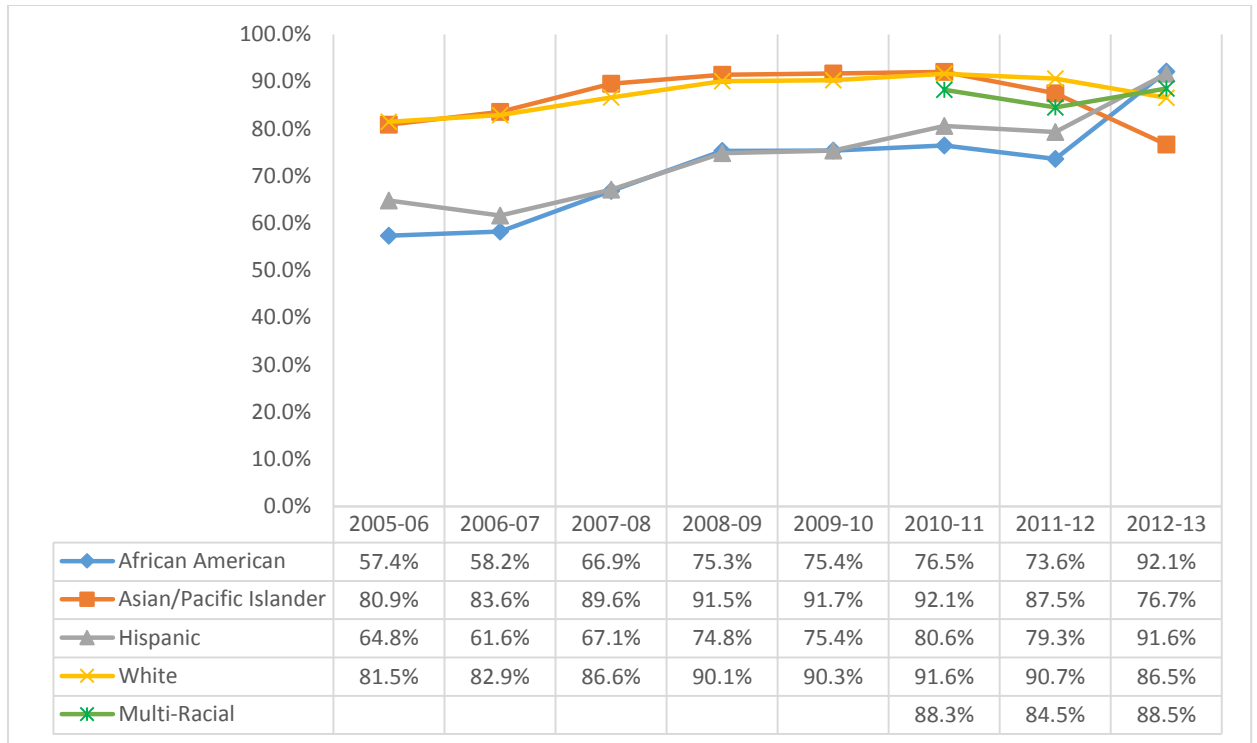


Figure 4. Mid-Atlantic System's Reading MSA Scores for students scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grades 6-8 (SY0506-SY1213).

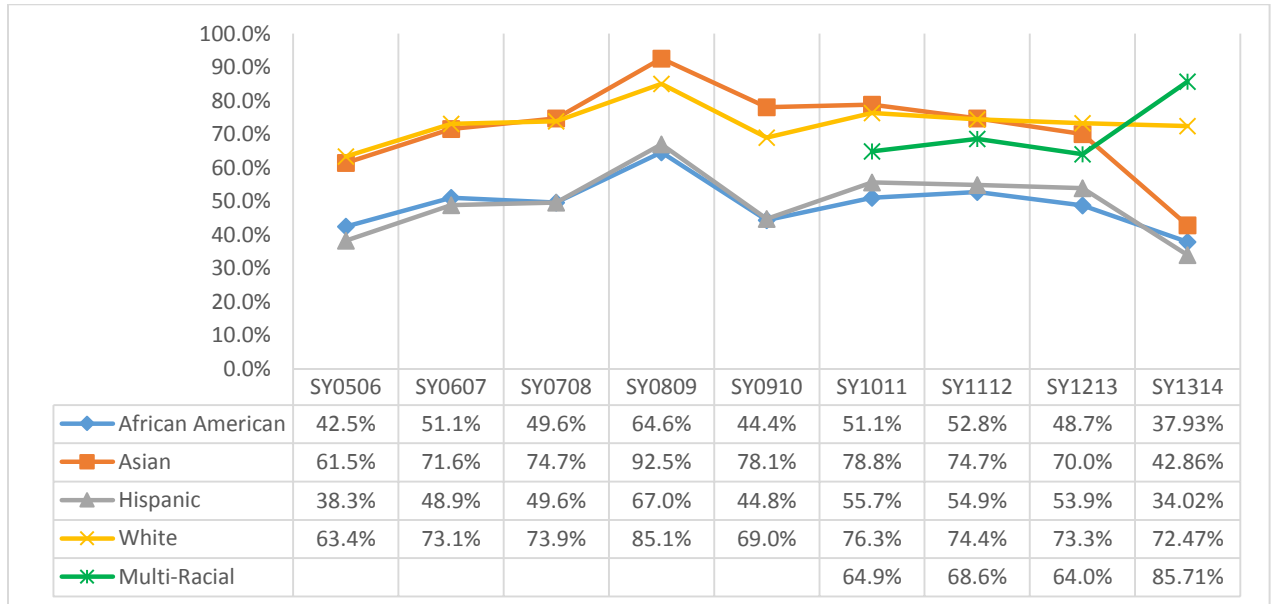


Figure 5. Mid-Atlantic System's Algebra I HSA Scores for students scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grades 9-12 (SY0506-SY1314).

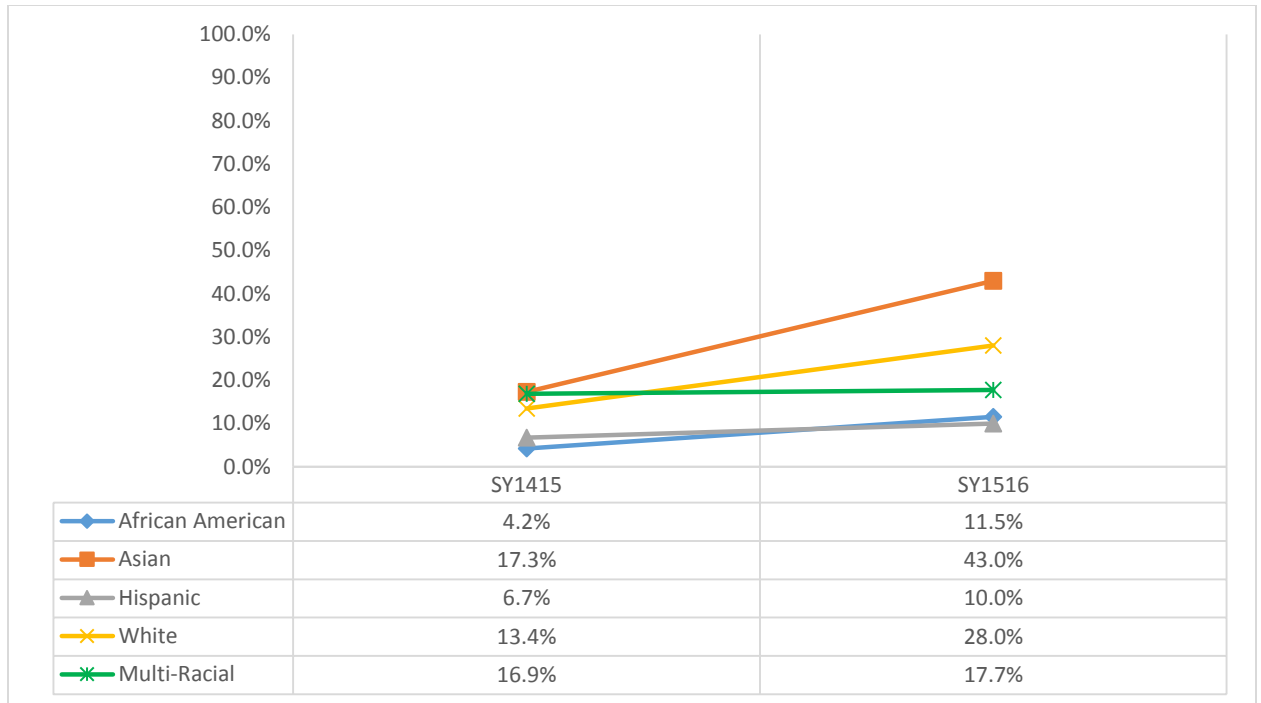


Figure 6. Mid-Atlantic System's Algebra I PARCC Scores for students scoring Level 4 or 5 in Grades 9-12 (SY1415-SY1516).

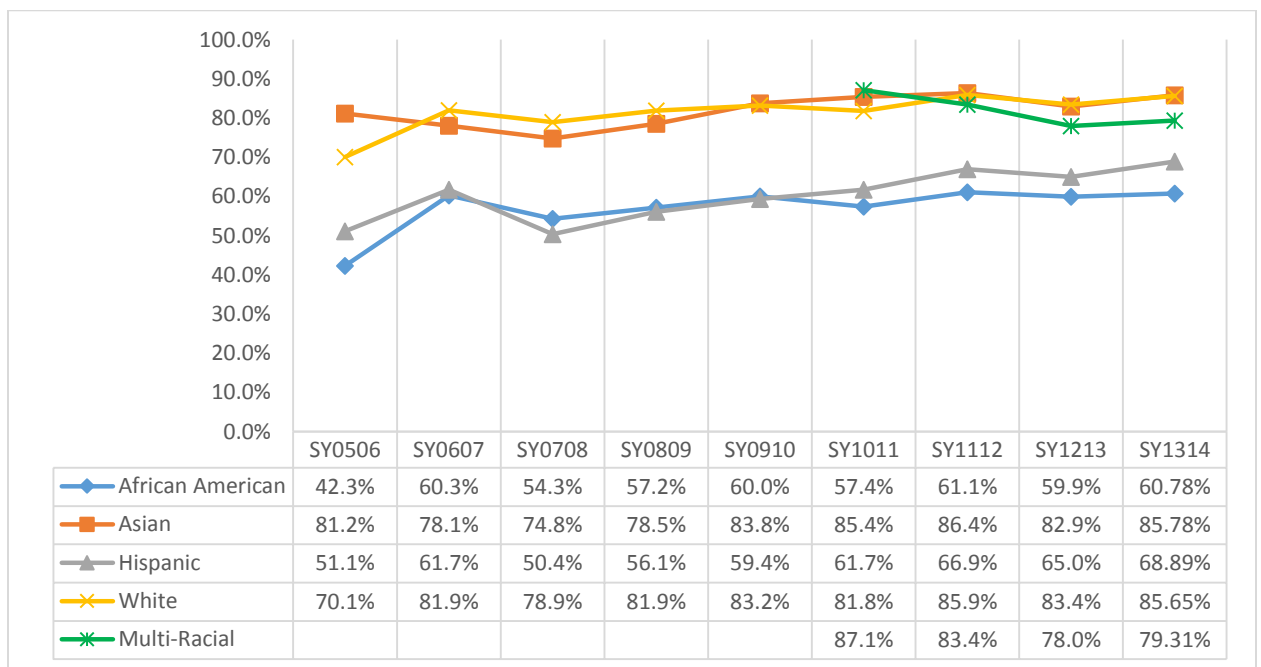


Figure 7. Mid-Atlantic Systems English HSA Scores for students scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grades 9-12 (SY0506-SY1314).

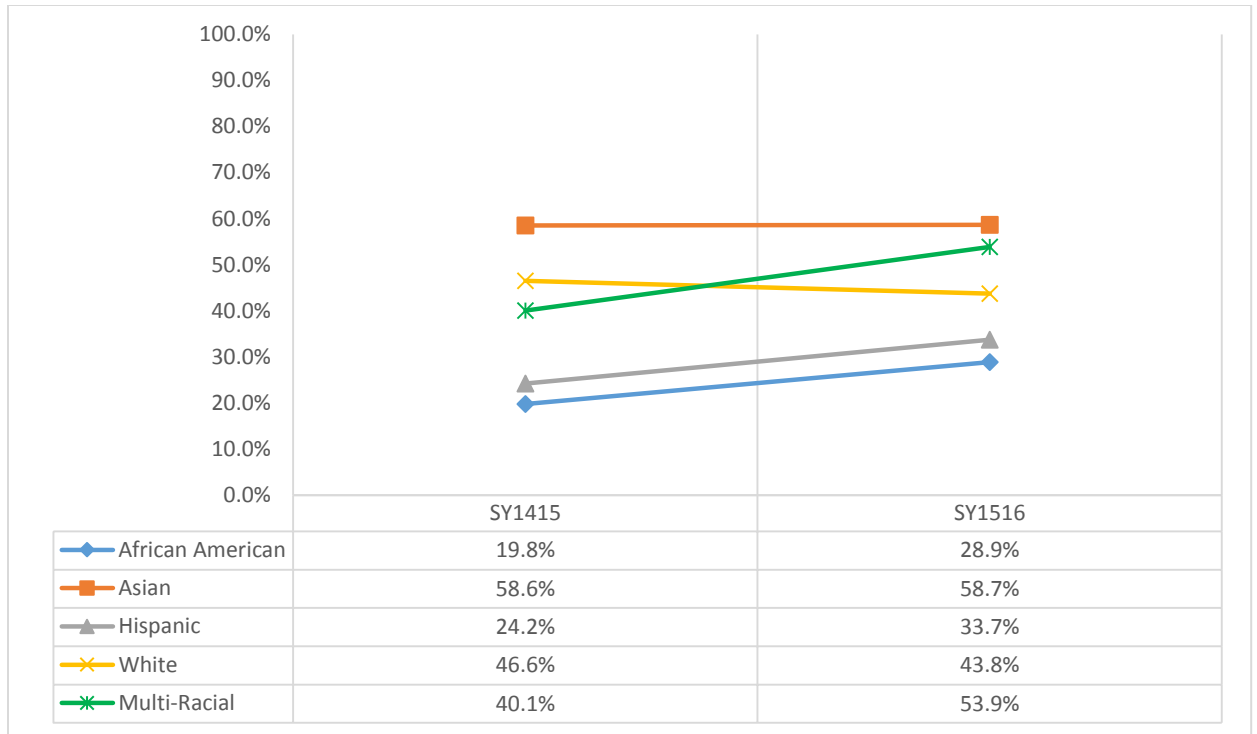


Figure 8. Mid-Atlantic Systems English PARCC Scores for students scoring Level 4 or 5 in Grades 9-12 (SY1415-SY1516).

The School System's Efforts to Address Low Student Performance: A Chronology

The Mid-Atlantic school System began a series of initiatives to address the achievement deficiencies after the passage of NCLB, which increased the focus on achievement gaps and accountability for student outcomes. In 2002, the district appointed a highly regarded school superintendent (Superintendent A) who came with a solid record of accomplishment in another (out-of-state) school district. In his first six months as superintendent, the new leader established three major goals for the school system to achieve within five years: accelerate academic achievement of all students, create a safe learning environment that promoted accelerated achievement, and promote community partnerships that support academics. To support accelerated learning for every student, the superintendent proposed new or expanded programs such as Open Court reading in Grades 1-8, the International Baccalaureate course of studies, and a full

complement of Advanced Placement courses in all high schools. In addition, he standardized math and reading textbooks for Grades 1- 8 countywide, and implemented block scheduling in all county secondary schools to increase learning opportunities.

In order to reach the goals established for the system, he implemented the Project Management Oversight Committee (PMOC) model, based on his prior experience, as the systematic structure for managing the various initiatives or projects being implemented. This new structure consisted of a group of district leaders that included the superintendent and acted as a governing body to set strategies, monitor progress, and resolve issues. The PMOC was comprised of content coordinators, school-based administrators and central office staff. Its processes were based on generic project management principles created to foster cross-departmental collaboration and maintain a quality-oriented organization (Pogonowski, 2017).

The PMOC model is based on the principles of project management as a major step in the evolution of how managers gained (or attempted to gain) control of organizations, technologies, and workers (Johnson, 2013). The purpose of a project management model is to manage complex systems. While the roots of project management theory lie in business practices that began more than a century ago, it is only in recent decades that project management has emerged as a vital component of any serious operation in business, engineering, the military, etc. (Johnson, 2013; Villanova University, 2017). Typically, project management starts at the beginning of the project: the planning and organizing stage. This involves the creation of lists, processes, budget allocations, and other project components that the company deems are required to get an event, task, or duty accomplished. Project management continues as the tasks are being

completed toward the completion of such a project and overlaps with project oversight along the way (Villanova University, 2017).

Project oversight occurs after a project has begun and is the checker of the processes and progress of such a project. The use of oversight in a project is not only to keep things in line and the project moving forward as smoothly as possible, but also to serve as a troubleshooter and adjuster of certain processes that could be improved along the way. Apart from this duty, those in charge of project oversight ensure that everything needed to complete a project is indeed completed and is within what project management first anticipated and planned in the first place. It is generally agreed that when project and process managers work together, they make certain that projects are completed according to specifications, budget, and timeframe (Villanova University, 2017). While there is research literature consisting mostly of case studies in management used in business schools, there is very little research on the use of PMOC in a K-12 system as a means to improve instruction or eliminate achievement gaps.

During the initial years of its use in the Mid-Atlantic School System, three projects were assigned to the PMOC to manage and provide oversight with regard to implementation (Pogonowski, 2017). These projects were Academic Achievement, Safe and Orderly Schools, and Community Engagement. Each project had milestones or key dates by which to complete specific parts of the work: a) deliverables, b) specific tasks that needed to be completed in a given order to ensure attainment of the identified goal, c) a sponsor from the PMOC who was responsible for guiding the project, and d) a project team composed of a Project Manager, a Process Manager and a group of supporting individuals responsible for ensuring the success of the project.

In the PMOC model, a Project Manager is considered the “visionary” of the charter and is the in-house expert for the project. The Project Manager is responsible for: developing a project plan, analyzing and synthesizing data to drive actions, managing the project team, managing project dependencies and impacts, and recommending promising practices. A Process Manager is the “tactician” of the charter. The person selected for this role does not have to have content knowledge of the project but should have skills in arranging, planning and facilitating team meetings; gathering and organizing data; managing project budget/resources; assuring that materials are properly distributed; implementing processes to ensure follow through from meeting to meeting; ensuring that Action Management Plans are current, and posting Monthly Action Management Reports, data and other documents as appropriate.

In the Mid-Atlantic System, the initial three broad project areas that were part of the PMOC process—Academic Achievement, Safe and Orderly Schools, and Community Collaboration—were divided into eight charters or contracts. The eight areas were: Reading/Writing K-12, Mathematics K-12, Alternative Education, Accelerated and Advanced Studies, Instructional Support and Accountability, Instructional Leadership, Parent Involvement and Communication, and Community Collaboration through Partnerships. Each project had a charter, which was a contract between the project team and governing PMOC body. Each charter had specific goals and a project team. Teams were required to develop an action plan to address the charter goals. Each plan began with the rationale describing why the work was vital to achieving specific goals. This was followed by the project scope, which outlined the desired outcome, specific deliverables, and the timeline for completion in the form of a either a milestone schedule

or a high level Gantt chart, which illustrated the project schedule including the start and finish dates of all major elements of a project. Additionally, the plan identified any dependencies and impacts. Dependencies included other projects and/or system initiatives that were related to, that affected, or might be affected by the planned project. Impacts on major organization groups, processes, standards, etc. that could affect, or be affected by, the project are identified and rated as “High,” “Medium,” or “Low.”

The charter teams appeared before the PMOC monthly. The team was required to update the body on the status of the deliverables, status of the milestone timeline and justify any slippage in the schedule or lack of growth on the identified deliverables.

2005-2006 – Superintendent B. When the previous superintendent left the system in November 2005, a retired system Assistant Superintendent of Instruction was appointed to serve as the interim superintendent for the remainder of the year. During her brief tenure many of the initiatives, including the PMOC process, were discontinued (Pogonowski, 2017).

2006-2013 – Superintendent C. In 2006, a new superintendent was appointed to lead the district and in June of 2007, he presented to the Board of Education the System’s first strategic plan. His five-year plan outlined goals and measures for success for the System. These measures were later used to determine performance growth and gap reduction among various student groups (Pogonowski, 2017).

In August 2007, the Center for Secondary School Redesign (CSSR), a private firm that previously had been contracted by the Board of Education to conduct an internal study of the system’s practices and procedures pertaining to eliminating the achievement gap, recommended five key strategies. As a result of the CSSR study, the superintendent

appointed a task force to review the findings and to formulate a plan to address them (Pogonowski, 2017).

The task force met on five separate occasions and issued a report recommending seven strategies that the system should use for the district to utilize in response to the five key topics on which they were asked to focus (AACPS, 2007). The first priority noted by the task force was for the system to purchase a data management system that would be able to disaggregate data by student group and generate various reports.

Implementing the CitiStat model. In 2009, Superintendent C met with his executive team and expressed concern that, as a system, they were not moving fast enough to close the achievement gap. At that meeting, he charged the Deputy Superintendent with one single goal: to select a team of educators with the sole purpose of identifying key targets and strategies that would eliminate disparities in academic achievement, increase classroom engagement, and increase rigorous learning opportunities for all students (Pogonowski, 2017).

While the district had been implementing system-wide initiatives that focused on improving the achievement of all students, the superintendent believed that the district had the resources and responsibility to do more but would need far more data and information about schools. In response, the Deputy Superintendent and other members of the Executive Team adapted an accountability model, CitiStat (Pogonowski, 2017), a data-driven management system designed to monitor and improve the performance of city departments in real-time (Perez & Rushing, 2007) for use in the district.

CitiStat had been used in various state and city government agencies and was highlighted in the widely acclaimed HBO show, *The Wire* (Baines, 2008). A key aspect

of CitiStat is biweekly face-to-face meetings of department heads with the mayor or agency head to assess progress made on a range of specific issues. Prior to the biweekly meetings, departments submit data, collected during the prior two weeks, to the agency head or mayor's office. The data focus on progress made on key performance indicators and are the basis for discussions between the organizational leaders and the various agencies or divisions (Baines, 2008).

Superintendent C and members of his executive team adapted the CitiStat model for use in the system. Teams were created and responsible for developing action management plans that closely resembled the format and content of previous PMOC charters. A key difference from the former PMOC model was that previously only system level aggregate data were used. The modified CitiStat model relied on all data disaggregated by race/ethnicity and three service groups (ESOL, FARMS, and Special Education). Ten key school-level performance indicators were identified by the Superintendent and had been defined as the Strategic Plan Indicators of Success. These formed the basis of the data analyses and were expected to be monitored by ten Action Management Teams. A charter was created for each of the ten Indicators of Success (see Figure 9), and qualitative and quantitative measures were used to create a growth index for each of the indicators. Each growth index was comprised of both Critical Features, or the qualitative measures that have been deemed as best practices in national research and previous experience within the school system, and Leading Indicators, or the data and quantitative measures (See Appendices A and B).

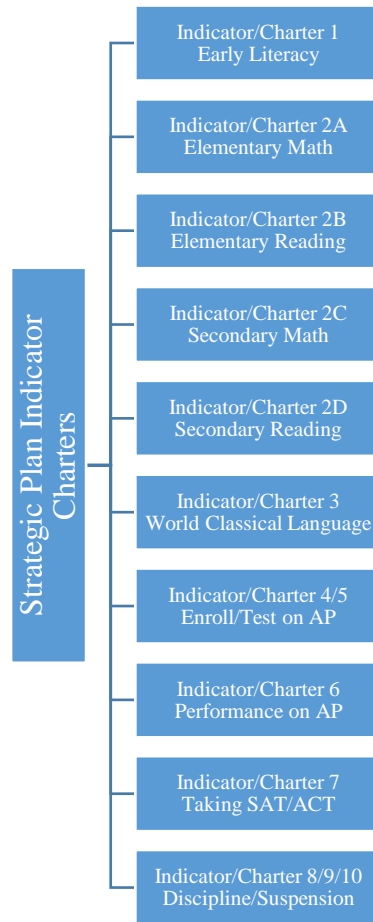


Figure 9. Strategic Plan Indicator Charters

A protocol was created which the system populated with data for each of the ten indicators disaggregated by the seven racial groups and the three service groups (ESOL, FARMS and Special Education) (See Appendix C). Each of the seven schools was mandated to use the benchmark protocol for all of the county-level assessments and were provided the option to use it with school created assessments. By looking at the content standards, both the individual schools and the district's Division of Curriculum and Instruction were able to determine the effectiveness of the curricula, instruction, and assessments.

The first data reports were ready for analysis in 2010. The disaggregated data indicated that some of the seven schools were making greater gains than other schools. The initial belief was that the African American student group had the greatest disparities when compared to the highest performing ethnic student group: Whites (Pogonowski, 2017). However, when analyzing the data for all student subgroups, poverty was reaffirmed as having a greater impact on student performance than did race or ethnicity. Therefore, in order to further narrow the focus on eliminating gaps in the identified schools, the system more thoroughly analyzed the number and percent of students in each of the seven schools who received FARMS and who did not meet the goal of one or more of the ten Strategic Plan Indicators of Success. For example, in one particular school, 98 students, representing 89% of all students in third, fourth and fifth grades, failed to meet the Strategic Plan Indicator goal. Through this data analysis process, 28 schools, elementary to high, were identified as targeted schools. As a targeted school, additional funding and positions were allocated to support the school in the identified areas. In addition, there was also an increased presence from the central office in the form of added resources and oversight (McMahon, 2016).

Second OCR complaint. During this time, as the System was struggling with maintaining sufficient gains to eliminate the achievement gaps, the System had still not met all of the requirements of the 2005 OCR agreement. In July of 2011, the NAACP filed a second complaint with the OCR. This complaint stated that the system had racially-disparate outcomes in disciplinary outcomes. It outlined that African American students were considerably more likely to be suspended or expelled from schools and

referred to an alternative school program (NAACP, 2011). This prompted more emphasis on the EOC process.

Creation of the EOC. During the 2010–2011 school year, the system had a renewed effort surrounding the Action Management Process. Similar to the PMOC model developed during Superintendent A’s tenure, data were constantly gathered and analyzed, school system needs were identified and prioritized, and projects were defined to address those needs. Superintendent C appointed a group of district leaders, called the Executive Oversight Committee (EOC), which was to review strategies, monitor progress, and resolve issues. The EOC was comprised of the Deputy Superintendent, the Associate Superintendent of School Performance, the Assistant Superintendent of Advanced Studies and Programs, the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, the Assistant Superintendent of Student Support Services, the Chief Operating Officer, the Executive Director of Equity and Human Relations, the Executive Director of Instructional Data, and the Executive Director of Alternative Education. While similar to the structure developed during Superintendent A’s tenure, the most significant difference was that Superintendent C did not attend the monthly meetings (Pogonowski, 2017). This management system fostered cross-departmental collaboration, provided a common framework, and helped to create and maintain a quality-oriented organization (Anne Arundel County Public Schools [AACPS], 2012).

Project Managers, who also served as the content coordinators for the respective indicators, reported their findings and progress to the EOC. It became apparent that while appropriate questions were being asked of the Project Managers by members on the EOC, the questions were being asked of the wrong individuals. The individuals who would

more appropriately answer the questions were the principals and their respective Regional Assistant Superintendents. Based on the limited progress made in meeting the goals, it also became clear that each Action Management Team—created to support the EOC schools—was trying to support too many schools and needed to focus their support. As a result, the number of schools was reduced from 28 EOC schools to 14 EOC schools. Additionally, it was determined that building-level principals needed to sit with the Project Manager to share the progress of their respective schools.

In 2012, the district’s Board of Education (BOE) reiterated its commitment to overcoming disparities in student achievement among and between student groups—racially, ethnically, and socio-economically— by adopting a second *Strategic Plan: The Journey to Greatness, 2012-2017*. The ultimate goal of the plan was to ensure that every student meets or exceeds standards and that gaps in achievement are eliminated (AACPS, 2012).

A new data system. A major event that occurred in 2014 was the installation of a new data system. Prior to 2012, all of the data management systems used within the school system were built and managed in-house by its technology office. The system had been using data since 2009, when the system adapted CitiStat. At that time the data protocols were initiated to report and analyze student achievement and other indicators, identify achievement gaps, make instructional and curricular adjustments, and inform and communicate information to parents and community members. However, it was determined that the data systems were simplistic and lacked functionality. The systems were not web-based so the end users were not able to utilize or manipulate the data unless they were on the county’s network or able to export the data into Excel. Frustrations with

the data system were expressed by teachers and principals and by members of central office (Hall, 2015).

In 2013, the district issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) to obtain a corporate product that would provide a data management system. A committee of eight members reviewed seven different proposals and selected Performance Matters (Hall, 2015). The system signed a three year, \$1.7 million dollar contract with Performance Matters in 2014. With the new system, the staff at EOC schools were provided increased amounts of professional development to support their efforts accessing and comprehending the data (Hall, 2015).

Reinstating the PMOC model. During the 2013-2014 school year, a committee consisting of the associate superintendent, the three assistant superintendents, three executive directors, and the senior manager of research, examined a variety of potential models including Accelerated Schools, Direct Instruction, and Success for All. After much deliberation, the committee chose to reconstitute the use of a Project Management Oversight Committee (PMOC) as a means of monitoring school performance and growth. It was the consensus of the committee that PMOC was the best structure for accountability, gathering data, performance analysis, and setting targets for student growth at the seven EOC schools (McMahon, 2016). Through the use of the PMOC structures (i.e. charters, data protocols, data sharing, critical features, leading indicators), the EOC schools were made more accountable and required to share their progress with the committee. Schools identified for support through the EOC were required to analyze both the summative data as measured by the Strategic Plan and the formative data on a

more regular basis. All data collected through progress monitoring at the identified schools had to be aligned with the system's Strategic Plan.

Shortly after this decision was made, seven members of the superintendent's executive team were assigned to work with the system's Division of Instructional Data for three months analyzing a variety of data from all of the schools within the district. The team concluded that there were historical failures with the previous school reform models/structures that the system had used to measure student achievement at the seven designated EOC schools. In the summer of 2014, the principals at the EOC identified schools were informed of their schools identification, the supports associated with the designation, as well as and the accountability structure to be used (Pogonowski, 2017).

2013-2014 Superintendent D. At the conclusion of the 2012-2013 school year, Superintendent C requested to be released from his contract to accept a superintendent position in a neighboring county. As a result, a retired deputy superintendent from a neighboring district was appointed as the interim superintendent. Superintendent D maintained the accountability model that was then in place.

2014-2016 Superintendent E. With the appointment of yet another superintendent in 2014, the Strategic Plan was amended to establish the goal of having 80% of all students reading on or above grade level by the end of second grade as measured by Fountas and Pinnell (F&P) (McMahon, 2016). During Superintendent E's tenure, both the EOC structure and the PMOC model were continued to support the identified EOC schools.

The Current PMOC Model and Structure in the Mid-Atlantic K-12 System

The district established the expectation that progress monitoring is a tool that is to be utilized in all schools. Schools identified for support through the EOC are required to analyze both the summative data, as measured by the Strategic Plan, and the formative data on a more regular basis. Through the use of the PMOC structures, the EOC schools have an additional level of accountability that requires them to share their respective progress with the committee. All data collected through progress monitoring at the identified schools have a direct or indirect alignment to the system's Strategic Plan. Given the different needs at each particular level and strategic plan indicator goal, the data that schools are expected to collect and review varies (Alwin, 2002).

NCLB and *Race to the Top* forced the district to focus more attention on the lowest performing schools. Based upon the number of failing schools, the district responded to this concern by using the PMOC to monitor growth and student achievement at these schools. The management structure that was created resembled that of CitiStat.

A key aspect of CitiStat is biweekly face-to-face meetings of department heads with the mayor to assess progress made on a range of specific issues. As noted above, this approach has been used in various municipal and state governments. The process relies on biweekly meetings, with departments submitting data to the head's office that has been collected during the preceding two-week period leading up to the scheduled meeting. The data focus on progress made on key performance indicators and are the

basis for discussions between organizational leaders and local governmental agencies (Baines, 2008).

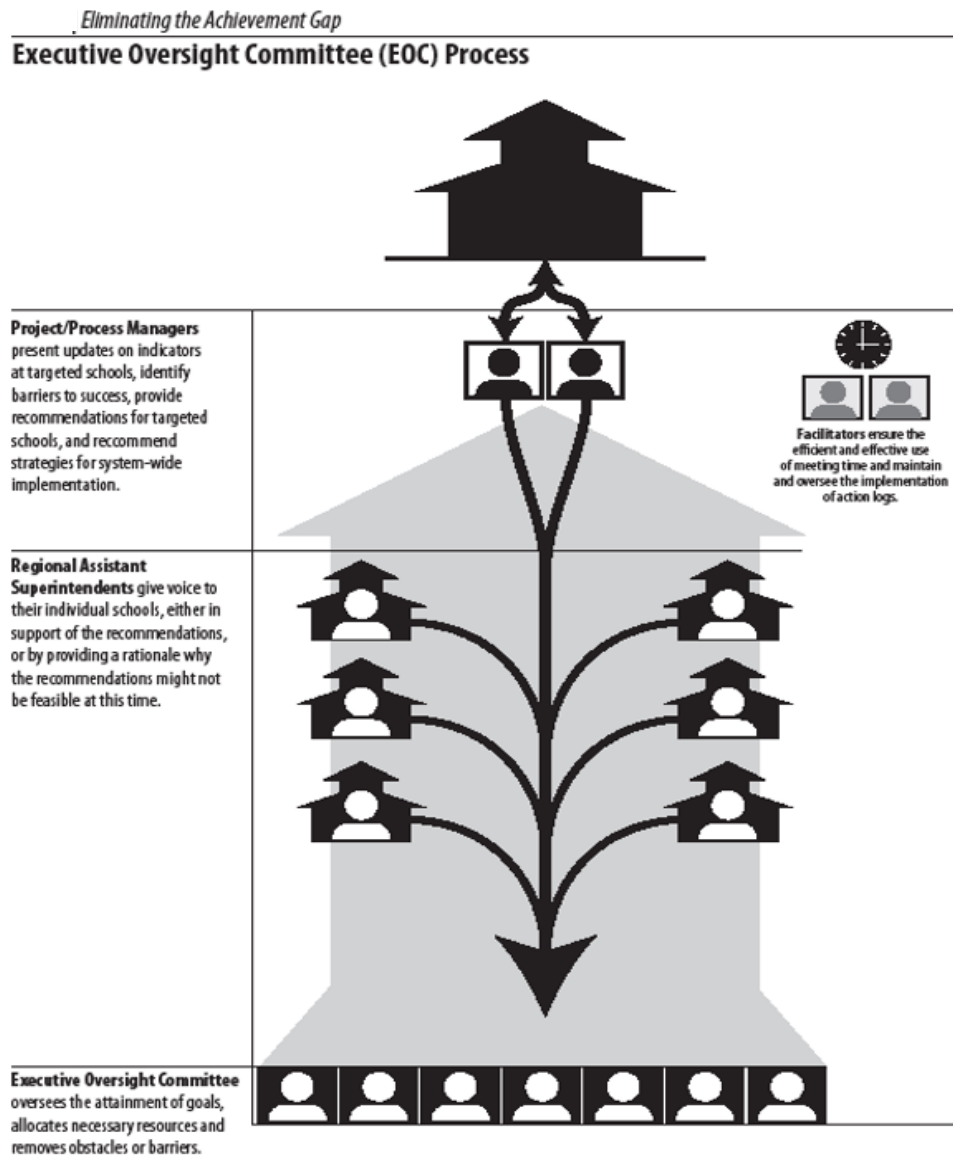
Superintendent C and his executive management team attempted to model something similar to CitiStat for the district. Academic progress for the lowest performing 14 schools was to be monitored using both qualitative and quantitative measures. To support these measures, a growth index was created for each of the 10 Strategic Plan Indicators. The index was comprised of both Critical Features, or the qualitative have been deemed as best practices, and Leading Indicators, which are the quantitative measures.

During the 2010–2011 school year, the district once again instituted an Action Management Process. In this process, data were constantly gathered and analyzed, school system needs were identified and prioritized, and projects were defined to address those needs. As noted above, a group of district leaders, called the EOC, served as the body to review strategies, monitor progress, and resolve issues. The EOC was comprised of the Deputy Superintendent, the Associate Superintendent of School Performance, the Assistant Superintendent of Advanced Studies and Programs, the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, the Assistant Superintendent of Student Support Services, the Chief Operating Officer, the Executive Director of Equity and Human Relations, the Executive Director of Instructional Data and the Executive Director of Alternative Education. While similar to the structure developed during Superintendent A's tenure, the most significant difference was the absence of the then current superintendent, Superintendent C. (Pogonowski, 2017). This management system fostered cross-departmental collaboration, provided a common framework, and helped to

create and maintain a quality-oriented organization. For this process, the system employed members of the superintendent's executive staff to serve in this capacity (See Table 1).

Table 1

Executive Oversight Committee Process



Using this system, Project and Process Managers, comprised of content coordinators and resource teachers, and developed an Action Management Plan. The plan included evidence-based practices found in both the district and across the nation that had proven to demonstrate progress to eliminate achievement gaps. Upon completion of the plan, the Project and Process Managers set out to identify Action Management Teams comprised of carefully selected leaders in the district, ensuring there were representatives of every department in their organizational structure. These cross-functional staff members were assigned to 11 teams. The teams were led by the Project and Process Managers to ensure that the various elements of the plans were accomplished within identified timeframes. Reports of the progress of the work were shared with the EOC monthly. In addition to the reporting tool, the academic and discipline data for each of the respective Strategic Plan Indicators was shared and analyzed monthly in the board room of the BOE (Pogonowski, 2017). During the monthly meetings, project and process managers were required to update the EOC on the progress that each school identified for their respective indicator had made. In addition to sharing progress, managers were required to highlight barriers they had encountered and to make recommendations. (See Table 2).

Table 2

-Sample Monthly Reporting Tool

EOC Action Management Team

Monthly Report
Indicator 2D: 50% of all students in each student group in grades 3-8 will be performing at the Advanced level on the Maryland standardized tests in Reading.
Date:
Project Manager:
Process Managers:
Target Schools: :
AMT Members
List all members:
Please attach any pertinent data from dashboard.
Targeted Schools That Are Progressing and Promising Practices (list schools and identify potential practices that are yielding progress)
Targeted Schools That Are Not Progressing and Barriers (list schools and identify barriers to progress [leadership, culture, structures, other])
Data Analysis for Recommendation (if applicable)
Background Information/Rationale for Recommendation (if applicable)
RECOMMENDATION (if applicable)

Action/Strategy	Update

As noted above, while initially the Project and Process Managers reported their findings and progress to the EOC, it became apparent that although the appropriate questions were being asked, they were being asked of the wrong individuals. As a result,

the individuals who would more appropriately answer the questions were the principals and their respective Regional Assistant Superintendents. Based on the limited progress made in meeting the goals, it also became clear that each Action Management Team was trying to support too many schools and needed to focus their support.

When looking at factors within a school that contribute to student growth and performance, it is recognized that principals are second only to teachers in their impact on student achievement (Seashore Lewis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). Evidence suggests that a highly effective principal can increase his or her students' scores up to 10 percentile points on standardized tests in just one year (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). The PMOC is premised on the leadership of the principal making changes affecting every aspect of the school. Principals can also affect other student outcomes including reducing student absences and suspensions, and improving graduation rates. Principals in low-achieving or high-poverty, minority schools tend to have a greater impact on student outcomes than principals at less challenging schools (Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). For the 2014-2015 school year, the process was amended to reflect these discoveries. Each of the seven school-based principals comes before the EOC three times a school year with his/her Regional Assistant Superintendent. Additionally, each principal was assigned a Collaborative Friend to serve as a non-evaluative ally, advisor and an additional level of support. These Collaborative Friends accompany the principal to the hearing. Several informational meetings were held over the summer to inform principals, Regional Assistant Superintendents, Project/Process Managers and Collaborative Friends of the modified procedures and their individual roles. At the first of these meetings, schools were

informed of the reporting structure along with a calendar of meeting dates. The subsequent meetings were leveled: elementary, middle, and high school.

For a typical meeting in the most recent school year, each school was invited to enter the meeting at the designated time outlined on the agenda (See Appendix B). Typically, the meetings are scheduled for four hours, with each school being allocated 30 minutes. The meetings are held at the school system offices. The school team consists of one to two individuals, the principal and a school-based leader. When principals come before the body to present their data, they are seated at a separate table facing the EOC. Their school-based data, as well as the data collected at the county level, has been uploaded to a private site for the members of the EOC to review prior to the meeting. During the meeting, schools share their progress, identify barriers they have encountered, describe additional resources they need, and defend their actions when their progress fails to meet the expectations of the EOC. The meetings are facilitated by the EOC Chair. While the EOC Chair is the primary individual asking questions, all members of the body are encouraged to pose questions. As questions are asked, they are recorded, and at the conclusion of each meeting the questions and responses are sent to the principals, the Regional Assistant Superintendents, and the Collaborative Friends. The intent of this follow-up is for them to further review the concerns of the EOC and to answer with their respective school based leadership team. (See Appendix C). To support schools as they navigate this process, various “non-negotiables” were established. First, each school was required to create a plan to address the indicators (See Appendix D). The plan identified the indicator, steps taken to address it and how they were going to measure success. An example of an indicator for one school was “to increase the amount of student

engagement during instruction”. When schools appeared before the committee, they would highlight their achievements. They would also receive feedback and suggestions of strategies to employ to reach indicator goals. At one particular meeting, the school was asked to define the school’s denotation of engagement to allow the body to better understand why the school thought increased engagement would improve student performance. Schools were also required to create a PMOC structure within their building that mirrored the central office structure. Each targeted school identified Project and Process Managers for identified indicators as well as a school based oversight committee. One school identified their math department chair as the project manager and the assistant principal as the process manager. Together they were responsible for monitoring and supporting their respective school with increasing the overall math performance within their building (See Appendix E). Additionally, schools were directed to review their School Improvement Plans to ensure that their plan specifically addressed the Strategic Plan Indicator of Success Goals in which they were deficient. Finally, the targeted schools were provided with a list of guiding questions (See Appendix C) that would not only be used when they came to present to the EOC, but to aid in focusing the instructional dialogue during the school level process. While schools were only required to present their progress to the EOC three times a year, they were expected to hold monthly meetings that resembled the meetings held before the EOC. (See Appendix E)

Summary and Purpose of this Research

The achievement gap between student groups, particularly African Americans and Whites in both state assessments and discipline measures, is a longstanding, national challenge (Rothstein, 2014). Effectively closing the gap requires improving the

performance of all students while accelerating the performance of low-performing student groups in order to catch up to their higher performing peers. Researchers have found that a variety of school, community, economic and familial factors correlate with the achievement gap, but views are mixed on how to narrow the gap (Alliance for Excellence Education, 1999; Cancian & Danziger, 2009; Jacob & Ludwig, 2009; Janet, 1999; Mitra, 2011; OECD, 2012). Over the past decade, federal, state and local policies have made the closing of the achievement gap a top priority.

There have been longstanding gaps within the Mid-Atlantic School System between African American and White students as measured by the key Success Indicators outlined on the district's strategic plan. These gaps are evident in both system data and are also drawn from the 2005 and 2011 OCR complaints. Efforts to address low performance achievement among certain groups of students have been implemented in a variety of areas, such as adoption of new curricula, by several superintendents. One major effort has been to focus specific attention on the lowest performing schools through the use of data on key performance indicators and the implementation of a process designed to oversee improvement of individual schools. This process is the PMOC, first introduced in 2004, and based on principles of project management that were later revised. The model utilizes data and a heightened level of accountability to yield quick, yet sustainable growth and progress. In the Mid-Atlantic school district, the process is implemented by the EOC and is known as Project Management Oversight Committee (PMOC). In the model, adapted for use in the school district, the EOC acts as a project management team that reviews school data and assists school principals in their planning to create and implement structures to meet the targeted goals.

|

To date, there has been no systematic investigation of the PMOC process as a means of school improvement in order to raise the achievement of underperforming schools in the district. Therefore, the purpose of this investigation was to determine whether the use of the PMOC model in supporting the EOC school-based leaders and their respective schools is improving the performance of all students in the critical academic and discipline indicators.

Section 2: Design and Methodology

As stated earlier, the achievement gap is a longstanding, national challenge. Effectively closing the achievement gap requires improving the performance of all students while at the same time accelerating the performance of low-performing student groups in order to catch up to their higher performing peers. There has been an enduring achievement gap within the Mid-Atlantic School System and one of the chief strategies chosen by the Mid-Atlantic school system to address low achievement among some subgroups of students has been the PMOC model. The model utilizes data and a heightened level of accountability to yield quick, yet sustainable growth and progress. To date, there has been no systematic investigation of the PMOC model as a means of school improvement. The purpose of this investigation is to examine the impact of the PMOC model in supporting school based leaders and their respective school leadership teams in accelerating student performance within their buildings.

The following research questions guided the investigation:

1. What trends occurred in selected academic and discipline indicators in seven EOC schools participating in the PMOC model over the time period 2010-2011 to 2015-2016?
2. How do school trends in academic and discipline indicators compare to trends in selected demographic and other characteristics (i.e., student mobility teacher mobility, percentage of students receiving Free and Reduced Meals Services, percentage of students receiving English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services and the percentage of students receiving special

education services) in these same schools during the period 2010-2011 to 2015-2016?

3. What is the level of satisfaction of selected elements of the PMOC process among those participating in the PMOC process?

Study Design

This descriptive quantitative study used existing system record data. According to Borg and Gall (1989), a descriptive research design is best carried out when the purpose is aimed at finding out "what is," so observational and survey methods are frequently employed to collect descriptive data. A causal-comparative research design was considered. Due to the fact that a causal-comparative attempts to determine the cause or consequences of differences that already exist between or among groups of individuals (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2018), it was not the most fitting research design to address the research questions posed.

Data Sources

The data used in this research were extracted from either the state's data reporting website or the school system's student management system. The state's system houses state assessment data as well as graduation and dropout data for all schools within the state. Data in this system are updated yearly. Prior to the annual posting, it is reviewed by the respective systems to ensure student demographic and enrollment accuracy. System data are uploaded daily from various sources into the student management system. Because of the daily uploads, the data are dynamic and can change based on the date pulled.

Data were extracted for seven schools designated as EOC schools in the Mid-Atlantic school system. As noted in Section 1, designation as an EOC school and subsequent intervention using the PMOC process has been occurring since the 2011-2012 school year. Between that time and 2016, a total of 14 schools were designated as EOC. However, only seven schools have remained in the process for the five years. These include three high schools, two middle schools and two elementary schools. Of the seven schools, six of them are clustered in two geographic locations in the school district. Table 3 presents the enrollments and demographic information for each of the schools for the 2011-2012 school year.

In examining the racial and ethnic composition of the schools, four are a minority-majority school with the largest population being either African American or Hispanic. Two have a relatively even distribution of students identifying as African American, Hispanic and White. Only one of the schools has a predominately White student body.

Table 3

Demographics of EOC Schools in 2011-2012 School Year

School	EOC Schools From Year to Year										
	Student Count	American Indian/Alaska Native	Asian	African American	Hispanic	Multi-Racial	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	White	Special Education	English for Speakers of Other Languages	Free and Reduced Meals Services
High School A	1814	0.11%	2.71%	31.18%	29.74%	3.04%	0.06%	33.17%	7.24%	16.53%	48.09%
High School B	1921	0.31%	4.81%	26.61%	12.96%	4.97%	0.26%	50.08%	8.92%	6.89%	45.02%
High School C	2034	0.69%	4.98%	54.24%	17.24%	5.27%	0.25%	17.34%	10.72%	5.76%	43.73%
Middle School A	861	0.35%	1.97%	28.22%	31.01%	3.14%	0.00%	35.31%	9.70%	17.55%	51.96%
Middle School B	669	0.69%	4.98%	54.24%	17.24%	5.27%	0.25%	17.34%	10.08%	9.47%	54.44%
Elementary School A	616	0.16%	1.14%	38.34%	55.14%	2.61%	0%	2.61%	8.12%	45.62%	87.82%
Elementary School B	600	0.17%	1.00%	24.83%	69.17%	1.67%	0.17%	3.00%	5.35%	55.02%	90.80%

Measures

As noted in Section 1, data on 10 measures, called Success Indicators as determined by the system's Strategic Plan, are collected and reported for each school. For

the purposes of this study only three of the measures were used. In addition to the three Strategic Plan indicators, four additional measures were used for the current research.

The following are descriptions of each of the seven indicators:

- Reading achievement is measured in grades three through eight, using the Maryland School Assessment. Students who scored in the Proficient or Advanced range are deemed successful on this assessment.
- Math achievement is measured in grades three through eight, using the Maryland School Assessment. Students who scored in the Proficient or Advanced range are deemed successful on this assessment.
- Graduation rate is calculated using a cohort model. The four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate is the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who form the adjusted cohort for the graduating class. For any given cohort, students who are entering grade 9 for the first time form a cohort that is subsequently “adjusted” by adding any students who transfer into the cohort later during the subsequent three years and subtracting any students who transfer out, transfers to another county, or die during that same period. The four-year graduation rate is calculated by dividing the number of students who graduate within four years, including the summer following their fourth year of high school, with a regular high school diploma by the number of students who form the adjusted cohort for that graduating class. Students who drop out of high school remain in the adjusted cohort—that is, the denominator of the cohort graduation rate calculation (Maryland State Department of Education, 2017).

- Successful completion of Algebra I describes trends in the percentage of Grade 8 students completing Algebra I with a grade of C or higher.
- Suspension rate is calculated using the number of students suspended in a given school year as the numerator and the total student enrollment for the same year as the denominator (Maryland State Department of Education, 2017).
- Grade Point Average (GPA) is calculated by dividing the total number of grade points earned by the total number of credit hours attempted. The total number of grade points earned is the sum of the individual subject credits multiplied by weights corresponding to the grades (0-4). This measure of student performance describes trends in the percentage of students in grades 9 through 12 (Hall, 2015).
- Dropout rate is the four-year adjusted cohort dropout rate. It is defined as the number of students who leave school, for any reason other than death, within the four year period divided by the number of students who form the adjusted cohort. The school years are defined as the first day of the school year through the summer to the first day of the following school year. This time frame encompasses all student enrollment activity that occurs during the summer, including summer withdrawal from state-approved programs and schools (Maryland State Department of Education, 2017).
- Student mobility is the rate at which students move from one school community to another. It is calculated yearly based on the number of entrants and withdrawals in a given school year. Entrants are the number and percentage of students entering (transferring in or re-entering) school during the September to

June school year after the first day of school (Maryland State Department of Education, 2017).

- Teacher mobility can be defined as the number of teachers who leave their teaching positions each year, either to take a different teaching position or to leave the profession altogether. Similar to student mobility, teacher mobility is calculated based on teachers entering at the start of year and leaving at any point throughout the year (Hall, 2015).
- Free and Reduced Meals Services (FARMS) is based on the number and percentage of students whose applications for free/reduced price meals meet the family size and income guidelines (as promulgated annually by the U.S. Department of Agriculture) and students approved through direct certification. The counts are reported as of the student's last day of enrollment in the school system—either the last day in school or the date the student withdrew. The percentage is calculated by dividing the number of students receiving free or reduced price meals by the June net enrollment (Maryland State Department of Education, 2017).
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) identification is determined by a state-identified screening tool. Enrollment percentages are based on the counts that are reported as of the student's last day of enrollment in the school system—either the last day in school or the date the student withdrew. The percentage is calculated by dividing the number of ESOL students by the June net enrollment (Maryland State Department of Education, 2017).

- Special education services is based on the number and percentage of special education program participant, or students with disabilities who have current Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). The counts are reported as of the student's last day of enrollment in the school system—either the last day in school or the date the student withdrew. The percentage is calculated by dividing the number of special education students by the June net enrollment (Maryland State Department of Education, 2017).

Table 4 below presents the specific indicators and other data that were used to address the research questions and the school years for which data were available for this study.

Table 4

Indicators Addressed in Research Questions

Measure of Indicator	Data Source		Data Available for School Years						Notes
	MSDE	System	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	
Grade Level Measures									
Proficiency on Maryland School assessment (MSA in reading and mathematics in Grades 3-8)	√		√	√	√	√			MSA was discontinued as a result of the transition from the Maryland State Curriculum to the Common Core State Standards. The new assessment, Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) was administered as a pilot during 2014-2015 and the assessment was revised for the 2015-2016 school year.
Graduation rates (four year cohort)	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	
Above Grade Level Measures									
Completion on Algebra I by grade 8 with a Grade of C or higher		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
At Risk Indicators									
Suspension rate by school level	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	
Grade Point Average (GPA) among high school students		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Dropout rates (four year cohort)	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	
School Factors/Characteristics									
Student mobility	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	
Teacher mobility		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Students receiving FARMS	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	
Students receiving ESOL services	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	
Students receiving Special Education services	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	

A review of the performance data for the seven schools over the five year period demonstrated consistent deficiencies in meeting the system-identified indicators as determined by the System's Strategic Plan. For the five secondary schools, it should be

noted that each of the identified schools were unsuccessful in meeting the indicator goal for each of the areas pertaining to their respective school level.

Methods

To address research question 1: “*What trends occurred in selected academic and discipline indicators in seven EOC schools participating in the PMOC model over the time period 2010-2011 to 2015-2016?*” visual data are displayed in both chart and graph form to identify potential trends. The specific data examined for students in grades 3-8 are: three years of assessment data (2011-2012, 2012-2013, and 2013-2014); the percentage of students scoring at proficient and advanced levels on the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) in reading and math; access to and opportunity for instructional rigor as measured by the percentage of students successfully completing Algebra I by Grade 8 with a grade of C or higher from 2011-2012 through 2015-2016; and suspension data for students suspended from school for at least one day from 2011-2012 through the 2015-2016 school year. As a result of the state’s decision to transition from the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) to the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) beginning in the 2014-2015 school year, reading and math data were not available.

Data examined for students in Grades 9-12 were: the percentage of students with a GPA of less than a 2.0 from 2010-2011 to the 2015-2016 school year; graduation and dropout rates using the four-year cohort model from 2010-2011 through the 2015-2016 school year; and suspension data for students suspended from school for at least one day from 2010-2011 through the 2015-2016 school year.

For Grade Level Measure data points, the researcher looked for an increase in the percentage of students performing at the proficient or advanced level. Measures of success were noted by overall gap reduction between student groups as well as a gap reduction when comparing the respective schools to the overall state and county averages. Data for the Above Grade Level Measures was displayed and reviewed in a similar manner. Being that the data points in this area are not collected at the state level, measures of success were determined by the overall gap reduction between student groups as well as a gap reduction between the respective schools and the system average. Conversely, the researcher looked for downward trends for the data points associated with At Risk Indicators. Similar to the Above Grade Level Measures, Academic Ineligibility is not a data point that is collected at the state level, therefore gap reduction was determined by comparing student groups with county averages. Suspension and dropout rate gap reductions were determined in a manner similar to the Grade Level Measures.

The specific indicator data for each school, with the exception of the successful completion of Algebra I and academic eligibility was accessed from the website of the State Department of Education. The remaining data points were accessed through the system's data warehouse. Each set of school data per data point was exported to an Excel file. The various data points for each school were then merged to form a complete data profile for each of the schools. The seven Excel files were then compiled into a larger Excel file with each tab containing the complete data profile for each of the schools. The data were then transferred into a table format to create a graph and trend lines were generated using Excel.

To address research question 2: *“How do school trends for improvement in academic and discipline indicators compare to trends in selected demographic and school characteristics (i.e., administrator, teacher and student mobility, percentage of students receiving Free and Reduced Meals Services, percentage of homeless students, percentage of students receiving English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services and the percentage of students receiving special education services) for the 2010-2011 to 2015-2016 period?”* visual data are displayed in both chart and graph form to identify potential trends. The data points identified under the School Factors/Characteristics were collected and displayed visually using charts and graphs to identify trends. It should be noted that while these data points are elements that research has proven to have an impact to student success and growth (Earl & Katz, 2006), they are not in the sphere of influence by the system or school. The researcher compared these data points to county averages as well as to non-EOC schools to determine if there are other schools in the system with similar data points that are yielding greater gains.

For research question 2, the researcher examined multiple data points following the same process as described for research question 1. The specific data examined for each of the seven schools were: student mobility, teacher mobility, percentage of students receiving Free and Reduced Meals Services, the percentage of students receiving ESOL services, and the percentage of students receiving special education services. The above referenced data points were accessible through the state’s Department of Education website with the exception of teacher mobility. That data point was accessed from the Division of Human Resources.

To address research question 3: *“What is the level of satisfaction with select elements of the PMOC process among those participating in that process?”* visual data were displayed in both chart and graph form to identify potential trends. During the 2015-2016 school year, participants in the EOC Process were asked to complete a satisfaction survey at the conclusion of each of the monthly meetings. The satisfaction survey was set up as a Likert scale with the purpose of evaluating the participants’ feelings of satisfaction with the meeting. The Likert scale is commonly used in survey research to measure respondents’ attitudes by asking the extent to which they agree or disagree with a particular question or statement. A typical scale might be strongly agree, agree, not sure/undecided, disagree, strongly disagree (Statistics Cafe, 2011). The results of the survey were analyzed to determine the changes, if any, in the perceptions of the participants with regard to being heard, feeling supported and leaving with ideas and suggestions.

The responses were placed into three groups, Principals, Regional Assistant Superintendents, and EOC Members. The data were aggregated across months and school level when tallied in a chart format using Excel. Through Excel, the data were graphed by response category. Based on the feedback, the EOC was able to make adjustments to the process.

Human Subjects Review

Because this study used existing data that were aggregated to the school level, a waiver of human subjects review was sought and granted from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Maryland, College Park. See Appendix F for a copy of the waiver.

Summary

This section described the specific measures used to examine the status of seven EOC schools after five years of participation in the PMOC process. The measures and data sources were described as well as the analyses performed to address each research question. The results of those analyses will be discussed in the next section.

Section 3: Findings, Discussion, Conclusions, and Implications

Purpose

The persistent low performance of schools and the achievement gap between student groups, particularly African Americans and Whites, in both state assessments and discipline measures is a longstanding, national challenge (Rothstein, 2014). The goal of gap reduction is to effectively improve the performance of all students while accelerating the performance of low-performing student groups in order to catch up to their higher performing peers. Researchers have found that a variety of school, community, economic and familial factors correlate with the achievement gap between different student groups, but views are mixed on how to narrow the gap (Alliance for Excellence Education, 1999; Cancian & Danziger, 2009; Jacob & Ludwig, 2009; Janet, 1999; Mitra, 2011; OECD, 2012). Over the past decade, federal, state, and local policies have made the improvement of low-performing schools a top priority.

There have been years of low performance in select schools which have led to longstanding gaps within the Mid-Atlantic School System between African American and White student as measured by the key Success Indicators outlined on the district's strategic plan. These gaps are evident in both system data and are reflective of 2005 and 2011 OCR complaints. Efforts to address low performance achievement among certain groups of students have been implemented in a variety of areas, such as adoption of new curricula, by several superintendents. One major effort has been to focus specific attention on the lowest performing schools through the use of data on key performance indicators and the implementation of a process designed to oversee improvement of individual schools. This process is the Project Management Oversight Committee

(PMOC), first introduced in 2004 by a prior superintendent and based on principles of project management and revised in 2010. The model utilizes data and a heightened level of accountability to yield quick, yet sustainable, growth and progress. In the Executive Oversight Committee (EOC) model, the EOC acts as a project management team that reviews school data and assists school principals in their planning to create and implement structures to meet the targeted goals.

This study was the first systematic investigation of the PMOC process and its impact on raising the achievement of underperforming schools in the district. The purpose of this investigation was to determine the impact of the PMOC model in supporting the EOC school-based leaders in the Mid-Atlantic school system in improving the performance of all students in the critical academic and discipline indicators. Following are the results of data analyses that were conducted in response to each of the three research questions.

Analysis of Question 1

What trends occurred in selected academic and discipline indicators in seven EOC schools participating in the PMOC model over the time period 2010-2011 to 2015-2016?

To address this question a total of six indicators were examined:

- Proficiency on State Assessments
- Graduation Rate
- Completion of Algebra I by 8th grade
- Suspension Rate
- Grade Point Average among high school students
- Dropout Rates

Proficiency on State Assessments. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and school system both use the Maryland School Assessments (MSAs) to track schools' progress in meeting achievement goals and complying with NCLB. Students in grades 3-8 take the MSA annually in reading and mathematics. Students scoring proficient or advanced on the MSA pass the exam, while students scoring basic do not pass the exam. This measure of student performance describes the school system's student achievement on the MSAs in grades 3 through 8 from the 2011-2012 school year to 2013-2014 school year.

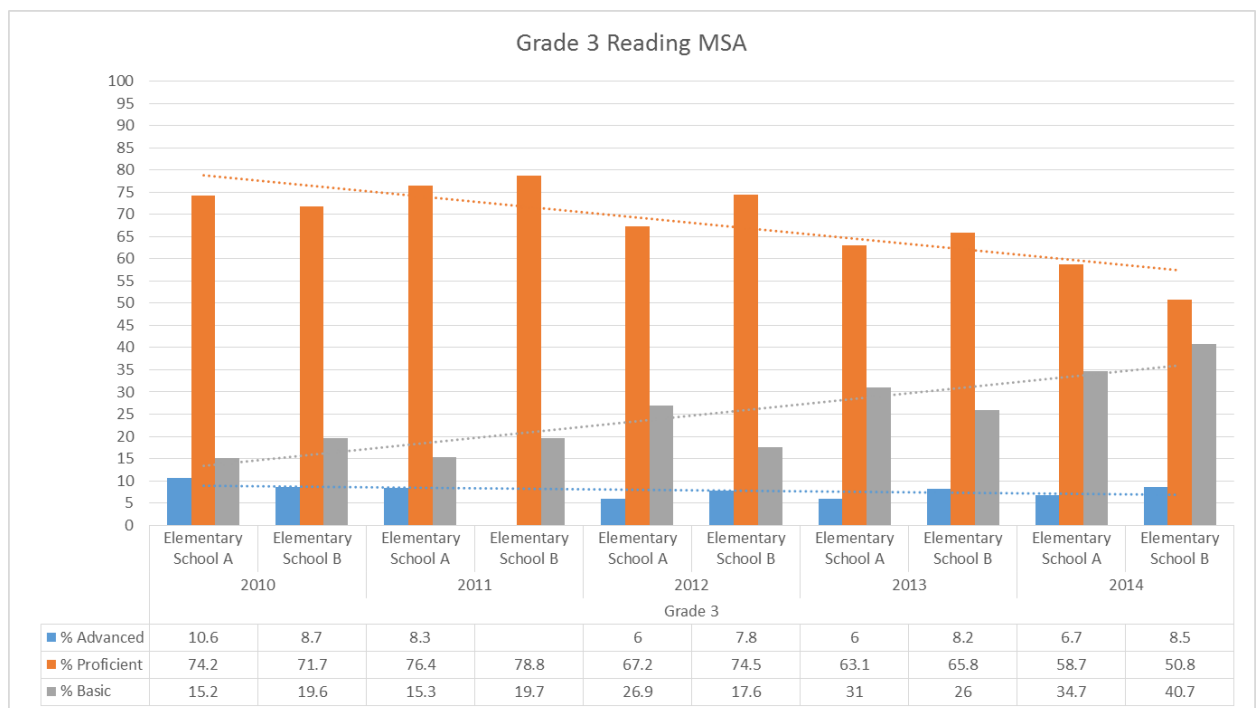


Figure 10. Trend data of Grade 3 Reading MSA.

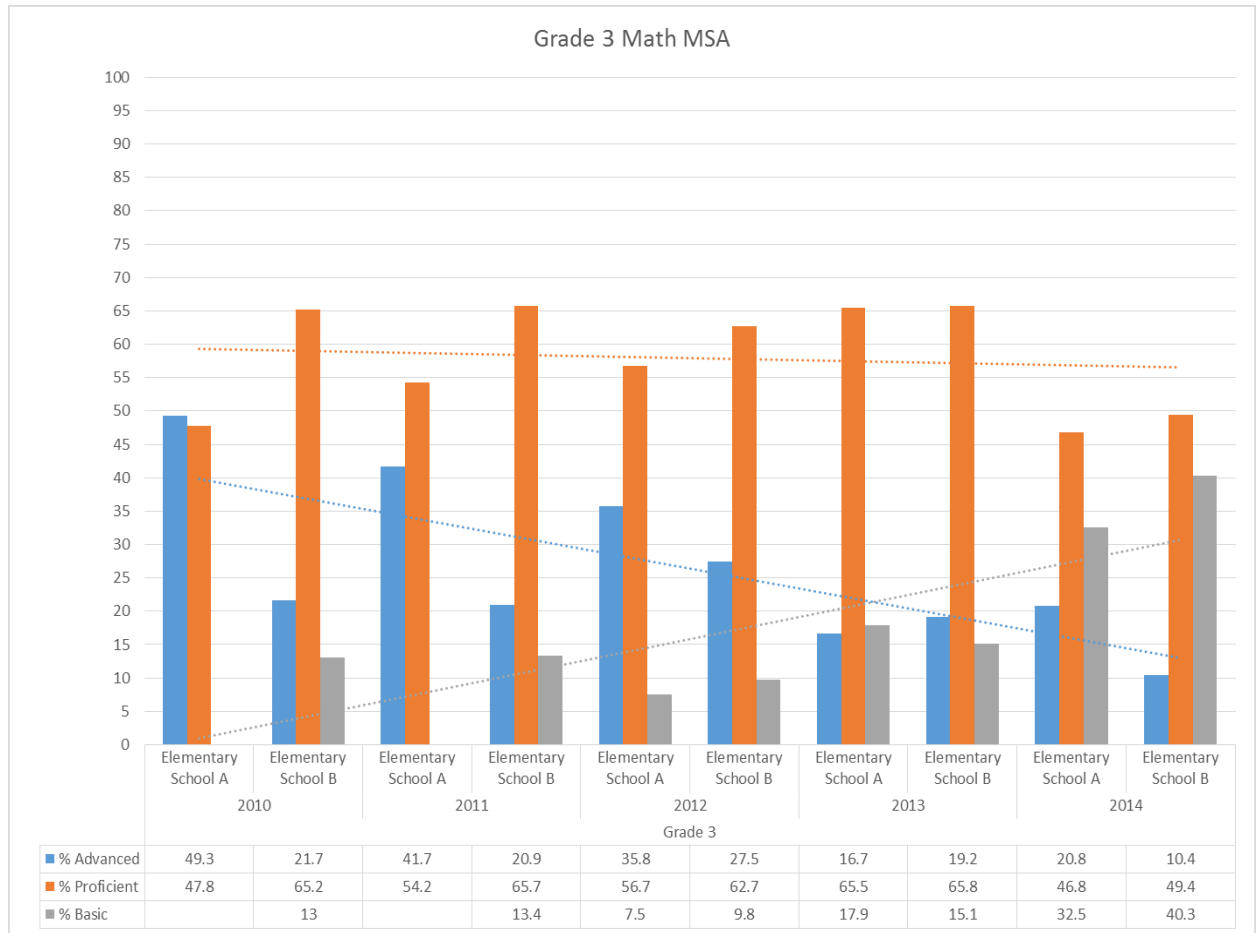


Figure 11. Trend data of Grade 3 Math MSA.

The cited data show that both elementary schools struggled to increase the percentage of students performing at the proficient and advanced levels. This is evident in the downward slope in the trend line for both schools in both areas. Over the four year span, both School A and School B actually displayed a 50% reduction in the percentage of students performing at the advanced level in the area of Mathematics. While the Reading data did not display such a downward trend line in the data for students scoring at the advanced level, the trend lines indicate that the percentage of students performing at the basic level for both schools more than doubled over the four-year span.

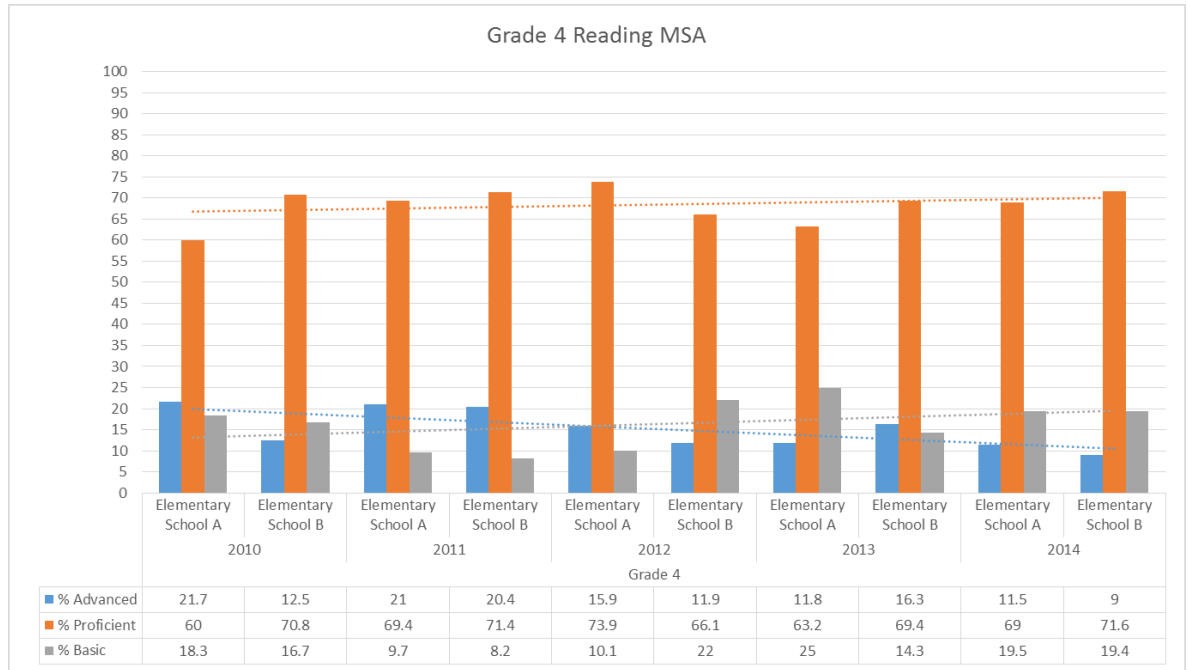


Figure 12. Trend data of Grade 4 Reading MSA.

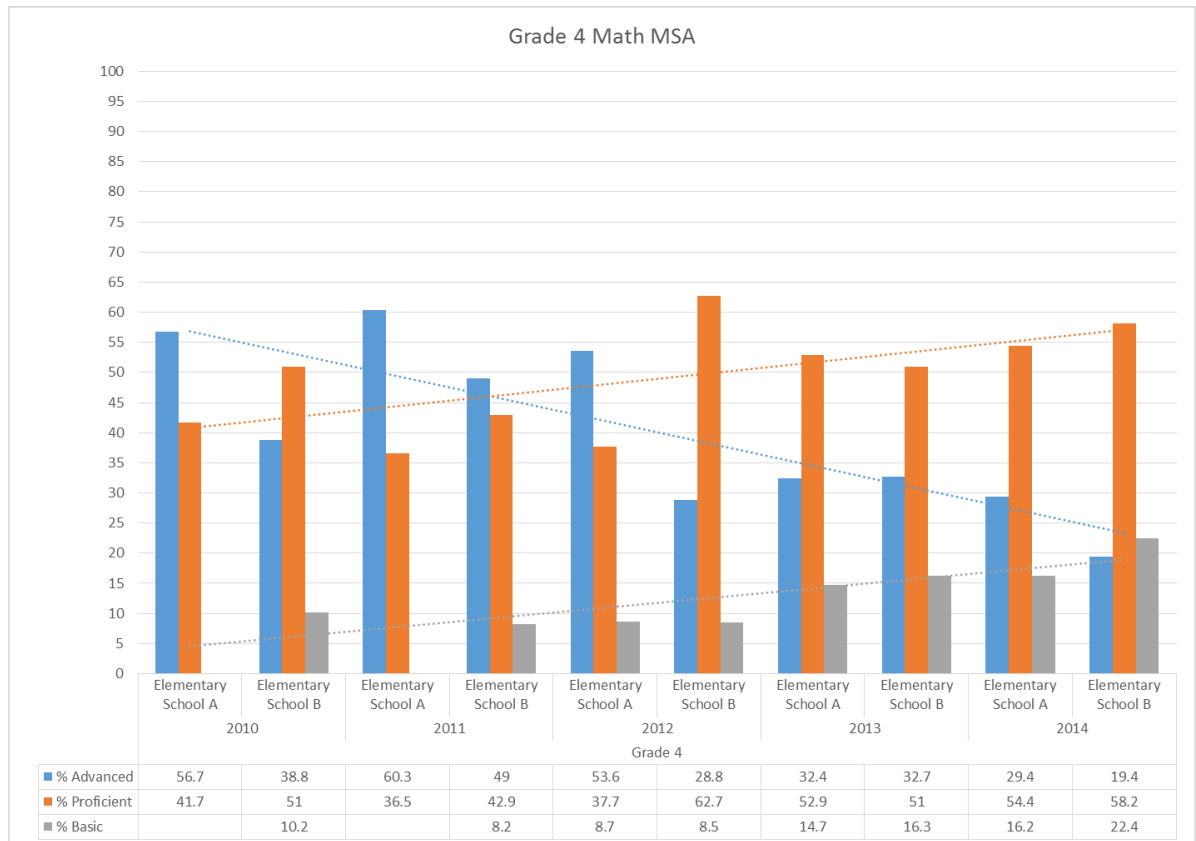


Figure 13. Trend data of Grade 4 Math MSA.

The pattern for the performance in Grade 4 is similar to Grade 3. School A demonstrated a consistent downward slope in the trend line for the students performing at the advanced level in Reading. Baseline data reported 21% of students performing at advanced level; however by the 2013-2014 school year there were only 11.5% scoring at the advanced level. This is evident by the slight decrease in the slope of the trend line. School B displayed similar trend lines in the area of Reading. It should be noted that during the 2012-2013 school year, the percentage of students scoring at the advanced level increased by 4.4 percentage points to 16.3. For the subsequent year the same data point decreased by 7.3 percentage points to a four year low of 9%. While there were some fluctuations in the percent of students performing at the basic level, the trend line data indicates that there was an overall upward slope, indicating an increase, with both schools more than doubling the percent scoring at the basic level. School A went from 9.7% in the 2010-2011 school year to 19.5% in the 2012-2013 school year. In the same time frame, School B went from 8.2% scoring basic to 19.4% scoring basic.

Grade 4 math trend line data displayed a similar trend. Both schools displayed dramatic declines in the trend line for the students scoring at the advanced level. School A displayed a 30.4 percentage point decrease in the number of students in this category. Within the four year time period, the percent of students scoring advanced dropped from 60.3% to 29.4%. School B had similar trend line slopes with the percent of students scoring advanced dropping from 49% to 19.4%, a 29.6 percentage point decline. Both schools also reported an upward slope in the trend line for the percentage of students performing at the basic level. School A had a 16.2 percentage point increase and School

B had a 14.2 percentage point increase.

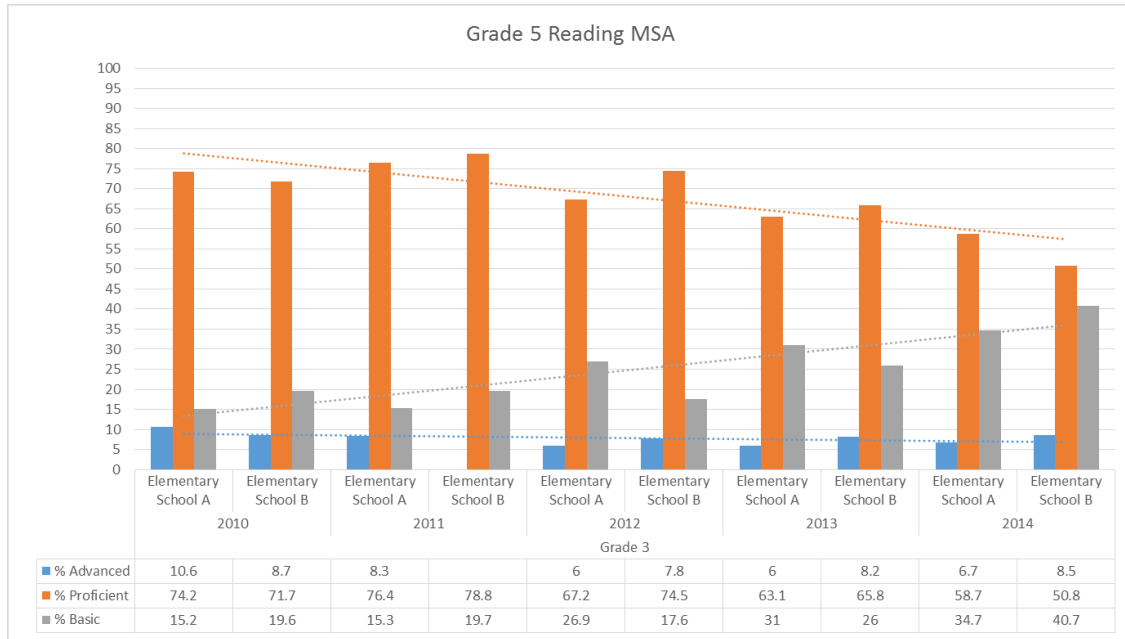


Figure 14. Trend data of Grade 5 Reading MSA.

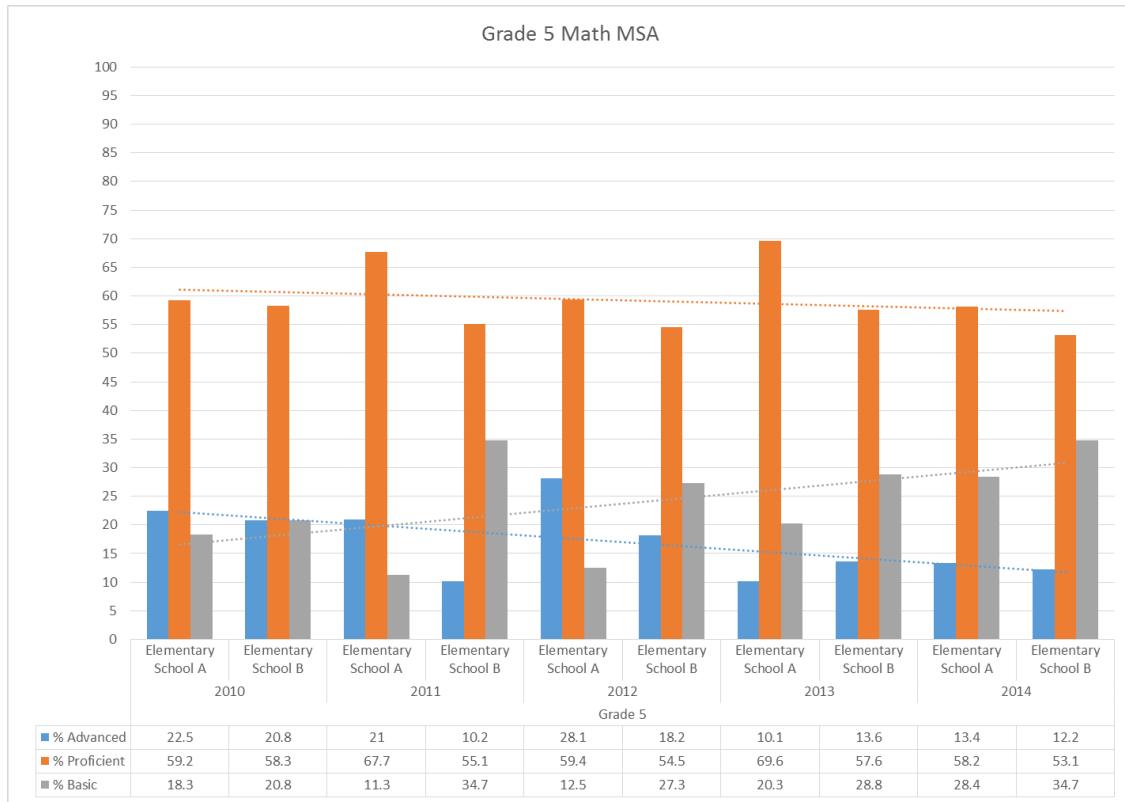


Figure 15. Trend data of Grade 5 Math MSA.

Grade 5 reading data had a similar trend as the other elementary grades (See Figure 14). In School A the percentage of students scoring advanced displayed a downward slope when looking at the trend lines. This is evident in the 21.4 percentage point decrease from the 2010-2011 baseline data of 53.2% to 31.8% in the 2013-2014 school year. This data coincides with the upward trend lines for the percentage of students scoring at the basic level.

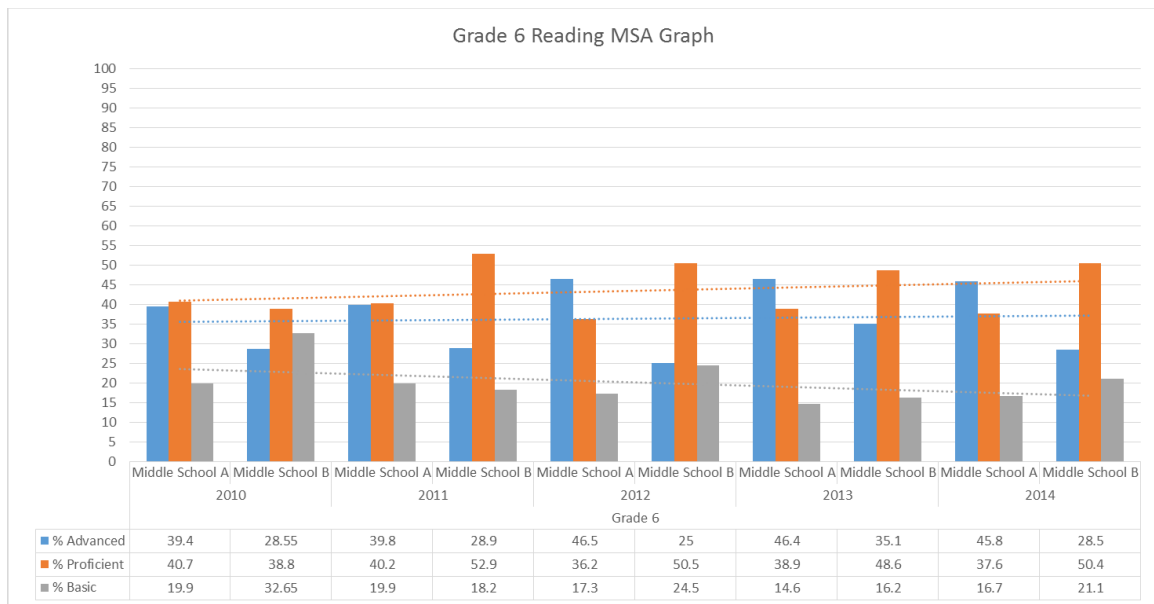


Figure 16. Trend data of Grade 6 Reading MSA.

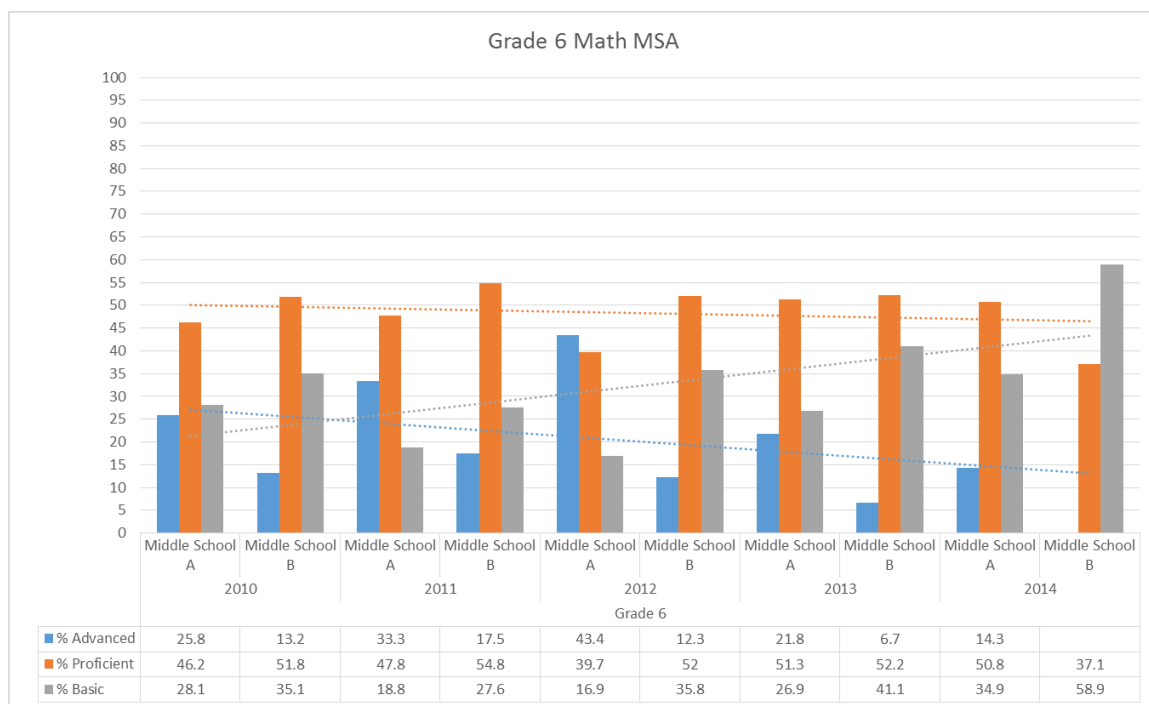


Figure 17. Trend data of Grade 6 Math MSA.

The Grade 6 data for reading does not follow the pattern established at the elementary level. Despite changes in the raw data, the trend lines indicate a decline in the percentage of students scoring advanced or proficient and an increase in the percentage scoring at the basic level. Middle School A increased the percentage of students scoring advanced by 6 percentage points. Their baseline data for the 2010-2011 reports 39.8% of assessed students performing at the advanced level. By the 2013-2014 school year the percentage had risen to 45.8%. Middle School B displayed a slight decrease in the percentage of students performing at the advanced level. Over the same time span, the school reported a 0.4% drop from 28.9% to 28.5% scoring at the advanced level. The math data does not show similar gains. Middle School A reported a 19 percentage point decrease in advanced students. Over the four year period for which the data was reviewed advanced scores dropped from 33.3% to 14.3%. Inversely, the percent of

students scoring basic rose from 18.8% to 34.9%. This trend was comparable to the performance of Middle School B. Their advanced scores showed a decline from 17.5% scoring advanced to 0% scoring advanced. Their percentage of students score basic more than doubled from 27.6% to 58.9%.

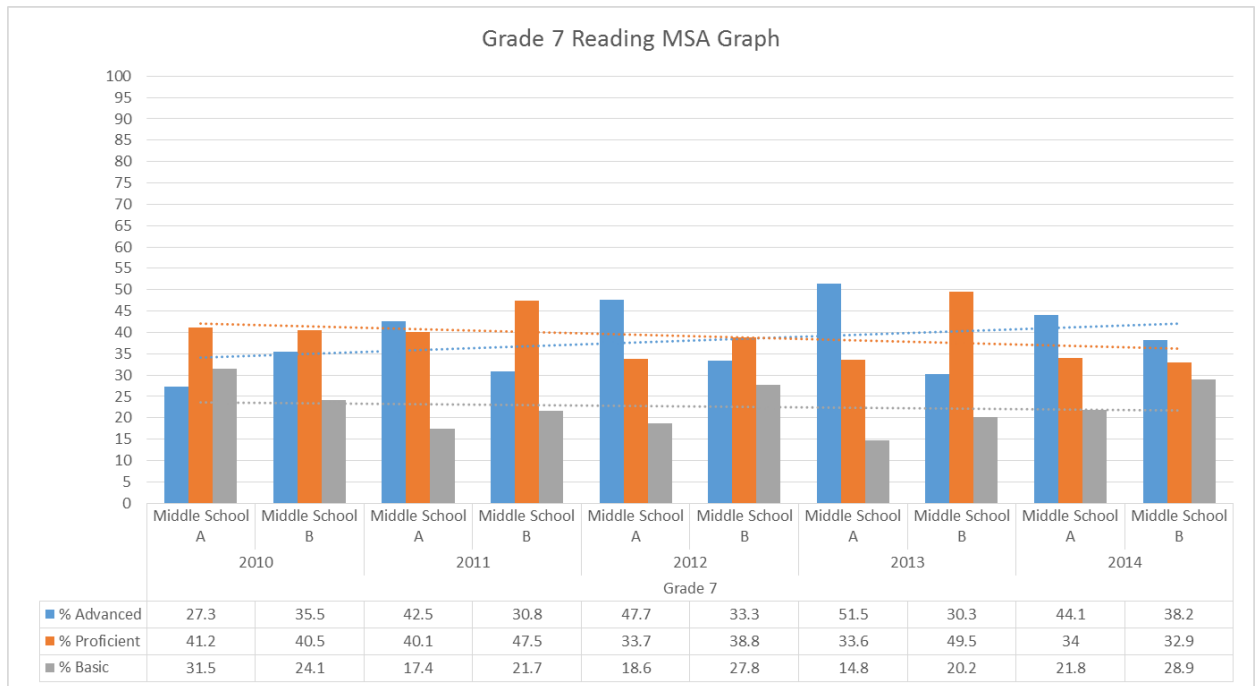


Figure 18. Trend data of Grade 7 Reading MSA.

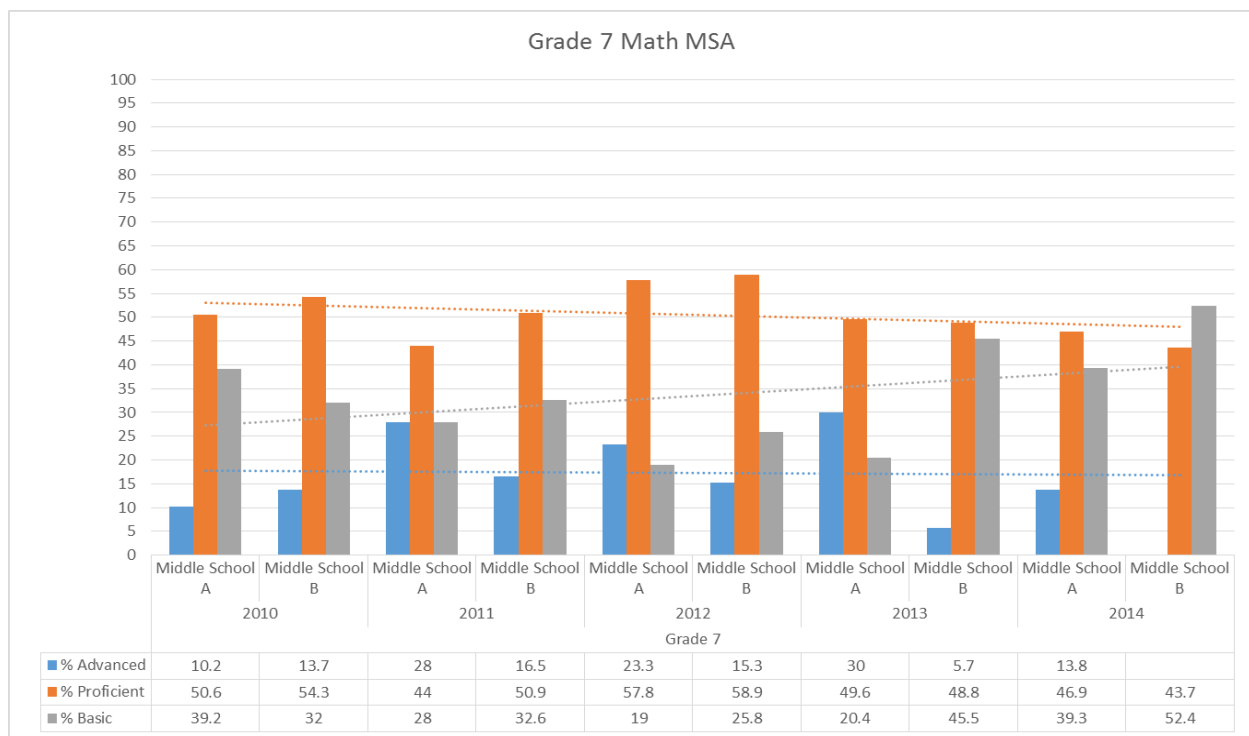


Figure 19. Trend data of Grade 7 Math MSA.

Grade 7 data did not exhibit the same trend as Grade 6 data. The trend line for the percentage of students scoring at the basic level displayed minimal change. Those scoring at the advanced level had a minimal increase and those scoring proficient had a slight decline. Middle School A's advanced percentage decreased by 4.3 percentage points from 42.5% to 38.2%. It should be noted that during the 2012-2013 school year, the percentage of students scoring advanced rose to 51.5%. The percentage of students scoring basic increased from 17.4% to 21.8%. Middle School B actually reported a 7.4 percentage point increase in reading. Scores increased from 30.8% advanced to 38.2% advanced across the four year span. While advanced scores increased, the percentage of students scoring basic also increased 7.2 percentage points from 21.7% to 28.9%.

Similar to the Grade 6 math trend, Grade 7 math data showed large declines. This is evident by the increased slope of the trend line for students scoring at the basic level.

While the trend line for students scoring advanced showed little change, there was a decline in the trend line for students scoring at the proficient level. Middle School data showed a 14.2 decrease in students performing at an advanced level. The percent dropped from 28% in the 2010-2011 school year to 13.8% in the 2013-2014 school year. In the same time span the percent of students scoring at the basic level increased from 28% to 39.3%. Middle School B displayed similar patterns with the percent of students scoring advanced dropping from 16.5% to 0%. The school reported a 19.8 percentage point increase in the percent of students scoring basic. Baseline data reported 32.6% scoring basic in 2010-2011 with 52.4% performing at the basic level in 2013-2014.

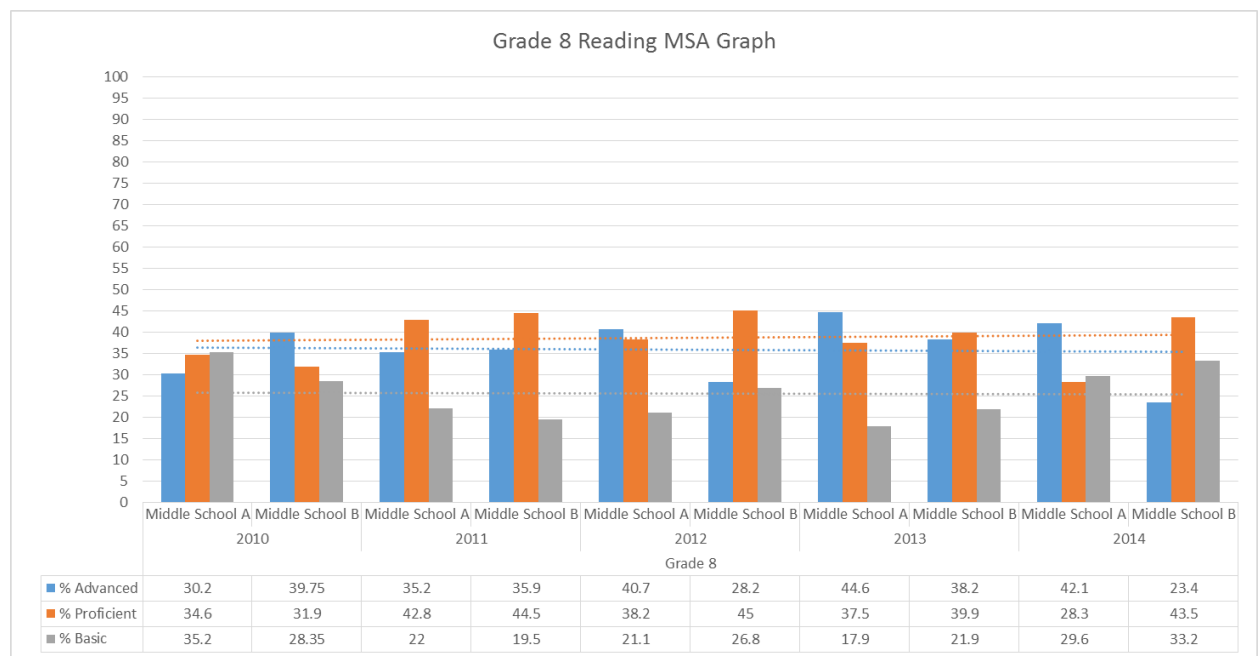


Figure 20. Trend data of Grade 8 Reading MSA.

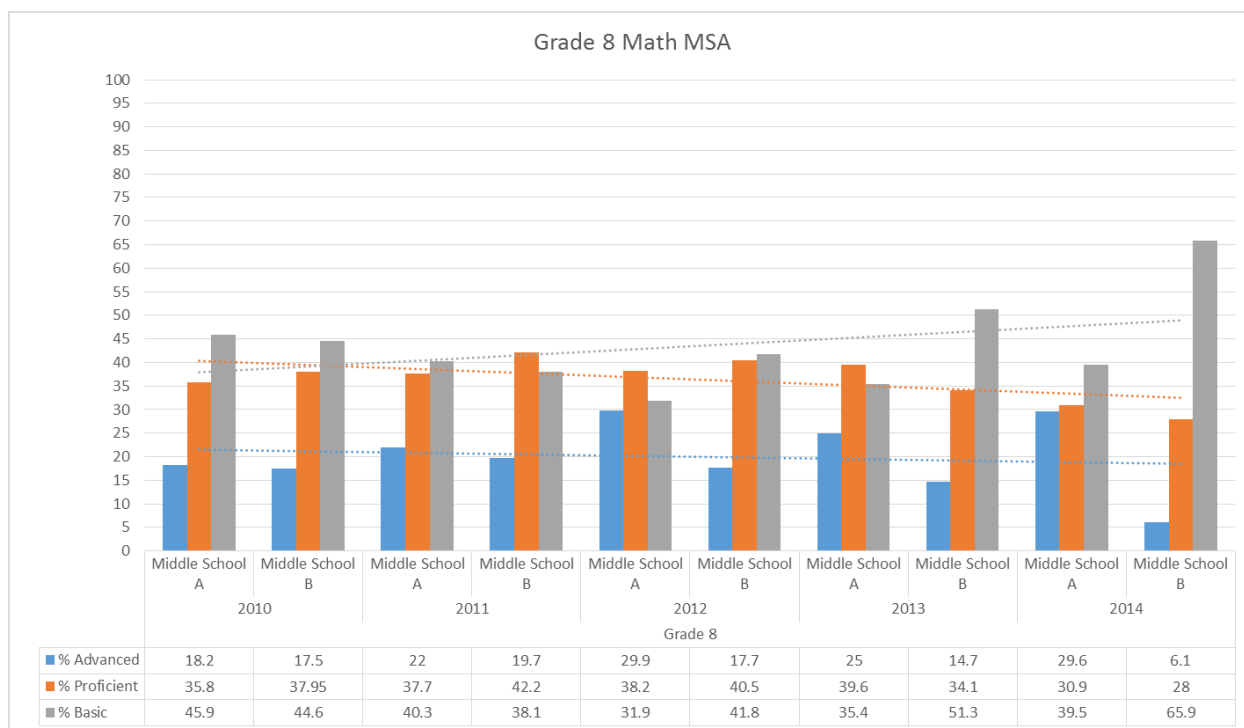


Figure 21. Trend data of Grade 8 Math MSA.

When looking at the trend lines, the performance of students in the areas of reading stayed relatively constant for basic, proficient and advanced. The math data however, does not reflect a similar trend line data. The trend line for the percentage of students scoring advanced depicts that there was an overall decline in performance. The trend line for the percentage of students score proficient also had a decline, but at a slightly steeper slope. As the overall percentage of students scoring proficient and/or advanced declined, the trend line for students scoring at the basic level displayed an increase in the slope. Baseline data reports an increase in the advanced reading from 35.2% to 42.1%. Math data shows an increase from 22% scoring advanced to 29.6% scoring advanced. Middle School A also reported an increase in the students performing at the basic level for reading with a 7.6 percentage point gain from 22% to 29.6%. The percentage of students scoring basic in the area of math actually decreased by 0.8

percentage points from 40.3% to 39.5%. Middle School B's data did not follow the same pattern. In reading, the percentage of students scoring at the advanced level dropped from 35.9% to 23.4% and the percentage of students scoring at the basic level increased from 19.5% to 33.2%. Their math data had a similar trend with the percentage of students scoring advanced decreasing from 19.7% to 6.1% and the percent of students scoring basic increasing from 38.1% to 65.9%.

Graduation Rates. The four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate is the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who form the adjusted cohort for the graduating class. For any given cohort, students who are entering grade 9 for the first time form a cohort that is subsequently “adjusted” by adding any students who transfer into the cohort later during the next three years and subtracting any students who transfer out, transfer to another county, or die during that same period. The four-year graduation rate is calculated by dividing the number of students who graduate within four years, including the summer following their fourth year of high school, with a regular high school diploma by the number of students who form the adjusted cohort for that graduating class. Students who drop out of high school remain in the adjusted cohort, that is, the denominator of the cohort graduation rate calculation. This measure of student performance describes trends in the percent of Grade 12 students completing the requirements to earn a state diploma from the 2011-2012 school year to the 2015-2016 school year.

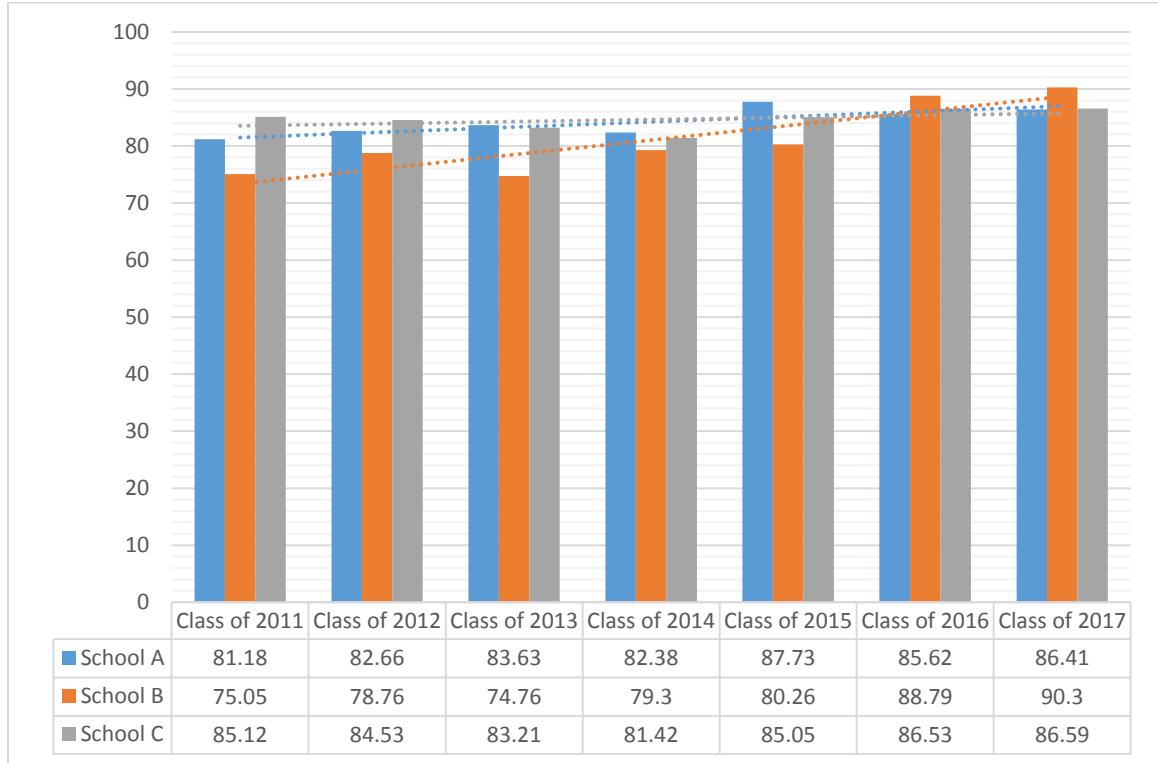


Figure 22. Trend data of high school graduation rates.

Of the three PMOC high schools, High School B made the greatest gains with a 13.74 percentage point increase from baseline data from the 2010-2011 school year with the Class of 2011 compared to the 2015-2016 school year data with the Class of 2016. Over the six year span, High School B only had one school year, 2012-2013, in which graduation rates declined. The subsequent year, the data indicate that the school had a 4.54 percentage point gain that compensated for the previous year's 4 percentage point loss. Despite these fluctuations, High School B is the only school to have a positive slope in the trend line. High School A displayed a 4.44 percentage point increase over the six year span. In that span, there were two years in which there was a decline in the data, the 2013-2014 and the 2015-2016 school years with the 2015-2016 being a 2.11 percentage

|

point drop. These data are reflected in the slight increase in the trend line. High School C displayed minimal growth over the time span with an overall improvement of 1.41 percentage points. For three consecutive school years, 2011-2012 through 2013-2014, the data decline with a 3.7 percentage point decline from the 2010-2011 school year. Despite the 3.63 percentage point increase in the 2014-2015 school year, the data was still 0.07 percentage point lower than baseline data. This is evident in the fact that there is no change in the trend line across the span of the years.

Grade 8 Success in Algebra I. The system encourages all students to complete Algebra I by the end of 9th grade as part of its ongoing efforts to ensure success for every student. The system also strives to have more students complete the course earlier to ensure college preparedness for rigorous coursework. This measure of student performance describes trends in the percent of Grade 8 students completing Algebra I with a grade of C or higher from the 2011-2012 school year to the 2015-2016 school year.

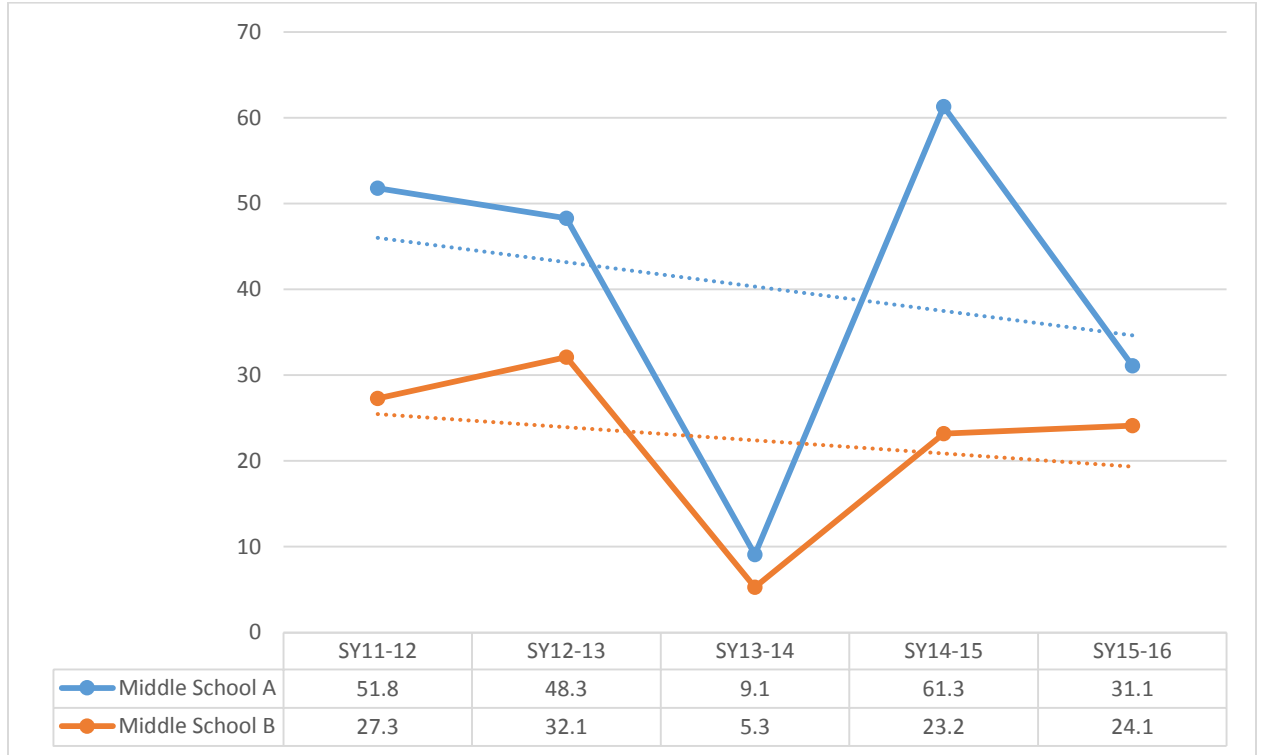


Figure 23. Middle School trend data of completion of Algebra 1 by Grade 8 with a Grade of C or Higher.

Over the five year span, the EOC Middle Schools have not made gains in increasing the percentage of 8th graders completing Algebra I when compared to the 2011-2012 baseline data. In fact, both schools have displayed a decrease in their data. Middle School A showed a 20.7 percentage point drop from the 2011-2012 base line year. Middle School B showed a 3.1 percentage point drop from the 2010-2011 base line year.

Suspension Rates. The system tracks and publicly reports the suspension rates of students by race, ethnicity, and service groups as a part of its annual reporting of performance data. This measure of student performance tracks suspension rates for elementary and secondary students from the 2011-2012 school year to the 2015-2016

school year. The rate is calculated using the number of students suspended in a given school year as the numerator and the total student enrollment for the same year as the denominator.

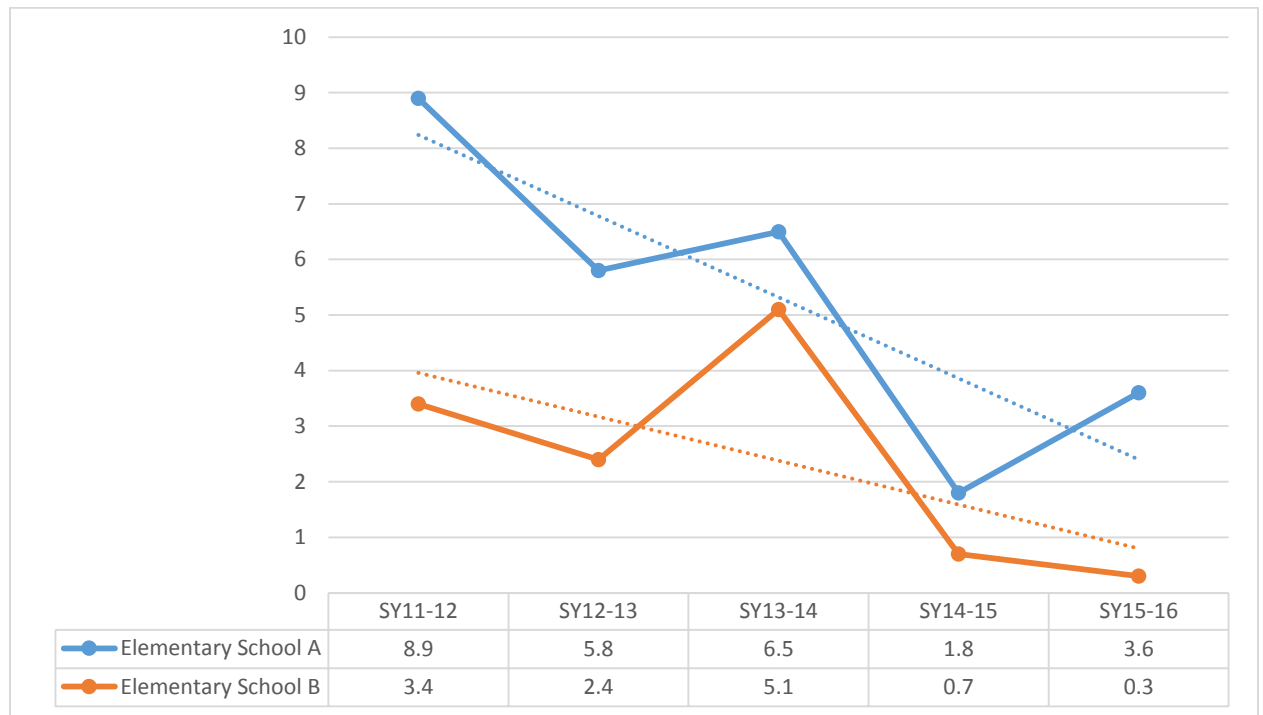


Figure 24. Trend data of elementary school suspension rate.

Both of the EOC Elementary Schools displayed drops in their suspension rates through the 2014-2015 school year and an overall decline in both schools. However, while Elementary School B continued to show a decrease for the 2015-2016 school year, the percentage of students suspended in School A doubled in that year.

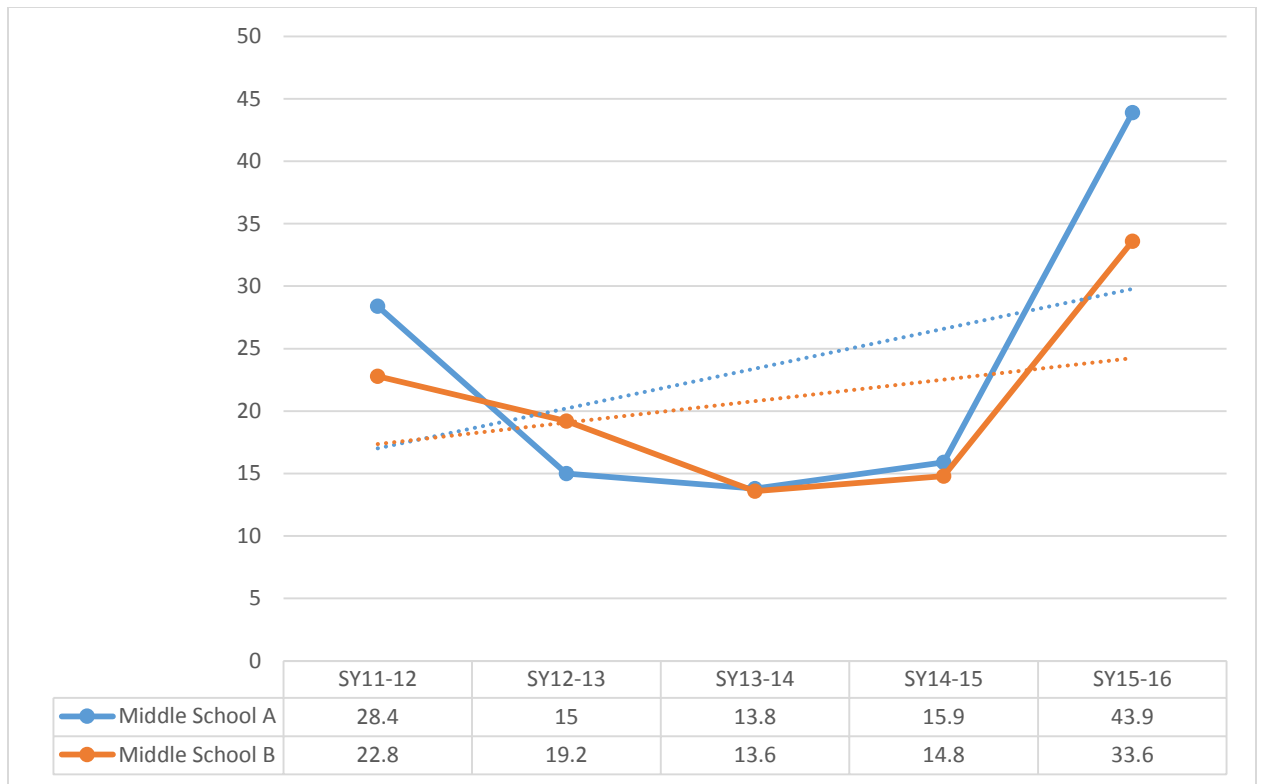


Figure 25. Trend data of middle school suspension rate.

Unlike the elementary schools, there was less of a downward trend in suspension rates at both of the middle schools. In fact, while Middle School A decreased their percent of suspensions by half between 2011-2012 and 2013-2014 and Middle School B showed a 9.2 percentage point drop during this time, during the 2015-2016 school year schools had dramatic increases in their suspension rates. The rate more than tripled for School A between school year 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 and more than doubled for School B during that time.

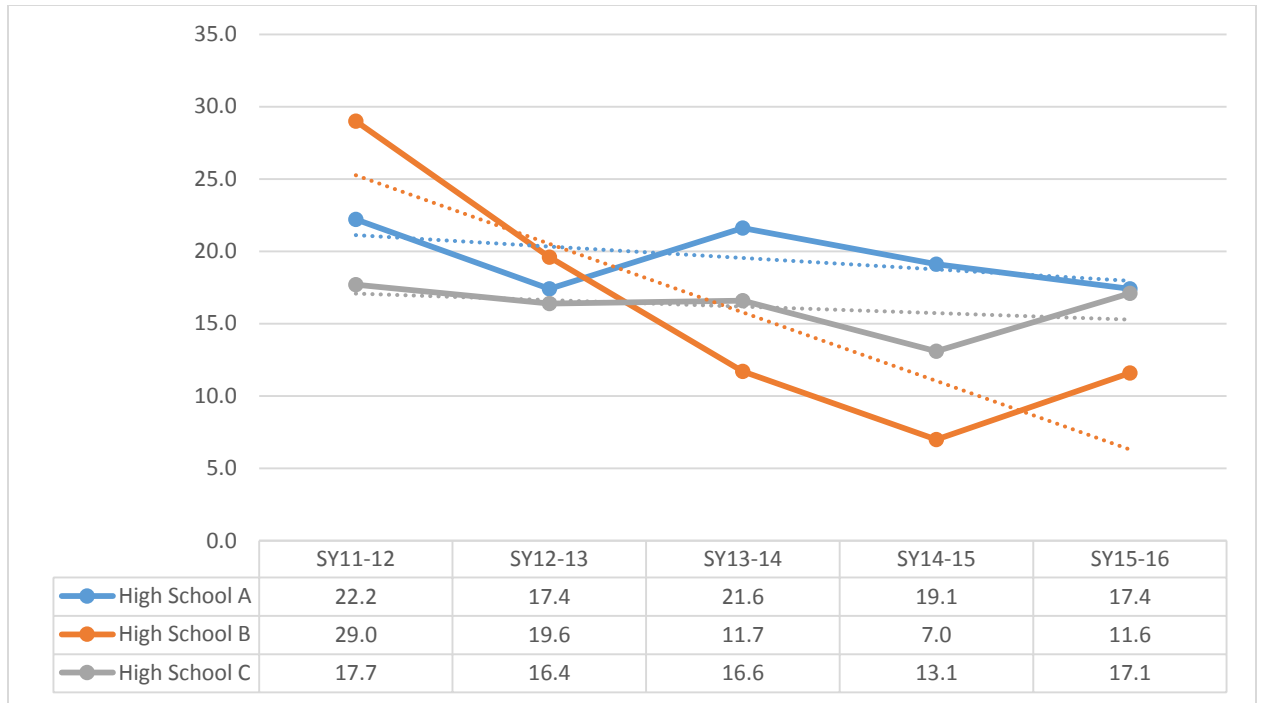


Figure 26. Trend data of high school suspension rate.

When compared to their baseline year of 2011-2012, only one of the three EOC high schools (High School B) had decreased the suspension rates over the five years. While High School A reduced its rate by more than half from point 1 to point 5, the overall trend was virtually flat. Similarly, High School C showed a flat overall trend in suspensions despite a low of 7.0 percent in 2014-2015.

Grade Point Average. Another at risk indicator determined as a means for measuring school success is the percent of students with a Grade Point Average (GPA) of less than or equal to 2.0. A student's GPA is calculated by dividing the total number of grade points earned by the total number of credit hours attempted. The total number of grade points earned is the sum of the individual subject credits multiplied by weights corresponding to the grades (0-4). Figure 27 below presents the trends in this measure of student performance as the percent of students in grades 9 through 12 who had a GPA of less than 2.0 from the 2011-2012 school year to the 2015-2016 school year.

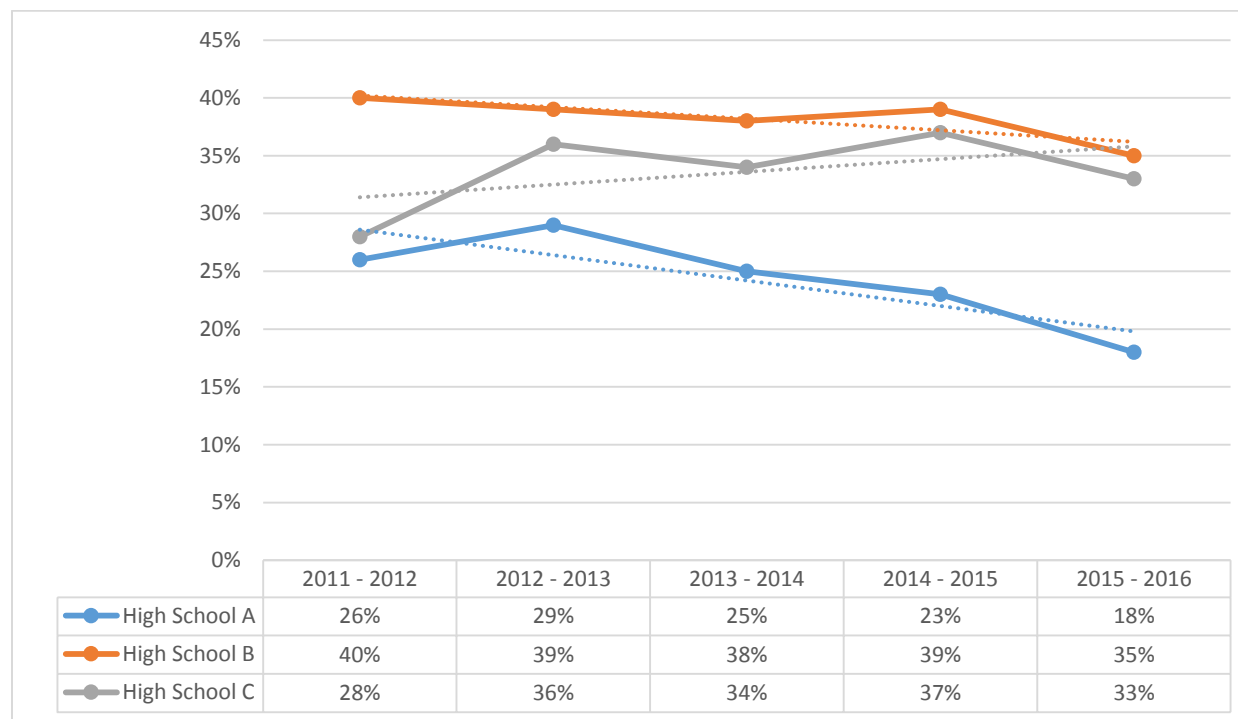


Figure 27. Trend data of the percentage of students with GPA of <2.0.

In the review of data, High School A made the greatest gains, with an 8 percentage point decline from point 1 to point 5 in the percentage of students with a GPA of less than 2.0. High School B had a slight gain of 5 percentage points but a flat trend. High School C had an increase of about 5% percentage points in students with GPAs of

less than 2.0 between 2011-2012 and 2015-2016 and an overall upward trend in the percentage of students over the 5 years.

Dropout Rate. The four-year adjusted cohort dropout rate is defined as the number of students who leave school, for any reason other than death, within the four-year period divided by the number of students who form the adjusted cohort. The school years are defined as the first day of the school year through the summer to the first day of the following school year. Student activity that occurs during the summer, including summer withdrawals, are included in the prior year's data.

First Time 9th Graders are students who enter 9th grade for the first time and who are expected to graduate within four school years. Dropouts are any student who, for any reason other than death, leaves school before graduation or the completion of a Maryland–approved educational program (including a special education program) and is not known to enroll in another school or State–approved program. This measure of student performance tracks dropout rates for high school students from the 2011-2012 school year to the 2015-2016 school year.

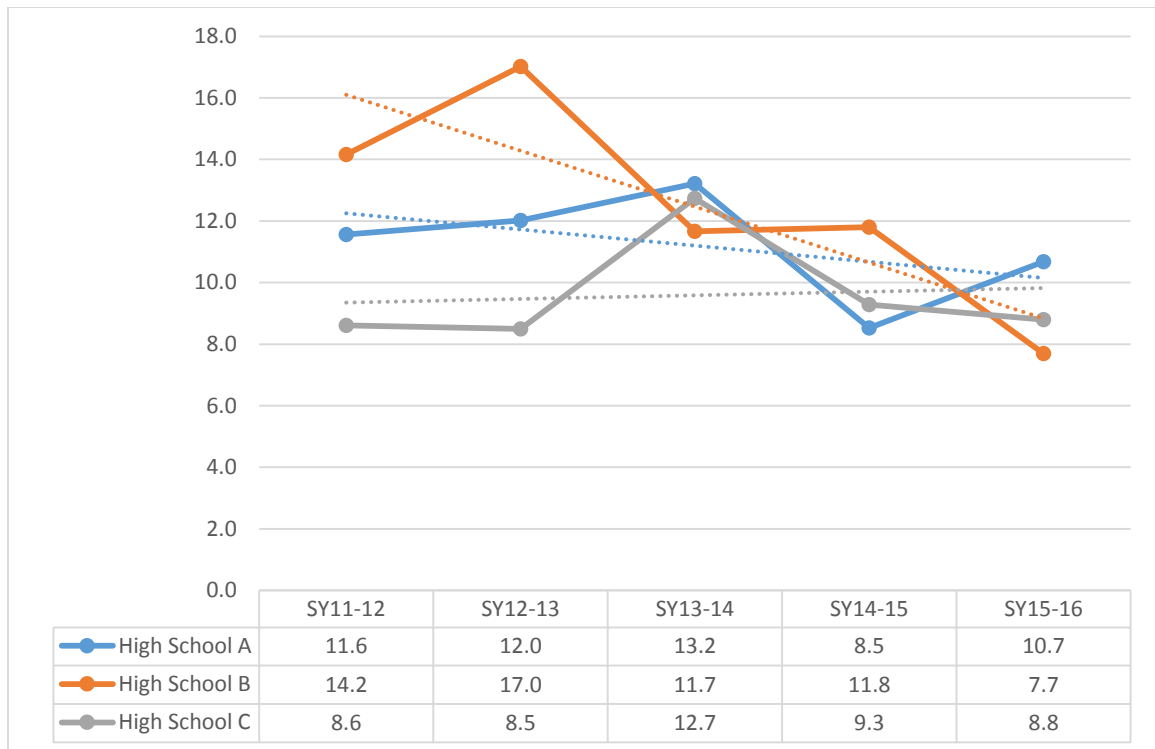


Figure 28. Trend data of high school dropout rates.

With the exception of High School C, the three schools have made gains in reducing the percentage of students dropping out. Although School A has reduced their drop out percentage by 0.9 percentage points from the baseline data from 2011-2012, the dropout rate did not begin to decline until the 2014-2015 school year, where it reached a low of 8.5%. In the subsequent year, the rate increased by 2.2 percentage points. High School B continued to make consistent gains in reducing their dropout rate. These data are consistent with the two previous data points. High Schools' A and B trend lines displayed a decline in the percentage of students dropping out of school, while High School C's trend line shows a slight increase.

Analysis of Question 2

How do school trends in academic and discipline indicators compare to trends in selected demographic and other characteristics (i.e., student mobility teacher mobility,

percentage of students receiving Free and Reduced Meals Services, percentage of students receiving English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services and the percentage of students receiving special education services) in these same schools during the period 2010-2011 to 2015-2016? To address this question, the following school variables were examined: Figures 29 to 43 present the trends for these variables for each of the seven schools:

- Student Mobility
- Teacher Mobility
- Students receiving FARMS
- Students receiving ESOL services
- Students receiving Special Education services

To compare the relationship between academic and discipline data and school-level variables, the first step was to reduce the number of comparisons. This was completed separately for high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools. For each type of school, if the trend lines for a school characteristic neither increased nor declined, the decision was made to not explore this relationship. Only academic variables were examined and those selected represent the system's current intentional focus, meaning these are the indicators where the resources and attention is being focused. The following variables were selected at the high school level:

- Teacher mobility
- Students receiving FARMS
- Students receiving ESOL services
- Graduation rate

- Dropout rate

The following indicators were selected at the middle school level:

- Teacher mobility
- Students receiving FARMS
- Students receiving ESOL services
- Students scoring at the basic level on MSA Math

The following indicators were selected at the elementary school level:

- Teacher mobility
- Students receiving FARMS
- Students receiving ESOL services
- Students scoring at the basic level on 3rd grade MSA Reading

In the sections below, the trends for school-level characteristics are presented followed by the tables that show the relationships between the selected academic variables and school-level variables.

Student Mobility. Student mobility is the rate at which students move from one school community to another. It is calculated yearly based on the number of entrants and withdrawals in a given school year. Entrants are the number and percentage of students entering (transferring in or re-entering) school during the September to June school year after the first day of school (Maryland State Department of Education, 2017). A student moving from one school to another within the same school district as a result of promotion is not considered to be an entrant for mobility purposes unless the student entered school after the first day. Withdrawals are the number and percentage of students withdrawing (transfers and terminations) for any reason during the September to June

|

school year after the first day of school. Data are reported at elementary (kindergarten through grade 5), middle (grades 6 through 8) and high (grades 9 through 12) school levels.

While student mobility is not a data point that schools have the ability to influence, it can be a factor in a school's ability to impact student achievement. If students are frequently transferring in and out of a school, it has the potential to create gaps in student knowledge, thus impacting their ability to perform at higher levels. As you can see in figures 29 to 31, the mobility rate overall stayed consistent with no more than a 10 percentage point range in any school from the lowest to highest year. The trend line data for the identified high schools indicates that School B had the greatest decline in mobility. Schools A and C had a slight change in slope. Both of the identified middle schools had trend lines that indicate a decline in the overall student mobility. At the elementary level, the trend line for School A had a negative slope, indicating a decline in student mobility, while School B had a positive slope, indicating an increase in the student mobility.

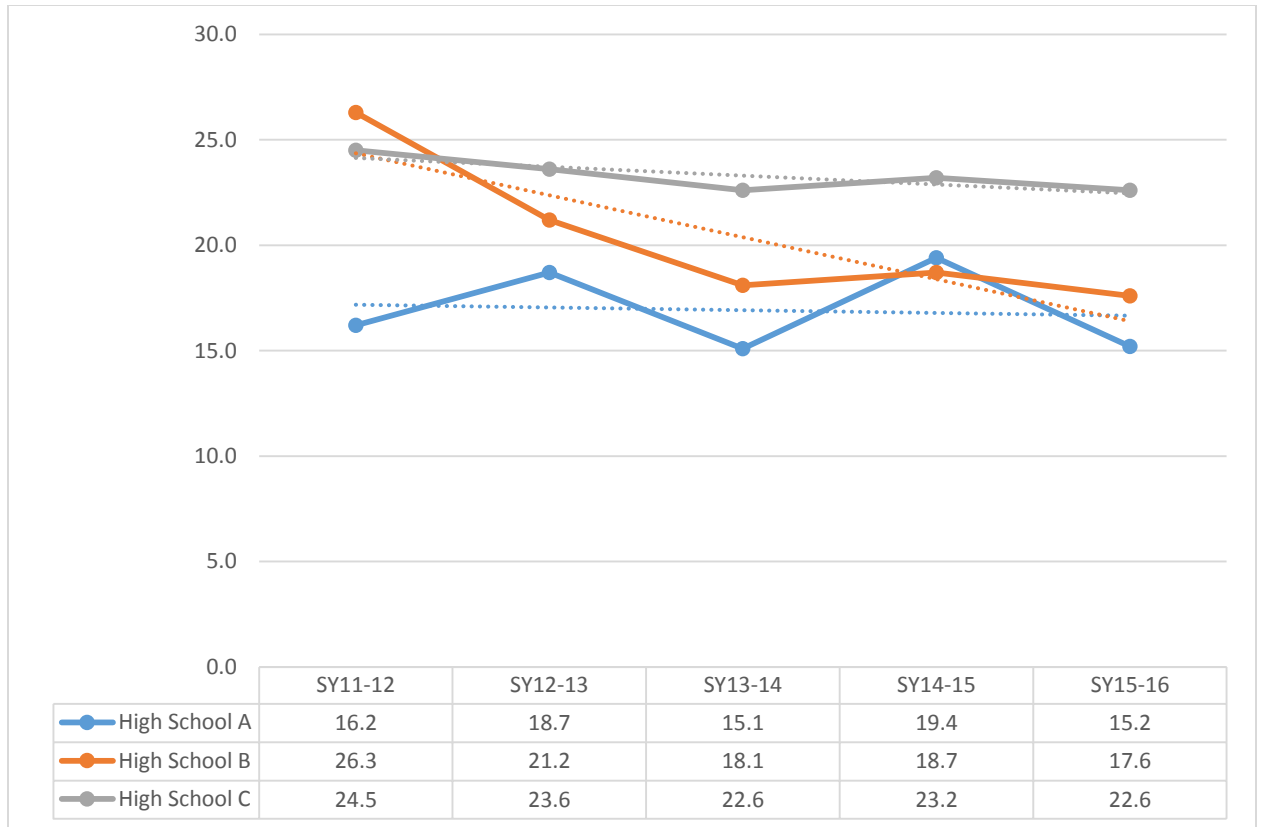


Figure 29. Trend data of high school student mobility.

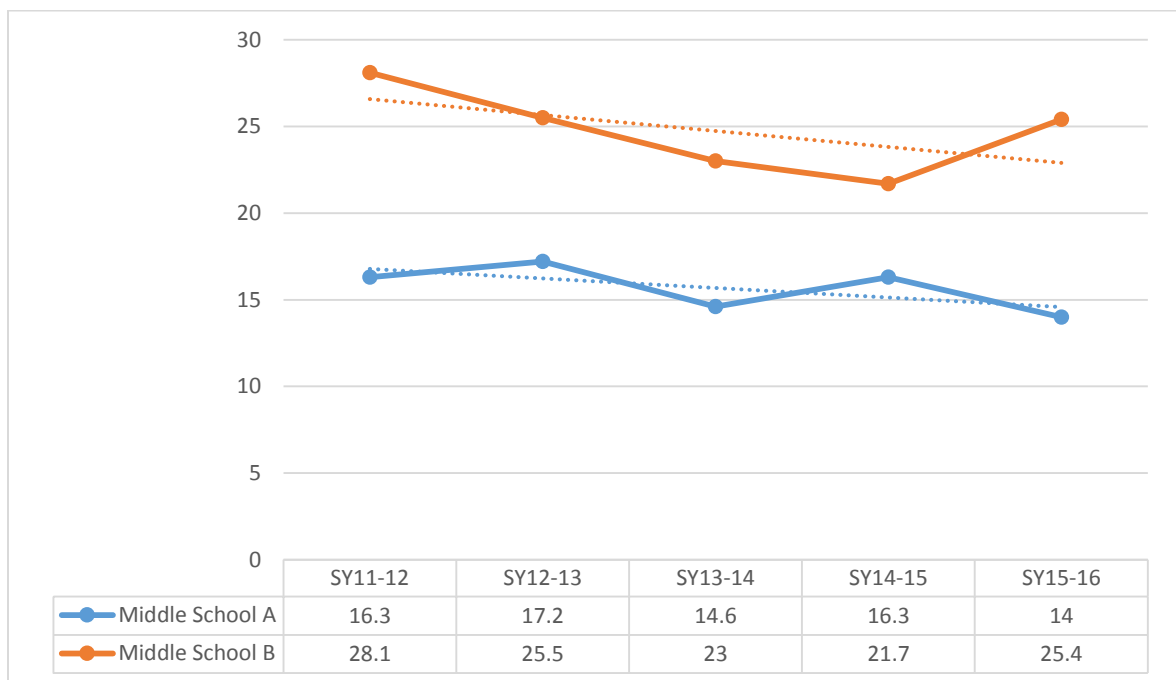


Figure 30. Trend data of middle school student mobility.

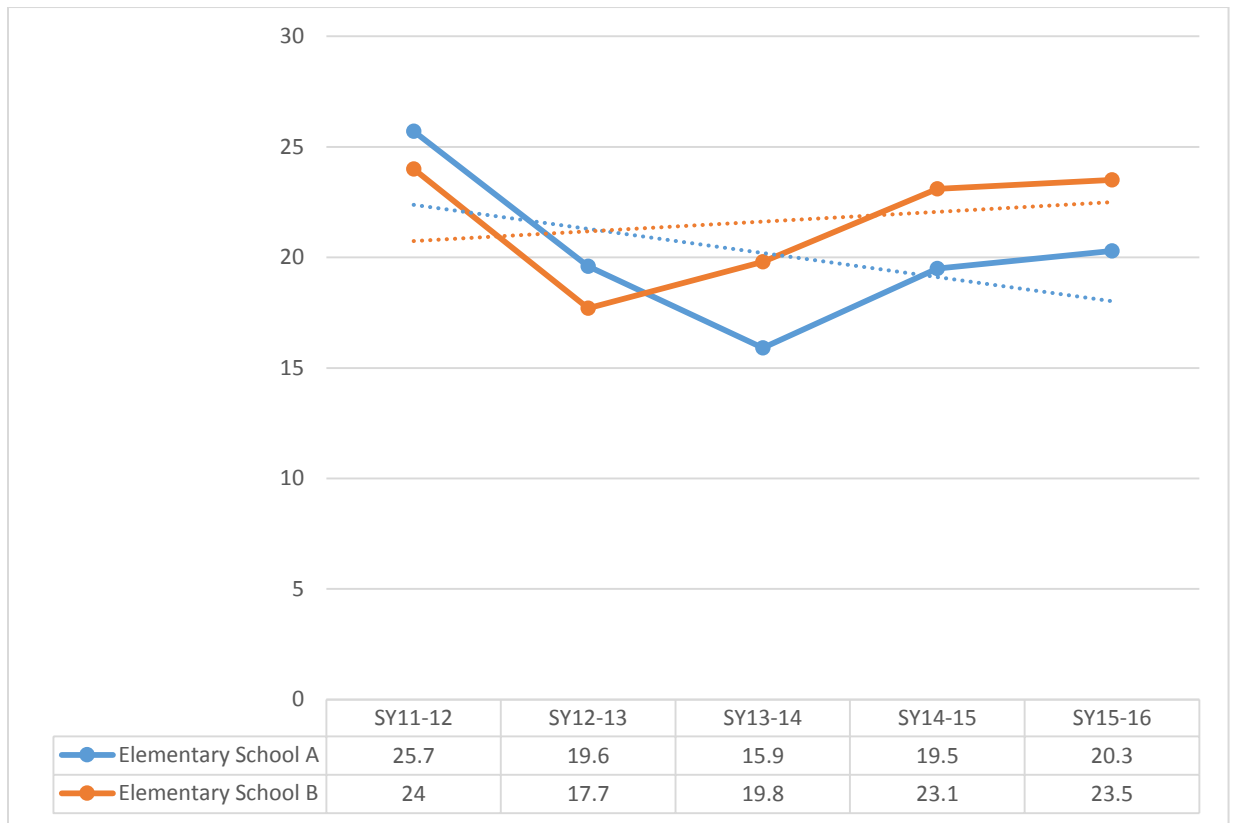


Figure 31. Trend data of elementary school student mobility.

Teacher Mobility. Teacher mobility can be defined as the number of teachers who leave their teaching positions each year, either to take a different teaching position or to leave the profession altogether. Similar to student mobility, teacher mobility is calculated based on teachers entering at the start of the year and leaving at any point throughout the year. While there are other factors that contribute to teacher mobility (i.e., pay, age, student population) that individual schools cannot influence, school culture and a feeling of support can also contribute to a teacher's decision to stay at a given school (Legler & Kiley, 2004).

High rates of teacher mobility, whether in a given year or a span of years, can impact student achievement. This is largely due in part to the amount of time and financial resources allocated to the training and professional development of teachers (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, Rockoff, & Wyckoff, 2008). Additionally, vacant positions are often filled by teachers with the least amount of experience leaving the most impoverished schools with the most inexperienced educators. Figures 32 to 34 show that there is not a consistent downward trend in any one of the seven schools. Although four of the seven have a lower ending mobility rate for the 2015-2016 school when compared to the baseline data from the 2010-2011 school year, they all displayed fluctuations in the data over the six year span. In reviewing the trend lines, High Schools A and C had a negative slope indicating that there was a decline in teacher mobility over the identified time span. Conversely, High School B had a trend line with a positive slope indicating that the teacher mobility within the school over the span of the identified years increased.

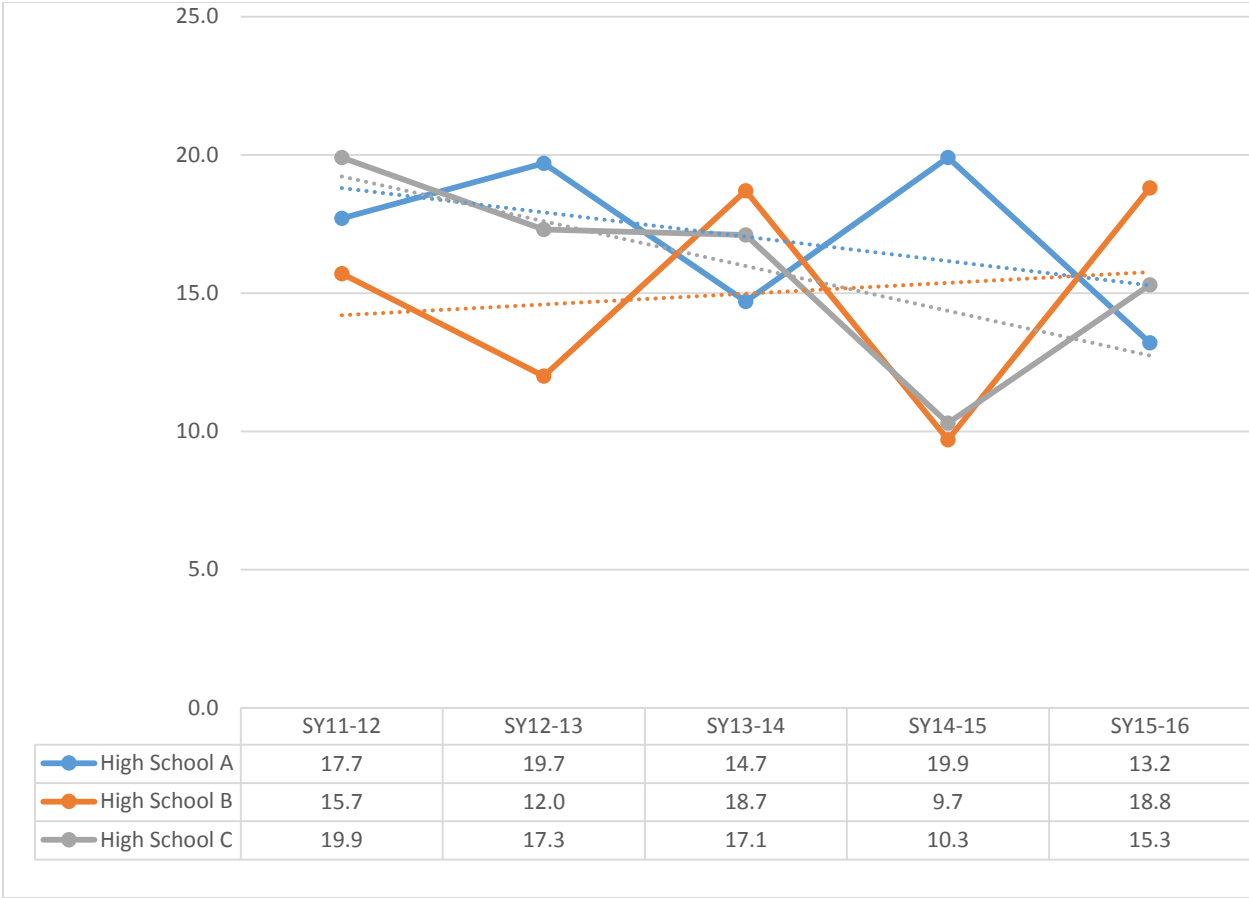


Figure 32. Trend data of high school teacher mobility.

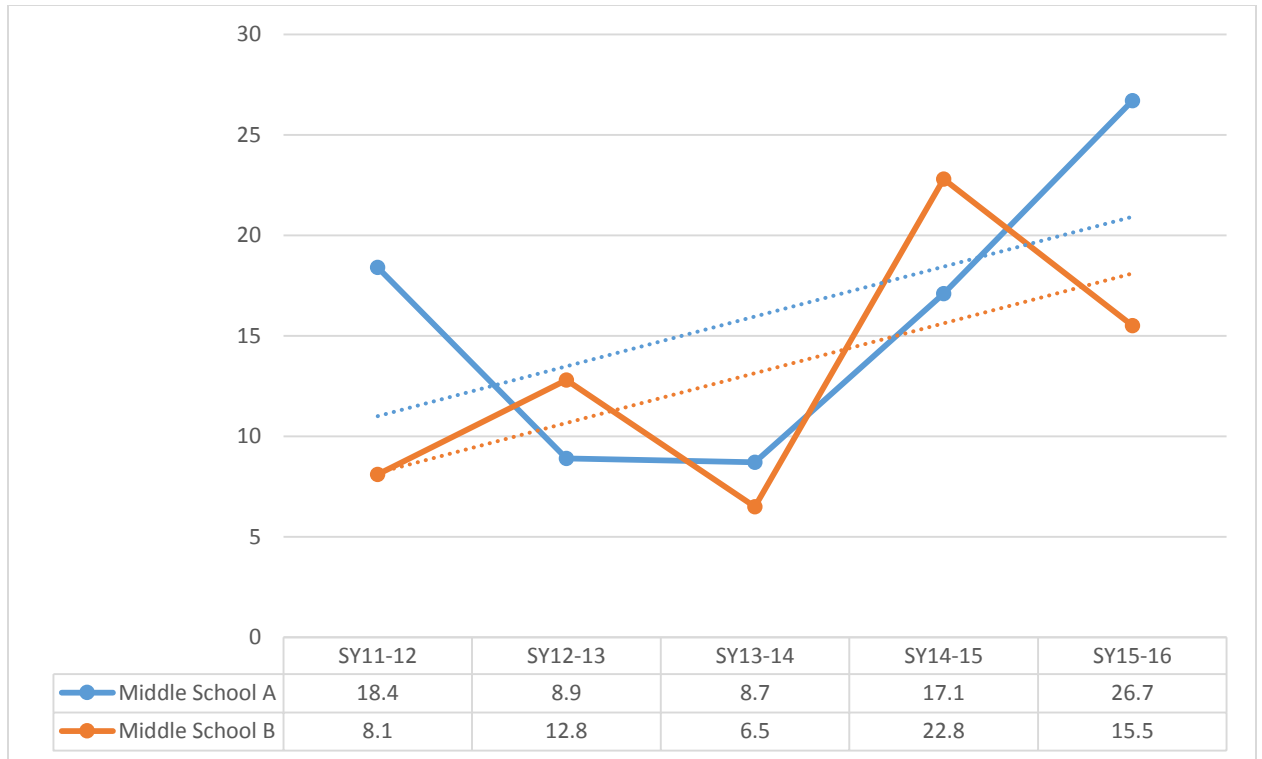


Figure 33. Trend data of middle school teacher mobility.

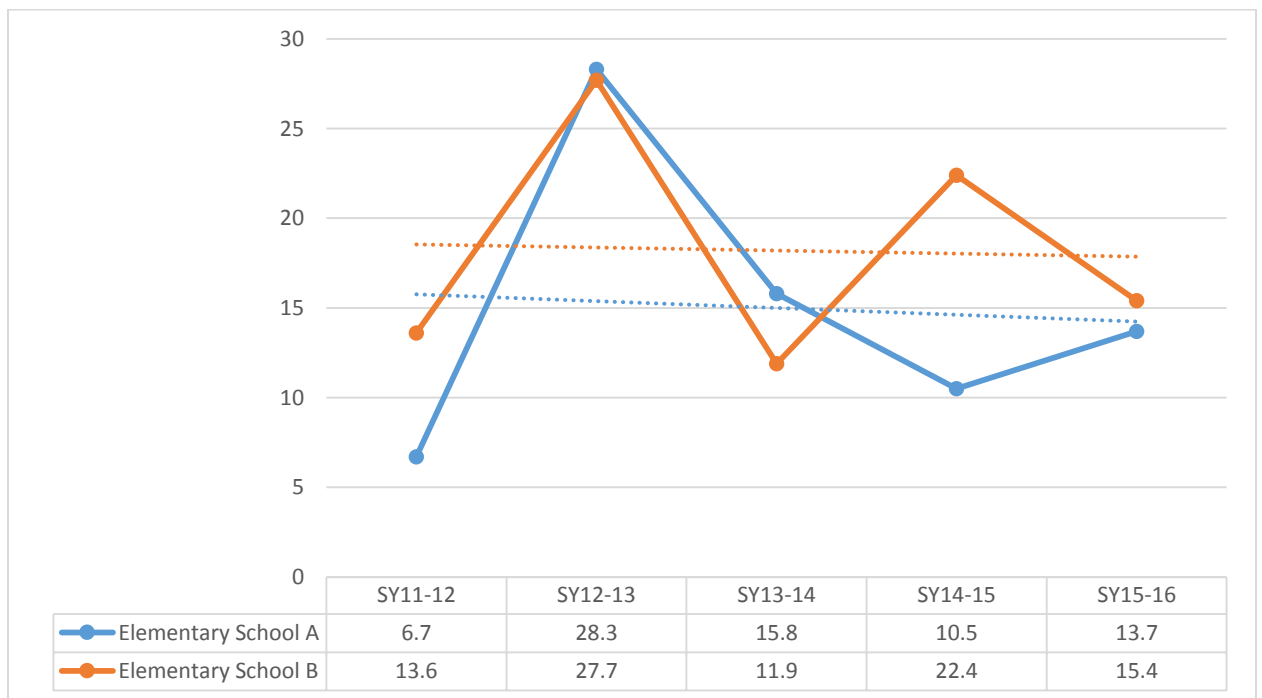


Figure 34. Trend data of elementary school teacher mobility.

|

Students Receiving Free and Reduced Meal Services (FARMS). The state calculates FARMS based on the number and percentage of students whose applications for free/reduced price meals meet the family size and income guidelines (as promulgated annually by the U.S. Department of Agriculture) and students approved through direct certification. The counts are reported as of the student's last day of enrollment in the school system—either the last day in school or the date on which the student withdrew. The percentage is calculated by dividing the number of students receiving free or reduced price meals by the June net enrollment.

Although FARMS is not a data point that schools have the ability to influence, it can be a factor in a schools' ability to impact student achievement. As seen in figures 35 to 37, all of the identified schools have had a consistent increase in the number of students living in poverty and qualifying for meal services. As students matriculate from elementary to middle to high school, the percentage of students decreases. The average percentage of students qualifying for FARMS at the identified elementary schools was 90.2% compared to only 57.6% at the identified middle schools and an even lower rate of 46.7% at the identified high schools. The trend lines for all seven of the identified schools had a positive trajectory indicating that over the given time span, the percentage of students receiving Free and Reduced Meals has increased.

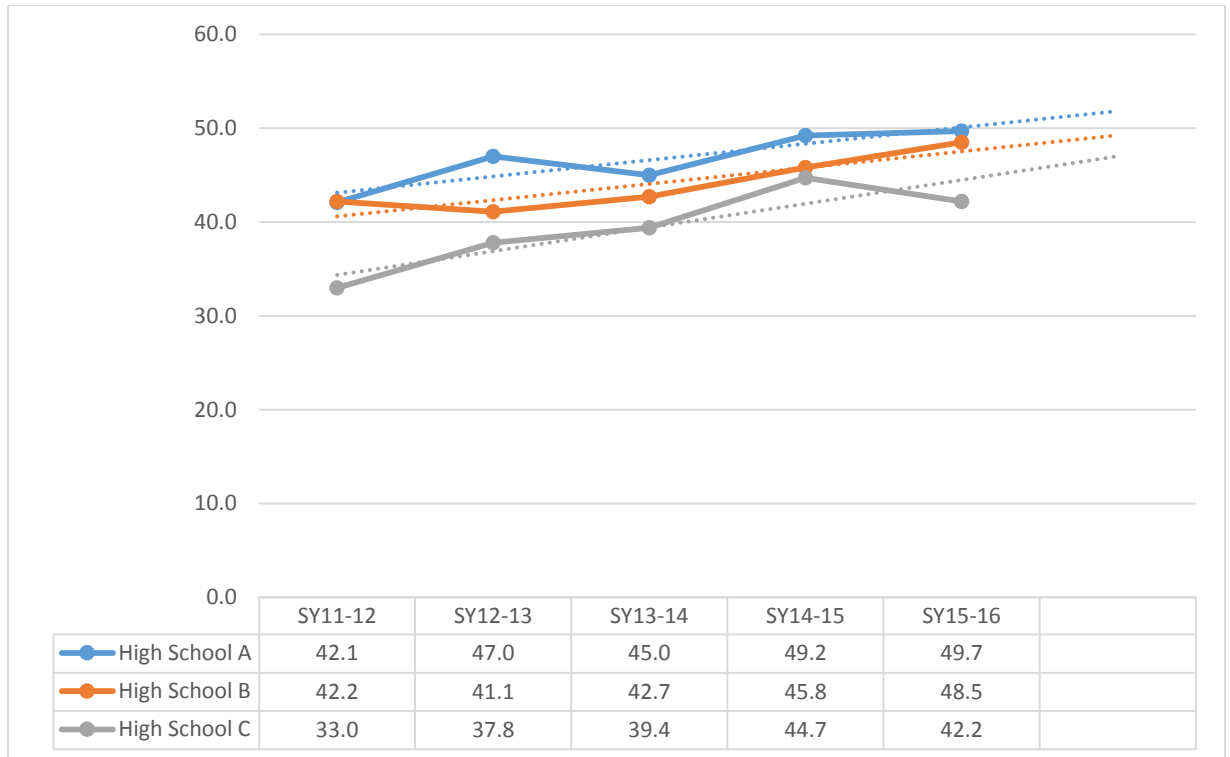


Figure 35. Trend data of high school students receiving FARMS.

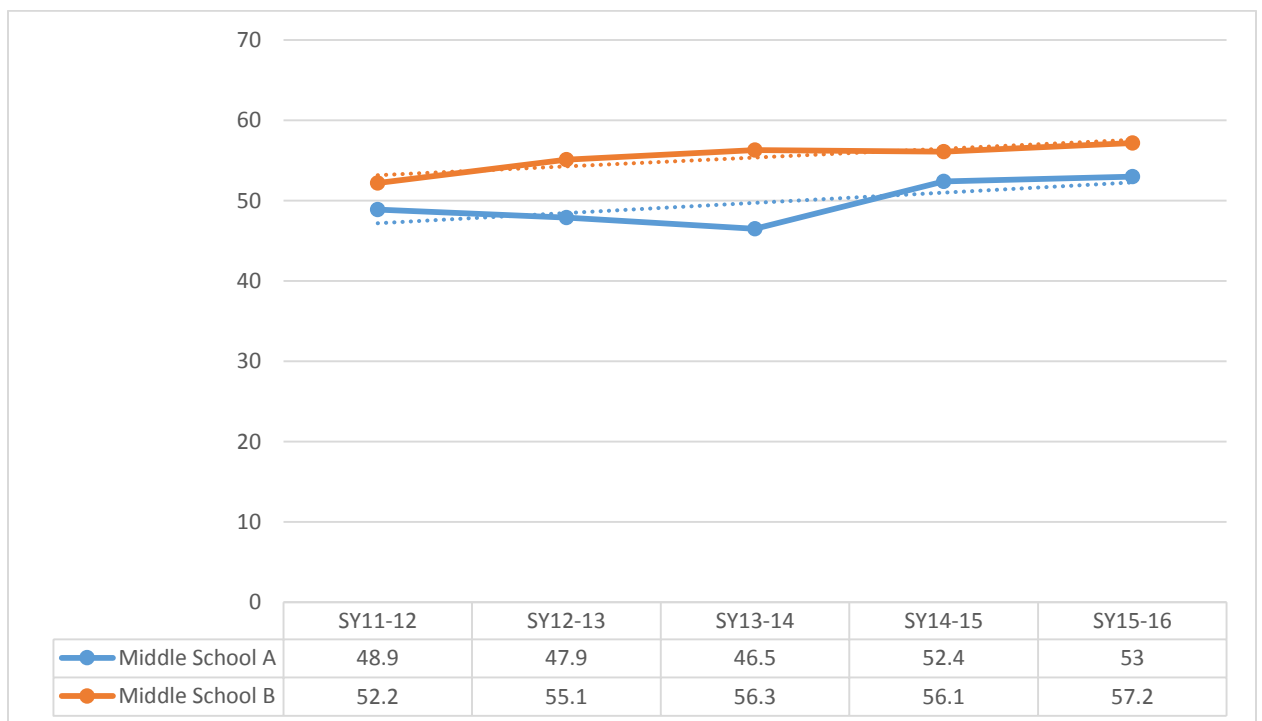


Figure 36. Trend data of middle school students receiving FARMS.

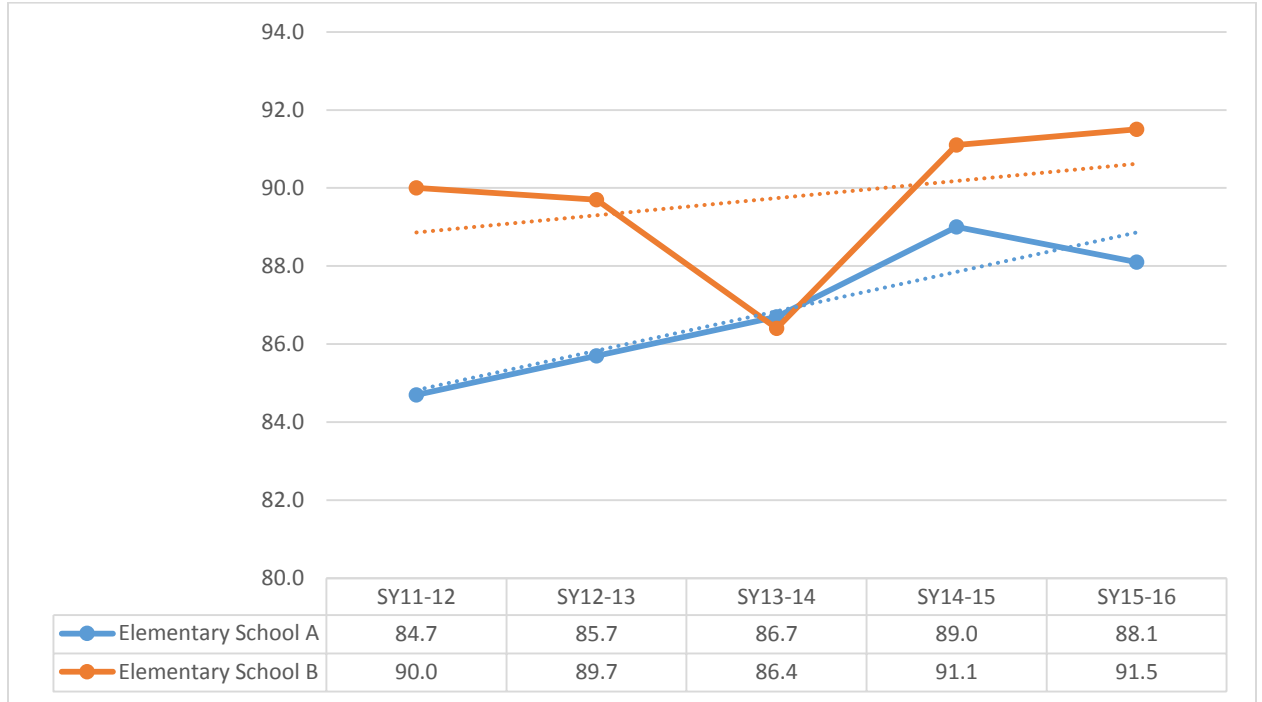


Figure 37. Trend data of elementary school students receiving FARMS.

Students Receiving English for Speakers of Other Languages Services (ESOL). ESOL students have a primary or home language other than English and have been assessed as having limited or no ability to understand, speak, read, or write English. The counts are reported as of the student's last day of enrollment in the school system, either the last day in school or the date of student withdrawal. The percentage is calculated by dividing the number of ESOL students by the June net enrollment.

Similar to the previous School Factors/Characteristics described above, the percentage of students receiving ESOL services is not a variable which the schools can control. As seen in figures 38 to 40, for the 2011-2012 school year, High School B had no students or a count fewer than ten. This is also true for High School C from the 2011-2012 school year through the 2015-2016 school year. Regardless of the year in which the

school began to serve students qualifying for ESOL services, all of the schools have continued to increase their ESOL enrollment. Similar to the FARMS data, all seven of the identified schools had trend lines with a positive slope. This is an indication that the percentage of students receiving ESOL services has increased.

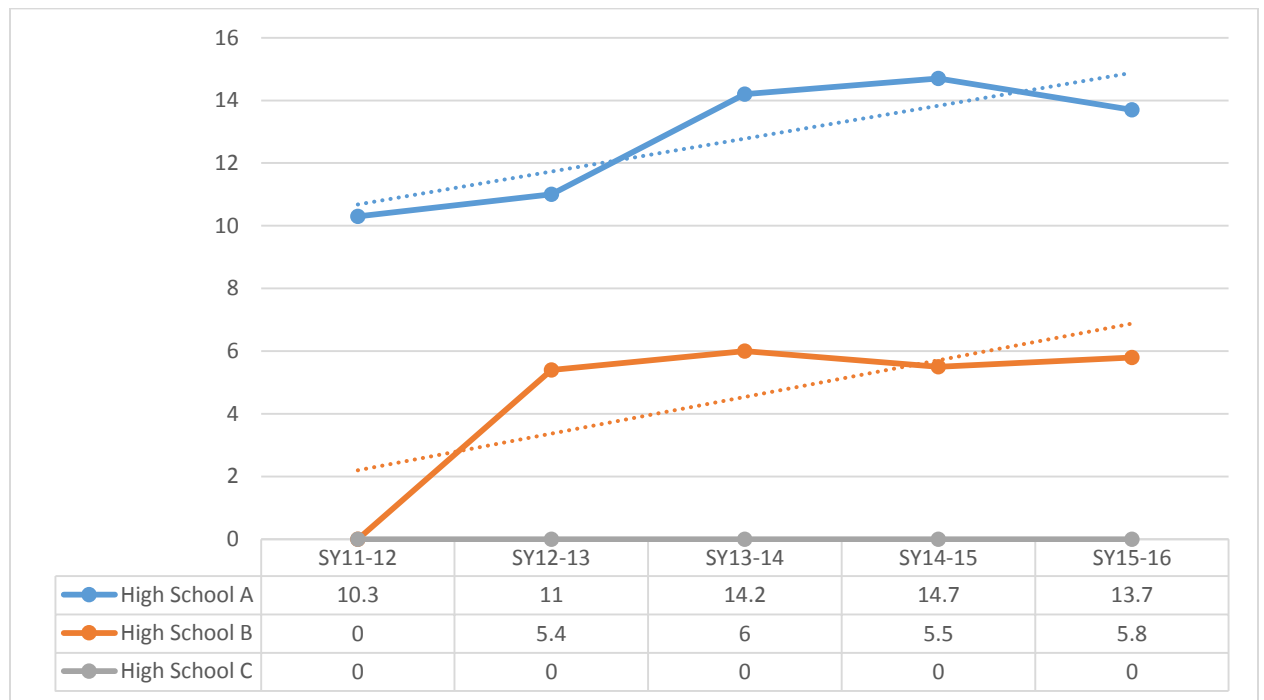


Figure 38. Trend data of high school students receiving ESOL.

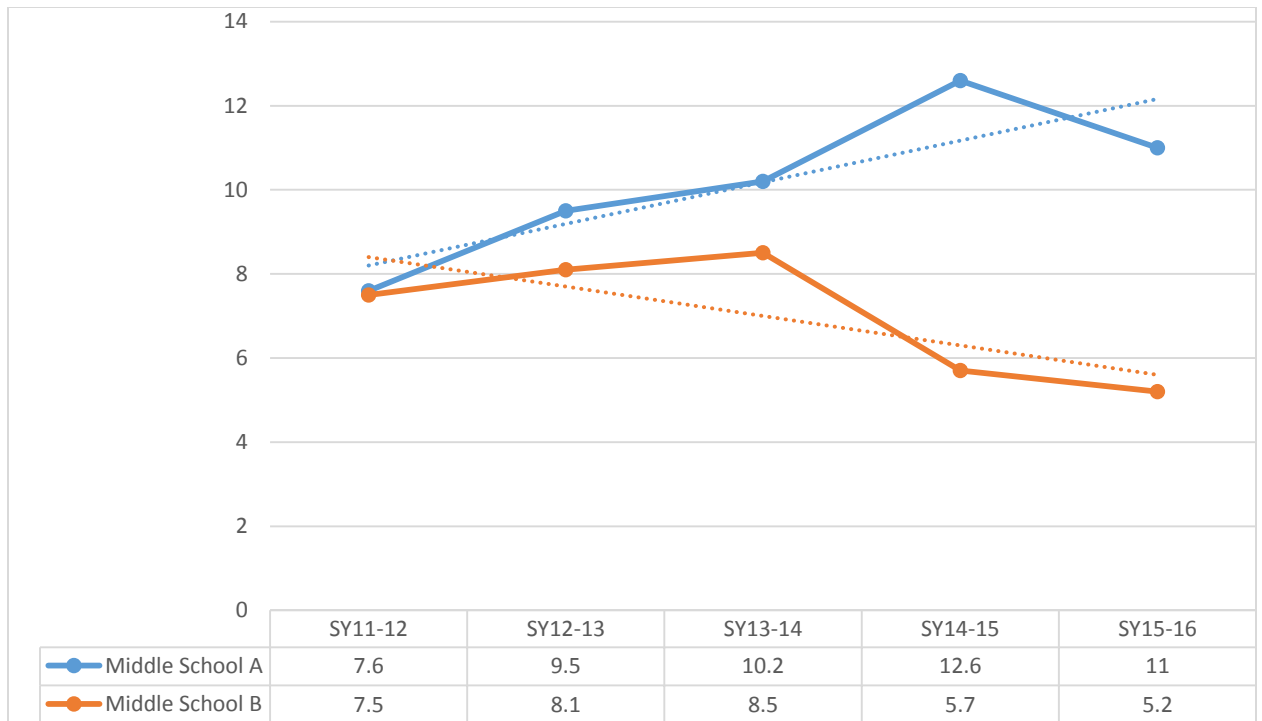


Figure 39. Trend data of middle school students receiving ESOL.

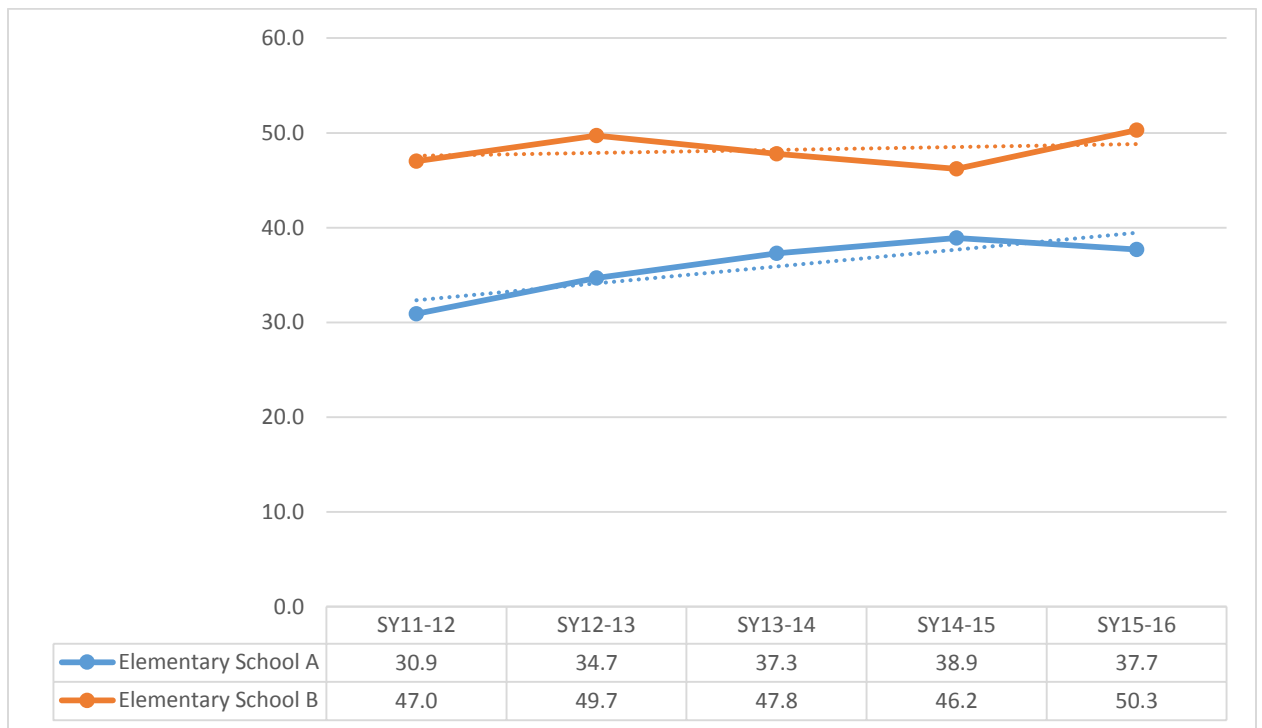


Figure 40. Trend data of elementary school students receiving ESOL.

Students Receiving Special Education Services. The number and percentage of special education program participants are identified as students with disabilities who have current Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). The counts are reported as of the student's last day of enrollment in the school system - either the last day in school or the date of student withdrawal. The percentage is calculated by dividing the number of special education students by the June net enrollment. While schools have some influence in this percentage as a result of the Special Education identification process, overall, schools have limited influence surrounding this data. As seen in figures 41 to 43, the percent of students receiving Special Education services had limited fluctuation with the highest year to year increase being a 3.6 percentage point increase for Middle School B. In reviewing the trend lines, High School A had a slope of zero indicating no change. School B had a slight increase in the trend line indicating an increase of the percentage of students receiving Special Education services. High School C had a trend line with negative slope, which is reflective of a decline in the percentage of students receiving Special Education services within the identified time span. Middle School A had a trend line with a positive slope indicating an increase in the percentage of students receiving Special Education services. Middle School B had a negative slope as a result of a slight decline in the percentage of students receiving services. Both elementary schools had trend lines with a slope of zero, indicating no change.

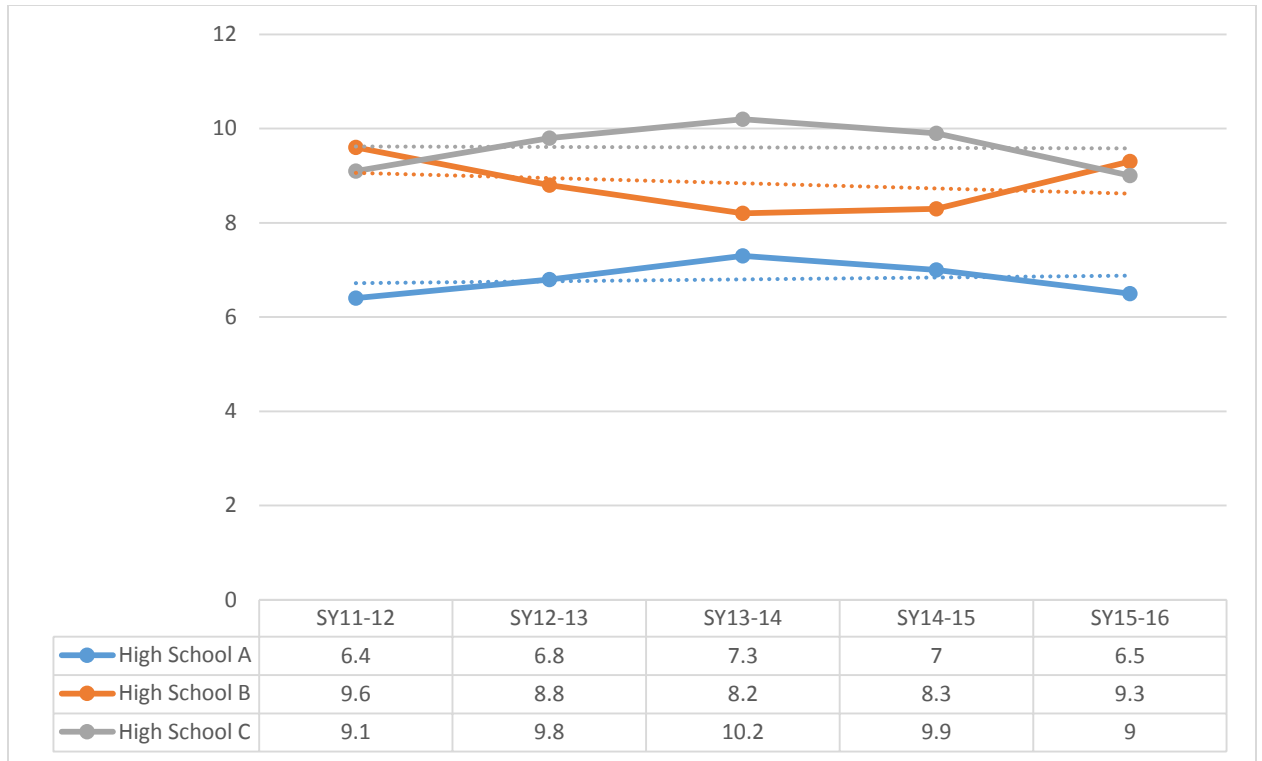


Figure 41. Trend data of high school students receiving Special Education.

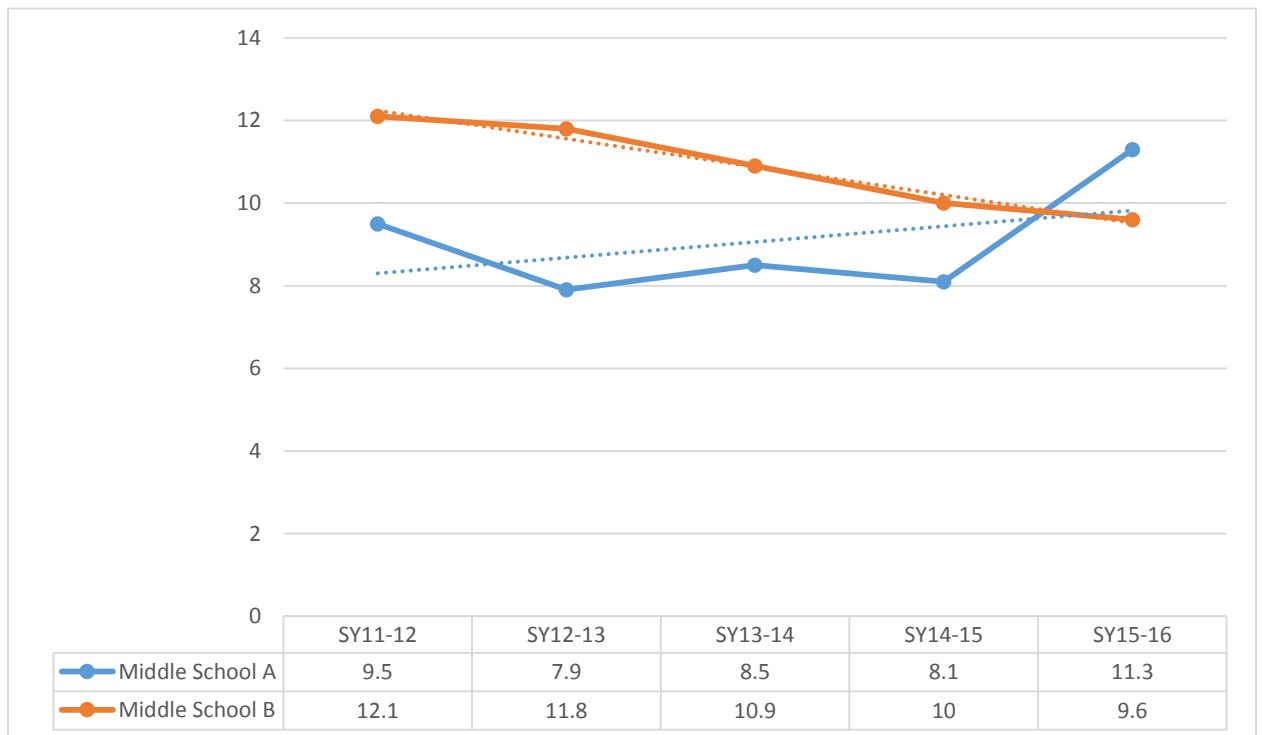


Figure 42. Trend data of middle school students receiving Special Education.

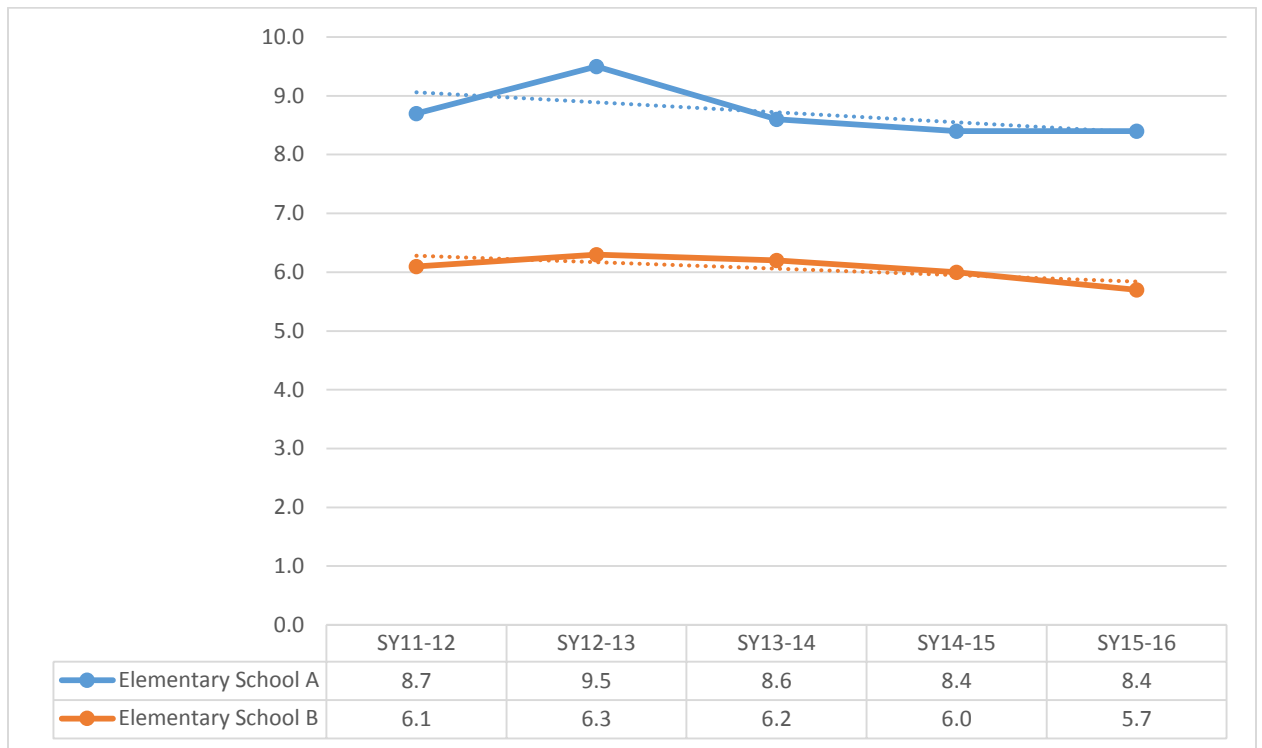


Figure 43. Trend data of elementary school students receiving Special Education.

To examine the relationship between selected variables, the outcome trend lines were overlaid on the school characteristics. Figures 44 to 50 present those comparisons.

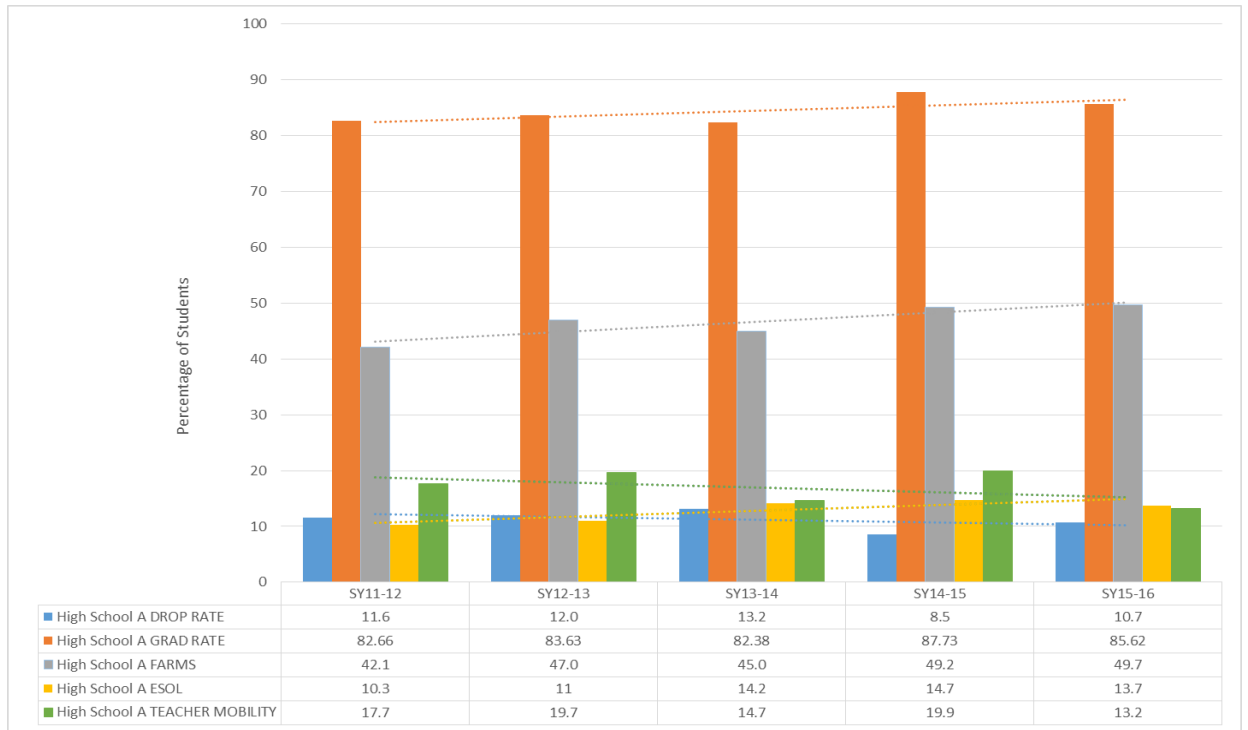


Figure 44. Relationship between high school dropout rates and School Factors at High School A.

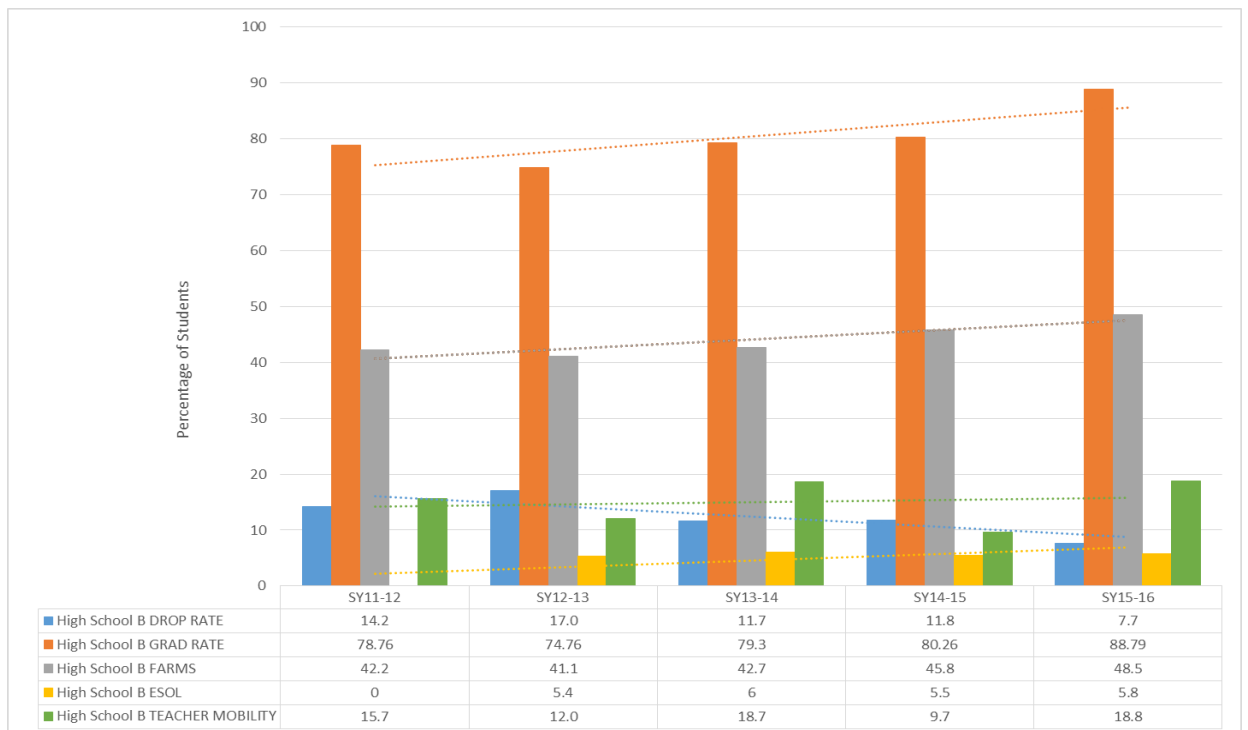


Figure 45. Relationship between high school dropout rates and School Factors at High School B.

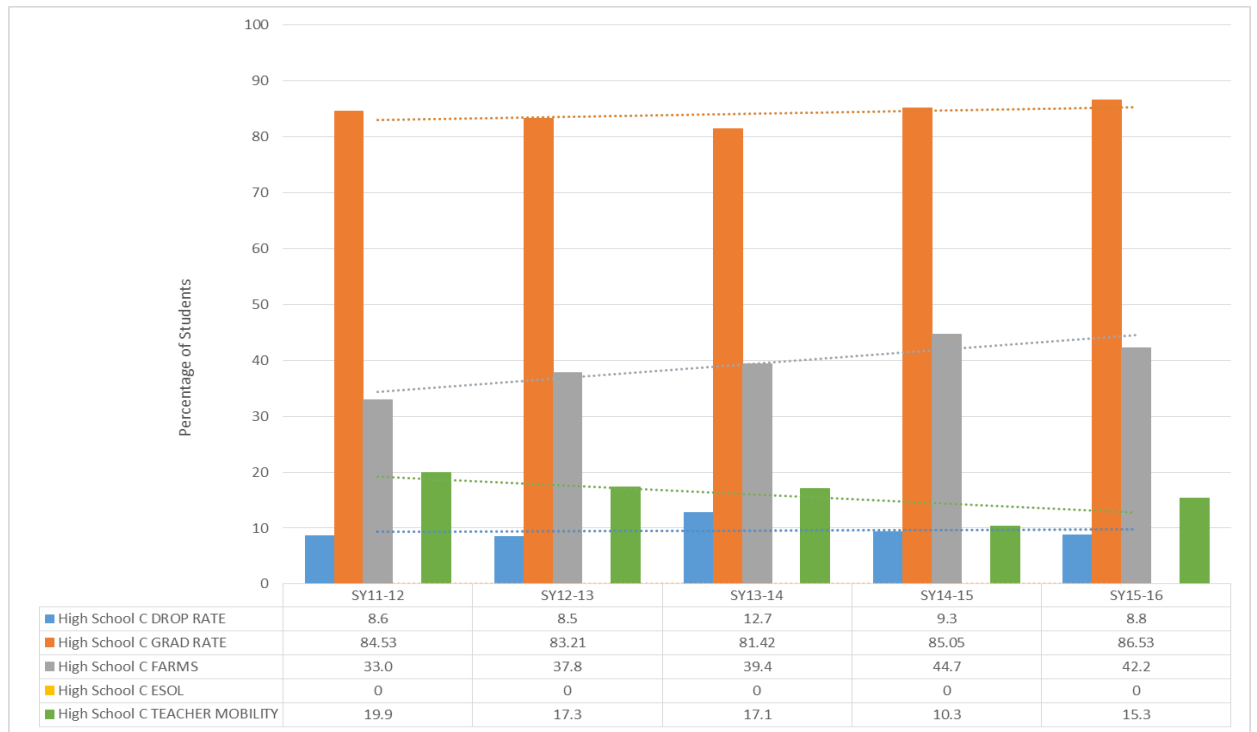


Figure 46. Relationship between high school dropout rates and School Factors at High School C.

In reviewing the trend data, it should be noted that all the three high schools had upward trends in graduation rates despite their upward trends in percentage of students receiving FARMS benefits. The expected result would be that as factors such as the percentage of students receiving FARMS benefits increase, teacher mobility and the percentage of students receiving ESOL services would trend upward, graduation rates would trend downward and drop out rates would trend upward. High School C is the only school that did not have a downward trend in the area of dropout rates. Their trend line data remained stable over the five year span. Given that High School C has an ESOL population of less than 5%, the State Department of Education does not publish the actual number.

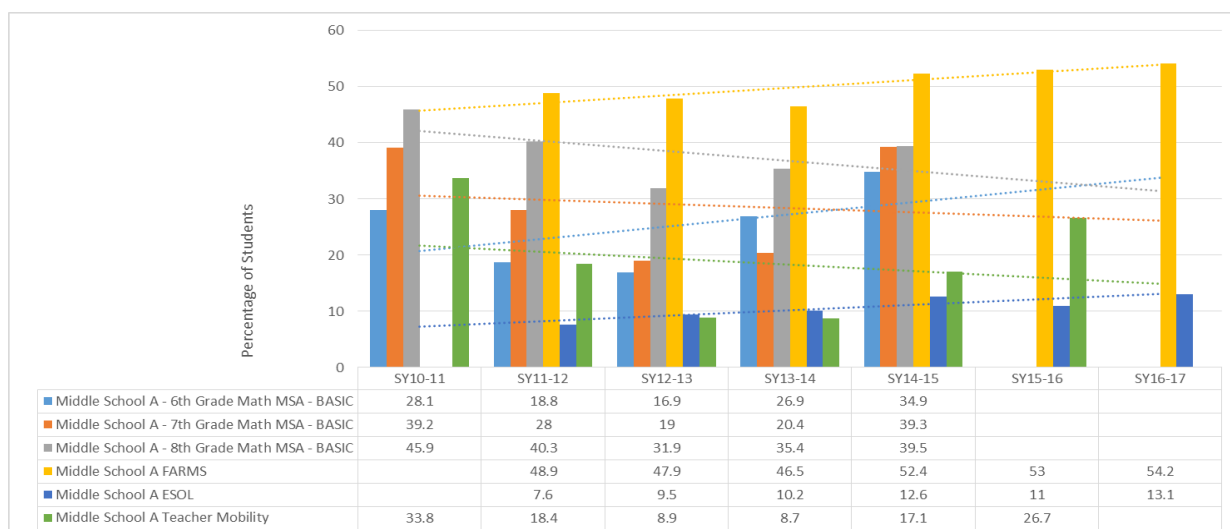


Figure 47. Relationship between middle school MSA Math Scores and School Factors at Middle School A

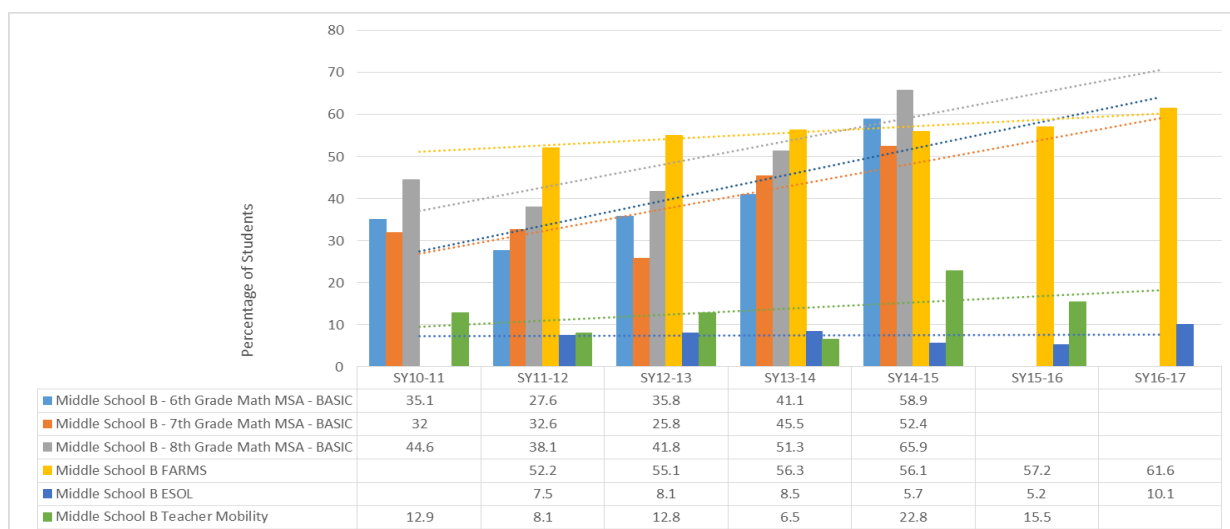


Figure 48. Relationship between middle school MSA Math Scores and School Factors at Middle School B.

In reviewing the trend lines of Middle School A, the percentage of students receiving FARMs and ESOL services trended upward. The expectation would be that as these trend lines move in an upward direction, the percentage of students scoring at the basic level on MSA would also trend in an upward direction. That did not prove to be true for 7th and 8th grade. So despite the school factors, students in these grades were not negatively impacted. Rather, they showed academic growth. The percentage of students

scoring at the basic level for 6th grade, did not trend in the same manner. The trend data indicate that the percentage of students scoring at the basic level actually increased.

The trend data for Middle School B did not resemble the trend data outlined for Middle School A. For Middle School B, the trend data for the percentage of students receiving ESOL services remained stable, the other data trended upwards indicating increased percentages in both students scoring at the basic level at all grades, students receiving FARMS and teacher mobility.

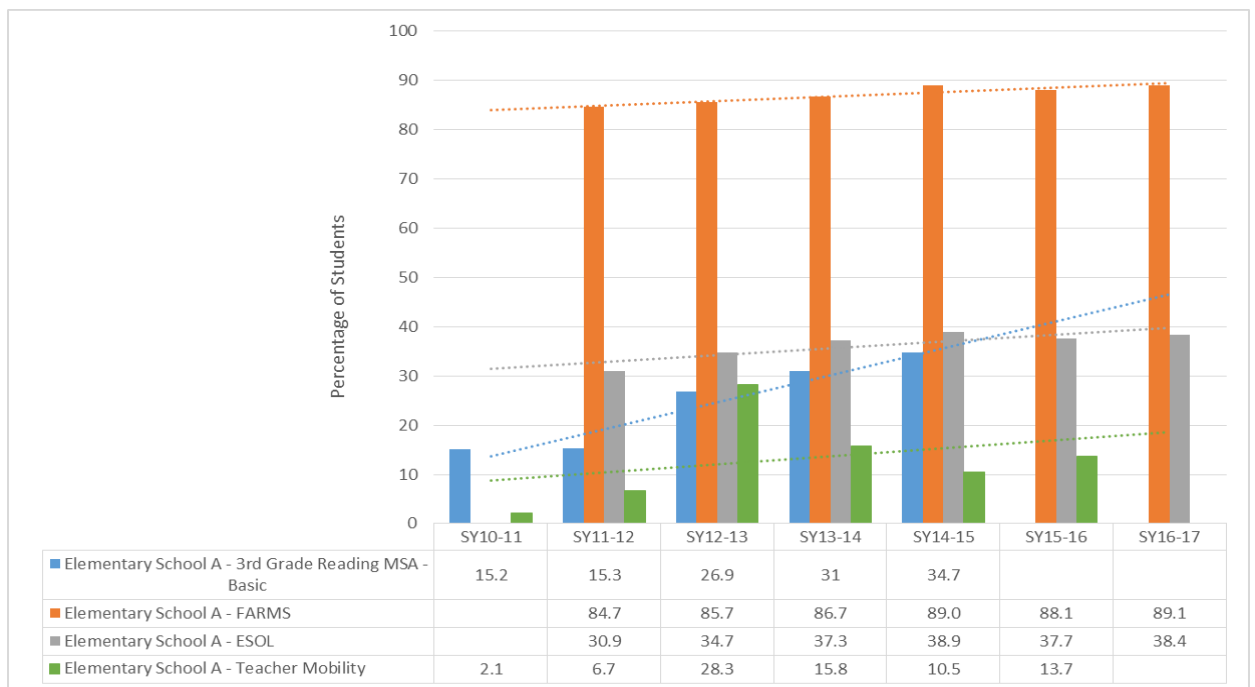


Figure 49. Relationship between Grade 3 MSA Reading scores and School Factors at Elementary School A

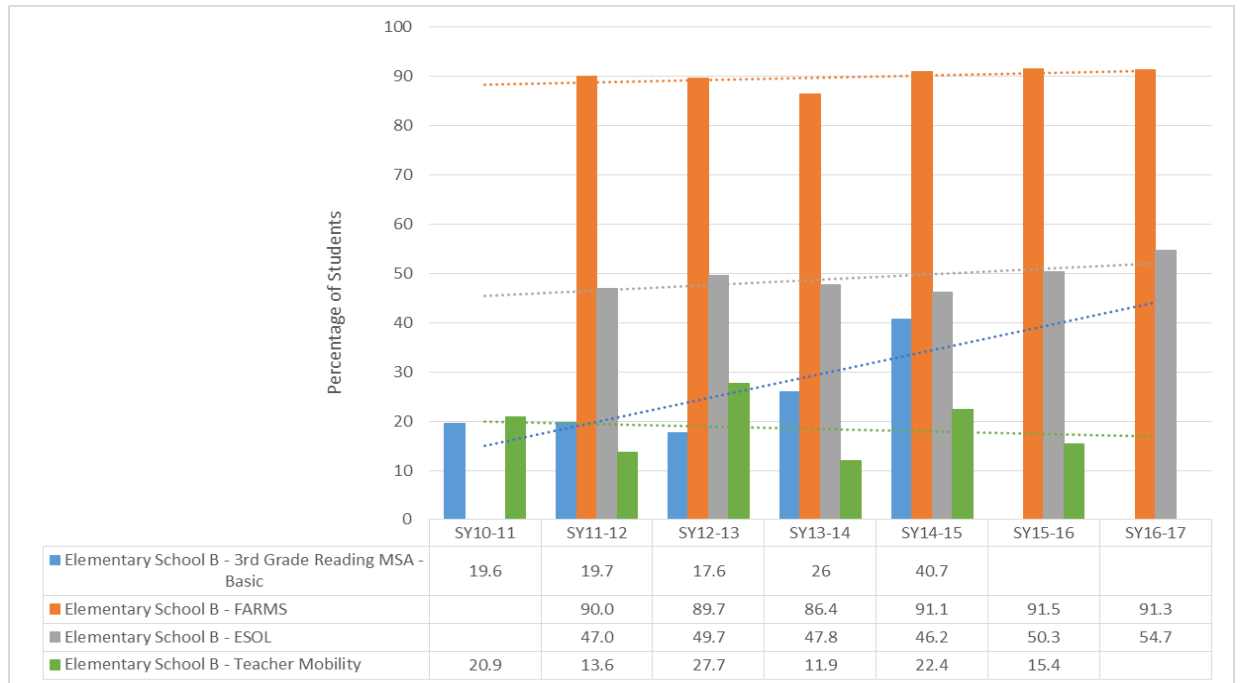


Figure 50. Relationship between Grade 3 MSA Reading scores and School Factors at Elementary School B.

The trend data for both elementary schools displayed some similarity. With the exception of teacher mobility, both schools' data trended upward, indicating increased percentages in all areas: students scoring at the basic level, students receiving FARMS and students receiving ESOL services. Although teacher mobility trended downward for Elementary School B, the impact on student performance is not reflected.

Analysis for Question 3

What is the level of satisfaction of selected elements of the PMOC process among those participating in the PMOC process? To address this question a Likert scale was used to assess participant satisfaction at the conclusion of each of the monthly meetings for the following:

- Left the process feeling heard
- Left the process feeling supported

- Left the process with ideas and suggestions

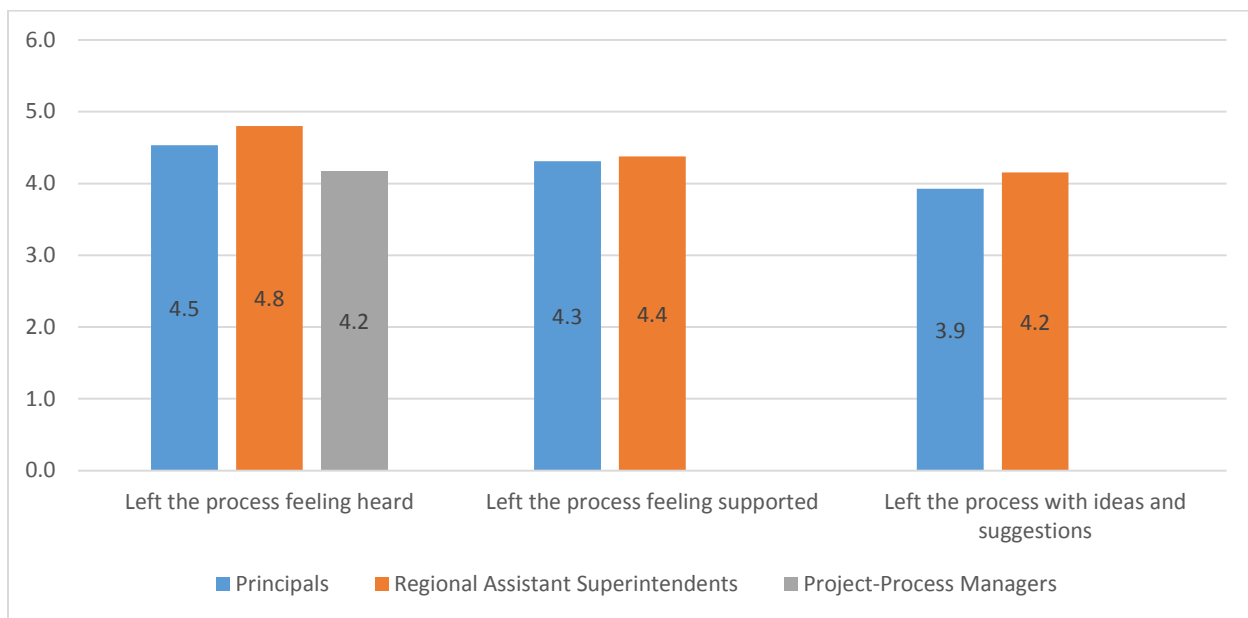


Figure 51. EOC Satisfaction Survey responses.

During the 2015-2016 school year, satisfaction data was collected from the principals, those who supervised them, Regional Assistant Superintendents, and EOC members. The surveys were administered monthly at the conclusion of the EOC meeting. For the survey (See Appendix E), participants were asked to respond to three questions using a Likert scale. Of the data collected from the principals who responded, the average score of those who left the EOC Meeting feeling as though they had been heard was a 4.5 out of 5.0. When their supervisors—Regional Assistant Superintendents—were asked the same question, they had an average score 4.8 out of 5.0. The remaining participants of the EOC Meeting had an average score of 4.2 out of 5.0.

The second question asked if they left the meeting feeling supported. Of the principals who responded, the average score recorded was a 4.3 out of 5. When the

Regional Assistant Superintendents were asked the same question, they reported an average score of 4.4 out 5.0.

The final question asked participants if they left the meeting with ideas and suggestions from the EOC meeting. Of the principal who responded, the average score was a 3.9 out of 5.0. Of the Regional Assistant Superintendents who responded, the average score was a 4.2 out of 5.0

Conclusions Question 1

What remains unclear is whether the achievement data would have worsened without the PMOC model. The data indicate that the PMOC process did not have the predicted impact. In the review of these data, the expectation was that as a result of the PMOC process, there would be an increase for all of the On Grade Level and Above Grade Level indicators and a corresponding decrease in all of the At Risk indicators. In fact, in many areas the percentage of students scoring at the basic level increased. The only indicator in which the expectation of a decrease proved to be true was for the percentage of high students with a GPA of less than a 2.0. When looking at the trend lines for the other various academic indicators, the majority would seem to indicate that the PMOC process had minimal effect on improving student performance, student persistence, and student retention. The other indicators yielded inconsistent data trends with schools yielding data indicating that student performance has actually declined or regressed rather than improved. This is particularly true with middle school suspension rates.

The trend data for the other indicators yielded inconsistent results. Schools would show improvements for one or two years and then regress either slightly or at percentages

equal to or worse than their baseline data. It should be noted, however, that when reviewing Grade 8 math data, the number of students who actually take the Grade 8 MSA math is not equivalent to the number of students enrolled in 8th grade. If a student is identified for advanced math, they are enrolled in Algebra I as an 8th grader and the student would take the Algebra I MSA.

Conclusion Question 2

The expectation would be that the different School Factors/Characteristics would impact the overall performance in the various academic and discipline indicators. The expected impact would depend upon the indicator. When reviewing data for the above grade level and grade level indicators, one would expect that indicator data would trend downward as the different School Factors/Characteristics trended upward. When examining at risk indicators, the expectation would be that the data would trend upward as the School Factors/Characteristics trended upward.

Upon review of the data, there were some inconsistencies in each of the different indicators. For example, there were schools in which a grade level's performance on the MSA trended in a positive manner despite the upward trend in School Factors/Characteristics. Yet in the same school, there were grade levels that were unable to mitigate the impact of the School Factors/Characteristics on the student performance on MSA.

The above level indicator of completion for Algebra I by 8th grade was in line with the expected impact. As factors such as FARMS and teacher mobility tended upward, the percentage of students completing the course trended downward. This was not a consistent pattern with all of the School Factors/Characteristics. It should be noted

that student mobility tended downward for both schools and as referenced above, the indicator data also trended downward.

Because of the trend data inconsistencies, it could not be determined if the various School Factors/Characteristics impacted a school's efforts to improve overall low student performance. A contributing factor that could be explored in future research is the impact of principal change on teacher mobility.

Conclusion Question 3

Although the data overwhelming showed that both the principals and Regional Assistant Superintendents felt heard and supported, the fact that they did not feel as though they were provided with ideas and suggestions at the same rate is concerning. While a portion of the PMOC model is to provide structures and a forum for schools to voice their concerns, the overall purpose of the model is to support the improvement of persistent low student performance in the identified schools. A little more than half of the participants saw the practices within the PMOC model as being value added or promising structures for increasing students performances, reducing gaps and addressing challenges. Given that 57.1% of the respondents felt they were provided with the ideas and suggestions they needed to return to their schools to do the necessary work needed to improve overall student performance and eliminate gaps, the system may consider examining the benefit of this structure. Given the number of resources available and the fact that these schools have been identified as a priority for the system, the expectation would be that 100% of the respondents felt that they were provided with ideas and suggestions. The fact that some respondents didn't feel so satisfied suggests the system

|

should consider adding a follow up question to gain insight as to what else could be done to change the perception.

Limitations

As with all research, limitations for this study must be considered. First, with the transition from the previous state assessment to PARCC, there were not five years of academic data. Because of the transition from Maryland State Curriculum (MSC) to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), there was a misalignment between the taught curriculum and the assessed curriculum during this period. At the time these data were collected, students in grades 3 through 8 were instructed using the CCSS, but assessed using a test based on the MSC. In addition, when the state displays data and the population count is less than 10, the data is reported as $\leq 5\%$. This impacts the ability to graph the data and caused the researcher to report such areas as zeros. Another limitation was that since the satisfaction data were collected using a Likert scale, there was no opportunity to ask follow up questions. A third limitation was the timing of participants' feedback. Participants were asked to share their feedback at the end of the EOC meeting. Many participants were eager to leave and did provide feedback. Moving forward, the system should consider distributing the surveys at the beginning of the EOC meeting. This would allow the participants to respond immediately after their portion of the EOC meeting.

Implications for the System

Although the PMOC process has not had the predicted impact, it does not diminish the possibility that there were gains that would not have been revealed if the process had not been implemented. The system should consider allocating funding for

further studies to more deeply examine the impact of the process. Despite the attempts to intentionally and strategically staff our most vulnerable schools with our most effective practitioners, these efforts continually fall short. There is much evidence that schools with the highest levels of poverty are staffed with new and novice teachers (Luebchow, 2009). Data provided by Mid-Atlantic to the State indicate that this is evident in the district. As a result, the system should consider exploring the potential for having the most experienced teachers in the schools with the highest numbers of students in poverty. Given that all seven of the schools examined through this research have higher poverty and higher mobility rates than other schools in the system, the findings of this research may better inform the system to mitigate further gaps. While this is not an issue unique to this system (Luebchow, 2009), it is something that should be examined.

While the PMOC process may allow principals in the most challenged schools to feel as though their concerns have been heard, the data does not indicate that the model is improving low student performance. While there was an increase in the percentage of students scoring at the basic level, there was a decrease in the percentage of students scoring at the proficient and advanced levels. The seven schools are still utilizing the PMOC structures and model. Although the model appears to be helpful and beneficial for addressing particular challenges, the study is inconclusive in determining whether PMOC is effective as a model for improving low student performance.

Appendices

Appendix A: Protocols

Instructional Team Benchmark Protocol

Benchmark _____ Date of Administration(s) _____
Grade(s) _____ Date of Team Meeting _____
Team _____ Proficiency Cut Score _____

Step 1: Gather Specified Data (prior to meeting)/Summary

Responsibility:

Task:

- ☐ Teachers grade student work and scan benchmarks.
- ☐ Teachers examine benchmark results. Noting the following for their classes:
 - _____ Number of students that did not participate
 - _____ Number below proficient standard
 - _____ Number at or above the proficient standard
 - _____ AACPS Mean
 - _____ School Mean
 - _____ Class Mean
- ☐ Determine if there are scores that separate students into tiers based on overall performance
- ☐ Note any patterns or interesting observations that may have implications for student learning.
- ☐ Indicate any gaps that are evident in the scores.

Notes:

Step 2: Standards	
Task:	<input type="checkbox"/> View the Standards tab. <input type="checkbox"/> Indicate the standards where there are discrepancies in the pattern between the school's results and district results. This will give a measure of relative strength and weakness compared with the other AACPS students' results. <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers share discrepancies between different classes and/or school results. <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss what this difference among classes and teachers indicates about instruction and groupings of students.
Notes:	
Step 3: Item Analysis Tab	
Task:	<input type="checkbox"/> View Item Analysis tab. <input type="checkbox"/> Sort the items from least to greatest by selecting the % Attained column heading. <input type="checkbox"/> Determine which items were most problematic. <input type="checkbox"/> View the items and discuss: their relevance to the curriculum, cognitive level of the questions, and potential reasons the items were problematic. <input type="checkbox"/> Determine the instructional implications of the problematic items. <input type="checkbox"/> Determine which items were least problematic. <input type="checkbox"/> Determine the instructional implications of the least problematic items.
Notes:	

Step 4: Student Response Tab

- Task:**
- ☐ View the Responses tab.
 - ☐ Discuss which students or groups had difficulty with which items.

Notes:

Step 5: Summary of Benchmark Performance

- Task:**
- ☐ Discuss general areas of strength that the benchmark results demonstrate.
 - ☐ Discuss the general areas of weakness that the benchmark results demonstrate.
 - ☐ Discuss the possible reasons for the areas of weakness or strengths.
 - ☐ Can variability in performance be linked to specific strategies?
 - ☐ Consider whether the weakness is with a skill, concept or application of the concept.
 - ☐ Determine which standards/skills/concepts are most important or have the largest impact on future student achievement.

Notes:

Step 6: Instructional Plan

- Task:**
- ☐ Create an instructional plan for the next 30 days based on the results.
 - ☐ Plan includes what will be done for the entire class and what will be done for differentiated groups and individual students.
 - ☐ Plan includes differentiated strategies where needed for both remediation and enrichment.
 - ☐ Plan includes appropriate level of instruction, not just a repeat of concepts.
 - ☐ Plan includes reassessment of the skill, concept or application at the appropriate cognitive level.
 - ☐ Plan includes ways that instruction will be different than previous instruction.
 - ☐ Describe how an observer would identify changes to instruction in the classroom.
 - ☐ Date for reassessment is set. Date: _____

Notes:

Step 7: How will the actions be monitored?	
Task: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> List steps in monitoring the actions. <input type="checkbox"/> List obstacles that exist to successful implementation of the plan. <input type="checkbox"/> List timelines and review dates. <input type="checkbox"/> Describe what the reevaluation looks like. <input type="checkbox"/> Determine whether all students will be reassessed or just a portion of the students 	
Notes:	Responsibility/Date:
Step 8: What is considered success?	
Task: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Determine what standards of performance would be considered success on the reassessment. <input type="checkbox"/> List what actions are planned for students who continue to not be successful on these standards. <input type="checkbox"/> Remember to Communicate and Celebrate Success 	
Notes:	
Follow-up on Strategy	
Date	
Task: <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate instructional plan and instructional response after reassessment.	
Outcome <div style="height: 150px;"></div>	

Appendix B: Sample EOC Agenda

EOC Meeting
Monday, March 14, 2016
12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
The Board Room
Agenda

Outcomes:

- Identified considerations, resources and, actions to investigate opportunities that will assist schools to meet their SIP goals to Elevate All Students; Eliminate All Gaps.

- Evaluate meeting

12:00	Welcome, Outcomes, Remarks	EOC Chair
12:05	Norms, Agenda, Meeting Preview	EOC Chair
12:15	Middle School	Principal
12:45	Break	Team Members
12:50	Middle School	Principal
1:20	Break	Team Members
1:25	Middle School	Principal
1:55	Break	Team Members
2:00	Middle School	Principal
2:30	Break	Team Members
2:35	Middle School	Principal
3:05	Break	Team Members
3:10	Middle School	Principal
3:40	Closing Remarks	EOC Chair
3:50	Meeting Evaluation	Team Members
4:00	Meeting Adjourned	

EOC Norms

- Begin and end each meeting on time

Appendix C: Guiding Questions for EOC Presentation Preparation

Guiding Questions for EOC Presentation Preparation

1. What accomplishments are you most proud of and to what do you attribute the growth/success?
2. With which indicators did you not have as much growth/success?
 - a. What efforts/supports have you already employed to improve these indicators?
 - b. How did/are you using your internal levers to improve?
 - c. What additional efforts/supports do you feel you need to continue to grow and achieve in these areas?

Appendix D: Sample Plan to Address Indicators

Plan to Address Indicators

School: Imaginary High School Date: October 20, 2014

INDICATOR	STEPS TO ADDRESS	MONITORING
2c	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaborative Planning (Critical Features)• Use of feedback from walkthroughs• Small goals set quarterly• Math Practices LookFors• HOTs• PD through cluster	
Notes:		
INDICATOR	STEPS TO ADDRESS	MONITORING
2d	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• See SIP action step 1	
Notes:		
INDICATOR	STEPS TO ADDRESS	MONITORING
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Refine imp. of CDM• Training for new IDT Leaders• Create system of supports for	

Appendix E: Sample Action Log

Middle School A – Build teacher capacity to more effectively address the social/emotional needs of students.

Action Log/Concern/Support	Person or Persons Responsible	Date Due	Status/Completion
Follow up to Trauma Informed Instruction PD	Kathy	4/7/17 – Complete this log with notes, details and status, then return to EOC Chair via email	Scheduled for 4/17. To be co led by School Counselor DC and Alt On teacher as follow up to first training with a focus on practical application of response to students exhibiting behaviors as result of trauma.
Need for self-inflicting injuries PD and resources for Student Services staff	Sally Lucia	4/7/17 – Complete this log with notes, details and status, then return to EOC Chair via email	While the counseling staff was not able to attend the DBT training in Feb. because it was full, the school psychologist assigned to Bates was allowed to attend. The session was videotaped and is currently available for all staff on the Intranet>School Counseling>Foundation>Professional Development>DBT Training Feb 2017. I did speak to the School Counseling Department chair to remind her that our role is not to treat students who are self-injuring, but rather to follow the steps outlined in Board Regulations to refer these students for outside mental health support.
PD to support with Arts Integration	Mary	4/7/17 – Complete this log with notes, details and status, then return to EOC Chair via email	

Appendix F: Scoring Rubric for Monitoring Scorecard

Scoring Rubric for Monitoring Scorecard Critical Features

0- Exploration Stage (Red)	Readiness is assessed by an Action Management Team. Team is accountable for helping create readiness, an important function when the goal is to reach an entire population. Action Management Teams help schools recognize the need for these resources to help staff secure the needed resources to do the work ahead and prepare staff for the new practices.
1- Installation Stage (Yellow)	To acquire or repurpose the resources needed to do the work ahead. Selecting staff, identifying sources for training and coaching, providing initial training for staff, finding or establishing performance assessment (fidelity) tools, locating office space, assuring access to materials and equipment, and so on are among the resources that need to be in place before the work can be done effectively.
2- Initial Implementation (Lime)	Initial Implementation is the time when the innovation is being used for the first time. During this Stage, practitioners and staff are attempting to use newly learned skills (e.g., the evidence-based program) in the context of a school that is just learning how to change to accommodate and support the new ways of work. Action Management Teams help to develop the staff competencies required by the evidence-based program, help administrators adjust staff roles and functions to align with the program, and help leaders in the school fully support the process of using the program and incorporating the necessary implementation supports.
3- Full Implementation (Green)	Full Implementation is reached when a majority or more of the intended practitioners, staff, or team members are using an effective innovation with fidelity and good outcomes. In the Full Implementation Stage, the new ways of providing services are now the standard ways of work where practitioners and staff routinely provide high quality services and the implementation supports are part of the way the school carries out its work. The work of Action Management Teams/EOC is to ensure that the gains in the use of effective practices are maintained and improved over time and through transitions of leaders and staff.

Appendix G: Indicator 2c

Indicator 2c - Middle School Math		Beginning of Year	Mid-Year	End of Year				
Critical Features	Use of Mathematical Practices Look Fors: Used and monitored through instructional planning and implementation. Use of practices walk through tool or critical features of the SMP's.				DC conducts 2-3 walk throughs per class per week; Look fors are used weekly in planning	DC conducts 1 walk through per class per week; Look fors are used weekly in planning	DC conducts walk throughs occasionally	DC rarely conducts walk throughs
	Professional Development tailored to meet the needs of math teachers is implemented by Department Chairperson and, when available, supported by Math Resource personnel.				More than 3 PDs offered with summaries and sign in sheets	2-3 PDs offered with summaries and sign in sheets	1 PD offered with summaries and sign in sheets	No PD offered
	Flexible use of the Advisory Period / PAM to provide pre and re teaching to students to increase achievement in their Math course. Students are added and removed quarterly in order to ensure the most appropriate students receive necessary supports.				Effective instruction in Advisory / PAM results in 80% of students with a C or better in their Math course; Each marking period, the class roster is edited.	Effective instruction in Advisory / PAM results in 70% of students with a C or better in their Math course; Each semester, the class roster is edited.	Instruction in Advisory / PAM results in 50%-70 of students with a C or better in their Math course; Students are not added or removed from roster.	Instruction in Advisory / PAM results in less than 50% of students with a C or better in their Math course; Students are not added / removed from roster.
	Strategic implementation of "Independent Days" using the PBL and mathematically rich problems for students to explore using the Mathematical Practices. These are monitored experiences and tasks for 15 minutes within the classroom structure.				80% or more of teachers utilize an Independent Day task at least once per week.	80% or more of teachers utilize an Independent Day task at least twice per month.	Less than 80% of teachers use Independent Day tasks at least once a week. Some teachers use Independent Day tasks sporadically.	Independent Day tasks are not utilized.
	Effective Collaborative Planning to analyze student performance and plan for instruction. Monitoring tool for collaborative planning and assessment of standards is used for continued growth in the planning process.				Highly effective rating on 80% or more meetings per the Collaborative Planning Rubric	Effective and/or Highly Effective rating on 60% or more meetings per the Collaborative Planning Rubric	Developing and/or Effective rating on 40% or more meetings per the Collaborative Planning Rubric	Ineffective per the Collaborative Planning Rubric
	Rigor is evident and aligned to PARCC PLDs using formal and informal observational techniques/tools.				Rigor observed = PLD 4 in more than 70% of collected observational data	Rigor observed = PLD 3 in more than 70% of collected observational data	Rigor observed= PLD 2 in more than 70% of collected observational data	No evidence of rigor in PLDs in collected observational data
	Implementation of vertical teaming focused on Math with 5th and 6th grade teachers. Teachers from both levels are afforded the opportunity to observe each other's classrooms and engage in collaborative dialogue around curriculum, instruction, and assessments				Vertical Teaming implemented with all feeder schools at least 2x per school year.	Vertical Teaming implemented with all feeder schools at least 1X per school year.	Vertical teaming implemented with some feeder schools at least 1x per school year.	Vertical teaming is not implemented.
	Integration of computer curriculum. Usage time increasing consistently each week. Each student should have approximately one hour per week.				Consistent use of CC (90 minutes once per week per teacher)	Regular use of CC (60 minutes once a week per teacher)	Limited used of CC (15-60 minutes per teacher)	No implementation of CC or less than 15 minutes per week per teacher

Appendix H: Human Subjects Review Waiver



1204 Marie Mount Hall
College Park, MD 20742-5125
TEL: 301.405.4212
FAX: 301.314.1475
irb@umd.edu
www.umresearch.umd.edu/IRB

DATE: August 3, 2017

TO: Anthony Alston
FROM: University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1109125-1] A Descriptive Analyses of the Use of a Project management Oversight Committee for Improving Student Achievement In Seven Low Performing Schools of a Single Large School District In the Mid-Atlantic Region of the United States

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF NOT HUMAN SUBJECT RESEARCH
DECISION DATE: August 3, 2017

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB has determined this project does not meet the definition of human subject research under the purview of the IRB according to federal regulations.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at 301-405-4212 or irb@umd.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB's records.

Appendix I: EOC Evaluation

Please indicate a response in the section that corresponds to your participation with today's EOC meeting.

As a Principal, I left the meeting:

	Absolutely				Not At All
Feeling Heard	1	2	3	4	5
Feeling Supported	1	2	3	4	5
With ideas/suggestions to think about	1	2	3	4	5

As a Regional Assistant Superintendent I think the Principals that I support left:

	Absolutely				Not At All
Feeling Heard	1	2	3	4	5
Feeling Supported	1	2	3	4	5
With ideas/suggestions to think about	1	2	3	4	5

As a Project/Process Manager I now have a greater understanding of the challenges and the influences impacting the school that I support and how it relates to the School Improvement Plan.

	Absolutely				Not At All
	1	2	3	4	5

References

- Algozzine, B., Wang, C., & Boukkhtiarov, A. (2011). *A comparison of progress monitoring scores & end of year grade achievement*. Retrieved from New Waves-Educational Research & Development:
<http://www.caerda.org/sitedev/pub/nw/14.pdf#page=5>
- Alliance for Excellent Education. (2007). *The high cost of high school dropouts: What the nation pays for inadequate high schools*. Washington, D.C.: Alliance for Excellent Education.
- Alwin, L. (2002). The will and the way of data use. *School Administrator*, 59-74.
- Anne Arundel County Public Schools. (2012). *Our journey to greatness: Anne Arundel County Public Schools Strategic Plan*. Annapolis: Anne Arundel County Public Schools.
- Association of Public Service Employees. (2008). *Performance Network Conference*.
- Bailey, M. J., & Dynarski, S. M. (2011). *Gains and gaps: Changing inequality in U.S. College Entry and Completion*. NBER Working Papers 17633, National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc.
- Baines, M. (2008, November/December). Citistat: Is This the Answer to Comprehensive Area Assessment? *Association for Public Service Excellence*, 4-5.
- Barton, P., & Coley, R. (2009). *Parsing the achievement gap II*. Retrieved from Educational Testing Service:
<http://www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/PICPARSINGII.pdf>
- Boyd, D., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., Rockoff, J., & Wyckoff, J. (2008). The narrowing gap in New York City teacher qualifications and its implications for student achievement in high poverty schools. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*. 27, 793-818.
- Camera, L. (2016,). Achievement gap between White and Black Students still gaping. *US and World Report*. Retrieved from
<http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/datamine/2016/01/13/achievement-gap-between-white-and-black-stdents-still-gaping>
- Cancian, M., & Danziger, S. (2009). Improving educational outcomes for poor children. *Changing Poverty, Changing Policies*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Center for Public Education. (2012). *The principal perspective: At a glance*. Center for Public Education.

- Center on Education Policy. (2004). *From the capital to the classroom: Year 2 of the No Child Left Behind Act*. Washington, D.C.
- Chubbs, J. E., & Loveless, T. (2002). *Bridging the achievement gap*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution.
- Crommey, A. (2000). Using student assessment data: What can we learn from schools? North Central Regional Educational Laboratory.
- Currie, J.. (1999). Investing in our children: What we know and don't know about the costs and benefits of early childhood interventions. *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*, 24, 1406-1409.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). *The flat world and education: How American's commitment to equity will determine our future*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Deno, S. (n.d.). *Curriculum-based measures: Development and perspectives*. Retrieved from http://www.progressmonitoring.org/CBM_Article_Deno.pdf
- Doyle, D. (2003). Data-driven decision making: Is it the mantra of the month or does it have staying power? *The Higher Education Journal*, 19-21.
- Dynamic Measurement Group. (2017, January). Retrieved from <https://dibels.org/dibels.html>
- Earl, L., & Katz, S. (2006). *Leading schools in a data-rich world*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- ECONorthwest. (2010). *The economic impact of Oregon's student achievement gap*. The Chalkboard Project.
- Education Commission of the States. (2015). Retrieved from <http://www.ecs.org/html/issue.asp?issueid=117&subissueID=303>
- Evans, R. (2005). Reframing the achievement gap. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 86, 582-589.
- Fraenkel, J. R., & Wallen, N. E. (2018). *How to design and evaluate research in education*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.
- Fuchs, L., & Fuchs, D. (2004). What is scientifically-based research on progress monitoring. American Institute for Research, Office of Special Education Programs.
- Fuchs, L., Deno, S., & Mirkin, P. (1984). The effects of frequent curriculum-based measurement and evaluation on pedagogy, student achievement and student awareness of learning. *American Educational Research Journal*, 449-460.
- Heinemann. (n.d.). *Fountas & Pinnell reading assessment resources*. Retrieved from <http://www.heinemann.com/fountasandpinnell>

- Jacob, B. A., & Ludwig, J. (2009). Improving educational outcomes for poor children. *Focus*.
- Johnson, J. H. (1999). Educators as researchers. *Schools in the Middle*, 38-41.
- Johnson, J. H. (2000). *Data-driven school improvement*. Retrieved from http://www.ncacasi.org/jsi/2000v1i1/data_driven
- Johnson, S. B. (2013). Technical and institutional factors in the emergence of project management. *International Journal of Project Management*.
- Lafee, S. (2002). Data-driven districts. *School Administrator*, 6-15.
- Lee, V. E., & Burkam, D. T. (2002). *Inequity at the starting gate*. Washington, D.C.: Economic Policy Institute.
- Legler, R., & Kiley, S. W. (2004). *Perspectives on the gap: Fostering the academic success of minority and low income students*. Learning Point Associates.
- Louis, K. S., Leithwood, K., Wahlstrom, K. L., & Anderson, S. E. (2010). *Learning from leadership: Investigating the links to improved student learning*. Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement/University of Minnesota.
- Luebchow, L. (2009). *Equitable resources in low income schools*. Education Policy Program.
- Maryland State Department of Education. (2017). *2017 Maryland Report Card*. Retrieved from <http://www.MDReportCard.org>
- Maryland State Department of Education. (2017). *Every Student Succeeds Act*. Retrieved from <http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DAPI/ESSA/index.aspx>
- McIntire, T. (2002). The administrator's guide to data-driven decision making. *Technology and Learning*, 18-33.
- Mitra, D. (2011). *The social and economic benefits of public education*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University.
- Moretti, E. (2004). Estimating the social return to higher education: Evidence from longitudinal and repeated cross-sectional data. *Journal of Econometrics*, 175-212.
- Morgan, E. (2014). *The School Discipline Census Report*. Council of State Governments Justice Center.
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. (2004, May 14). Letter to United States Office of Civil Rights. Annapolis, Maryland.
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. (2011, July 11). Letter to the United States Office of Civil Rights. Annapolis, Maryland.

- National Center for Education Statistics. (2011). *Forum guide to crime, violence and discipline incident data*. Washington, D.C.: US Department of Education
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2015). *School composition and the Black-White achievement gap*. Washington, D.C.: US Department of Education.
- National Center on Response to Intervention. (n.d.). *Progress monitoring*. Retrieved from http://www.rti4success.org/categorycontents/progress_monitoring
- National Center on Student Progress Monitoring. (n.d.). *What is curriculum-based measurement and what does it mean to my child?* Retrieved from <http://studentprogress.org/families.asp>
- Organization for Economic Co-Operation. (2012). *Equity and quality in education: Supporting disadvantaged students and schools*. OECD Publishing.
- Oreopoulos, P., & Salvanes, K. G. (2009). How large are returns to schooling? Hint: Money isn't everything. *NBER Working Papers*.
- Quenemoen, R., Thurlow, M., Moen, R., Thompson, S., & Morse, A. (2004, February). *Progress monitoring in an inclusive standards-based assessment and accountability system*. Retrieved from <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/nceo/onlinePubs/Synthesis53.html>
- Reardon, S. F. (2011). *The widening academic achievement gap between the rich and the poor: New evidence and possible explanations*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation Press .
- Reynolds, G. M. (2002). Identifying and eliminating the achievement gaps: A research-based approach. *Viewpoints*, 9, 3-11.
- Rothstein, R. (2014). The racial achievement gap, segregated schools, and segregated neighborhoods: A constitutional insult. *Economic Policy Institute*.
- Sass, T. R., Hannaway, J., Xu, Z., Figlio, D. N., & Feng, L. (2012). Value added of teachers in high poverty schools and lower poverty schools. *Journal of Urban Economics*, 104-122.
- Smith, E. J. (2004, September). PMOC letter to an Assistant Superintendent. Annapolis, Maryland.
- Stiggins, R. J. (2001). The unfulfilled promise of classroom assessment. *Educational Measurement: Issues & Practice*, 5-15.
- Stuart, A. W., Fox, L., & Cordova-Webb, D. (2016). *How racially diverse schools and classrooms can benefit all students*. New York: The Century Foundation.
- Syed, S. (2015). *Building principal pipelines: A strategy to strengthen education leadership*. The Wallace Foundation.

US Department of Education. (2011). *Dear Colleage letter on the nondiscriminatory administration of school discipline*. US Department of Education.

Villanova University. (2017). *What is project management?* Retrieved from <https://www.villanovau.com/resources/project-management/what-is-project-management/#.WV-kBU2oupo>

Whitehouse, E. (2016, November). *Transitioning to the Every Student Succeeds Act*. Retrieved from http://www.csg.org/pubs/capitolideas/2016_mar_apr/every_student_act.as