

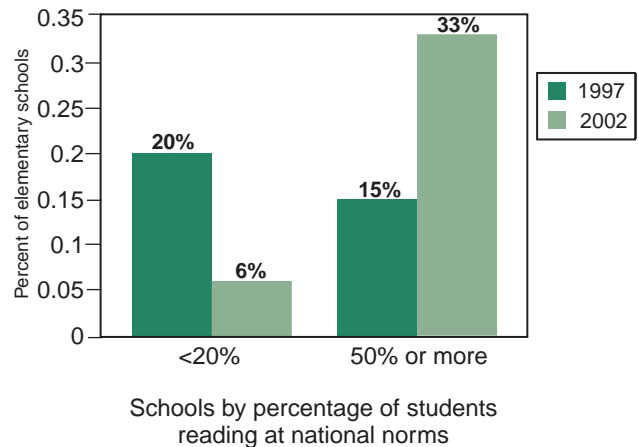
Applauding Our Accomplishments While Recognizing New Challenges

Over a decade of education reform has laid a strong foundation for the Chicago Public Schools to deliver on its promise of providing quality education for all students. There has been much progress, but there is still a long way to go. There are four central challenges facing the school system.

1. All schools must make progress and excellence must be the norm not the exception.

CPS has made significant efforts in reducing the numbers of very low performing schools through strong accountability programs. The number of low performing schools dropped from 20% in 1997 to 6% in 2002 (Graph 1). Many schools have made significant progress. The number of elementary schools with over 50% of students reading at national norms doubled between 1997 and 2002 (Graph 1). At the same time, many other schools have been stagnant. Of schools in 1997 that had greater than 20% of their students reading at national norms, half have made substantial improvements in their reading scores, and half have shown little improvement.

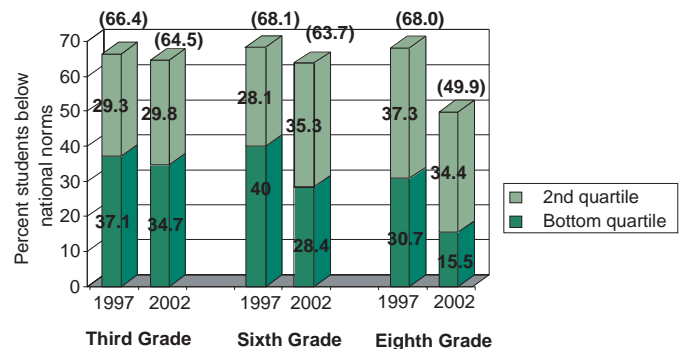
Graph 1: Declining Number of Very Poorly Performing Elementary Schools (ITBS)



2. Chicago schools need to raise expectations and increase the number of students who reach and exceed standards.

Between 1997 and 2002, the percentage of Chicago students in grades 3-8 whose reading achievement scores place them in the bottom quartile on national norms has declined substantially (Graph 2). Yet, particularly in the primary grades, there has been less progress in raising the proportion of students who are reading above the second quartile (above national norms). Although the progress has been substantial, not even the schools that have been improving can be fully satisfied. This problem is vividly illustrated in our ISAT results (see ISAT Results for 2001 on page 5). The ISAT is a standards-based test that measures how student achievement compares to standards for what students should know and be able to do. In the third and fourth grade, approximately 20 percent of Chicago students demonstrate limited knowledge and skills in the basic content areas. By seventh and eighth grade, the proportion of Chicago students who lack the most basic skills declines, particularly in reading and social studies. But across the grades, the largest problem facing Chicago is that most of our students are below standard, meaning that they demonstrate basic knowledge but cannot effectively apply skills to solve problems. Our instructional programs cannot consign our students to the second quartile—having the basics but not being able to demonstrate the problem solving and application abilities increasingly important for their future.

Graph 2: More Progress in the Upper Grades in Lowering the Bottom Quartiles (ITBS Reading)



Note: 2002 data is preliminary. The bottom quartile includes percentiles 1 through 25 and the 2nd quartile includes percentiles 26 to 50.

3. No Child Left Behind introduces broader accountability with serious implications for schools.

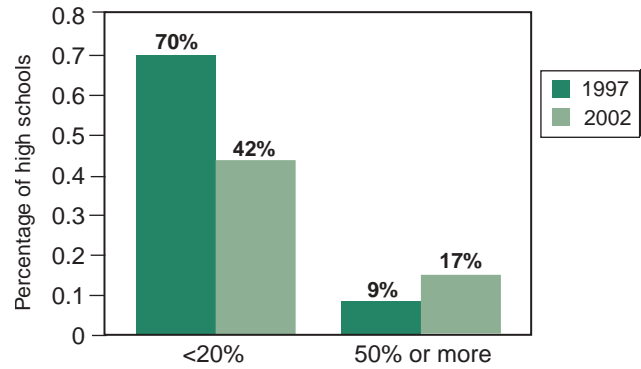
New federal No Child Left Behind legislation introduces broad and high stakes accountability for all schools. Under the new law, the district must ensure that all staff meet “highly qualified” standards and schools must ensure that all

students are making adequate yearly progress, including students receiving special education services, English Language Learners, and members of all ethnic and racial groups. All schools must ensure that they are working to develop concrete plans to support struggling students. Chicago schools must embrace these requirements and use them as an opportunity for further improvement.

4. Despite progress, many neighborhood high schools continue to struggle.

Since 1996, the number and diversity of programs for high school students has increased dramatically. The district opened six new regional magnets and two military academies. New charter and small high schools provide students with an opportunity to select smaller learning environments. Students also have more choices within their neighborhood high schools, from the rigorous International Baccalaureate programs to new career, language, technology, and fine arts academies that provide career-oriented programs with post-secondary linkages. The general high school program has been strengthened. All students must take a sequence of courses that prepare them for college and participate in service learning, advisory, and career preparation to support their development. But not all high schools have made sufficient progress (Graph 3). The percentage of high schools with very low performance remains high. Many neighborhood high schools have experienced declining enrollment and dramatic increases in the percentage of students in special education. Progress in reducing dropout rates has been slow—over 40 percent of 13 year olds do not complete high school by age 19.¹ In addition, Prairie State results (page 5) demonstrate substantial weaknesses in student performance in the core content areas. Less than 30 percent of Chicago eleventh graders met state standards in mathematics, science, and social studies.

Graph 3: Despite Progress, There Remains Many Low Performing High Schools (TAP)



High schools by percentage of students reading at national norms on the TAP

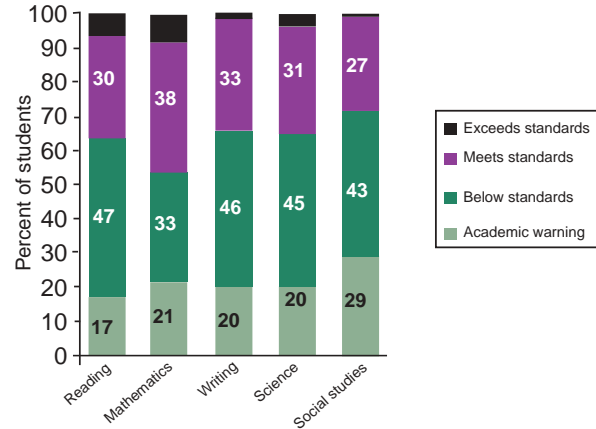
¹ Allensworth Elaine and John Q. Easton (2001) *Calculating a Cohort Dropout Rate for the Chicago Public Schools*. Consortium on Chicago School Research, Chicago, IL.

ISAT (3rd - 8th) and Prairie State (11th) Results for 2001

- **Academic warning:** Student work demonstrates limited knowledge and skills in a subject. Because of major learning gaps, students apply knowledge and skills ineffectively.
- **Below standards:** Student work demonstrates basic knowledge and skills. Students apply knowledge and skills in limited ways.
- **Meets standards:** Student work demonstrates proficient knowledge and skills. Students effectively apply knowledge and skills to solve problems.
- **Exceeds standards:** Student work demonstrates advanced knowledge and skills. Students creatively apply knowledge to solve problems and evaluate results.

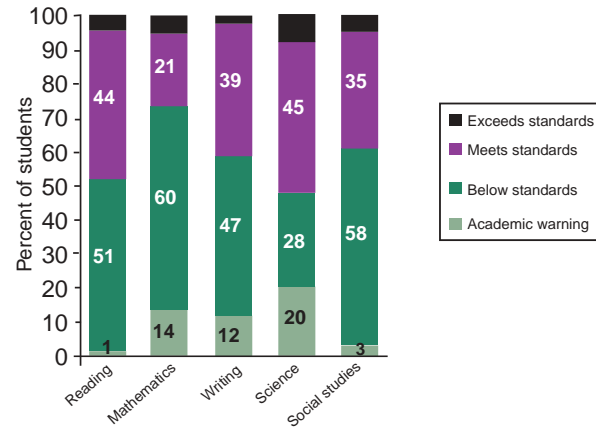
Third and Fourth Grade ISAT Scores

2001 ISAT Results for Chicago: 3rd Grade Reading, Mathematics and Writing, 4th Grade Science and Social Studies



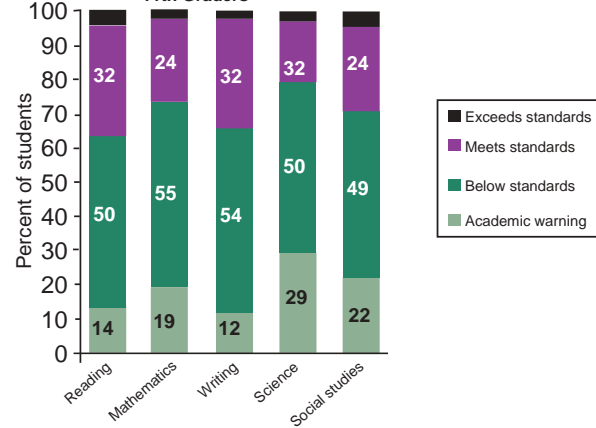
Seventh and Eighth Grade ISAT Scores

2001 ISAT Results for Chicago: 8th Grade Reading, Mathematics and Writing, 7th Grade Science and Social Studies



Eleventh Grade Prairie State Scores

2001 Prairie State Results for Chicago 11th Graders





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