

Changes in Teaching and Student Achievement

The goal of *Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence* comprehensive reform model is to improve achievement for all students. The implementation of the PAE reform is predicated on teachers and administrators having the necessary skill, knowledge, and materials to integrate the key components into their daily teaching practice. Given the depth of change required by teachers and administrators to implement the PAE reform model, it is realistic to assume that it would take them several years to implement all components as envisioned by the district. As of spring 2005, there is considerable evidence that administrators and principals have played a much greater instructional leadership role in schools, that teachers have made tangible changes in their instruction, and that there are positive gains in students' achievement in reading, writing, and mathematics.

Findings Related to Teacher Learning

Creating Environments and Structures for Teacher Learning in Schools: Ongoing professional development and continuous, accessible support for teachers is building teacher capacity to implement and sustain school-wide reform. Evidence of improving environment and structures for teacher learning included:

- Schools are creating spaces for learning and sharing ideas, for example, in one school, the library for leveled books was where a Special Education teacher and classroom teacher collaborated on the materials they would use the next day;
- One school changed their staff meetings to a workshop format with a mini-lesson, study group activity, and reporting back to the whole staff;
- Schools meet regularly in study groups by grade level or across grades depending on the topic or task;
- Teachers lead staff meetings and open their classrooms to others to help them gain experience and credibility as master teachers;
- Principals have a phase-in strategy within their schools—starting with the most eager teachers, while allowing others to “dip a toe in before jumping in the pool,” and mapping out their plan for going schoolwide—for having everyone trained and implementing;
- Teachers are seeking out professional development in numbers exceeding the district's capacity, with numbers completing Writing Institute Level I growing each year from 625 in 2003 to 834 in 2004, and 1212 in 2005; and numbers completing Reading Institute Level I growing from 453 in 2004 to 602 in 2005 (with over 200 more registering than could be accommodated in 2005) (Appendix B);

- Principals walk into classrooms and give informal feedback frequently, and their teachers know what they are looking for—the Principles of Learning with implementation of Writer’s and Reader’s Workshops or Disciplinary Literacy; and
- Principals and teachers do regular Learning Walks so that teachers will learn how the Principles of Learning look at other grade levels.

Changes in Teacher Knowledge and Skills: Teachers consistently reported that they have significantly expanded their knowledge and skills. For example, teachers overwhelmingly credit the Writing Institute training and materials for their growth in the teaching of writing. The Writer’s Workshop represents, for most teachers, a paradigm shift and deepening of teaching skill, as shown in these comments:

Before this training, most of the time I did prompt writing and/or sentence starters. The idea of allowing students to choose their own topics has been very successful. This is a whole different philosophy, and it is producing results.

I have a consistent daily period of time that children are writing. I wasn’t consistent about it before.

My understanding of the craft of writing is now so much deeper than before. Through this training, I was exposed to some beautiful literature that I can now use to elevate my students’ writing.

I’m able to pick out certain things in my students’ work that I wasn’t able to before because I didn’t know what I was supposed to be looking for.

Findings Related to Perceptions of Students’ Writing Performance

Students were Better Writers: Teachers who implemented Writer’s Workshop reported that their students improved their writing and they wrote more. Representative teacher comments:

My kindergarten students this year are better writers than my first grade students were at the end of last year, and they are also better readers.

I have a second grade classroom full of writers. They are eager to share their ideas and enjoy the art of writing.

My kids want to write all the time—there has been an explosion of writing in my room.

My students love to share their writing. The writing produced by the students has been phenomenal.

Representative administrative comments:

Kids really have publishable materials. You see kids who understand the levels of writing and understand whether they’ve met standard or not. Even in our Level I schools you begin to see it by the end of the first year. The organization of the classrooms and their routines are pretty evident across our district. You see the attention to literature. The kids have a deep

understanding about different genres, and you can see the evidence of that in their writing.
Patricia A. Harvey

Standards are part and parcel of the classroom environment; they drive and guide instruction so they are visibly used. We know the best and highest level is when the students themselves are able to articulate the standards in language that they understand. Area Superintendent

I had a first grade student come up to me and say, "I want you to see my work." And he was able to tell me why some of his work was meeting standards and why some of it wasn't and what he had to do to go back to organize it, to produce the type of outcome that he needed. That was a big "wow" for me to hear a student that articulate about where they needed to go to be successful. Principal

Students' Diverse Needs Can Be Met: Teachers found that Writer's and Reader's Workshop worked with a classroom of students with differentiated skill levels and with different levels of language learning.

Teachers said:

I feel more comfortable working with students who are at many different places in their skills or in different places with the process of writing.

This is the most powerful means of making ELL students literate. It has improved ELL students' performance, success, and feelings of inclusion.

Findings from Standardized Tests

The results of standardized tests taken by students each spring helped the district and individual schools assess how they were doing in meeting their goal of improving student achievement. For this report, the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) were analyzed. The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments are given to students each spring to measure how well they have mastered state standards. For this evaluation, the trend, from 1998 to 2005, in MCA scores in reading, writing, and mathematics for grade three and grade five will be examined to assess progress made by students in Saint Paul.

There have been steady gains in the percent of students reaching proficiency on the MCA's from 1998 to 2005. Findings included:

- Students passing the grade five writing MCA increased from 47% to 74% (Appendix A, Graph 1);
- Students passing the grade three reading MCA increased from 26% to 62% and in grade five from 29% to 63% (Appendix A, Graph 2);
- Students passing the grade three mathematics MCA increased from 23% to 61% and in grade five from 27% to 63% (Appendix A, Graph 3);

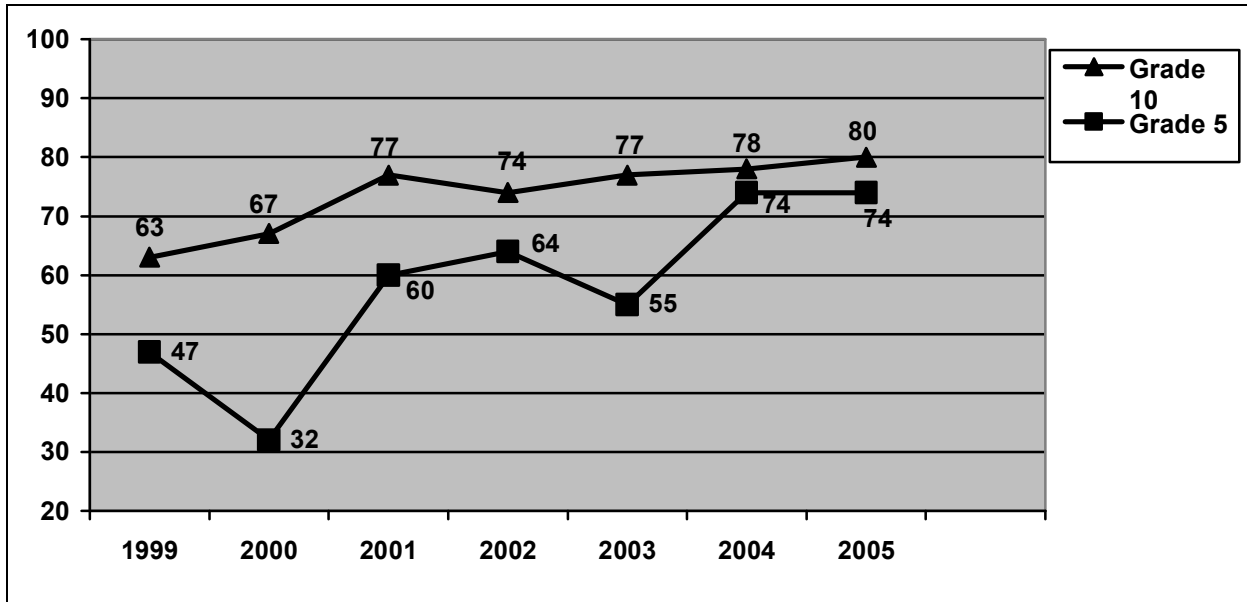
Over a period of six years (1999-2005), SPPS has made progress in narrowing the achievement gap among groups of students. Findings included (Appendix A, Table 2):

- Significant narrowing of the achievement gap between low income and non-low income grade three and grade five students in reading, writing, and mathematics MCA's, the decrease in gap ranging from six percentage points in grade three mathematics to fourteen percentage points in grade five reading;
- Significant narrowing of the achievement gap between ELL and non-ELL third and fifth grade students in reading, writing, and mathematics, the decrease in gap ranging from sixteen percentage points in grade five mathematics to twenty-one percentage points in grade three mathematics and grade five reading;
- Significant narrowing of the achievement gap between Asian American and Caucasian students in third and fifth grade in all three subjects, the decrease in gap ranging from seven percentage points in grade five reading to fifteen percentage points in grade three mathematics;
- The achievement gap was narrowed between African American and Caucasian students in fifth grade, from three percentage points in reading and mathematics to nine percentage points in writing;
- However, for Special Education students, the achievement gap widened in all grades and subjects. Additionally, the achievement gap grew for American Indian students in fifth grade.

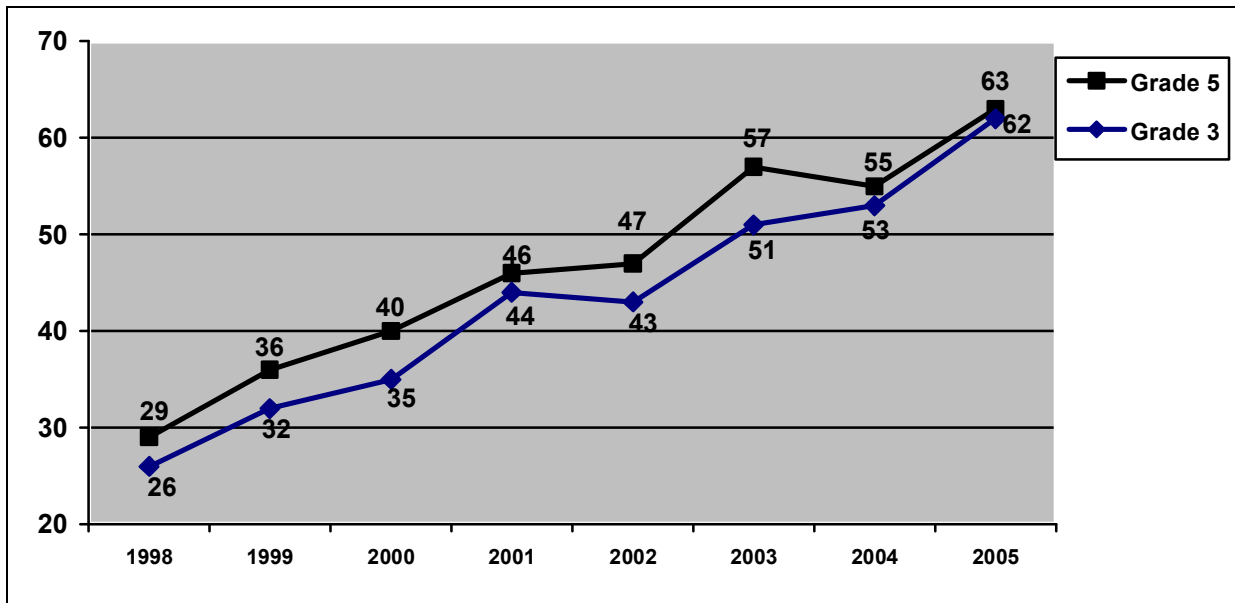
It is clear that significant progress has been made in improving student achievement. After seven years, from twenty-seven percent (27%) to thirty-eight percent (38%) more Saint Paul students achieved proficiency on MCA's in reading, writing, and mathematics. These results are even more significant when considering the change in district demographics over the same seven-year period (Appendix A, Table 1). Even though more students are low income (increased 14%), more speak languages other than English (increased 16%), and more require Special Education services (increased 6%), students passing the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments has gone up. At the same time that Saint Paul students have become more complicated, instruction has improved, expectations have been raised, and student achievement has gone up.

Appendix A *Standardized Test Results*

Graph 1. Performance of SPPS Students on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments in Writing – Percent Proficient



Graph 2. Performance of SPPS Students on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments in Reading – Percent Proficient



Graph 3. Performance of SPPS Students on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments in Mathematics – Percent Proficient

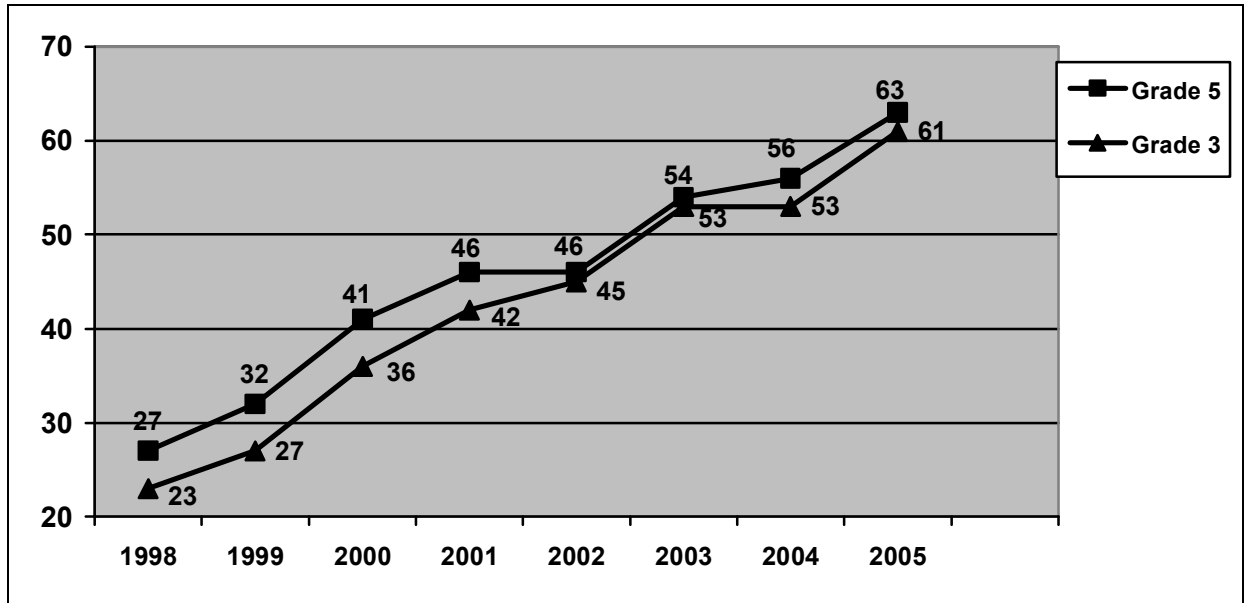


Table 1. Demographic Data for Saint Paul Public Schools

	1997-1998	2004-2005	Increases
<i>Low Income</i>	55%	69%	+14%
<i>Non-Low Income</i>	45%	31%	
<i>ELL</i>	21%	37%	+16%
<i>Not ELL</i>	79%	63%	
<i>Special Education</i>	12%	18%	+6%
<i>Regular Education</i>	88%	82%	
<i>Students of Color</i>	60%	72%	+12%
<i>Caucasian</i>	40%	28%	
<i>African-American</i>	23%	28%	+5%
<i>Hispanic</i>	8%	12%	+4%
<i>Asian American</i>	28%	29%	+1%
<i>American Indian</i>	2%	2%	

Table 1. Progress in Narrowing Achievement Gaps in Saint Paul Public School

Percent of Grade 3 and 5 Students Proficient on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment from 1999 to 2005

Over a period of six years, SPPS has made significant progress in narrowing the achievement gaps between low income and non-low income as well as between ELL and non-ELL third and fifth grade students in reading, math, and writing. Moreover, SPPS has reduced the achievement gap in all three subjects between Asian American and Caucasian students at both grade levels and between African American and Caucasian students in fifth grade. These are all remarkable achievements. However, for special education students, the achievement gap widened in all grades and subjects. Additionally, the achievement gap grew for American Indian students in fifth grade. For these groups, close attention is warranted.

= gap has narrowed by three percentage points or more from 1999 to 2005

= gap has widened by three percentage points or more from 1999 to 2005

	Grade 3 Reading			Grade 5 Reading			Grade 3 Math			Grade 5 Math			Grade 5 Writing		
	1999	2005	change	1999	2005	change	1999	2005	change	1999	2005	change	1999	2005	change
<i>Low Income</i>	18.9	52.3	+33	21.7	54.9	+33	20.0	50.4	+30	14.3	55.5	+41	38.4	67.3	+29
<i>Non-Low Income</i>	59.7	83.0	+23	66.6	85.1	+19	58.8	83.0	+24	54.8	83.2	+28	69.1	85.6	+17
<i>ELL</i>	9.3	52.1	+43	8.5	50.2	+42	13.3	56.4	+43	7.6	55.0	+47	32.1	69.7	+38
<i>Not ELL</i>	43.5	68.9	+25	49.1	70.4	+21	42.1	64.2	+22	36.7	67.2	+31	56.0	73.6	+18
<i>Special Education</i>	12.3	32.5	+20	10.7	30.0	+19	15.5	35.0	+20	9.3	35.5	+26	17.5	40.3	+23
<i>Regular Education</i>	34.2	67.4	+33	40.7	70.6	+30	34.4	65.9	+32	30.8	69.1	+38	53.6	79.4	+26
<i>African-American</i>	22.2	53.4	+31	25.6	55.8	+30	18.1	45.2	+27	10.1	48.8	+39	35.9	64.6	+29
<i>Caucasian</i>	55.7	85.1	+29	59.1	85.6	+27	56.1	82.7	+27	49.7	85.3	+36	62.2	82.4	+20
<i>Hispanic</i>	27.0	54.1	+27	29.4	53.0	+24	25.4	52.6	+27	17.1	51.7	+35	41.2	63.0	+22
<i>Caucasian</i>	55.7	85.1	+29	59.1	85.6	+27	56.1	82.7	+27	49.7	85.3	+36	62.2	82.4	+20
<i>Asian American</i>	15.3	52.3	+37	21.7	55.6	+34	19.2	61.2	+42	18.2	63.6	+45	43.9	76.2	+32
<i>Caucasian</i>	55.7	85.1	+29	59.1	85.6	+27	56.1	82.7	+27	49.7	85.3	+36	62.2	82.4	+20
<i>American Indian</i>	31.9	60.5	+29	31.5	51.7	+20	22.7	48.9	+26	26.4	50.0	+24	50.0	60.7	+11
<i>Caucasian</i>	55.7	85.1	+29	59.1	85.6	+27	56.1	82.7	+27	49.7	85.3	+36	62.2	82.4	+20

Appendix B

Teachers Participating in Professional Development through August 2005

The numbers in this table may not be accurately adjusted for retirements, transfers, and other changes in personnel. The numbers in Level II and Level III columns are the same teachers that have completed Level I, and in the case of writing, Level II.

<i>PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS</i>	<i>Writing Level I</i>	<i>Writing Level II</i>	<i>Writing Level III</i>	<i>Reading Level I</i>	<i>Reading Level II</i>	<i>Jr. High Initiative</i>
Adams Spanish Immersion Magnet	31	9	15	19	6	
American Indian Magnet	22	10	6	10	3	
Ames Elementary	17	7	5	4	2	
Arlington Senior High (Excel)	2					8
Battle Creek Environmental Magnet	34	10	13	21	9	
Battle Creek Middle	2				2	18
Benjamin E. Mays Magnet	17	9	4	13	5	
Capital Hill Magnet	17	4	4	9	2	6
Central Senior High	1			1		4
Chelsea Heights Elementary	20	5	6	12	2	
Cherokee Heights West Side School of Excellence	29	6	4	16	5	
Cleveland Quality Middle	4					15
Como Park Elementary	38	9	8	27	4	
Como Park Senior High	3					6
Crossroads Elementary	37	17	10	23	3	
Dayton's Bluff Achievement Plus Elementary	30	10		25	15	
Eastern Heights Elementary	20	11	3	3	1	
ELL/Special Education/Administration	16	5	5	9	1	10
Expo for Excellence Magnet	22	5	2	17	1	
Farnsworth Aerospace Magnet	26	13	4	10	2	
Four Seasons Achievement Plus Elementary	19	6	1	1		
Franklin Music Magnet	26	14	7	18	9	
French Immersion Magnet	14	5	4	6	1	
Frost Lake Magnet School of Technology and Global Studies	45	6	10	19	5	
Galtier Science/Math/Technology Magnet	23	13	2	4		
Groveland Park Elementary	25	10	7	11	2	
Hancock-Hamline University Collaborative Magnet	49	17	16	28	3	
Harding Senior High	1				3	5
Hayden Heights Elementary	29	6	5	12	5	
Hazel Park Middle Academy	1					26
Highland Park Elementary	16	9	3	15	2	
Highland Park Junior High	1				1	27

(Appendix B continued)

Highwood Hills Elementary	16	7	2	6	2	
Homecroft Elementary	15	5	2	4		
Horace Mann Elementary	15	5	4	4	1	
Humboldt Junior High	9					24
Humboldt Senior High					1	4
J.A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary	19	4	12	15	9	
Jackson Preparatory Magnet	30	9	8	2		
J.J. Hill Montessori Magnet	18		1	4	2	
Johnson Senior High	4					6
Linwood Achievement Plus Elementary	15	3	3	6		
Longfellow Humanities Magnet	21	5	7	14	5	
Maxfield Magnet School of Academic Excellence	11		1	5	1	
Mississippi Creative Arts Magnet	43	9	23	21	4	
Monroe Achievement Plus Community	24	14	10	17	7	
Monroe Middle	3					8
Murray Junior High						18
Museum Magnet	16	8	1	3	1	
Nokomis Montessori Magnet	29	20	17	19	14	
North End Elementary	13	3	2	1		
Open School	7	4	2	8	2	12
Parkway Elementary	12	2	1	11	6	
Phalen Lake Elementary	31	6	9	17	1	
Prosperity Heights Elementary	19	8	6	14	6	
Ramsey Junior High	2				3	27
Randolph Heights Elementary	16	9	3	14	2	
Riverview West Side School of Excellence	14	5	5	5	1	
Rondo	2	1	1	1		
Roosevelt West Side School of Excellence	22	3	2	1	0	
Sheridan Elementary	16	13	4	11	6	
St. Anthony Park Elementary	18	8	5	11	3	
Vento, Bruce F. Elementary	20	3		10		
Washington Technology Middle	4					32
Webster Magnet, The Enrichment School	47	15	14	25	6	
Wellstone, Paul & Sheila Elementary	25	4	4	12		
World Cultures Magnet	21	9	6	12	2	
Totals as of August 2005	1212	398	299	602	179	256
Totals as of August 2004	834	344	157	453		
Totals as of August 2003	625	206	94			

Note: Over 200 teachers requested registration for Reading Institute Level I in 2005 than could be accommodated.