

3-12-2014

# Five High Performing Charter Schools Case Studies and Analysis: What Makes Them Successful?

Paul Haubrich

*University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee*, paulh@uwm.edu

Robert Kattman

*University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee*, rkattman@uwm.edu

William Kritek

*University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee*, wjkritek@uwm.edu

Julie Kremer

Alfonzo Thurman

*University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee*, athurman@uwm.edu

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## Recommended Citation

Haubrich, Paul; Kattman, Robert; Kritek, William; Kremer, Julie; and Thurman, Alfonzo, "Five High Performing Charter Schools Case Studies and Analysis: What Makes Them Successful?" (2014). *School of Education Faculty Articles*. 1.  
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**Five High Performing Charter Schools**  
**Case Studies**  
**and**  
**Analysis**

**What Makes Them Successful?**

Paul Haubrich  
Robert Kattman  
William Kritek  
Julie Kremer  
Alfonzo Thurman

Final Report

Submitted

March 12, 2014

**This report was prepared under a grant from the Suzanne and Richard Pieper  
Family Foundation, Ltd. in cooperation with the University of Wisconsin-  
Milwaukee Foundation.**

**The research team members are solely responsible for the results of this study.**

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# **CASE STUDIES OF FIVE HIGH PERFORMING CHARTER SCHOOLS**

## **Executive Summary**

This study investigates five high achieving, urban charter schools authorized by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee to determine the factors that contribute to the results they have obtained. Each of the schools is unique utilizing different curriculum and teaching methodology. Thus, there is no single curriculum or teaching methodology that must be adopted to achieve success with urban students. There are, however, factors that, although expressed in different ways, lead to the positive outcomes obtained by each school. It must be understood that these factors do not operate in isolation to each other. They are tightly interwoven, each impacting on the other. For example, leadership creates and maintains the other five factors. Shared beliefs and high expectations create community. A school does not achieve high academic results by simply declaring its intent. Rather leadership, the culture within the school, and the specific actions by school personnel, together, result in high achievement. It is the values, beliefs, and social norms that define the school culture. The school culture in turn is a strong determinant of student achievement. Academic success occurs in schools where learning is valued by both teachers and students and the school climate is such that teachers can teach and students can learn.

Each of these major factors is discussed as a single factor in later sections and also applied to the case studies reports for each school:

1. Leadership
  - a. The clear articulation of mission, beliefs, and values.
  - b. Modeling and acting on mission beliefs and values
  - c. Establishing the parameters for and practices of activities that create a feeling of community among students and staff.
  - d. Creating high academic expectations through beliefs, school structure, rigorous curriculum, high instructional expectations.
  - e. Creating high behavioral expectations through beliefs, school structure, modeling, and positive reinforcement.
  - f. Establishing processes and practices that lead to academic achievement and positive behavior, and providing the support to deploy these processes and practices uniformly throughout the school.
2. Shared mission, beliefs, and values
  - a. The universal acceptance by Board members, administrators, teachers, staff, and parents of the school's mission.

- b. Mission based hiring that brings strong, compassionate teachers to the school.
  - c. The concept of “sweating the small stuff,” believing that the difference is in the details.
- 3. Community
  - a. Activities that bring teachers and students together around the mission, beliefs, and values.
  - b. The administrators’ role as team leaders, facilitators and enablers.
  - c. The visibility of administrators in classrooms that ensures continuity of instruction, behavior, and culture.
  - d. The ability (agility) to react in a positive manner to changing situations.
  - e. The Board’s roll as provider of adequate resources both human and material.
- 4. High academic expectations
  - a. The emphasis on being prepared to go to college.
  - b. Challenging and rigorous curriculum.
  - c. Specific instructional goals that provide “the end in mind” for each lesson.
  - d. The emphasis on hard work.
- 5. Positive behavior expectations
  - a. The interwoven character education program that teaches students what to do rather than what not to do and how to relate to others in a positive manner.
  - b. The constant use of positive language that reinforces expectations.
  - c. Relationship building that creates positive interactions between students and teachers.
- 6. Agreed upon processes and practices
  - a. Instructional leadership that provides not only what to teach but how to teach.
  - b. The teachers’ acceptance and deployment of instructional practices to create high expectations, engage students in learning, and proactively managed classrooms.
  - c. The collection and use of data.
  - d. Productive use of time.

As noted in the opening paragraph each school had its unique characteristics and different histories that impact its mission and value system. In each case study the concept of operating as charter school is an element that creates the opportunity to be independent of district organization, structure and traditions, they are independent schools that stand on their own rather than reliance on a system to define their mission, leadership and curriculums. The factor of independence is not identified as a strong correlate of research on effective schools, but in the instance of these five schools that independence to achieve their own goals and create a culture of success plays a positive role in the outcomes.

# **Methodology and General Observations**

## **Introduction**

This study was designed to explore the basis for success in five charter schools located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The study was motivated by the report from the National Alliance of Public Charter Schools (2009) that noted the variability in results for charter schools across the nation and asked the questions of why some charters are successful and others are not? In general we know why some charter schools fail, poor fiscal management, poor implementation of the proposed model, leadership issues and enrollment that fails to meet a designed budget.

The focus of the study was to look at five charters that had achieved the following: 1) been in operation for at least five years, 2) reading and math scores approached or exceeded the state-wide required achievement testing from 2007-2012, 3) served urban minority populations for whom educational challenges commonly referred to as the “achievement gap” is evident in the achievement test data of the larger community. All five charters were authorized by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and had their charter contracts renewed at least once for five years the maximum allowed under state law.

## **Wisconsin Charters**

Legislation in Wisconsin creates two major categories of charter schools, those chartered by school districts (90+%) of all charter and independent charters called 2r charters after the section of legislation that defines independent charter schools. Most district charters are in reality program extensions of the district and not free standing schools independent of the district board or leadership. Independent charters, called 2r charters for the section of law that defines them, are the subjects for this research project. They are chartered by independent bodies, UW-Milwaukee and City of Milwaukee, having their own boards and budgets and free from many state regulations. For those interested in more detail on Wisconsin charter schools they can review legislation at Wis. Statutes 118.40 or go to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and review their web page on charter schools in Wisconsin. Currently of 243 charter schools in Wisconsin, 22 schools are independent charters.

## **Initial context of the charter research**

The research team (five members) collected and analyzed aggregated data that had been collected by the Office of Charter Schools at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. These data included achievement data, Wisconsin Concepts and Knowledge Exam (WKCE) and Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) developed by North West Evaluation Association, for three academic years 2010-2012.

Also included in these data sets were attendance, discipline and other behavioral data; fiscal and per pupil expenditure data was also included for perspective. Full demographic information is also included. These data can be found in Sections H, I, J, K and L of this report.

### **Team observations**

Four of the team members had previous knowledge of these schools and upon review of these data they offered the following general observations prior to commencing the study:

1. These schools while all successful by achievement standards do not necessarily look alike in their overall approach to education.
2. Curriculum was different, i.e. texts, but did follow general state standards
3. Leadership styles were different, but staff response(s) were positive.
4. School viewed social behavior development as essential to the operation of the school.
5. The Seven Correlates of effective schools were present, but seemed to vary from school to school with each school placing an emphasis certain elements and going beyond the general aspects of the correlates.

### **Research Questions**

1. For each school in the study what are the daily operational characteristics that define its character and culture?
2. What is the role of leadership at this school?
3. How does staff explain the success of the school?
4. What, if any, unique aspects of qualities are evident in a school?
5. What stands out as common elements of these schools?
6. What are the differences in these schools?

### **Methodology**

A research team of five professionals was assembled with each person becoming an embedded observer and interviewer for a period of time beginning with the 2012-13 school year. Three of the five researchers had contact with these schools in the previous years. Four of the members were associated with the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee and one was a recently retired public school principal.

Each team member was expected to 1) observe beginning with the new school year (2012-13) staff development process prior to the opening of school 2) establish an observation schedule that accounted for observing across all grade levels, on different days of the week and times of the day from September of 2012 through March of 2013. In many instances teachers were observed on more than one occasion to verify information or refine interpretations. 3) Team members were expected to interview school leadership, teachers and related personnel using protocols developed by the researchers (see Section M). Interviews were expected to run for 45-60 minutes and may have required more than one session. Researchers were free to conduct additional interviews of schools staff as appropriate i.e. office personnel, business manager, aides and other individuals who had regular contact with the school. 4) Team members met during the year to discuss both process and observation data.

Upon completion of the interviews and observations team member met to review information, share observations, raise questions and worked to find a framework for which to describe and guide the development of a final report. Those results are discussed in later sections of this paper.

## **Five Selected Schools: A Brief Summary**

Readers are directed to the detailed reports on each school that provide extensive demographic and achievement data found in Sections H-L.

### **Bruce Guadalupe**

Bruce Guadalupe Charter School is associated with the United Community Center that holds the charter for the school. This school traces its history to a church related institution dating back to the 1930s. The primary focus of the school was to serve the Spanish speaking community in Milwaukee and previously had received funding as a voucher school and was associated as a charter school with the Milwaukee Public School System. In 2005 the United Community Center sought and received a charter from the University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee (UWM). It serves a population of almost 100% Hispanic students and is a 4K-8 school.

### **Milwaukee College Preparatory School**

Milwaukee College Preparatory School (MCP) was founded in 1996 as a private voucher school supported by a family committed to making a difference for central city students. The school began as a Marva Collins school employing the methods and curriculum developed by Collins in Chicago in the 1980s. After 6 years of operation the school applied for and received a charter beginning in 2002.

The school serves approximately 500+/- students, 99.9% of whom are Black and significant majority of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch. This school has been recognized on five separate occasions by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction as a school that “beats the odds” in serving children within the Title 1 programs guidelines.

### **Seeds of Health Elementary**

Seeds of Health Elementary is located on Milwaukee’s near south side and serves a population of primarily Hispanic students (90+%). This school is part of an organization called Seeds of Health, Inc. that operates both educational and health related services programs in Milwaukee. Free and reduced lunch is offered to over 90% of the students based on financial information. This is a 4K-8 school and is located in a former parochial school building. This school began in 1993 as a Milwaukee Public School’s contract school to provide education services. The UWM charter was granted in 2004 and currently serves 430 students at two locations.

### **Woodlands School**

Woodlands began its career as the campus school from Alverno College located in Milwaukee Wisconsin. In the 1989 Woodlands separated from Alverno and became a private independent school that charged tuition and accepted vouchers where student family income qualified for a voucher. In 2003 Woodlands was granted a charter and allowed by changes in state law to retain students who were enrolled but lived outside of the city of Milwaukee. State law limited UWM charter schools to the city only. While the city only geographic limitation has been removed; enrollment at the school remains different than the four schools above with larger numbers of White students with



minority students representing less than 50% of the student body and eligibility for free and reduced lunch is only 30-40% of the student body. The entire school is structured on a multi-grade approach.

### **Young Leaders Academy**

Young Leaders Academy (YLA) was developed by the Metropolitan Milwaukee YMCA as an outgrowth of an after school and summer program to serve central city youth. The charter was granted in 2002 and serves approximately 520 students in Milwaukee's near north side. It is the only school in this study that did not exist as a school prior to receiving a charter from UWM. This school is almost 100% minority. It is located in a new facility built in 2002 and also houses a neighborhood YMCA program.

## **General Observations of the Five Schools**

This research project identified a number of common elements as well as differences that helped describe these schools. It was apparent that while there are similar characteristics that contribute to the success of a school there is also evidence that suggests that differences are not necessarily a barrier to success. A common barrier that is found in much of the existing research literature is economic disadvantage, however in this study it was not a barrier. A common element that is considered essential for achievement is attendance and in this study attendance is high.

Below are some general observations that the authors have identified as important to understand the general characteristics of these schools. Individual reports that follow this section will further illuminate these schools both similarities and differences.

1. Four of the five schools existed prior to becoming charters. Two schools, Woodlands and Bruce Guadalupe had a history of more than 50 years. Seeds of Health Elementary started as a contract school with MPS and Milwaukee College Prep was a voucher school for five years before becoming a charter and only Young Leaders Academy began as a new school.
2. Size of the school did not seem to influence results; Bruce Guadalupe has an enrollment of almost 1000 students in two buildings and Woodlands with the lowest enrollment of 330 students and the others enrolling 400 - 500 students. Size did not seem to matter. This observation could also be applied to class size with most schools having approximately 24 students per class.
3. Three of the schools have a sponsoring organization:
  - a. Bruce Guadalupe is part of the United Community Center, A Hispanic community organization, Seed of Health Elementary, Seeds of Health, Inc. and Young Leaders Academy, YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee.
  - b. Milwaukee College Preparatory and Woodlands do not have a sponsoring organization.
4. Minority membership did not affect the general achievement outcomes:

- a. Bruce Guadalupe and Seeds of Health Elementary are almost 100% Hispanic
  - b. Milwaukee College Preparatory and Young Leaders Academy are 100% African American
  - c. Woodlands is approximately 50% white, 30% Black and 20% Hispanic.
5. Economically Disadvantaged, as defined by Free and Reduced Lunch was different across the schools, Seeds of Health Elementary and Young Leaders Academy were almost 100% disadvantaged, Bruce Guadalupe and Milwaukee College Preparatory around 75% and Woodlands at 16% economically disadvantaged.
6. School year is longer than traditional 180-day year, generally 5-10 days longer.
7. Leadership has been stable for at least 10 years at four of the five schools. Leadership styles and focus on the culture of the school varied from school to school, but leadership attention to promoting the mission was evident and purposeful at all the schools.
8. All five schools are dependent upon parent transportation as public transportation (yellow buses) is not provided to these schools under legal interpretation.
9. Attendance is high, generally 95% or better.
10. Student mobility at these schools is generally low, less than 10% excluding graduates.
11. Classroom observations suggested that student engagement/ on-task behavior was very good.
12. Staff mobility is generally low, with teacher departure associated with spousal job change or being asked not to return.
13. School uniforms are required at three schools, Bruce Guadalupe, Milwaukee College Prep and Young Leaders Academy, while Seeds of Health Elementary and Woodlands do not.
14. Age of facilities varied, Woodlands being in a building that was over 50 years old with student bathrooms located in the basement, Bruce Guadalupe and Young Leaders Academy are modern buildings.

Research team members drafted individual school reports (see Sections H-L ) based on observations and interviews that described the significant aspects of the school's culture that seemed to define the school and its basis for successful achievement meeting the challenges of urban education. In team discussions some general findings were suggested in the analysis of each school and what might be evident in more than one school. These observations statements were considered to have been repeated more than a few times and represent some general findings.

- 1 Curriculum did not seem to be the dominant factor in the operations of the school. Curricular content was important, but strategies to organize and deliver content seemed to carry more weight.
- 2 Acceptance of mission and understanding of mission was very evident in interviews. Mission also guided staff in problem solving at the teacher level when student educational challenges became evident.

- 3 Teaching and developing social skills, pro-social behaviors and promoting character were dominant themes that created a school culture.
- 4 Each school had a definable structure that shaped the culture. Structural elements such as obvious routines, clear expectations (social and academic), group identity, social responsibility, defined patterns of movement, rituals intended to reinforce the mission and an environment that was supportive of students needs to understand expectations.
- 5 Leadership was a dominate element in interviews, leadership facilitated both faculty and students opportunity to participate.
- 6 Frequently teachers would report, "I can teach at this school". The meaning of this phrase supported the observation that student behavior was such that teachers could conduct their lesson with good cooperation from students and the student performance was such that teacher could readily identify student success and outcomes. Little time needed to be spent on management of behavior.
- 7 Teachers and leadership both participated in the hiring process and selecting individuals who could contribute to the existing culture was of prime importance.
- 8 Instructional style may be more important than the actual curriculum.
- 9 Students knew that teachers cared about them.
10. Parent cooperation was reported as positive and there were few if any complaints regarding lack of parent support with some schools reporting 100% attendance at parent teacher conferences.

In identifying the factors that contribute to the success of these schools one is drawn to the general concepts of the effective school literature and the seven correlates of successful schools literature (Lizotte, 2009) and the myriad of studies that shape that body of literature. There is no question that the elements of the Seven Correlates are evident in these schools, some more obvious than others and with emphasis placed on certain elements more than others. So how does the successful school achieve its outcomes?

To observers in this study there was no single leadership style other than the commitment to the mission, students and teachers. Some leaders are omni-present in their school, some leaders use soft signs to signify achievement and others have a structured process to insure that all the bases are covered. However in each instance the leaders and staff are committed to building a culture that promotes students of character, the future value of education, clear expectations for success and that learning/academic outcomes have significant future value.

Teachers, like leaders, accept the mission or are servants to the mission to insure that a classroom reflects the attitudes and culture that promotes student achievement. In defining a classroom culture of success, teachers are rewarded because they can "teach" and experience the fulfillment of having success with students. It's a positive cycle that builds between teacher and student, respect and hard work satisfies that human need to become self-actualizing.

The glue in all of this is the commitment to the mission that has as a central theme that all children can learn, teachers can teach and are gratified by the outcomes. Leaders facilitate the nurturing of attitudes and an understood values based culture supports the teaching learning process. Repeating these achievement outcomes over the years demonstrates that the process can be repeated and sustained.

## LEADERSHIP

The vital role of school leadership in the improvement of student achievement is well documented. After teacher quality, school leadership is the single most important factor in student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Further, the impact of leadership tends to be greatest in schools where the learning needs of students are most acute (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004). Leaders impact student learning both directly and indirectly by setting direction, developing people, and making the organization work (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004). Leadership is a complex process involving a wide variety of skills. Individual leadership styles differ based on personality and the context in which their leadership occurs. School leaders must often adapt their style to the specific needs of the school population they serve. While there is generalized agreement on what leaders do, present research lacks specificity as to what leaders do in the urban environment to improve schools and classrooms.

The senior administrators of the five schools interviewed for these case studies come to their positions from different backgrounds and at different times within the life of the school. The principals of BGCS were both teachers in the school before being promoted to their leadership roles. The executive principal of MCPS helped to found the school after serving as a principal of a private school. The principal of SOHE helped to found the school after a long career as a curriculum director in a suburban school district. The principal of WLS was a teacher at the school, then left to take a position in a private school. She was then asked by the WLS faculty to return to be their principal. The principal of the YLA founded the school after a career as a teacher in the Milwaukee Public schools.

The leadership teams serving the five schools also have somewhat different compositions. BGCS is lead by two principals (elementary and middle school) and an assistant principal/curriculum director. Back office support is provided through the United Community Center, the sponsoring organization. The leadership team of MCPS is composed of an executive principal, curriculum director, principal, two academic deans, and a business administrator. The executive principal, curriculum director, and business manager also oversee the two additional Milwaukee College Prep schools. SOHE is lead by elementary and middle school directors. Back office support is provided by the Seeds of Health, Inc. that also runs two high schools and a social service program. Woodlands is lead by a principal, dean of students, and a part time business administrator. The YLA is lead by a principal and assistant principal. Back office support is provided by the YMCA, its sponsoring organization.

The leaders have different personalities and as individuals approach their roles somewhat differently. There are, however, elements of leadership that they share. They effectively blend these leadership elements to create the high achieving urban schools they serve. As a group, the administrators:

- Are highly mission directed with a strong interest in student outcomes.
- Have high academic and behavioral expectations for students and staff.
- Show a willingness to share control by putting the right people in the right positions, giving them responsibility, and trusting them to accomplish the jobs assigned to them.
- Extend themselves to enable others to do their jobs better, encouraging them, and showing respect for them.
- Are committed to the professional growth of everyone within the organization, acknowledging staff, listening with empathy, and facilitating teachers' needs.
- Create and maintain a feeling of community for both students and staff.

Each of the elements does not and cannot stand alone. They are tightly interwoven, one dependent on the other to create the successful leadership that results in high student achievement.

The leaders of the five schools are “mission driven.” Senior leaders, administrators and teachers are very conscious of their end goal. The mission of YLA is “College bound, character strong” and MCPS’s is “Knowledge plus character paves the way to college and beyond.” Administrators and teachers recognize that they must build strong character and academic prowess via a rigorous differentiated curriculum if they are to meet their goal of gaining entry for their graduates into Milwaukee’s better high schools and give the students the opportunity to go on to college. SOHE uses “Capturing Kids Hearts” to build character and a strong academic program while BGCS seeks to move all students into the best high schools so they are able to become part of America’s middle class. For Woodlands it is the “Woodlands Way,” a belief system that allows teachers to teach, students to grow and learn, and comes together through leadership to create high expectations, trust and commitment to the mission.

The leader’s emphasis on obtaining knowledge and developing positive character is transformational for each of the schools. The development of positive student character makes it possible to create a culture where academic learning is important. The leaders of the five schools lead by example and expect teachers to do the same. At BGCS the principal tells teachers that they must “have the utmost respect for each child.” “I need you to see not 22 different faces but I need you to see your own children. How you treat your own children is how you should treat them. Does anyone here wish his or her children not to succeed? You love them and you care for them and you care about their academic achievement.”

At MCPS the principals tell teachers “Practice what you preach. If you want students to be self-disciplined, goal oriented and proactive, you must live it yourself.” “You have to erase or at least delete the tapes you have playing in your head (from prior experiences).” “You have to change your language and your reactions to get positive results. Initially it may take more work and added effort to tell a student, ‘You are too wonderful to be making this bad choice,’ rather than ‘Stop running down the hallway.’ But eventually it will become natural and like a second language for you.”

Each morning, the elementary and middle school directors of SOHE greet each student by name at the door as parents drop them off. They comment positively about the student and let them know that they are glad to see them. This same respect is shown to staff members and, in turn, staff members are expected to show respect and concern for each child in their class.

The multi-age classroom structure at Woodlands is all about sharing. Classrooms are constantly abuzz as students in cooperative learning groups discuss lessons and work on projects. This sharing extends to cross-grade activities where older students assist younger students with projects. This assistance expands beyond the academic to the precepts of the “Woodlands Way” to build character. Thus, the lessons are as much about social cooperation and the willingness to help others with respect as they are about academics.

The principal of YLA teaches one class of middle school students so that he is closer to the needs of the teachers and students. He also uses this classroom as a demonstration for teachers who may need additional help. At other times he is found stopping in different classrooms to quiz students on how they are doing, asking them to recite the schools mission statement or their class mission. He uses these visits to reinforce the mission for both students and staff.

The leaders of the five schools are quick to point out that “great teachers are the reason for their school’s success”. The great teachers, however, are not there by accident. The school leaders practice what the executive principal of MCPS refers to as “mission based hiring.” This begins with the selection of staff committed to the mission in both their beliefs and their cooperative efforts to facilitate the mission. Selection of staff who “buy in,” allows the leadership to advance an agenda for creating a culture of behavior that facilitates the “opportunity for teachers to teach” and “students to learn.”

Just as the leaders do mission based hiring, the reverse is true if they believe that a teacher does not fully share the school’s beliefs or is not able to consistently meet instructional expectations. While the school leaders endeavor to make every teacher successful and at times make extra ordinary efforts to help a teacher, if the teacher does not measure up, their employment is terminated. Teachers support administrators in this practice with one interviewee stating: “If they don’t believe as we do they just have to go.”

Once a teacher is hired the schools provide extensive staff development that inculcates the teacher into the culture of the school. Teachers have the opportunity to participate in many activities that establish practices throughout the school. Once these practices are agreed upon, they are supported through staff development, colleague mentors, and direct assistance from administrators. Administrators conduct both formal and informal observations throughout the year. If improvement is needed both the administrator and veteran teachers are enlisted to help a teacher. Administrators seek more than compliance from teachers. They seek internalization of the mission, beliefs, and practices. At Woodlands it is becoming part of the “Woodland’s Way.” At Seeds of Health Elementary it is “capturing each child’s heart.”

Senior leadership also practices what the executive principal of MCPS terms “deficit hiring.” This means that he seeks out individuals with talent in specific areas in which he is not an expert or chooses not to exert full control. Behind this action is the belief that when teachers are given the opportunity to lead and accept responsibility a positive environment can be achieved that promotes both positive social behaviors and supports a pro-learning climate. This allows the administration to extend leadership beyond the administrative team to teachers and others with demonstrated ability. Once these assignments are made, individuals have the ability to grow the assignment and reach for excellence. This creates a feeling of trust and inclusion that helps to build the community.

Through their administrator’s instructional leadership, each school has developed a program of high expectations for student behavior and academic achievement. Each school has a rigorous curriculum and instructional methodology to bring the curriculum to the students in an engaging manner. Classroom instruction is set up to create what MCPS call the “joy factor.” Lessons are presented in a manner that involves the learner as a participant, not an observer. Whether it is the cooperative group challenges at Woodlands or the Socratic methodology utilized at MCPS, teachers engage students in the lessons, ensuring that they understand concepts and can put knowledge into practice.

As one moves about each school the consistency from class to class and grade to grade is very noticeable. The school leaders have created common processes and practices that all teachers use as part of the instructional routine. The use of these common processes and practices provide a very stable learning environment for students. As a result, students always know what is expected of them. The school’s leaders constantly move about the school, stopping in classrooms for quick visits. At MCPS they leave notes termed “Glows and Grows.” These notes let teachers know what they are doing right and what areas they can improve on. The same process is seen at BGCS as one teacher stated, “They are very nice but very vocal about what is expected.”

Administrators meet with teachers on a regular basis to review individual student progress. One school leader stated that it is her responsibility to know each student as well as their classroom teachers does. This serves to hold the teacher accountable for each child’s progress and provides the opportunity to seek assistance with students who are not progressing appropriately. At MCPS administrators and teachers state unequivocally that “students don’t fail, schools and teachers do.”

Administrators realize that the creation of a feeling of community is key to success. Both students and staff must buy in for the program to be successful. The sense of community is created through the morning assemblies, classroom identification with a college, consistent expectations, and common practices. As one principal stated, “The same language is heard throughout the building.” “It becomes contagious and everyone wants to be part of it.” This feeling of being part of the school and the resulting pride increase the desire of students to meet the social and academic expectations.

Searching for terms that are descriptive of these schools’ leadership, what one arrives at the insight that these schools have a congruent environment where the blend of leadership, staff and students works to achieve common goals that are understood by all the participants. The elements of character development and academic rigor are very evident in the defining of the school



culture. The culture becomes a way of living for the entire school community. Positive behavior and the joy of learning become the norm.

The leaders of the five schools model the character development they want to see in students. The values of respect, integrity, quality, hard work and responsibility are not only posted on the wall, they are spoken about, recited, and acted on. These values become the foundation for leaders to support teachers and for teachers to make it possible for students to reach their academic goals.

## **Mission and Values**

It has become commonplace to say that successful organizations are mission driven. And that is precisely the case with the five successful charter schools involved in this study. The mission statements, and associated statements of philosophy, values and goals, guide the long-term and daily activities of the schools. Perhaps more importantly, the mission, values and goals have been embraced by everyone in the school—Board, administrators, teachers, staff, parents and students.

The formal mission statements, although stated in different ways, point to two interrelated goals. This is most explicit in these two statements: “Milwaukee College Prep is a free, K-8 public charter school that every child in the city of Milwaukee is eligible to attend, whose mission is ‘Knowledge plus character pave the road to college and beyond.’”

“Young Leaders Academy, a public, free charter school, is committed to developing the leadership capabilities of our students through an innovative curriculum, high expectations, and a character-based approach to learning.” The tag line is “College Bound, Character Strong.”

At the other three schools, the mission statements are not quite as explicit but they address the same two goals: high academic expectations and high character expectations.

“The Seeds of Health Elementary mission is to work in strong partnership with parents and community to fully develop physical, emotional, social and intellectual potential of each child in a safe and supportive learning environment.”

“Woodlands offers an innovative educational program of excellence for the whole child in a multicultural environment that prepares the child for lifelong learning in a rapidly changing society.”

“The mission of Bruce-Guadalupe Community School, a non-sectarian, nonprofit, community-based charter school is to create an environment that fosters high expectations and excellence for all students.

The mission and values of the schools are alive and shared within the school communities. The Seeds of Health Elementary Principal stated:

The mission holds us together. It is the common thread that binds the staff into developing learning strategies that help, understand and individualize learning opportunities for each child that enters the school. It is underneath all decisions in the agency as well as filtering down into the classroom.

In interviews with Milwaukee College Preparatory School Board members, administrators, and teachers, every individual explained the mission in almost the same words. “We will do everything in our power to see that our students are prepared to enter a strong college preparatory program in high school and that they have the moral character and determination to be successful in life.” Almost to a person, teachers stated, “If a student does not learn it is my fault.”

A founding member of the Young Leaders Academy teaching staff says, “Our mission and core values set the tone for the school and are at the center of the school’s culture.” Another long term YLA teacher says that everything the school does revolves around mission and vision of the school. All employees, he states, “believe that every child in the school has a right to a first-class education and those who don’t believe that don’t last long. Some have been terminated in their fourth or fifth weeks into the school year.”

As articulated by the Bruce Guadalupe Community School administrators and teachers, the formal mission statement becomes much more specific: in the words of the elementary school principal, “get kids to the best high schools, get kids to have success in the high schools and move kids to the middle class.” Even a first grade teacher says the mission is “To prepare students to go to the best high schools and colleges.” She sees first grade as a foundation for that goal.

Woodlands School staff and administration refer constantly to the Woodlands Way: a set of guiding principles used to organize and express the culture of the school. The Woodlands Way is captured in the mnemonic device--RESPECT.

**Respect for Learning**

**Education that is integrated (collaborative and connected)**

**Set up life-long learning (meaningful learning)**

**Pride in diversity (value and honor for all)**

**Excellence (growth to reach potential)**

**Creative discovery based learning (problem solving, learning by doing)**

**Time for living (respect and responsibility to others)**

The RESPECT device is used to prompt focus in both learning and behavior interactions.

The power of a school’s mission and values is realized in the daily activities of the administration and teachers.

The leaders at MCPS practice what they term “mission based hiring,” carefully screening potential candidates. They rely heavily on recommendations from teachers and parents. They never hire someone without seeing them in action. If a hiring decision turns out to be wrong, they are quick to remedy the situation. As the Executive Principal pointed out, a new hire was let go after participating in two days of the teacher pre-school staff development program because, “We could see that she was just not going to make it.” Teachers support this action. One teacher interviewed stated: “We just couldn’t have people who do not believe in our mission.” They would just have to leave.”

At all five schools relatively low teacher turnover maintains a staff that is committed to the mission and values. Teachers are active in the staff selection process. Potential new hires are often recommended by current staff members. In some cases, prospective teachers have to teach a lesson as part of the selection process.

The mission and values of the schools are kept in front of students throughout the day. At Milwaukee College Preparatory School each day begins with a “community” gathering through which the mission and beliefs are highlighted. Each classroom is named for a college, often the one the teacher graduated from. Students learn school cheers and chants about the school. The college becomes part of their identity within the school. The classroom develops its own mission in concordance with the school’s mission. Each student develops a mission statement relating to college attainment.

At Seeds of Health, in accord with the mission and values, empathy and encouragement are demonstrated on a daily basis, intentionally and constantly. Messages of personal best drape the hallways. Teachers discuss students and their learning and personal needs at team meetings. Numerous expressions of gratitude for teachers and the quality of their teaching are made at staff meetings.

Each morning at Young Leaders Academy begins with a whole school assembly held outside on the playground in warm weather or in the gymnasium if it’s cold or rainy. A limited number of announcements are made, student poetry or short stories may be read or their songs may be sung, grade level initiatives may be started, and an occasional academic challenge with a travelling trophy going to the winner initiated. Student leaders lead most of the activities.

At Bruce Guadalupe Community School two students have roles in the morning announcements, leading the Pledge of Allegiance or reading a portion of the day’s announcements. The school’s mission is front and center as each student starts his or her portion by saying something like “My name is Javier, my teacher is Ms. Corbett and when I go to college I will study to be an FBI agent” (or a veterinarian or a nurse or whatever.)

The Bruce Guadalupe Community School curriculum is guided by the Common Core State Standards but also by the Explore test of the ACT suite of tests. According to the Explore website, “Taking Explore in 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> grade tells you things you need to know—to plan your high school courses, prepare for the ACT, or choose a career direction.” At BGCS, students take the

Explore test in 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades, in part because it is the entrance exam for a number of the best high schools.

As part of the Woodlands Way, the school uses a multi-grade approach (1/2, 3/4, 5/6, 7/8). The older students, those who had stayed with the teacher, set the tone for academics and behavior for the new students. As a result a climate is developed in which teachers can teach and students can learn.

The realization of high academic expectations and high character expectations for students is enabled by a fundamental value that was evident in each of the schools. Essentially it is that the administrators and teachers have accepted responsibility for the academic and social development of the students.

Young Leaders Academy teachers see children as they would their own child and “we have to make things work for our kids” as one primary grade teacher said. “If we don’t do everything we can to assure that child learns, who will?” he asked. He went on to note, with emphasis, that a group of like-minded YLA teachers use the phrase “make it happen here” often to emphasize that at YLA they will go the extra mile for “their kids” to be successful “because that’s what we’re about here at YLA.”

The principal of Bruce Guadalupe Community School tells the teachers “You need to have the utmost respect for a child. If you have children of your own, or maybe nieces or nephews, I need you to see not 22 different faces but I need you to see your own children. How you would treat your own children is how you should treat them. Does anyone here wish his or her kids not to succeed? You love them and you care for them and you care about their academic achievement. When I see our 1000 kids, I see (and he says the names of his own four children.)”

One element of the Woodlands Way that is stressed is promoting to students and staff that students have unique aspects in their learning style and as students mature they need to manage their own learning moving toward adulthood. Becoming responsible for ones learning is a desired outcome of the school.

Seeds of Health Elementary School provides numerous student activities that require extra time and effort from the staff. It is shown in the homework club, soccer club, or “Mad Hat” dancing club. During the staff interviews at Seeds of Health Elementary, the resounding expression was “we are in this together.” The staff not only models it but lives it, creating a strong foundation built upon this belief. The school also has practiced the “Capturing Kids’ Hearts” program for ten years. The program is based on the concept that “if you have a child’s heart you will have his/her mind.”

In talking with Milwaukee College Preparatory School board members, administrators, and teachers one consistently hears three refrains: “all children can learn”, “we will do everything possible to see that all children learn”, and “children don’t fail, schools and

teachers do.” Teachers build close relationships with students by constantly showing that they care about them. Teachers learn about the student and his/her family. They listen to student concerns. They follow through to address student needs both academically and emotionally. They embody the often-heard phrase: “Failure is not an option.”

# High Expectations

## Academic Expectations

Establishing high academic expectation is both a mindset and a series of actions. Teachers must believe that poor urban children can learn and achieve the necessary knowledge to enter college. Parents, who have never had family members go to college, must see that this is possible for their children, and students must buy into the dream of going to college. This mind set, however, is not enough. Curriculum and instruction must be robust, providing the academic knowledge that makes the dream attractive. High expectations are expected at each of the five schools and expressed in different ways although there may be similarities they are implemented and experienced differently.

As a non-sectarian, non-profit, community-based, K4-8 charter school Bruce Guadalupe Community School (BGCS) was created to foster high expectations and excellence for all of its students. These high expectations begin early. The lead administrator of the elementary school principal said their mission is to “get kids to the best high schools, get kids to have success in the high schools and move kids to the middle class.” This was stated similarly by the middle school principal who said, “Our overall mission is to make sure our kids are productive members of the middle class or upper class. That’s going to come through our putting them in the best high schools, make sure they’re going off to college, get their degree and join a very productive workforce.”

The Curriculum Coordinator/Assistant Principal is formally responsible for BGCS’ curriculum and instructional processes and, for example, she wants all teachers to write on the board the learning target(s) for that day or class. They are to take the form of “Students will be able to . . .” The learning targets should also be included in lesson plans that are submitted to the curriculum coordinator each week by email. A power point summary used by the curriculum coordinator ended with a slide that said, “Focus is student performance how to improve our instruction to meet the needs of the students!” The middle school dean of students felt similarly saying, “Push them and support them to be successful in education and character – building children to be future leaders.”

At Milwaukee College Preparatory School (MCPS) the emphasis on being prepared for college begins the moment one enters the building. Each room is named for a college, often the institution that the teacher graduated from. The colleges that alumni have or are attending are prominently posted. Administrators and teachers constantly talk about college entrance and requirements. Students learn college cheer songs and information about the college. Seventh and eighth graders visit colleges in the local area and as far away as Washington, D.C.

Similarly at the Young Leaders Academy, teachers post their highest University degree and/or certificate achievement at the doorway to their classroom and throughout the year they discuss the importance of attending college and guests are encouraged to discuss their college experience as a means of providing students inspiration to learn more about a variety of colleges. Seventh and eighth grade students are also given the opportunity to

visit Historically Black Colleges and Universities as well as local area colleges and universities.

The MCPS curriculum is challenging. The curriculum is advanced one grade for all students. In other words, students in grade one receive instruction at the grade two level, etc. The expectation, for example, is that all four-year old kindergarten students will begin to read. MCPS leaders state that this is done “with hard work and love.” Balancing high expectations with compassion and nurturing helps shape the whole student.

At MCPS each lesson begins with the “end in mind.” Teachers post the expectations for each lesson so that students understand what they are expected to accomplish and they use a variety of techniques to ensure that all students are positively engaged with the lesson. Teachers insist on an answer being correct and a partially correct answer is not accepted. Rather discussion and analysis continue until the fully correct answer is obtained. This ensures understanding of concepts and reduces misconceptions on the part of students.

The hard work necessary to obtain mastery is constantly emphasized. The mantra, “The only place success comes before work is in the dictionary” is heard daily. Students are expected to both ask and answer questions in full sentences. Likewise, they are encouraged to explore multiple paths of understanding.

Finally, data regarding student achievements is reviewed weekly. If a student is having difficulty, it is the teacher’s responsibility to help the student overcome the difficulty. If the teacher is not successful it is his/her responsibility to solicit help through the academic dean to meet the student needs.

At Seeds of Heath a five-year academic plan was developed and during the alignment process the focus for teaching became preparing students academically to be successful in life. This was to be accomplished through a traditionally based academic program presented in a concept-based approach. The focus has been to improve basic reading and mathematics scores. The addition of student monitoring through ongoing assessments became a significant piece of the planning process.

The organization of a data management system and structuring staff meetings to analyze student data provided the means to adjust instruction to student needs. The end products were the development of academic support programs such as the pull out reading and math for either individuals or small groups, direct instruction, increased vocabulary skills, bilingual support, after school tutoring, and extended summer school.

The Seeds of Health Staff utilized the MAP testing format to evaluate student performance and as a means for their improvement. Data decision making confirmed what working and revealed gaps in a student’s learning. Team meetings were held after each MAP testing session the fall, in January and in spring. Individual student scores and whole-class trends were discussed to determine what meaningful data was. The first round of testing provided information so that teachers could develop intervention

strategies, the mid-year session established growth and progress towards established expectations. The classroom work and the assessments helped to bring reality to the continuous improvements needed for students. Further development in the assessment process allowed for individualized support and instruction for all students who needed something different in their educational plan. This informed decision-making tool supported teachers in a way that they can meet challenges and provide interventions for each individual student.

The defining elements of Woodlands are based in understanding the hallmarks of its programming and its social expectations which are built around **RESPECT**:

Respect for learning  
Education that is integrated  
Set up life-long learning  
Pride in diversity  
Excellence  
Creative discovery  
Time for living

Students and staff at Woodlands are encouraged to understand their strengths and weaknesses within the teaching-learning paradigm. Students in the upper grades, seventh and eighth, can openly express their learning styles and teachers respectfully acknowledge the teaching strengths by informally allowing the person best at “x” to assume the leadership for that subject within their team. High expectations supported by the efforts of teachers to facilitate students for both social and academic accomplishment. Expectations when met are rewarded to both student and teacher as one validates the other.

Woodland’s leadership consistently demonstrates high expectations for students by demonstrating knowledge of students and commitment to doing what it takes to facilitate a student’s learning. Adding to this is the expectation that infusing new elements into the educational program with both an expectation of the benefits and allowing staff to enter into the process of implementing a new strategy or approach to create teacher ownership. This was evidenced in the implementation of the MAP assessment initiative, which at this time is wholly owned by the teachers and the bringing of Character Education into the program with staff members saying, “We really do a lot of this already.”

The Woodlands Way, discussed previously, is rooted in developing those pro-social behaviors in students that create a learning climate in which teachers can teach and students can learn. The development of pro-social behaviors in students is a process of using rules, the basis for the rules and then converting those rules into students’ understandings and such values as ethics, character, managing conflict and above all accepting personal responsibility for actions sets the stage for effective learning.

The Young Leaders Academy (YLA) is determined to develop their youth as strong academicians who will be “character strong and college bound” through a rigorous



differentiated curriculum and a highly positive social environment. The YLA has a militaristic social and disciplinary character. Students march to and from classes and other places within the school, stand at attention and “parade rest” and students and adults wear uniforms; however they are not military uniforms, but rather are shirts or blouses, ties, slacks/pants or skirts and blazers.

In the early elementary grades direct instruction is often used and is used in some of the later elementary grades when students are behind their peers. The curriculum is challenging and most students are at or above grade level as was demonstrated by the WKCE and MAP scores. Critical thinking skills are developed, nurtured and tested regularly throughout the school year. The emphasis of being leaders is stressed from the moment students enter YLA and it is emphasized that to be leaders they must be college educated. Leadership is rewarded in a number of ways including membership to various organizations, the color of the ties and blazers, and student organization offices held are some of the examples. Teachers, administrators, staff, and students affirm leadership qualities of being ready to learn in order to lead. Positive feedback and awards are given to teachers and staff, just as they are to students.

YLA students are actively engaged by the teachers and administrators in the classroom and are encouraged to use all of the tools available to them whether it is a white board, computer, textbook, or a guest speaker who is present or “Skyped” in. Students are expected to answer questions fully and are expected to stand at attention when doing so.

The role of academic high expectations has been documented as an essential element in the making of a successful school and in the instance of these five schools this belief, value and commitment contribute much to the academic performance of these schools.

## **Behavioral Expectations**

Parallel to the role of high academic expectations is the need for high behavioral expectations. This was evident at each school and while styles may have differed, the result of social behavior that facilitated positive social interaction and personal responsibility characterized as becoming independent learners and cooperative in the learning process. The role of high expectations is evident in both the academic and behavioral cultures of these schools. Some examples are discussed below

At Bruce Guadalupe Community School (BGCS) the behavioral climate is essential to keeping everyone's attention and energy focused on the educational program so teachers can teach and students can learn. It begins with the uniform. All students, from kindergarten through eighth grade, wear the same uniform: a white shirt or blouse and blue pants or skirt. In each classroom there is a version of the school rules:

- Be respectful of yourself, teachers, others and the building
- Be prepared for class: materials, assignments, be focused, listen and learn
- No gum, candy, food or drink allowed
- Maintain a positive attitude
- Keep your hands and feet yourself

In addition, some teachers have explicit classroom rules, such as the following posted in an elementary classroom:

- Make safe choices
- Use inside voices
- Follow instructions
- Be respectful
- Listen when someone is talking to you

All the children in this particular classroom signed the poster with the rules to show that they understood and agreed to follow these rules.

At the beginning of the school year the middle school principal personally goes through all the school rules with all the middle school students – gathered together by grade level. The students, and teachers, then sign the Codes of Conduct. The process is repeated at the start of the second semester. The principal observes that, as a result of this process, no one can say they have not seen the school's rules.

The rules are consistent with the goals of Bruce Guadalupe which are repeated in morning announcements and are intended to instill in every student the:

- 3As: Attitude, Attendance, and Achievement
- 3Rs: Respect, Responsibility, and Resilience
- 3Ps: Projects, Performance, and Progress

Students when moving around the campus are always accompanied by a teacher. Needless to say, this is a little disconcerting to eighth grade students who feel they should be able to go between classes with supervision! However, the supervision is light and students are not required to be silent or to walk in strict lines, except in the early grades. Based on observations there are virtually no hassles in the hallways and very few students arrive at their destinations tardy.

Are there disciplinary problems? Of course there are but for the most part they are minor. The Dean of Students said, “No,” and chuckled when asked if she had to deal with fights or other major disturbances. A process observed in a physical education class is instructive. When a basketball went out of bounds during a game resulting in what might have led to a dispute about whose ball it was, two students immediately started to play rock-paper-scissors. The side of the winner took possession of the ball – dispute totally averted. That process took place several times during the basketball game. Similar tactics were used in other settings throughout the school averted potential disruptions.

At Milwaukee College Prep positive student behavior is achieved through the interwoven character education program that teaches students what to do rather than what not to do and how to relate to others in a positive manner, the constant use of positive language that reinforces expectations and relationship building that creates positive interactions between students and teachers.

Students understand that they will be accountable for everything that they do. Teachers begin each day with a fable or story that highlights a positive character trait. Students are taught Sean Covey’s *Seven Habits of Effective Students*. Together these “character” lessons help students to understand their responsibilities within the school and classroom and how to work and live with others in a positive manner. Students learn, recite, and analyze poetry every morning. Poems are selected to highlight one of the values of the school. Teachers use a set of “proverbs” in response to student words and actions that spotlight the expected behavior.

Teachers “sweat the small stuff” not allowing any breach of decorum pass without helping student to understand their responsibilities. Teachers do this in a proactive (positive) manner. Positive praise is used in abundance to promote desired behaviors. In this way, students are taught what to rather than what not to do.

Teachers also build close relationships with students by constantly showing that they care about them. Teachers learn about the student and his/her family. They listen to student concerns and they follow through to address student needs both academically and emotionally.

The Seeds of Health Elementary approach to classroom management and behavior is centered on the belief that students want to do well and can learn how to get along in a positive manner. The strong relationship foundation allows a proactive system to permeate the school. Students are treated with respect and encouragement in order to problem-solve and make good choices in a variety of situations. Each adult in the

building has had the Capturing Kids' Hearts training module. They continuously model the fundamental beliefs of the program like building a classroom social contract, encourage leaders from within, encourage behaviors around character words of the month, and giving positive affirmations to one another on a regular basis. It is a "feel good" environment from September to June.

The Capturing Kids Heart's program is founded on the principle that a loving, nurturing culture will reduce disruptions and behavior problems by making students and families feel like they are welcome partners at the school. Therefore the program provides the staff with common language and approach as the basis for interactions with students and families. Another Capturing Kid's Heart concept is that "if you have a child's heart you have his/her mind." This is the road map for Seeds of Health Elementary.

Through the various observations of the two locations of Seeds of Health it could be determined that the staff's attitude toward success was based in Capturing Kids' Hearts philosophy. This seems to be one of the core targets of the school. They are building a better school by being better persons through high expectations and the various character development activities. The adults and the students (families) are connected in words and actions. They are building a better school by being better people through high expectations and the various character development activities. These school-wide actions are present at all times. It is totally accepted as "the way we do things around here." All staff members believe in the program and adhere to its ideas. The result is it brings everyone together supporting children in a similar way, which helps to maintain and reduce the need for any guessing on the child's part.

At Woodlands it was apparent that one of the outcomes of the pro-social development of the students was the development of "student citizens" who accepted responsibility for their behavior and were willing to cooperate with others to achieve a positive learning environment. Students in lower grades did not express the student citizenship in obvious ways, but emulated that which was around them, while older students could express the ideals of the Woodland Way. Eighth grade students are required to present their final portfolio of accomplishments to a panel of external reviewers. In the process a UWM observer had the opportunity to serve as an external reviewer to give students a practice opportunity prior to their final presentation. This observer noted that it was obvious that students had internalized the values and elements of character into their required essay as part of the portfolio.

Teachers frequently expressed their reason for being at Woodlands was that at this school they "could teach." The clear meaning of this statement was that the behavior of students was conducive to learning and that this pattern was consistent throughout the school. Without the social cooperation between teacher and student for a common goal the learning environment at Woodlands would be quite different. In many respects a teacher "feels validated" for their efforts as a student's academic and personal growth are evident to them not only within the classroom, but also over time as they continue to have contact with students through the eighth grade. In a small school with continuity "everyone knows your name."

One unique factor for the development of pro-social behavior is the multi-grade approach that is valued by this school. When the school year begins a teacher will have a classroom composed of students half of whom have been taught by her/him the previous year and the other half of students who have moved up one grade. Clearly the older students set the standards for behavior and thus the new students are expected to meet those standards.

One other factor that contributes to the success of Woodlands is the high retention of students from year to year; thus, reducing student mobility to a low percentage of turnovers each year. The value of low turnover is that students know the rules and social behavior expectation structures.

At the Young Leaders Academy there are high expectations of order and discipline in the classroom, hallways, cafeteria, gymnasium, and swimming pool which is established partly through the military persona of marching to and from one space to another in the hallways, stopping on command, no talking unless recognized (through the raising of the hand and when called upon by an authority), standing “at rest” or “at attention” where students are in line, at least an arm’s length from the person in front of and to the side of them, and are standing straight (no slouching) and are attentive to the leader. The uniforms worn by both students and staff reinforce the type of order and behavior expected of everyone in the school. A UWM observer observed and in discussions with teachers, staff and administrators who are stationed throughout the hallways noted that most students follow the rules of marching softly (sometimes to a soft cadence, particularly with new elementary students) but there were some who did not and upon asking found out that these were students new to the school and had yet to learn YLA etiquette. The marching, waiting for recognition before speaking, standing at attention or at rest, and the wearing of uniforms are designed to help foster appropriate behavior and respectfulness within the school, home and community.

Building high expectations is important at the YLA and it begins with the school year’s community-wide assembly where students and their family are invited to attend along with community leaders, selected former YLA student leaders and Board of Trustee members. At this assembly guests, teachers, staff, administrators and student leaders address the students and their families. Following this community-wide assembly there are daily assemblies where YLA students gather in the gymnasium prior to the beginning of morning classes.

At the daily assemblies students gather by grade level with their classroom teacher and line up in rows where they may take the lead in conducting the opening activities with assistance of their teachers and/or student leader(s) or as a group the classes will hear instructions and/or announcements, participate in competitive events, or receive encouragement. When there are competitive events they usually are related to a specific educational topic and are between a selected grade level (e.g. grade 5) and/or a specific wing of a floor within the building. There is a traveling trophy in the aforementioned areas and obtaining and keeping the trophy is intense. The competitions are not only

designed to build competitive educational skills but also to continue to build community and leadership skills.

One of the strengths of the YLA was that teachers and administrators work together in and outside of the classroom. Administrators were consistently in the classroom asking students and teachers questions about the lessons and learning that was going on with students responding as if they were teachers and teachers responding appropriately as colleagues.

What was very apparent across all five schools in this study was the role of behavioral expectations that promoted pro-social behavior and built character education across all the students. This process of teaching social behavior and sustaining high expectations for positive social interaction facilitated the learning process. Without this dimension of behavioral expectation in tandem with academic expectation these schools would probably not experience the level of success they have achieved.

## **Building Community**

“Community” is a significant factor in the five charter schools’ high achievement. Community is definitely one of the common elements for success. Since building community is a theme that surfaced in the analysis of what creates success and high achievement, the understanding of community is an important detail. The following are components of the general concept of community as related to the high success rate in these five charter schools.

- A genuine belief in service to children and a culture that signifies that failure is not an option.
- Activities that bring administrators, teachers, students and parents together around the mission, vision and beliefs.
- The visibility of administrators in the school and especially the classrooms ensuring the continuity of instruction, behavior and the school’s mission is upheld.
- The attitude that we are in this together maintaining a consistent and complete buy-in perspective from all participants including students, staff and parents.
- The natural way in which affirmations are given to students and adults in the school community resulting in a self-concept of being valuable and capable.

Each one of the above elements is highly developed in each of the five schools. There is a strong sense of family derived from the attitude and actions of all members of the school. As I reviewed the five charters, the climate represented family with a bond between adults and students sustained over time. This sense of community was a natural way of being at the schools. It was not just the words on the wall or the listing in a notebook, but a sincere part of everyday happenings. The leaders intentionally place the mission of meeting students’ needs at the center targeting what is really important to the growth of all students. Then the teachers act toward one another in a shared collaborative manner. They believe each child can and will learn, and it is their responsibility to make it happen. Finally, this is a regular routine at the classroom level with the activities and events that reinforce the beliefs and values highlighted in the mission. The students respect and support one another becoming a room of children doing their best and believing they can do the required work. It all comes together. Community seems to be the culminating result. The leadership knows and understands the significance of these factors listed above therefore creating very successful schools with the end product of discovering each student’s potential. As the five schools are reviewed and analyzed, this becomes so clear. Within each element of success, an example from each of the five schools is listed. The individual case studies hold the key to a complete description of the numerous examples supporting the sense of “community” at the five UWM charter schools.

## **Service to Children**

- Bruce Guadalupe School is within the agency called the United Community Center. The agency services families in numerous areas as well as educationally. Therefore through its foundation and name, it is a place totally involved in service to families and the surrounding community. A middle school English teacher stated that “the mission is community. We are all here for the children.”
- The Milwaukee College Prep School has developed a culture that believes that all children can and will learn, and they “will do everything possible to see that all children learn.”
- At Seeds of Health children are at the center of the school. There is a family atmosphere with a hug them to death attitude. A homework club supports any child needing that extra boost.
- At Woodlands teaching the whole child is at the center of all decisions. The foundation for their mission is based on using RESPECT as a model. Each of the letters in the word respect stands for a shared value. (R is respect for learning, E is education that is integrated, etc.)
- There is a strong belief at Young Leaders Academy that the staff must “make it happen here” and that they will make things work for their kids. The teachers will take extra time for a child who needs either a challenge or support in both the academic or social area.

## **Activities Demonstrating a Shared Mission**

- On the Bruce Guadalupe website is a statement that the families must become a member of the school community. The requirement for one child is 30 hours of volunteer time. A record is kept by the Dean of Students. This emphasizes the fact that we are all a part of a child’s success in the future. The teachers greet their students each day in the gym during the morning meeting. The morning meeting provides a time to reinforce the school’s beliefs. Respect is highlighted on a regular basis as well as expectations for correct and appropriate behavior.
- The Declaration of Excellence is recited at the beginning of each day at Milwaukee College Preparatory School. It is at the morning gathering. The students say “I will use this day to the fullest...” The consistency of purpose is so vital in their success. The mission is kept out front of everyone on a regular basis-during class time, teacher meetings and letters home to parents. There is also an emphasis on college and doing the best at whatever they pursue.
- The children and adults create a social contract each September at Seeds of Health. This is a strong component of the Capturing Kids’ Hearts model. The program’s focus is simple built around the idea of how do we treat one another. It has been the Seeds of Health character education program for over ten years.
- The “Woodlands Way”-Respectful Learning Culture is stated by all staff members and is a routine part of the school life. The school is organized through multi-age classrooms, which allows for understanding and cooperation across age definitions. Many activities utilize a buddy system to enhance the mission.



- At the Young Leaders Academy, a morning assembly is held and led by student leaders. Students may read a poem, make announcements or recognize students' achievements. The core values from the YMCA (founding body of the school) have evolved into a very strong mission at YLA.

### **Leadership Visibility**

- The leaders of Bruce Guadalupe are involved in all aspects from curriculum to the morning assemblies. They are constantly moving around the school and stop in classrooms for informal visits.
- The leadership at Milwaukee Prep is unwavering in their school's procedures, practices and processes. A major factor is that they are universally accepted and deployed without exception.
- The leadership team at Seeds of Health is visible in two locations. Hallways are crowded with teachers and administrators at the beginning of the day and at the end of the day. There is a shuttle bus from the elementary location to the middle level location. Administrators ride the bus back and forth. Parents drop off and pick up their children which allows for connectedness to the school.
- Administrator at Woodlands visits the classrooms on a daily basis and knows all the students' names.
- Administrators are present in the YLA hallways and often engage in a student's learning activity in the classroom. The administrators and the teachers are expected to participate in the programs at the school, but there is a willingness to do so not just a demand of their time.

### **Attitude that We are Together**

- There is an established morning meeting at Bruce Guadalupe. The children gather in the gym and recite a standard saying to begin the day. They recite their name, the teacher's name and when I go to college I will study\_\_\_\_\_.
- At Milwaukee Prep there is a feeling that they (the teachers) are a part of the organization, are respected and love being involved in decision making. They buy into the mission and welcome the varied opportunities. The strong belief that "students don't fail, schools and teachers do" is a living and consistent piece of the focus at the school.
- During the teacher interviews at Seeds of Health (Windlake Elementary School), the expression came out loud and clear that "we are in this together." Hiring is so important and a key to maintaining the mission. The Elementary Director devotes time to investing in the right person for the school above what would ordinarily be expected.
- Woodlands' teachers believe strongly that the mission allows them "to teach." New teachers are hired who have a belief in the mission of the school.
- YLA teachers and administrators work together and maintain a collegial presence in all aspects of the school. There is a tone of "no nonsense," which is reinforced with the military style of expectations from hallway behavior to the classroom.

### **Affirming Culture**

- During the morning meeting at Bruce Guadalupe, there is recognition of those students who have achieved and completed good work. The curriculum coordinator conveys to the teachers that the children need to be challenged and must believe that they can do the tough stuff.
- During the morning gathering at Milwaukee Prep, there are songs, dances and cheers building on the sense of community. There is a character education program that enhances the child's school life. It is based on what a child should do not the negative side of actions. Teachers build relationships with their students and show them that they care.
- Adults and children are affirmed through the Capturing Kids' Hearts program at Seeds of Health. Personal best is a daily expression at this school. The culture requires that the adults and children are respected and valued for their strengths and gifts.
- Woodlands School is a small community and the teachers feel validated for their efforts with the families and their students. Teachers are active participants in numerous tasks around the school like new teacher selection, analysis of performance data and curricular planning. Students learn pro-social skills in order to become "student citizens."
- The attitude of "college bound, character strong" provides a balance to the program model. The students know exactly what their expectations are within the confines of the school environment. Doing ones best is evident and allows for pride and accomplishment.

After reflecting on the five charter schools, community is so strong within the walls of the school that it is a significant aspect of the learning environment. As an observer, community within abounds with the people within. It is definitely a contributing force to the academic success of the schools. The adults are dedicated to the mission of the schools as well as to each other and to the students and their families. It is a sincere professional attitude about their schools. The activities of the school bring the members together surrounding the belief of children first. Each individual school community takes pride in their ability to "Care" and therefore "Succeed."

# **Case Studies**

## **BRUCE GUADALUPE COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

### **A CASE STUDY**

**by**

**William J. Kritek**

Bruce Guadalupe Community School (BGCS) started as Holy Trinity Parish School in the latter half of the 1800s. It changed its name to Bruce Guadalupe Community School in 1969. Since 1990, BGCS has operated as a program of the United Community Center (UCC), which houses the school in two of its buildings. From 2000-2009, it operated as a Non-Instrumentality Charter School authorized by Milwaukee Public Schools. BGCS began its charter with UW-Milwaukee in July of 2009. Located on the near south side of downtown Milwaukee, it serves over 950 students from kindergarten to eighth grade.

The United Community Center was established in 1970. Its mission is “to provide programs to Hispanics and near south side residents, of all ages, in the areas of education, cultural arts, recreation, community development, and health and human services. The UCC assists individuals to achieve their potential by focusing on cultural heritage as a means of strengthening personal development and by promoting high academic standards in all of its educational programs.”

UCC is governed by a twenty member Board of Directors composed of prominent leaders in business and the community. An Education Committee of the Board meets monthly to discuss operational policies and program accountability outcome data of the school. The minutes of these meetings are passed on to the full Board of Directors for approval.

BGCS presently serves approximately 950 students in four-year old kindergarten through eighth grade. The school population is predominately Latino, reflecting the demographics of the immediate neighborhood. More than eighty percent of the students come from two zip codes—the one in which the school is located and the adjacent zip code. And more than eighty percent of the students qualify for free or reduced price lunch.

Only one student was retained in the same grade for the 2011-12 school year. The average daily attendance is 95%. Last year there were no students expelled and just 2%

were suspended. Year-to-year, approximately 95% of the students who attended BGCS the previous year return to the school the next year. About 9% of the students have been identified as having special education needs with disabilities ranging from specific learning disabilities, to speech and language impairments, to autism and orthopedic impairment. The program is primarily a pullout program, but does provide classroom inclusion support as needed for students.

BGCS is staffed by 40 classroom teachers, supported by another 20 teachers in specialty areas such as art, music, and physical education as well as special education teachers, counselors, reading specialists, a science coordinator, and a mathematics resource teacher. There are two principals, one for the elementary building (the lead administrator) and one for the middle school. In addition, there is an assistant principal in the elementary school who doubles as the curriculum coordinator and a dean of students in the middle school. The lead principal reports to the Executive Director of the United Community Center.

The ethnic mix of the faculty is 78% white and 23% percent Latino. Over the last three years, 89% of the teachers have returned each year. The classroom teacher to student ratio is approximately 1 to 25. Teachers have, on average, 9.2 years of experience in education. All teachers are properly licensed.

Data for this case study were collected primarily through interviews of administrators and teachers and observations of teachers during one of their classes. Each of the teachers was observed for at least 50 minutes; the interviews followed the observations. In addition, observations have taken place at the August staff development workshops, at a math professional learning community meeting, at a general faculty meeting, at morning assemblies in the middle school and at a pre-Christmas holiday concert featuring the orchestra, the band, the chorus and a dance group.

## **A Mission Driven, Supportive Community**

### The Mission

As stated on the BGCS website, “The mission of Bruce-Guadalupe Community School (BGCS), a non-sectarian, nonprofit, community-based charter school is to create an environment that fosters high expectations and excellence for all students.

In addition to valuing the knowledge of language and culture, Bruce-Guadalupe Community School provides students with a clear sense of identity, a positive attitude toward learning and effective communication skills.”

As articulated by the administrators and teachers, the formal mission statement becomes much more specific. The lead administrator/elementary school principal said the mission is to “get kids to the best high schools, get kids to have success in the high schools and move kids to the middle class.” Similarly, the middle school principal said, “Our overall mission is to make sure our kids are productive members of the middle class or upper class. That’s going to come through our putting them in the best high schools, make sure they’re going off to college, get their degree and join a very productive workforce.” And

the assistant principal/curriculum coordinator said, “The mission of Bruce Guadalupe Community School and UCC is to insure that the students are going to get a rigorous academic education in order for them to be successful for higher learning and to be able to give them an opportunity to progress. All students regardless of where they come from are going to get the best education so they are able to excel and become middle class, college citizens.”

Not only do the administrators articulate the mission this way but the teachers at all grade levels do as well. A veteran first grade teacher says the mission is “To prepare students to go to the best high schools and colleges.” She sees first grade as a foundation for that goal. A math teacher who has been at the school more than 12 years says the mission is “to prepare our kids to be the very, very best high school students they can be. That entails being strong academically, good citizens, and good representatives of any school they go to. As a teacher, my job is to be a role model. I have to know what the high schools are looking for and be able to reach kids who are struggling and also those who are gifted and talented.” And a fifth grade teacher phrases the mission this way: “I want them to leave being fluent in English and Spanish, go to the best high schools and on to good colleges and get good jobs. My role is to move them along as best I can.”

Some of the teachers responded a little bit differently to the “mission question” in the interview but the essence is very similar to the responses noted above. For example, a middle school English teacher said the mission is to “Have urban kids pushed forward in their education. The mission is community. We’re all here for you. My role is to do what I can to make them ready for (the next) grade.” And another middle school English teacher said the mission is to “Help our students find success. Compete with the majority of our country. Provide an opportunity to close that gap; level the playing field.” The middle school dean of students said the mission is to “Make them good students and give them a scenario for life so they can be successful. Push them and support them to be successful in education and character—building children to be future leaders.

The mission of Bruce Guadalupe Community School is visible in the daily routines of the school. For example, in the elementary school when students arrive at school they gather in the gym where they sit on the floor and read. (Some have gone earlier to the cafeteria for breakfast before going to the gym.) At 7:50 teachers come to the gym to greet their students and take them to their classrooms. Two students have roles in the morning announcements in the elementary school, leading the Pledge of Allegiance or reading a portion of the day’s announcements. The school’s mission is front and center as each student starts his or her portion by saying something like “My name is Javier, my teacher is Ms. Corbett and when I go to college I will study to be an FBI agent” (or a veterinarian or a nurse or whatever.) Occasionally, the student might say, “I’m undecided about what I will study in college.”

Is the mission being accomplished? Data from the previous year show that more than 90 percent of the students planned to enroll at a college prep high school. Forty-four (44) of 71 graduates were headed to a private high school, all except one to a Catholic high school in the metropolitan area. Twenty-two (22) of the 71 planned to attend a public charter high school, including 14 to Carmen High School of Science and Technology, a

Milwaukee Public Schools charter with a mission to “graduate critical thinkers and self-directed learners prepared for success in college, meaningful careers, community involvement and family life.” The remaining five graduating students planned to attend suburban high schools under Wisconsin’s open enrollment program.

### **The Educational Program**

In accordance with the mission, the educational program of Bruce Guadalupe Community School is designed to prepare students for the best high schools and eventually for college. As one teacher said, “We’re constantly trying to address college readiness standards.” The school curriculum is guided by the Common Core State Standards but also by the Explore test of the ACT suite of tests. According to the Explore website, “Taking Explore in 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> grade tells you things you need to know—to plan your high school courses, prepare for the ACT, or choose a career direction.” At BGCS, students take the Explore test in 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. Many of the private schools targeted by BGCS use the Explore test as an entry exam so doing well is important to students. In fact, the Explore test is administered at BGCS and the high schools accept the students’ scores from that administration. In addition, student scores on the Explore test provide valuable information for curriculum development. As an indicator of the importance of the Explore test, at one point in the school year an entire wall of the middle school cafeteria was covered by the names of students who had excelled in the various subtests (English, math, reading and science) as well as the composite.

In the elementary school (as well as the middle school) student scores on the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test and on the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam (WKCE) are used to identify areas of the curriculum that need attention. The school’s administrators are keenly aware of where other successful schools (both in the city and in the suburbs) score on the WKCE and are determined not to be outdone.

The educational program is also strongly influenced by how well BGCS students perform in high school. Administrators and teachers visit high schools to see how graduates are doing and to get feedback on how well they have been prepared. For example, the elementary principal noted that a couple of years earlier, students were having difficulty with high school science. As a result, the elementary school added a science lab so students would be better prepared to profit from science classes in the middle school and thus better prepared for high school science.

Because of the importance of writing in high school and college, there is a strong focus on writing at BGCS. Students learn a consistent language and set of expectations through the grades through the use of the 6 Traits of Writing (or 6 +1 Traits) model for assessing and teaching writing. From early grades students are taught and use the Traits: Ideas, Organization, Word Choice, Voice, Sentence Fluency, Conventions and Presentation.

Writers Workshop is also used throughout the school. The initial “Welcome Back” faculty workshop prior to the start of the school year revealed a continuing major effort to improve students’ skills in writing. On the fifth day of the workshop, there was a presentation on Writers Workshop with a focus on conferencing. The presenter, who has

been coming to the school for at least four years, encouraged teachers to work on writing with each individual student for one or two minutes and then record the essence of each conference in a notebook. In addition to helping the teacher work on the needs of individual students and the entire class, the records are also useful in parent conferences.

Reading is another strong curricular focus at BGCS. Because of a realization that high school students are expected to do a lot of reading, the middle school principal started a 40-book challenge to encourage students to read. In addition, for 36 minutes during DEAR time each day, students and teachers Drop Everything and Read. In a display case in the middle school cafeteria there are pictures of teachers reading a variety of books. The faces of the teachers are hidden by the books and the observer is asked to identify which teacher is reading which book. These programs are part of a conscious effort to create a “community of readers.”

In the elementary school, teachers use a guided reading approach. The reading program in grades K to 5 makes use of the Daily Five: read to self, read to someone, and listen to reading, word work, and writing. For example, in an elementary classroom a timer shows up on the smart board as students go to different parts of the room. Thirteen minutes start to count down. Three students are at a computer listening; several are at desks writing or doing other “word work.” Pairs are reading to each other. The teacher is at a semi-circular desk working with a group of students. She has a notebook with “Guided Reading” on it that includes information on how individual students are reading. On a wall are instructions for each of the five activities. Under Read to Someone the instructions say “Sit EEKK (Elbow to Elbow, Knee to Knee), Use a soft voice, Read the whole time, Stay in one spot, Get started right away. The timer goes off and the students switch to another activity.

The use of a timer on the smart board, by the way, is common in many of the classrooms. It is apparent that teachers are very careful to use all the class time in the most productive manner possible.

BGCS uses the SAXON math program—a fast paced teaching method that involves teaching a new mathematical concept every day and constantly reviewing old concepts. Tests are given after every five lessons. SAXON math requires homework at the end of lessons. The homework is graded and accounts for 20% of a student’s grade. According to a veteran BGCS math teacher, teachers have latitude to address the needs of the students, and, depending on the class, can slow down or speed up coverage of concepts. Interestingly, this teacher was observed encouraging students to “try to go a bit faster” on practice tests so they would be able to take tests such as Explore and WKCE more efficiently.

Homework is a consistent expectation throughout Bruce Guadalupe Community School. All students receive homework. The following is contained on the website of a second grade teacher:

Now that your son or daughter is in second grade they will be receiving more homework. I will discuss and explain all homework assignments with your child. All students will utilize a homework folder that he or she will use to bring homework back and forth to school. Students will also be provided an assignment notebook to note all assignments. If assignments are not returned on the due date your child will receive a zero. If your child is unable to complete an assignment due to an unforeseen event, please contact me as soon as possible so that we can devise a plan to get him/her caught up.

All students receive assignment notebooks to assist them in keeping track of their assignments. Parents are expected to check the assignment notebook daily and check with their child to ensure homework is finished. But the school understands that it is often difficult for students to do homework at home. BGCS provides several in-school opportunities for students to complete their homework. A morning study hall is available for students—some of whom have been dropped off close to 7:00. The middle school uses a block schedule for its classes so students are often given time during the class period to get started on their homework. The After School Achievement Program (ASAP), designed to provide additional help to targeted students at the end of the day, is another opportunity for the students to do homework. The Community Learning Center, located in the attached United Community Center, also provides Homework Help for students in grades 1-5.

BGCS has opportunities for students who need more challenging work as well as for those who need additional help to meet expectations. For example, for the second year now, algebra is taught in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Some 7<sup>th</sup> grade students are included in the algebra classes and next year these students will be in a geometry class. The math resource teacher provided a Response to Intervention (RTI) class to small groups of students during the first semester. Students who need help in math are assigned to these 30-minute supplemental classes based on MAP scores. During the second semester the math resource teacher offered enrichment classes to small groups of students who might be considered as gifted and talented. The reading specialist provides similar additional reading instruction to small groups of students who need help in reading.

Student success in mastering the curriculum is supported by a mandatory five-week summer school program. The program is three hours each morning Monday through Friday, focusing on the core subjects of Reading, Writing, Mathematics and Science. This extra time allows teachers to focus on students who may need extra assistance as well as provide enrichment for others. Furthermore, the United Community Center provides BGCS students with a summer enrichment program that operates from noon to 4:00 Monday through Friday. This program works in collaboration with the BGCS summer school program and currently serves 300 BGCS students.

The educational program at Bruce Guadalupe Community School is not focused solely on the basic subjects of language arts, reading, mathematics, science and social studies. There is a strong emphasis on educating the whole child so students are also offered courses in Spanish, family and consumer education, technical education, computer



instruction, physical education, art, music, and English as a second language. Some students participate in Project Lead the Way; a project-based curriculum designed to challenge and engage the natural curiosity and imagination of middle school students so they can gain a strong foundation for further STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) learning in high school and beyond.

General music is taught in grades K to 6. There are about 100 students in three distinct bands. The BGCS band has performed at the inauguration of the current Wisconsin governor and the current Milwaukee mayor. The Strings Program is an in-school and after-school music education program for students and alumni of Bruce-Guadalupe Community School and includes over 130 participants starting at age 4 and including BGCS alumni who are now in high school. At a pre-Christmas music concert, the entire middle school gym floor was taken over by the orchestra, bands, chorus and dancers.

### **Student Behavior**

The behavioral climate of the school is essential to keeping everyone's attention and energy focused on the educational program so teachers can teach and students can learn. It starts with the uniform. All students, from kindergarten through eighth grade, wear the same uniform: a white shirt or blouse and blue pants or skirt. In each classroom there is a version of school rules:

- Be respectful of yourself, teachers, others and the building
- Be prepared for class: materials, assignments, be focused, listen and learn
- No gum, candy, food or drink allowed
- Wear uniform daily and follow dress code
- Maintain a positive attitude
- Keep your hands and feet to yourself

In addition, some teachers have explicit classroom rules, such as the following posted in an elementary classroom:

- Make safe choices
- Use inside voices
- Follow instructions
- Be respectful
- Listen when someone is talking to you

All the children in this classroom signed the poster with the rules.

At the beginning of the school year the middle school principal personally goes through all the school rules with all the middle school students—gathered together by grade level. The students, and teachers, then sign the Code of Conduct. The process is repeated at the start of the second semester. The principal observes that, as a result of this process, no

one can say they haven't seen the school's rules.

The rules are consistent with the goals of Bruce-Guadalupe Community School as noted on its website and repeated in morning announcements: To instill in every student the:

- 3As: Attitude, Attendance, & Achievement
- 3Rs: Respect, Responsibility, & Resilience
- 3Ps: Projects, Performances, & Progress

Students move around the school always accompanied by a teacher. Needless to say, this is a little disconcerting to eighth grade students who feel they should be able to go between classes without supervision. But the supervision is light; students are not required to be silent or to walk in strict lines (except in the early grades.) And, in fact, teachers know which students are involved in music and allow them to get up, pick up their violin or viola case from outside the classroom and leave independently. In the middle school, which is departmentalized, students walk from classroom to classroom with arms full of books—no backpacks. Based on what was observed, there are virtually no hassles in the hallways and very few students arrive at the next destination tardy.

Are there disciplinary problems? Of course there are but for the most part they are minor. The Dean of Students said “No,” and chuckled when asked if she had to deal with fights or other major disturbances. A process observed in a physical education class is instructive. When a basketball went out of bounds during a game resulting in what might have led to a dispute about whose ball it was, two students immediately started to play rock-paper-scissors. The side of the winner took possession of the ball—dispute totally averted. That process took place several times during the basketball game. Another example: In a fourth grade classroom, the teacher noticed a student's wavering attention and told him to walk down the hall and get a drink of water. He said, “You didn't do anything wrong, just want you get back your focus.” Again, disruption averted.

### **Support for the Mission**

BGCS students are supported in their education primarily by their teachers and the high expectations they have for student success. But there are other supports that are crucial to getting into the best high schools and succeeding there.

The counselor in the middle school is responsible for placing eighth graders into high schools where they will be successful. She has a parent meeting in the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of the school year to get the students and their parents started on the process. A high school fair at the end of September involves 17 or 18 high schools. Students and their parents are able to meet with school representatives and learn about the program and what is required to be admitted. The counselor helps families fill out applications and helps students write essays. This actually starts in the summer when students work with the 8<sup>th</sup> grade English teacher.

By Winter break, students know where they've been accepted and then they start on the financial aide. Some of the high schools provide financial aide up to about one third of their tuition. The counselor helps students apply for financial aide, or to the Milwaukee

parental choice program or Wisconsin's open enrollment program. UCC also offers scholarships for students who have at least a 3.0 grade point average over 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades.

The middle school principal reinforces the push to make sure students are applying to the best high schools. In late October he offers a pizza party for students who have completed five applications. Students need to have at least one acceptance letter by the end of the first semester to be eligible for the annual trip to Washington, D.C.

Support for BGCS students also comes from the other United Community Center programs. The pre-college program tracks eighth grade graduates for 4 years. It brings them back for workshops and college fairs. There are good partnerships with most of the private schools so it's easy to keep in touch with BGCS graduates. UCC gets waivers from parents to visit students in the schools.

High School students are picked up and dropped off at the United Community Center and bused to and from some of the private schools that have large numbers of BGCS graduates but others from the area as well.

UCC has partnered with Marquette University for the Youth Empowered to Succeed (YES) program. Working with fourth and fifth grade students, the program focuses on health seeking to reduce risky behavior and improve fitness and nutrition.

The pre-college program also provides workshops for 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders to talk about high school and, in the summer, provide a high school preparation/transition program

The United Community Center maintains the Wall of Fame with support from a local financial institution. Teachers and staff nominate students to be on Wall: 2 middle school students, 2 high school students, and 1 college student each year. The array of photographs, going back into the 1980's, adorn the walls of a long corridor running between the school and other parts of the UCC building.

In the summer there is a high school preparation (transition) program. They collaborate with the pre-college program and work on study skills, etc.

### **Parental Support**

The parent section of the BGCS website starts with the following: "When your child enters school, every member of the family becomes part of the school community. Education is about everyone taking a vital role in the process—parents, school staff, and community members—to create an effective experience for all children." Many staff members identify parental support and backing as a significant actor that contributes to the academic success of the school.

Parents are required to sign a Parental Involvement Contract that states:

“BGCS believes that when parents work closely with their students and the school, both students and school will benefit.

Consequently, the BGCS policy expects parents to contribute and participate actively in support of their students and school. A minimum of 30 hours of participation for one student enrolled in the school, 40 hours for two, 50 hours for three and 55 for four is expected.”

Parents can provide services and participation in the following areas:

1. Attendance at Meetings
2. Fundraising
3. Assisting Teachers in Classrooms
4. Participation in School Activities
5. Supervising Students
6. Participation in Community/School Events.

A record of parent participation is kept by the Dean of Students.

Teachers communicate directly with parents using the Wednesday Red Folder. The folders contain an evaluation for each student on discipline and academics, along with a monthly and/or weekly newsletter of upcoming events, projects, and assignments. Progress reports are sent home in the Red Folder half way through each academic quarter. Teachers communicate with parents using email and through their web pages, which teachers are expected to update each month. Teacher websites and email addresses are provided to all parents. And, of course, communication takes place at Parent/Teacher Conferences that take place in November at the end of the first quarter and in March/April at the end of the third quarter.

### Leadership

At BGCS leadership and support go hand in hand. The lead administrator says he “tries to lead by example.” The following three comments provide an insight into his leadership approach and the example he is trying to establish.

In October, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction published the School Report Card based on the results of the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam (WKCE). Bruce Guadalupe Community School was rated as “Meets Expectations,” a bit of a disappointment to the principal who was hoping for a rating of “Exceeds Expectations.” The other administrators and the teachers were disappointed as well. The principal’s comments to the staff were “Here’s where we’re at. I’m neither happy nor sad. Our obligation is to our kids. We need to roll up our sleeves and get to work and get our overall score to “Exceeds Expectations.”

A second comment was made in the interview regarding the challenge of securing enough funds to support art and music and other special classes. “There were two students who struggled in the academic courses but they excelled, one in family consumer education and one in Project Lead the Way. One wanted to become a chef, the other an engineer. These two became Students of the Year but they never would have had the opportunity if we didn’t have those classes. We don’t want to take a trumpet or violin bow or a paintbrush out of a student’s hands. The whole child is what’s important to us.”

The third comment is repeated in similar form throughout the year. He tells the teachers “You need to have the utmost respect for a child. If you have children of your own, or maybe nieces or nephews, I need you to see not 22 different faces but I need you to see your own children. How you would treat your own children is how you should treat them. Does anyone here wish his or her kids not to succeed? You love them and you care for them and you care about their academic achievement. When I see our 1000 kids, I see (and he says the names of his own four children.)”

These comments show a deep respect for all students and a commitment to their academic, social and emotional well-being. The other administrators share this respect and commitment and it is reflected in their support of teachers as well as their demand for accountability.

Teachers know what is expected of them and know that they will be held accountable for student achievement. A fourth grade teacher said, “We’re flexible and given responsibility but we have to be accountable.” Among the expectations communicated to new teachers by the principal were the following:

- At dismissal, remain with students until 3:20
- Never leave children unattended
- Set example for kids: no visible tattoos, no flip flops, business casual dress
- 40 volunteer hours are required of teachers (family night, coaching, annual dinner, etc.)
- Each teacher or grade level team needs to send a newsletter home at least once a month.

The curriculum coordinator noted that, “We communicate to teachers the importance of always challenging the students in believing they can do it and that we want to prepare them for the best high schools so they have the opportunity to go the best colleges or just be able to handle the rigor of a college curriculum.”

The three administrators are constantly moving around the school, stopping in classrooms for quick visits. The assistant principal conducts formal evaluations in the elementary school using the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching. This evaluation model focuses on four domains of teaching responsibility: Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities. The middle school principal conducts the formal evaluations in the middle school. All first year teachers are provided

the formal evaluation process that involves pre and post-conferences with the teacher along with an observation. In addition, all teachers receive a formal evaluation every three years. According to the curriculum coordinator, "So many teachers have taken it to heart because they want to be excellent teachers." The two principals conduct informal evaluations, sharing observations with teachers based on their visits to the classrooms.

According to the teachers, the administrators make it known what is expected. One said, "They are nice but they are very vocal about what is expected." Another said, "She was very specific about what to work on."

The assistant principal/curriculum coordinator is formally responsible for BGCS' curriculum and instructional processes. For example, she wants all teachers to write on the board the learning target(s) for that day or class. They are to take the form of "Students will be able to...." The learning targets should also be included in lesson plans that are submitted to the curriculum coordinator each week by email. A power point summary used by the curriculum coordinator ended with a slide that said, "Focus is student performance and how to improve our instruction to meet the needs of the students!!"

Leadership extends to the teachers and they have a substantial role in curriculum development. As a language arts teacher noted, "The curriculum is not handed down." Professional Learning Communities have been formed in the various subjects. For example, in mathematics, teachers from each grade level, kindergarten to grade eight, meet regularly, along with the curriculum coordinator, to review the curriculum in that subject. Recommendations are made for changes based on student outcomes. The teachers have the responsibility to bring the results of those meetings back to their colleagues. The curriculum coordinator noted, "When I came in, I did a lot of driving of professional development. Three years into it, I involve teachers more. Right now the focus is on writing. A lot is driven by teachers."

The curriculum coordinator carries around a "teacher needs notebook." During the August workshop she said she often heard teachers saying they didn't have time to talk with each other. So, this year they identified a time when teachers should meet at least once a week. As an example of consistency across the grade levels, meeting times were identified for all grades, beginning with pre-kindergarten, where teachers should meet during (student) naptime! In grades 5-8, meetings should be held during lunchtime. Teachers also meet in grade level groupings to review student outcomes and recommend curriculum modifications. The coordinator requires minutes of these meetings in order to keep on top of the discussions and recommendations.

Teachers not only display a commitment to the school's mission but they are supportive of the students and each other. One teacher said, "We have teachers who are willing to do whatever it takes. They go over and beyond." Another said, "Teachers give everything possible to these kids." A middle school teacher said she "popped into classrooms of new teachers all the time. My advice to them is "don't sit down." Finally, another said, "This is a really nice place." Another said, "Everybody gets along; we're a team." We have quite a bit of trust."

## **Bruce Guadalupe Achievement and Evaluation Data**

Bruce Guadalupe administers two types of standardized tests to quantify student achievement. The Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) is a statewide standardized exam given each year in November. Students in 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade are administered the WKCE in the fall and are assessed in reading and mathematics. Students in 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade are also assessed in language arts, science, and social studies. The charts that follow show scores for multiple years as well as comparisons to MPS and state scores.

Students in 2<sup>nd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade are administered the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test in the fall, winter, and spring and are assessed in reading and mathematics. Students in grades 3, 4, 7, and 8 are also assessed in general science and science concepts and processes. Every three years NWEA conducts a norming study. In 2008, the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) calculated RIT point growth norms for grades 1-10 in reading and mathematics based on past test results of more than 2.2 million students. As a result, it is possible to determine the percentage of students in each grade level who took the MAP test in both the fall and spring that met or exceeded the growth norm according to the NWEA norming study in each content area.

As shown below, results in both reading and mathematics consistently exceed those of the Milwaukee Public Schools. Results for 2007-08 and 2008-09 trail those of the state of Wisconsin (State) as a whole. No results are shown for the 2009-10 school year. BGCS was in transition from a charter school authorized by MPS to one authorized by UWM and the state used that year as a new testing baseline. For the 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years reading results for BGCS were similar to State results. In mathematics results for BGCS exceeded those of the State.

Eight grade results are more volatile than results for the combined grades as can be expected because of the lower number of students. Reading and mathematics results consistently exceed those of MPS and the State with consistent improvement noted in mathematics.

### **Calendar (Days and Hours of Instruction)**

The number of hours of instruction is typical for Wisconsin elementary schools.

1	Grade Levels	K4-8
2	Start Time of Student Instructional Day	8:00
3	End Time of Student Instructional Day	3:00
4	Start-To-Close Instructional Day Minutes (Lines 3 - 2)	420
5	Number of Minutes for Lunch	15
6	Recess Time in Excess of 30 Minutes	15
7	Number of Instructional Minutes Per Day (Lines 4 -5 -6)	390
8	Total Number of Days In Teacher Calendar	185
9	Number of Teacher Pre-service/Professional Development Days	5
10	Number of Parent/Teacher Conference Days	4
11	Number of Student Instructional Days (Lines 8 -9 -10)	176
12	Total Instructional Minutes Per Year (Lines 7 x 11)	68,640
13	Late Arrival/Early Release Minutes for Professional Development	0
14	Total Instructional Minutes (Lines 12 - 13)	68,640
15	Hours of Instruction Per Year (Lines 14 / 60)	1,144



## **Board and Administrative Organization**

### **Board Members**

Jose Oliveri, President

Mary Alice Tierney, Vice President

William Schwartz, Treasurer

Keith Kolb, Assistant Treasurer

Patricia Cadorin, Secretary

Richard Bibler, Member

Michael T. Byrnes, Member

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Robert Kraft, Member

Jack Ladky, Member

Amelia E. Macareno, Member

Jorge Perez, Member

Agustin Ramirez, Member

Juan A. Ruiz, Member

Jill Winters, PhD, RN, Member

### **Administrative Team Members**

Pascual Rodriguez, Elementary School Principal

Santiago Navarro, Middle School Principal

Dora Acosta, Dean of Students

Patricia Arriola, Kindergarten Coordinator

Laura Gutierrez, Asst Principal/Curriculum Coordinator

## Assessment

Bruce Guadalupe administers two types of standardized tests to quantify student achievement. The Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) is a statewide standardized exam given each year in November. Students in 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade are administered the WKCE in the fall and are assessed in reading and mathematics. Students in 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade are also assessed in language arts, science, and social studies. The charts that follow show scores for multiple years as well as comparisons to MPS and state scores.

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Eight grade results are more volatile than results for the combined grades as can be expected because of the lower number of students. Reading and mathematics results consistently exceed those of MPS and the State with consistent improvement noted in mathematics.

Figure 1.

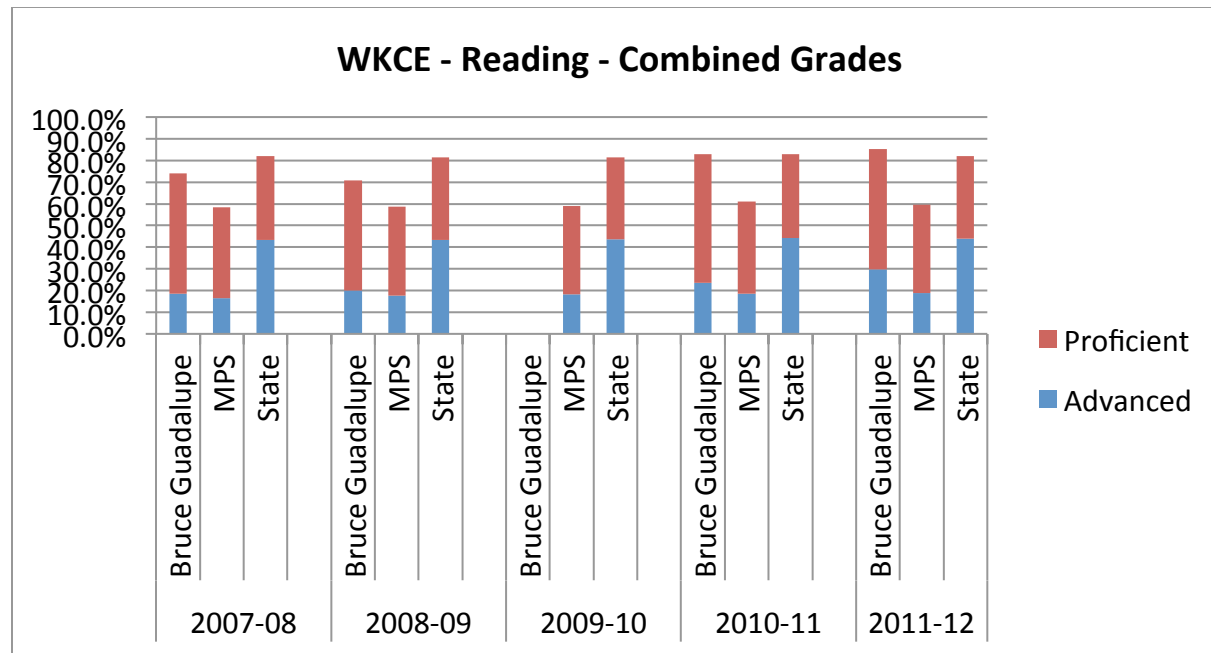


Table 1.

	2007-08			2008-09			2009-10			2010-11			2011-12		
	BG	MPS	State	BG	MPS	State	BG	MPS	State	BG	MPS	State	BG	MPS	State
<b>Advanced</b>	18.5%	16.5%	43.2%	19.9%	17.6%	43.3%	18.1%	43.7%	23.5%	18.4%	44.2%	29.7%	18.9%	44.0%	
<b>Proficient</b>	55.4%	42.0%	38.7%	50.8%	41.0%	38.1%	40.8%	37.8%	59.3%	42.5%	38.8%	55.5%	40.8%	37.9%	
<b>Basic</b>	22.8%	23.9%	11.8%	25.1%	24.9%	12.3%	24.2%	12.2%	14.7%	23.8%	11.5%	12.4%	23.8%	12.0%	
<b>Minimal</b>	3.4%	15.3%	5.4%	4.3%	15.2%	5.6%	16.3%	5.7%	2.5%	14.7%	5.0%	2.4%	15.7%	5.4%	
<b>No WSAS</b>	0.0%	2.3%	0.9%	0.0%	1.4%	0.7%	0.6%	0.5%	0.0%	0.6%	0.6%	0.0%	0.7%	0.6%	

Figure 2.

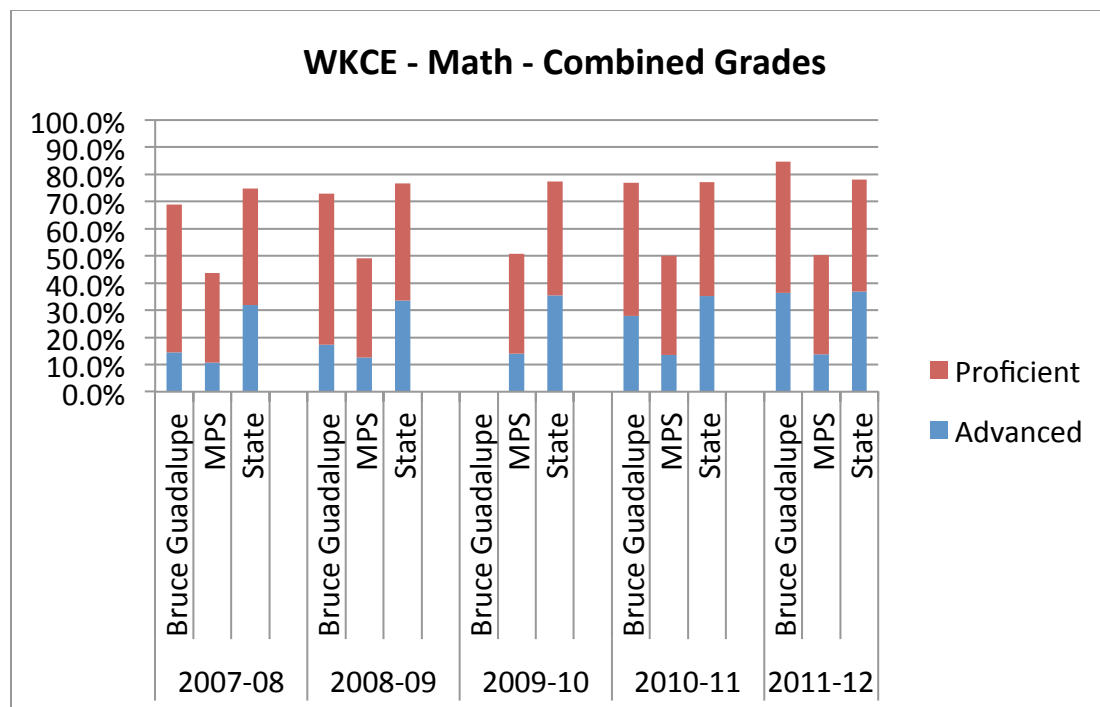


Table 2.

	2007-08			2008-09			2009-10			2010-11			2011-12		
	BG	MPS	State	BG	MPS	State	BG	MPS	State	BG	MPS	State	BG	MPS	State
<b>Advanced</b>	14.6%	10.7%	32.0%	17.3%	12.6%	33.6%	13.9%	35.4%	27.8%	13.6%	35.3%	36.5%	13.8%	36.8%	
<b>Proficient</b>	54.4%	32.9%	42.7%	55.6%	36.5%	43.1%	36.9%	41.9%	49.1%	36.4%	41.9%	48.3%	36.5%	41.2%	
<b>Basic</b>	16.3%	18.3%	11.4%	14.9%	18.5%	11.0%	18.0%	10.7%	11.5%	17.8%	10.7%	9.4%	17.7%	10.2%	
<b>Minimal</b>	14.6%	36.6%	13.3%	12.3%	31.6%	11.8%	30.5%	11.7%	11.5%	31.5%	11.7%	5.9%	31.3%	11.4%	
<b>No WSAS</b>	0.0%	1.6%	0.6%	0.0%	0.8%	0.4%	0.7%	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%	0.3%	0.0%	0.7%	0.4%	

Figure 3.

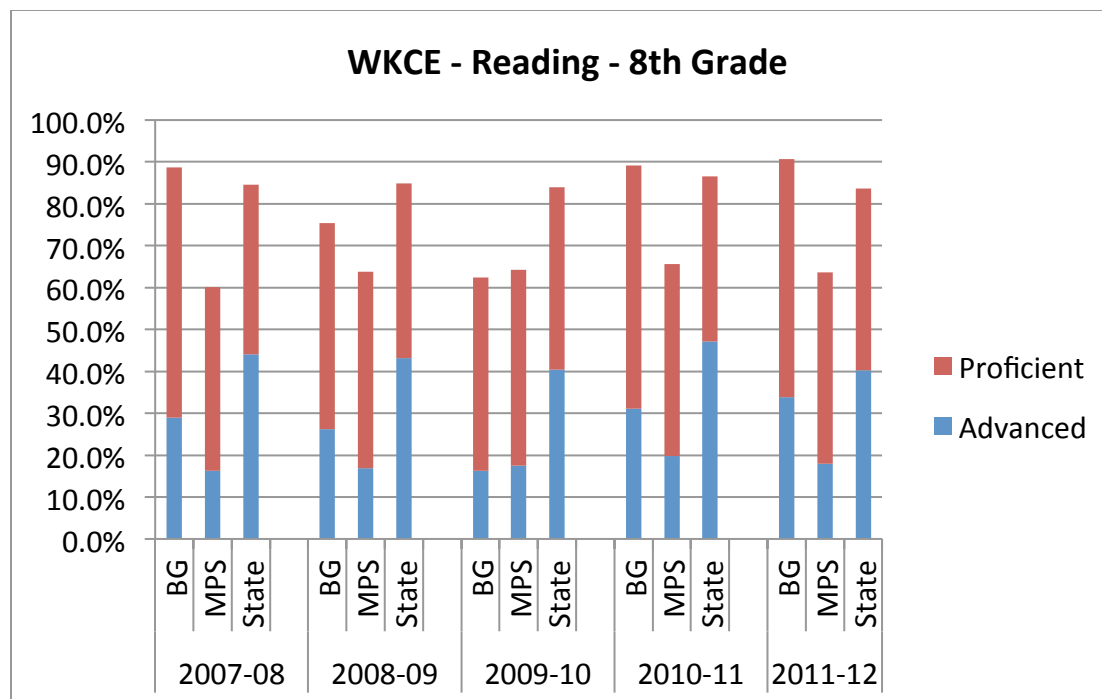


Table 3.

	2007-08			2008-09			2009-10			2010-11			2011-12		
	BG	MPS	State	BG	MPS	State	BG	MPS	State	BG	MPS	State	BG	MPS	State
<b>Advanced</b>	29.0%	16.3%	44.1%	26.2%	16.9%	43.1%	16.3%	17.5%	40.4%	31.1%	19.8%	47.2%	33.8%	18.0%	40.2%
<b>Proficient</b>	59.7%	43.9%	40.4%	49.2%	46.9%	41.7%	46.1%	46.7%	43.6%	58.1%	45.9%	39.3%	56.9%	45.7%	43.5%
<b>Basic</b>	8.1%	20.3%	9.0%	19.7%	19.6%	9.2%	19.7%	20.1%	10.0%	10.8%	18.9%	8.3%	6.2%	20.1%	10.2%
<b>Minimal</b>	3.2%	17.5%	5.8%	4.9%	15.0%	5.5%	14.9%	15.3%	5.5%	0.0%	14.6%	4.7%	3.1%	15.5%	5.4%
<b>No WSAS</b>	0.0%	2.1%	0.8%	0.0%	1.7%	0.6%	0.0%	0.4%	0.5%	0.0%	0.8%	0.5%	0.0%	0.7%	0.6%

Figure 4.

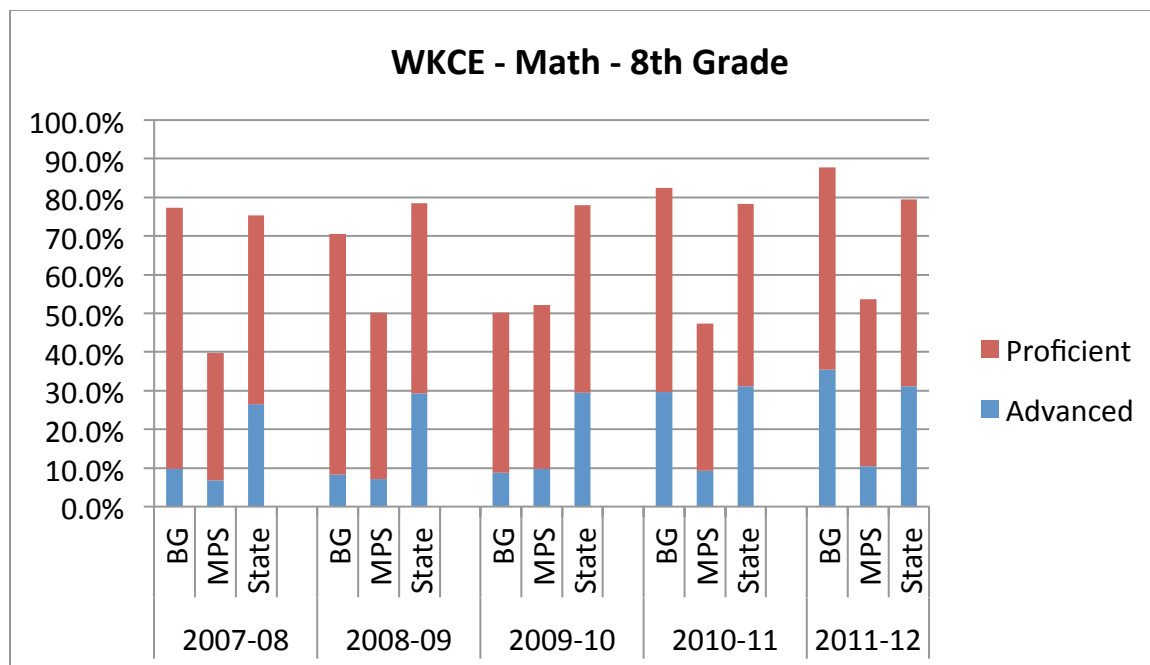
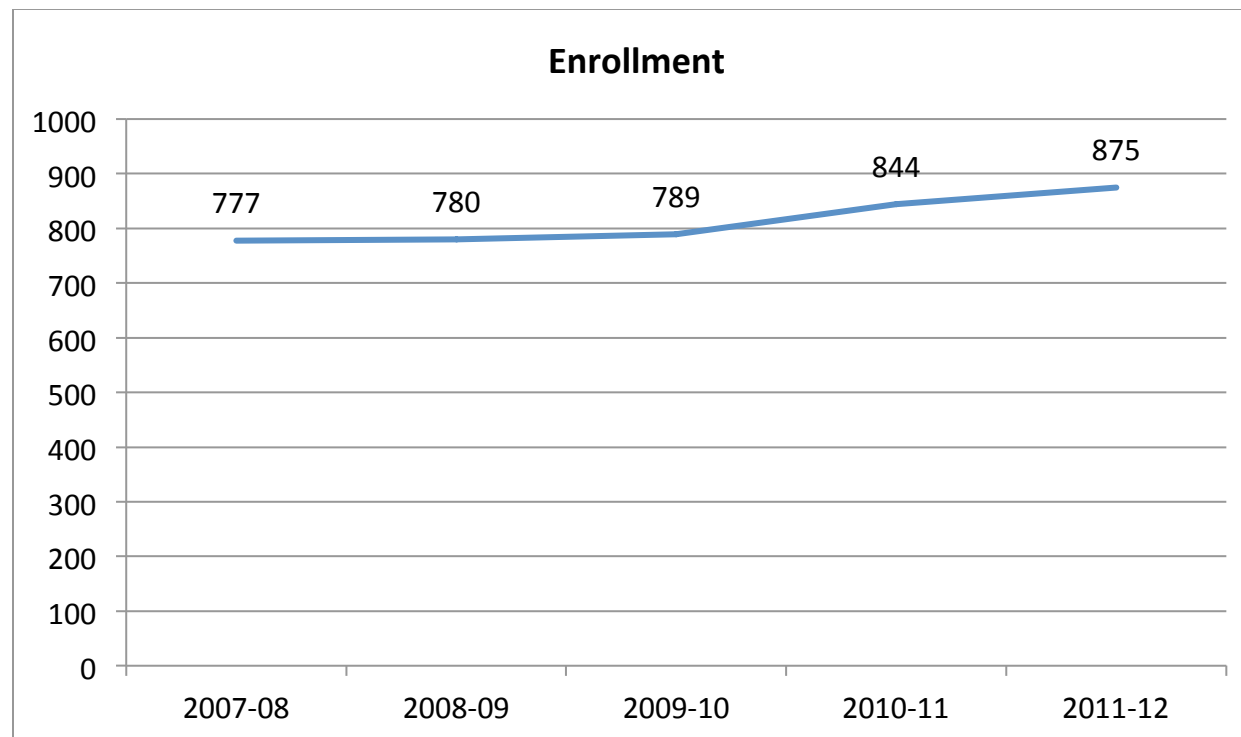


Table 4.

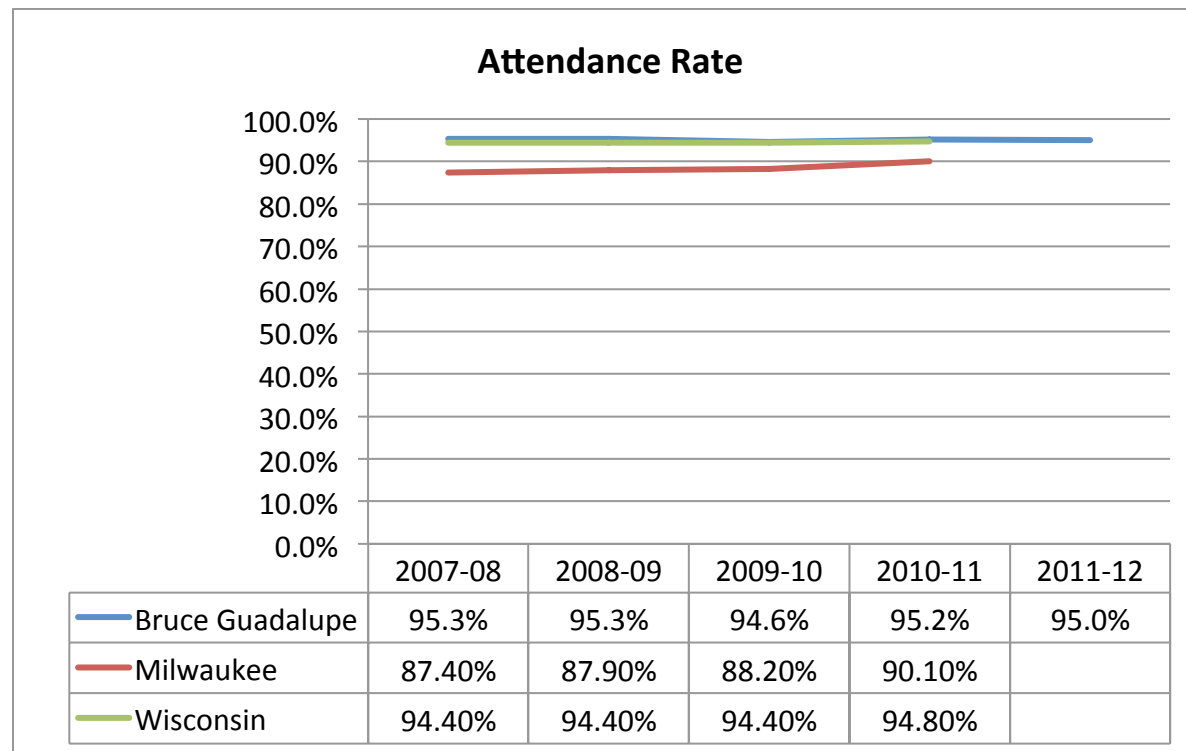
	2007-08			2008-09			2009-10			2010-11			2011-12		
	BG	MPS	State	BG	MPS	State	BG	MPS	State	BG	MPS	State	BG	MPS	State
<b>Advanced</b>	9.7%	6.8%	26.5%	8.2%	7.1%	29.3%	8.8%	9.7%	29.5%	29.7%	9.2%	31.2%	35.4%	10.4%	31.2%
<b>Proficient</b>	67.7%	33.0%	48.8%	62.3%	43.1%	49.1%	41.4%	42.4%	48.4%	52.7%	38.2%	47.1%	52.3%	43.2%	48.2%
<b>Basic</b>	21.0%	23.0%	13.1%	24.6%	26.0%	13.0%	23.1%	23.4%	13.0%	10.8%	23.0%	12.0%	9.2%	22.8%	12.0%
<b>Minimal</b>	1.6%	35.1%	11.0%	4.9%	22.9%	8.3%	23.5%	24.0%	8.7%	6.8%	28.7%	9.3%	3.1%	22.8%	8.3%
<b>No WSAS</b>	0.0%	2.1%	0.6%	0.0%	0.9%	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%	0.3%	0.0%	0.9%	0.4%	0.0%	0.8%	0.4%

Figure 5.



Enrollment has, by design, increased steadily over the past five years. Building space has been added to accommodate the increased number of students.

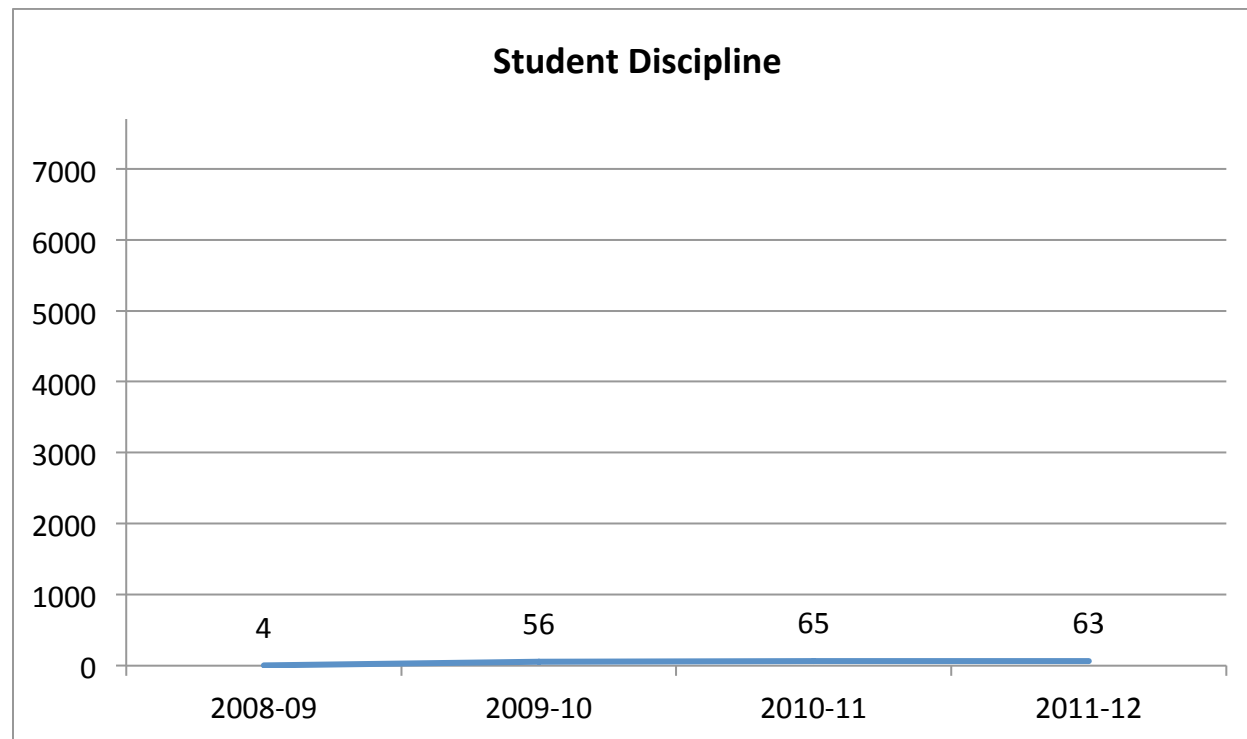
Figure 6.



Attendance rates are stable and similar to that of overall State attendance rates.

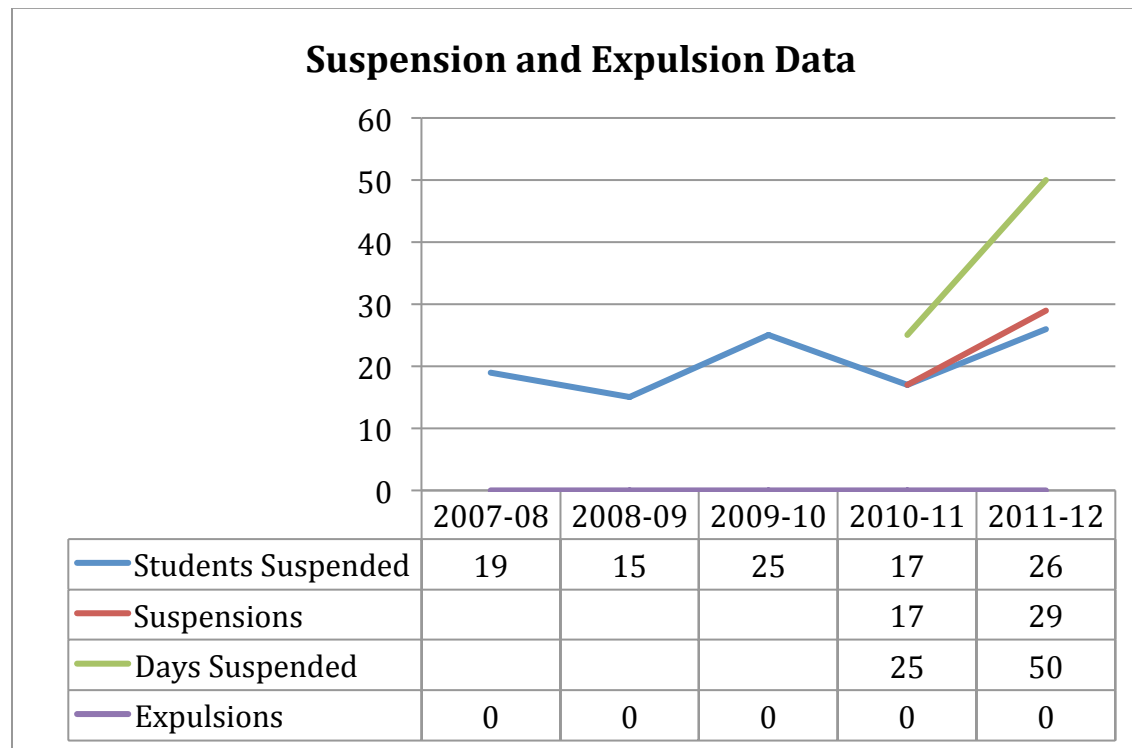


Figure 7.



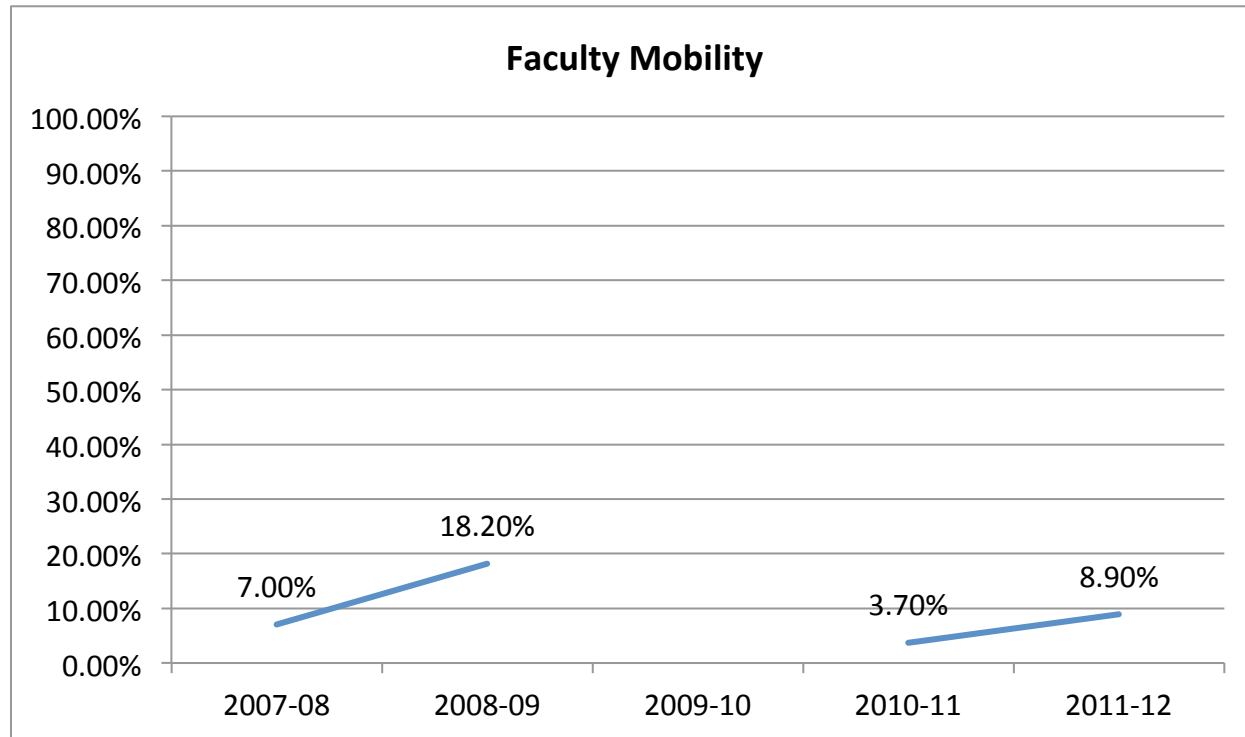
Discipline rates are consistent over the five year period.

Figure 8.



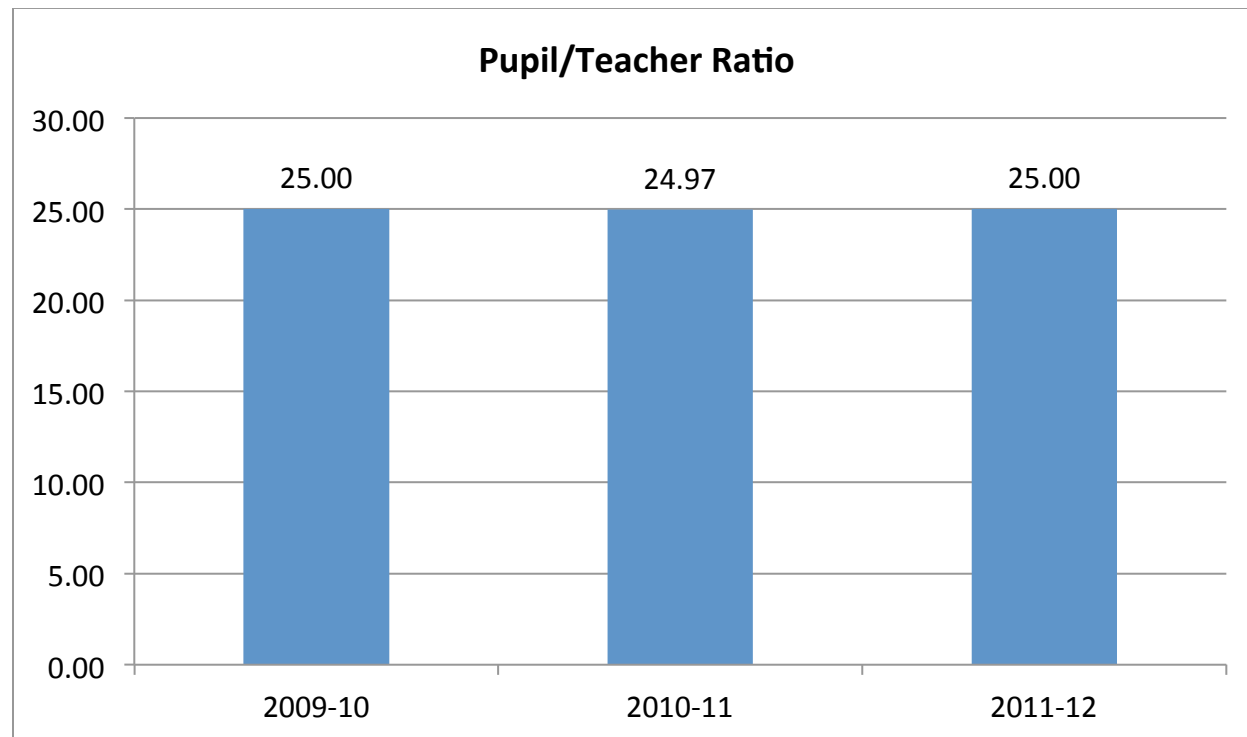
The number of students suspended and the number of suspensions has shown little variability over the five year period. The number of days students were suspended increased between the 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years.

Figure 9.



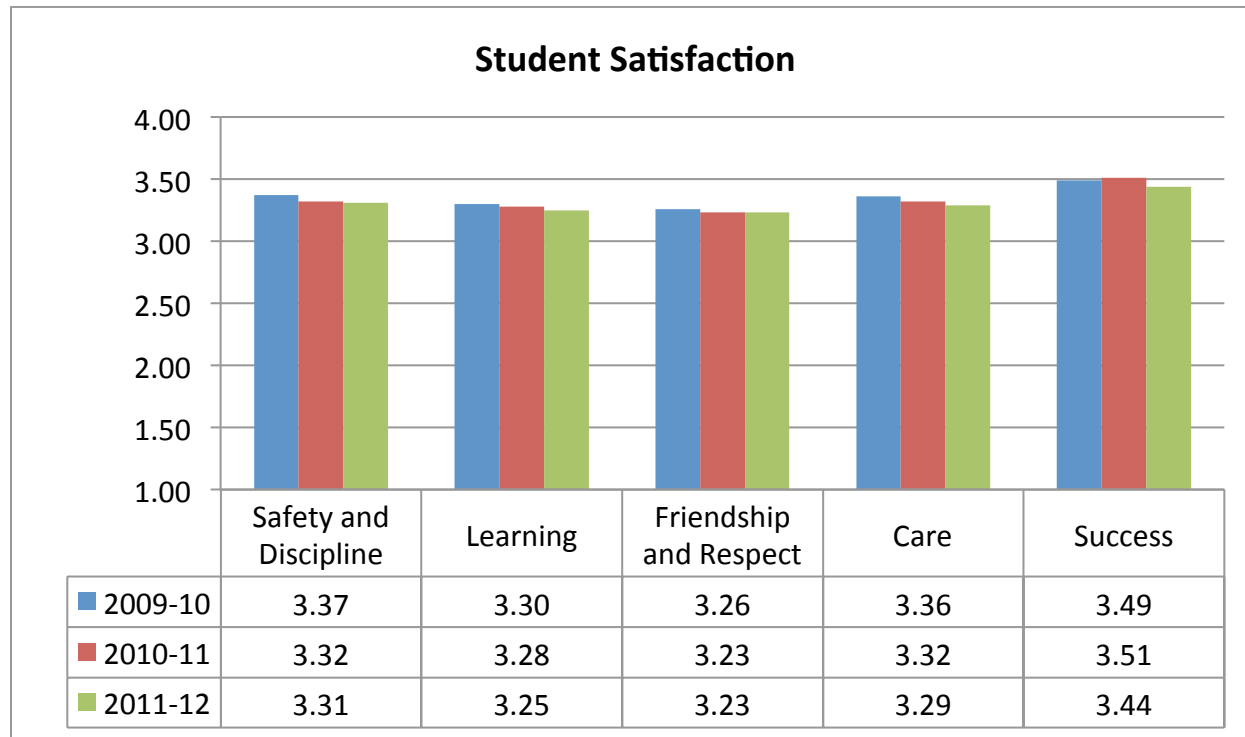
Faculty mobility is low. The stability of the faculty is an important aspect in student achievement.

Figure 10.



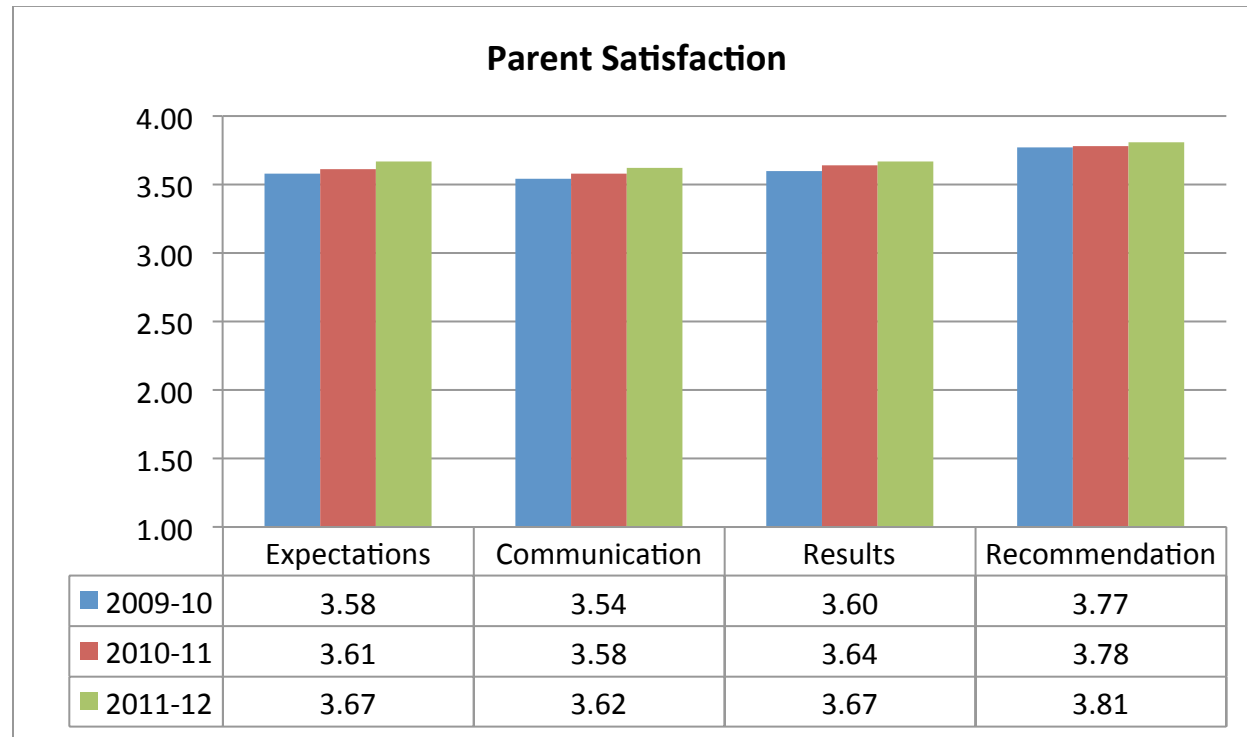
The pupil teacher ratio is stable.

Figure 11.



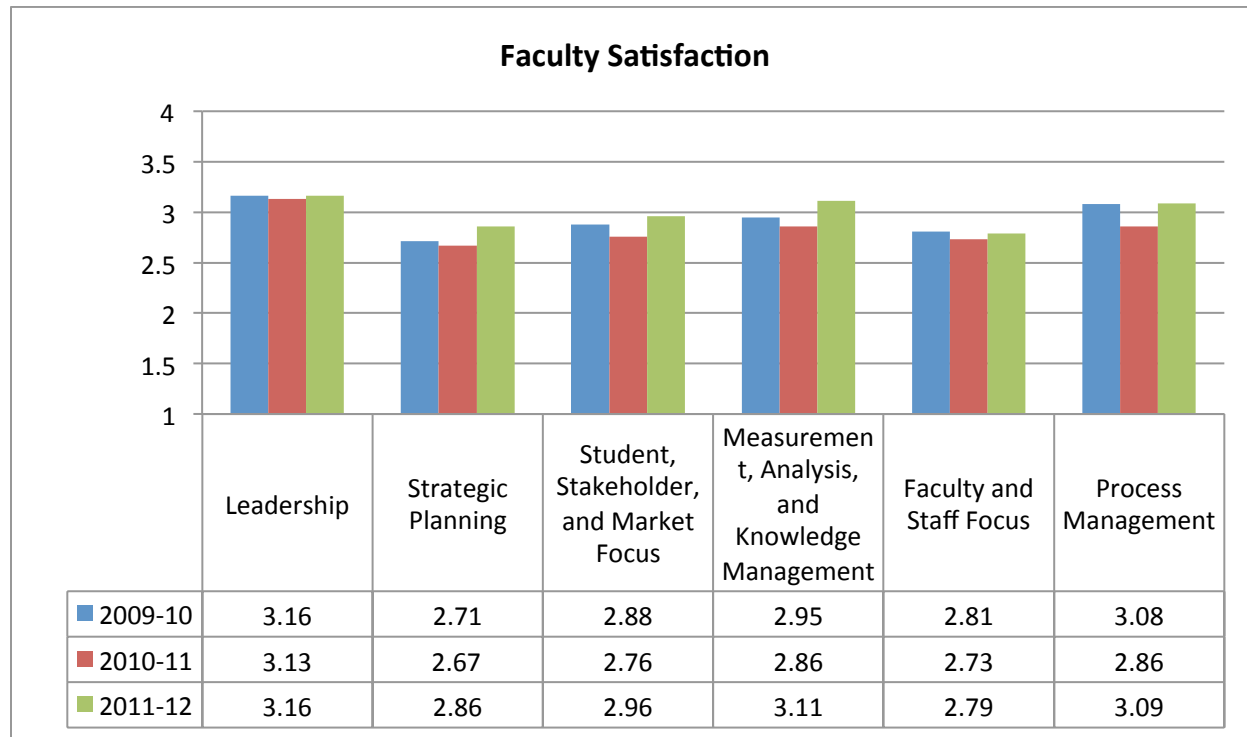
Student satisfaction is high. It is noted that students consistently rank their academic success as the most satisfying.

Figure 12.



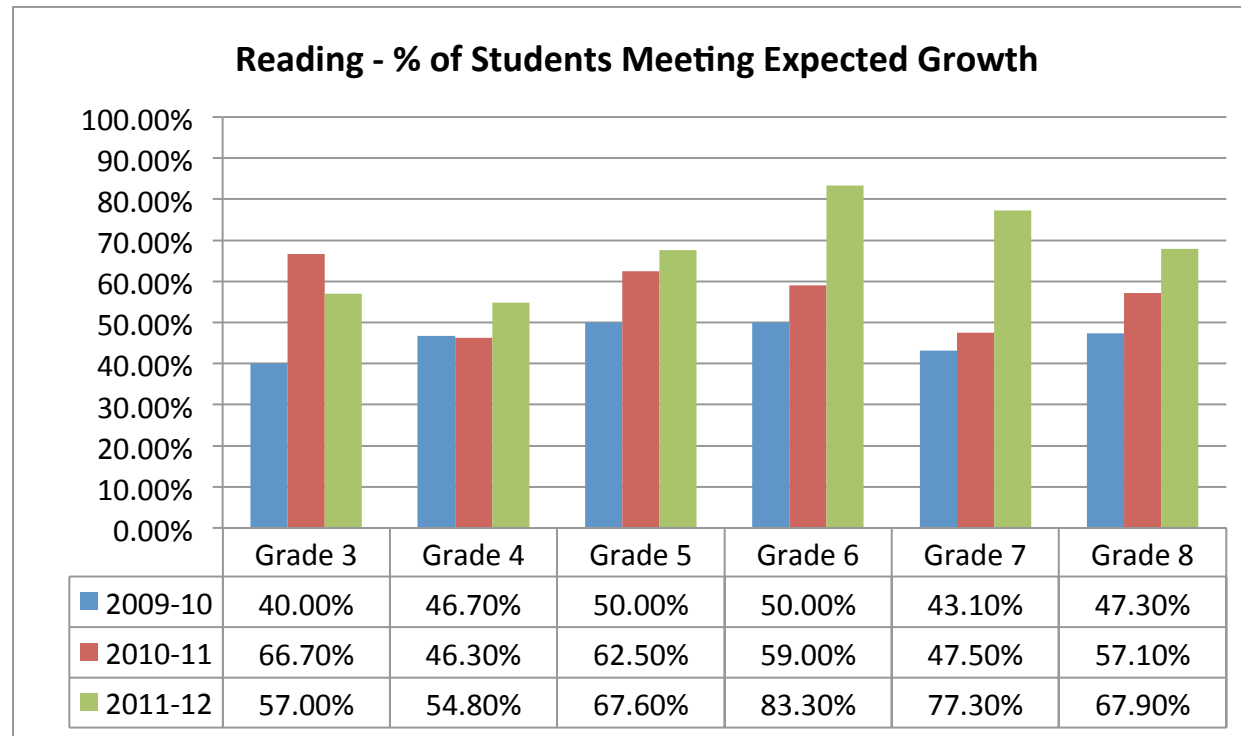
Parents are very satisfied with the school. Results reveal a slight increase with this satisfaction in all areas over the last three years.

Figure 13.



The faculty survey is based on the Baldrige Criteria for Educational Excellence and measures the quality level that faculty members believe exists with certain aspects of the school. Results reveal that the faculty believes that MCPS is achieving a high level of quality in these areas.

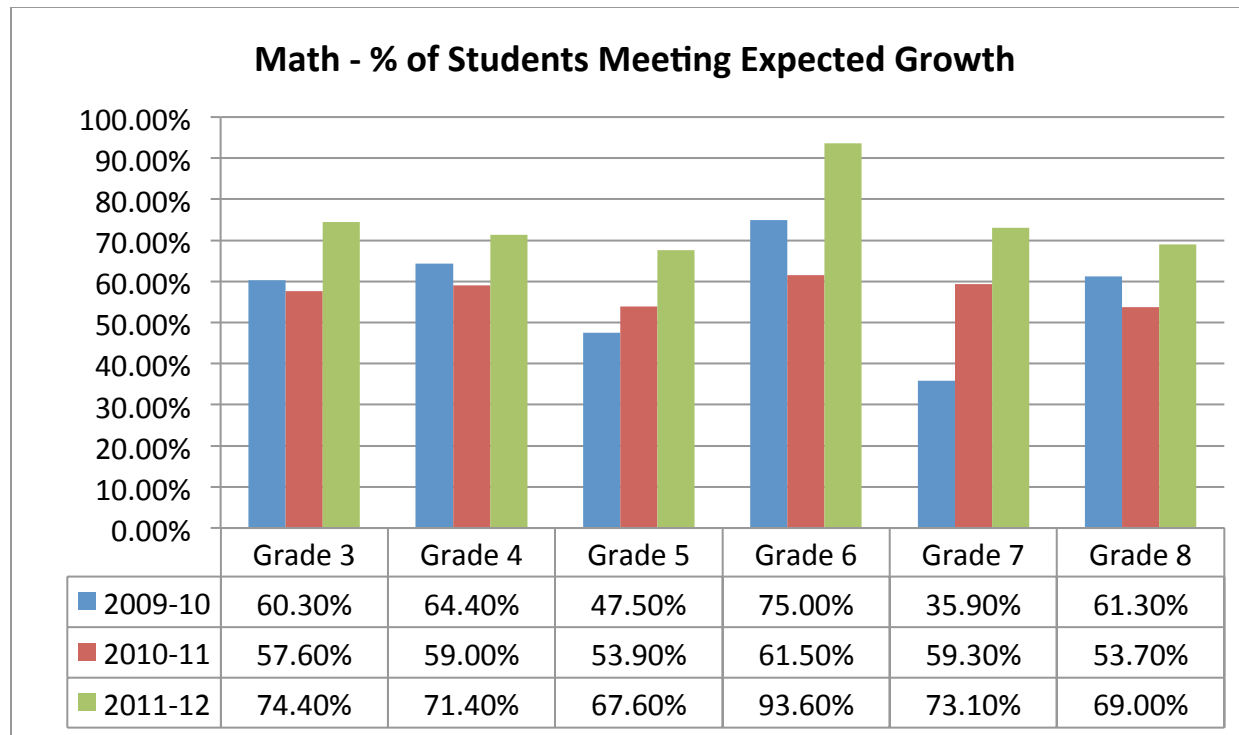
Figure 14.



Each BGCS student takes MAP assessments in Reading and Math in both the Fall and the Spring semester. NWEA MAP assessments are nationally normed. In addition, Fall MAP assessment results include an expectation of the average amount of growth a student is expected to make by the Spring, based on that student's Fall RIT score and their grade level. The graph above shows the percent of students that met their expected Fall to Spring growth in Reading. There is a definite upward trend with a larger percentage of students meeting their expected growth in each school year.

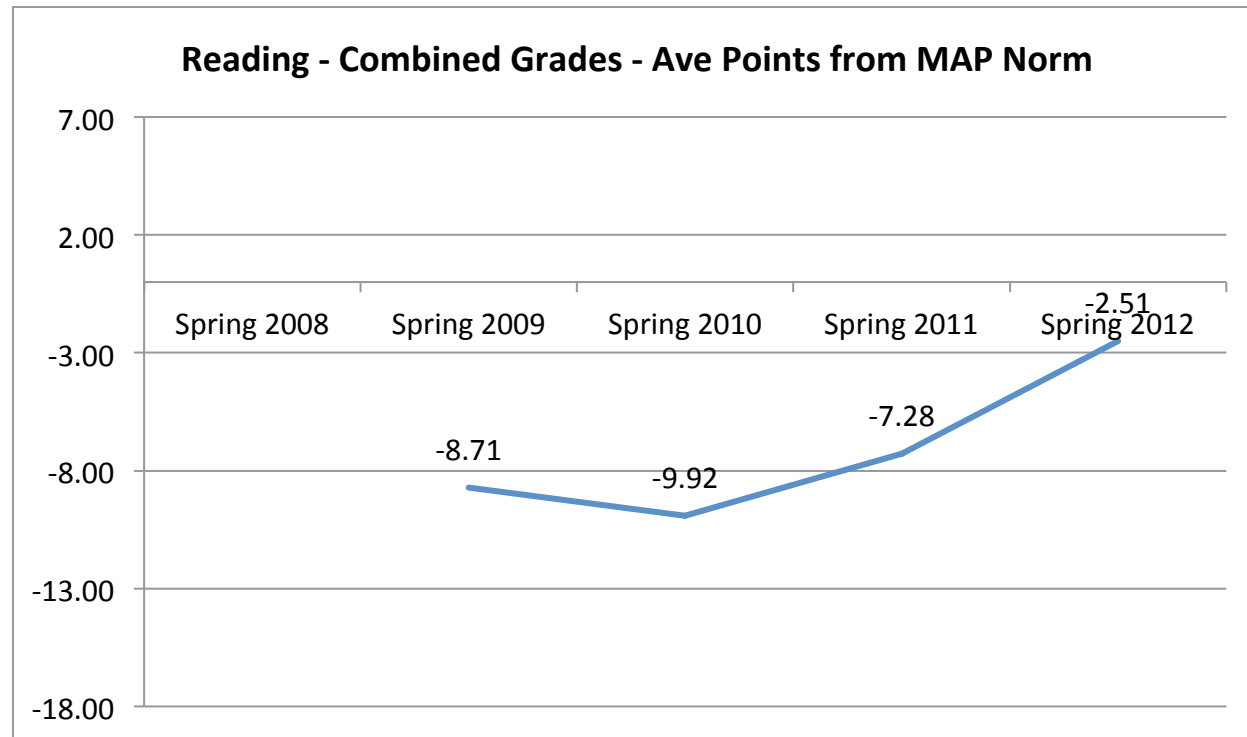


Figure 15.



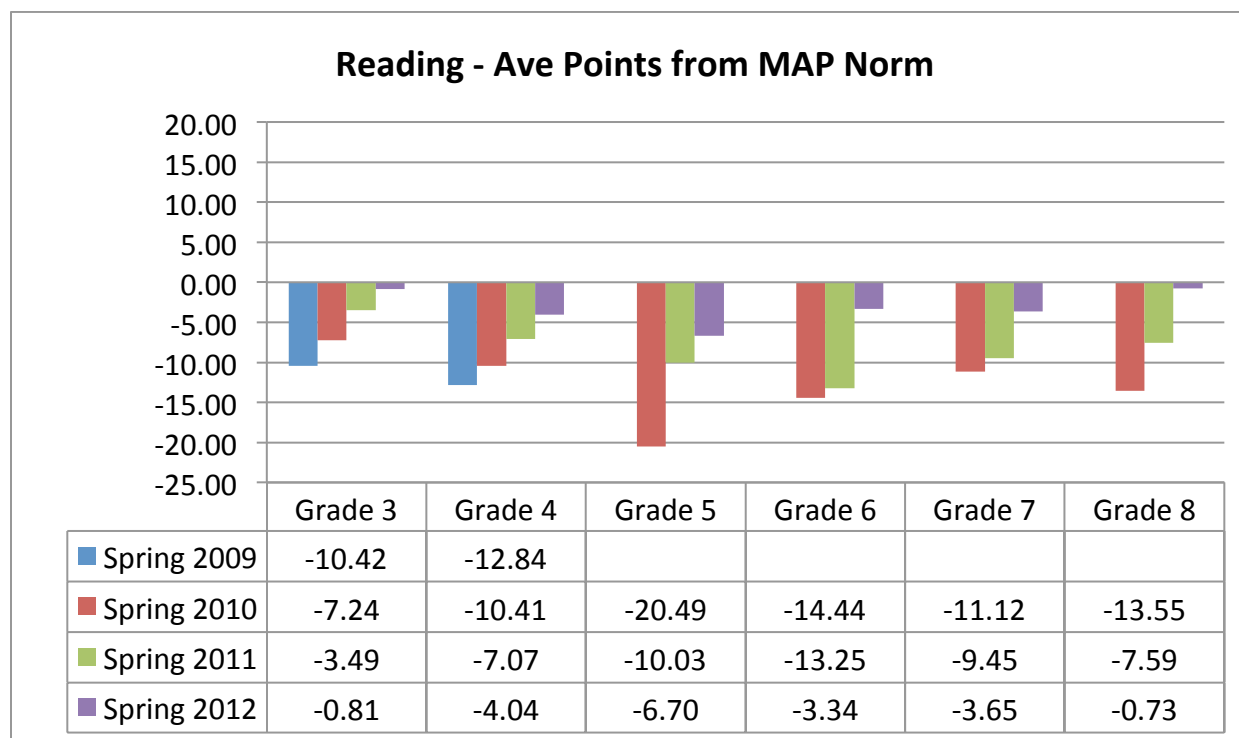
Results are mixed between the 2009-10 and 2010 school years. Results for the 2011-12 school year definitely increased over the two prior years.

Figure 16.



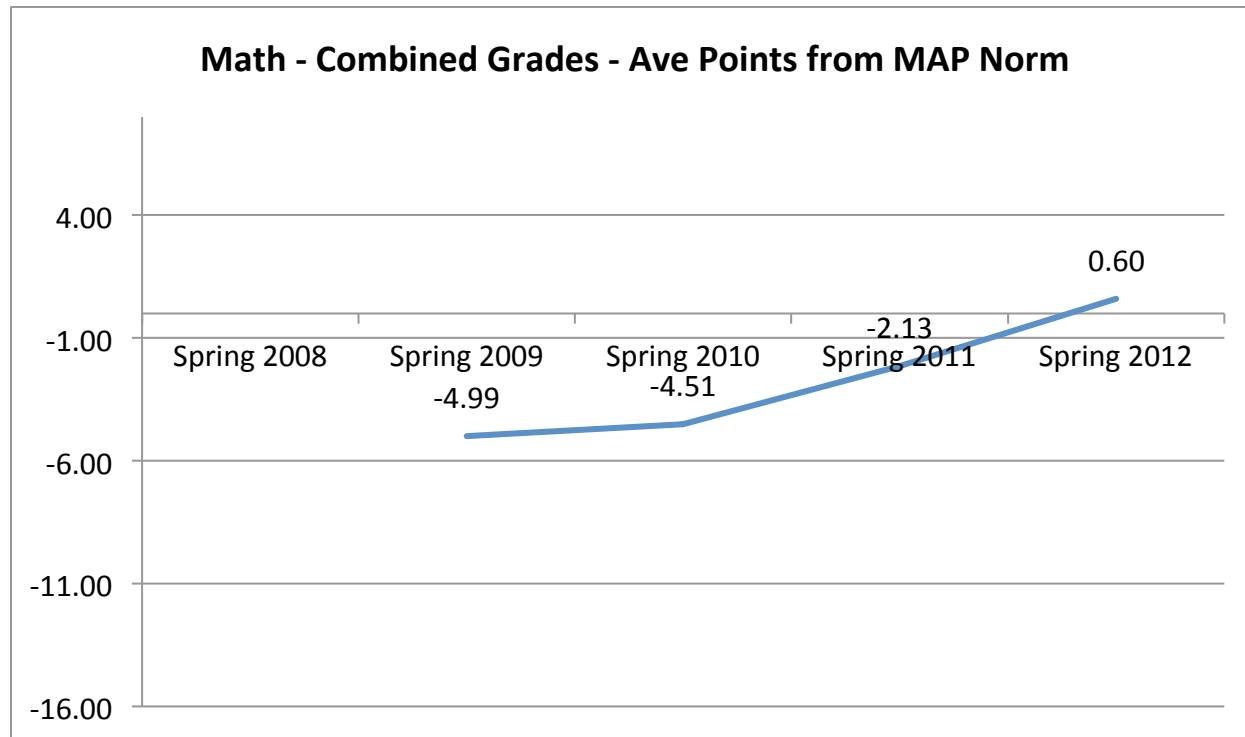
NWEA MAP tests are nationally normed. This graph shows that the average BGCS student (grades K-8) in Spring of 2008 scored more than eight points below the MAP national norm in Reading. This number has risen steadily from one year to the next with the average BGCS student (Grades K-8) in the Spring of 2012 scoring only 2.51 below the national MAP norm in Reading.

Figure 17.



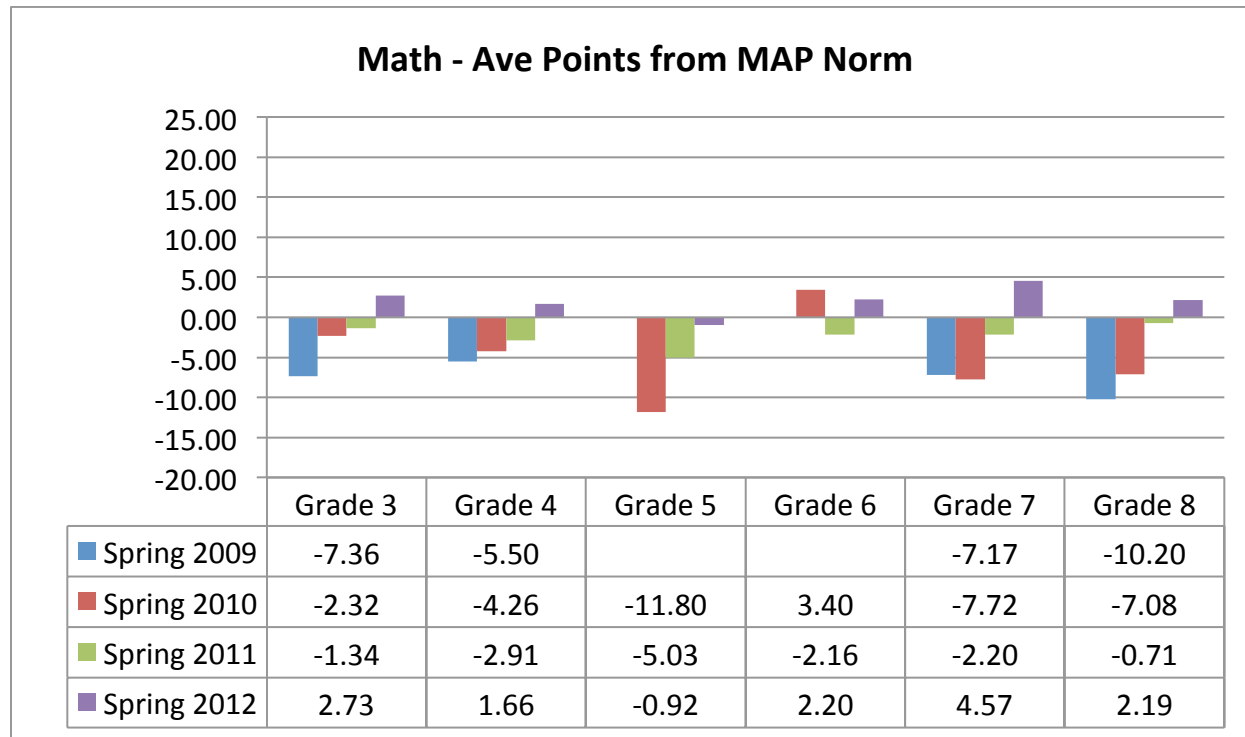
Looking at the average points above/below the national norm by grade level shows a similar picture with the deficit being reduced each year.

Figure 18.



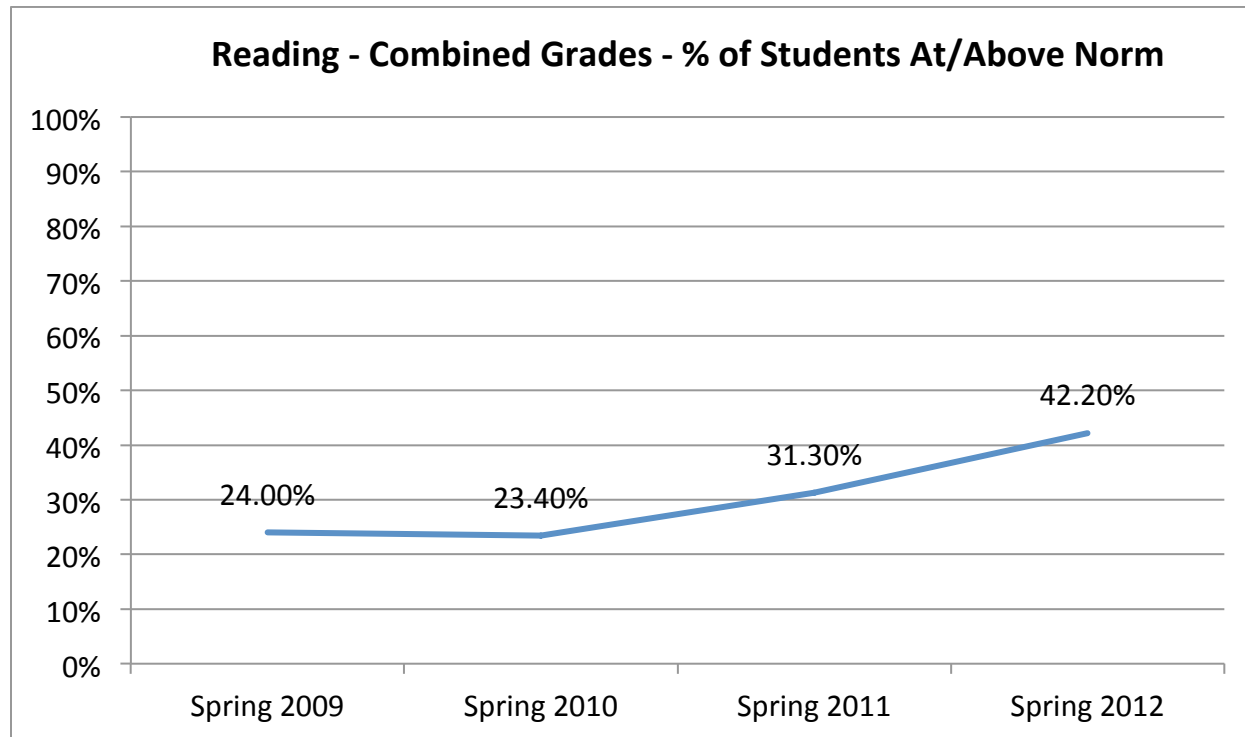
This graph shows that the average BGCS student (grades K-8) in Spring of 2009 scored about 5 points below the MAP national norm in Math. This number has risen steadily from one year to the next with the average MCPS student (Grades K-8) in the Spring of 2012 scoring 0.6 points above the national MAP norm in Math.

Figure 19.



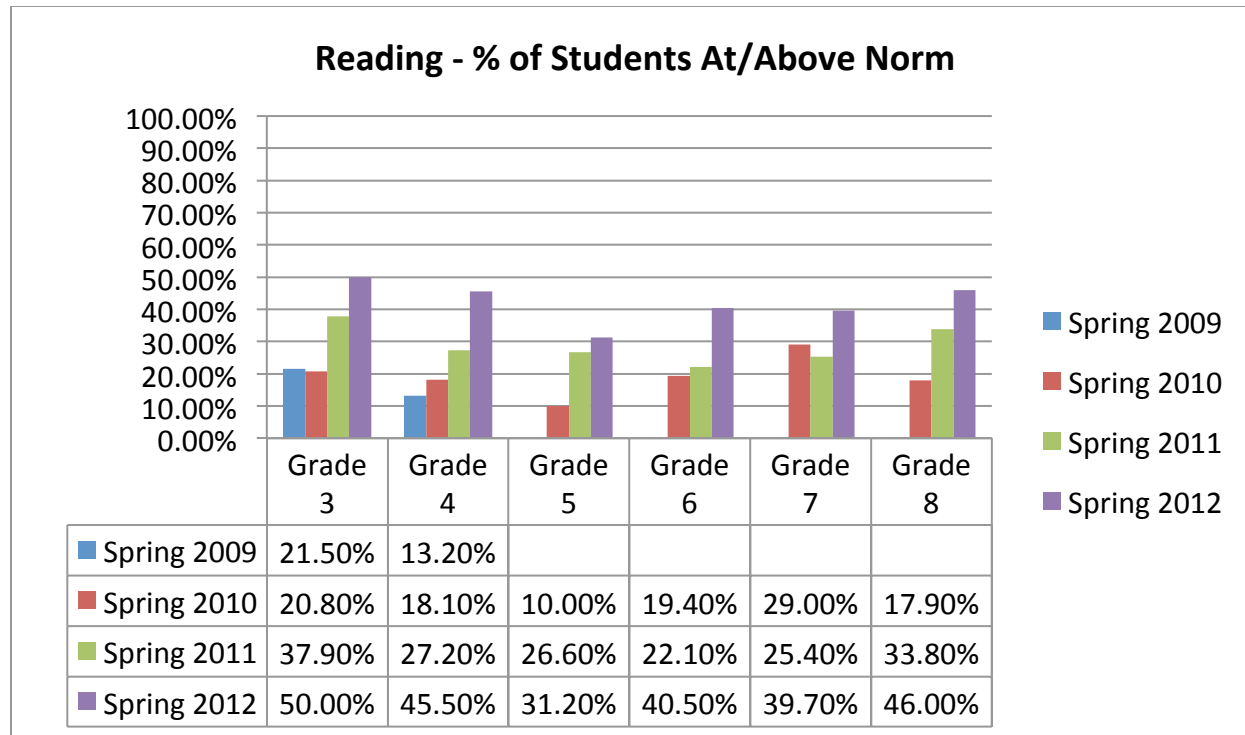
When looking at the average points above/below the national norm by grade level there is more variability in the results and no trend is evident.

Figure 20.



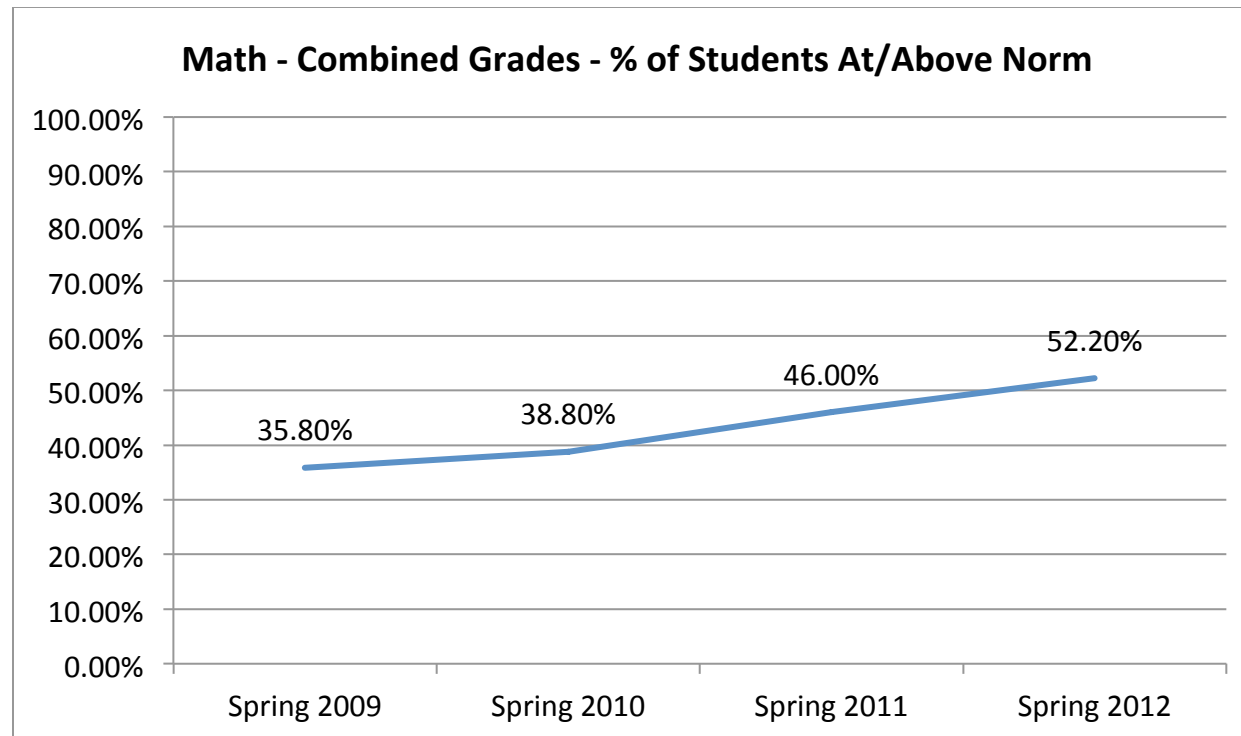
Because NWEA MAP assessments have national norms for each grade level and subject area, it is possible to determine the percent of students that score above the average. This graph shows that the percent of students (Grade K-8) scoring above average in Reading at MCPS has been steadily increasing for the past 5 years, with over 42% of students scoring above average in Reading in the Spring of 2012.

Figure 21.



When looking at the percent of students scoring at or above the national NWEA MAP norm in Reading by grade level, there is a general increase across all grade levels in the percent of students scoring at or above the national norm in Reading over the past 5 years.

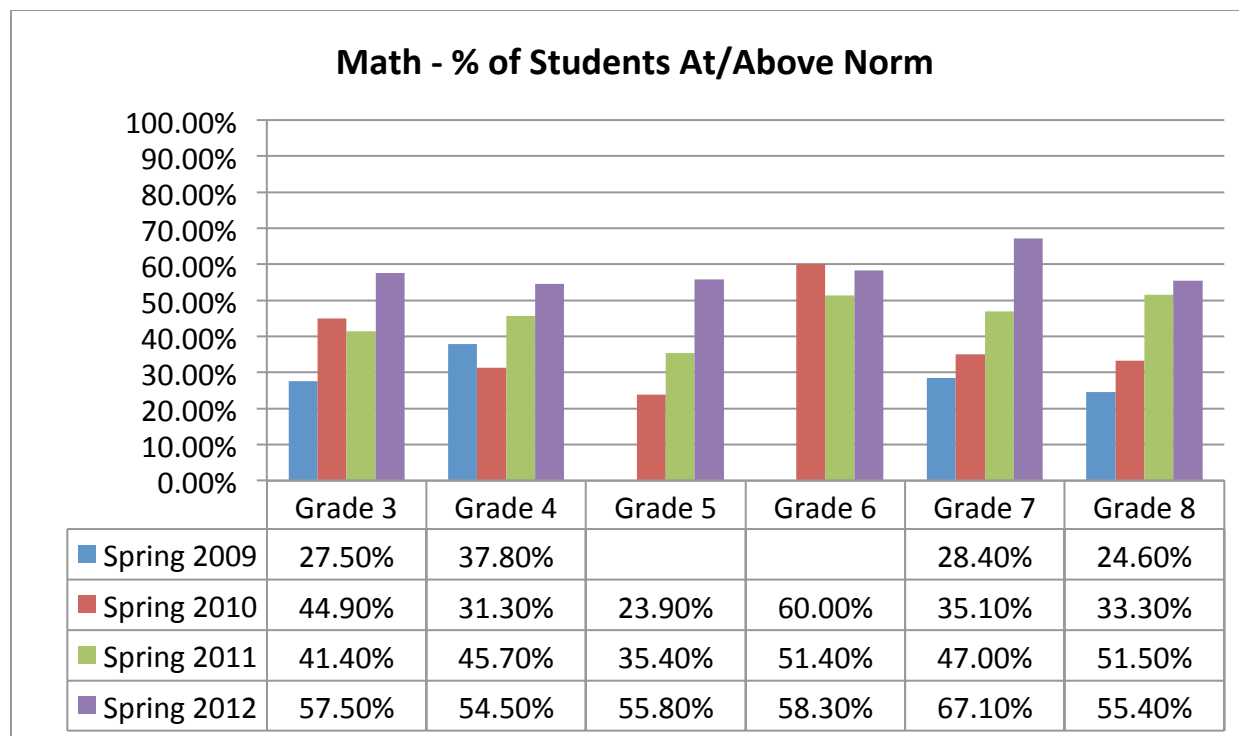
Figure 22.



This graph shows that the percent of students (Grade K-8) scoring at or above the national NWEA MAP average in Math at BGCS steadily increased from Spring 2008 to Spring 2011.

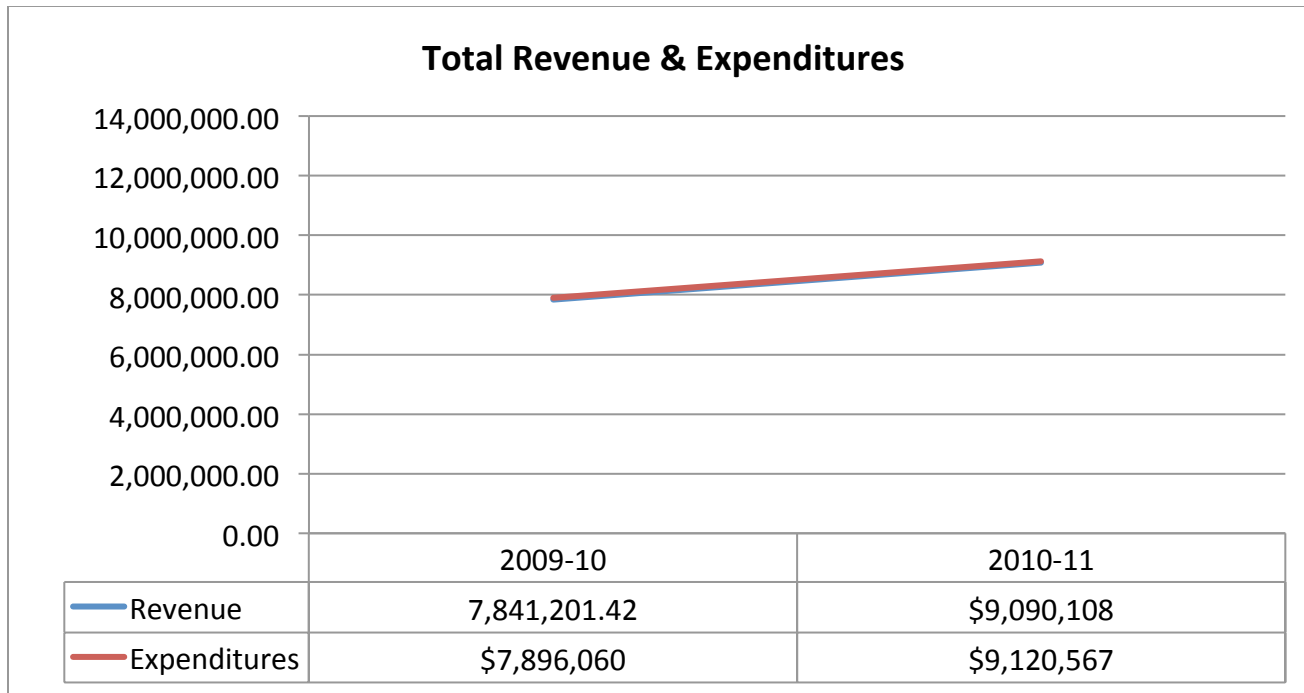


Figure 23.



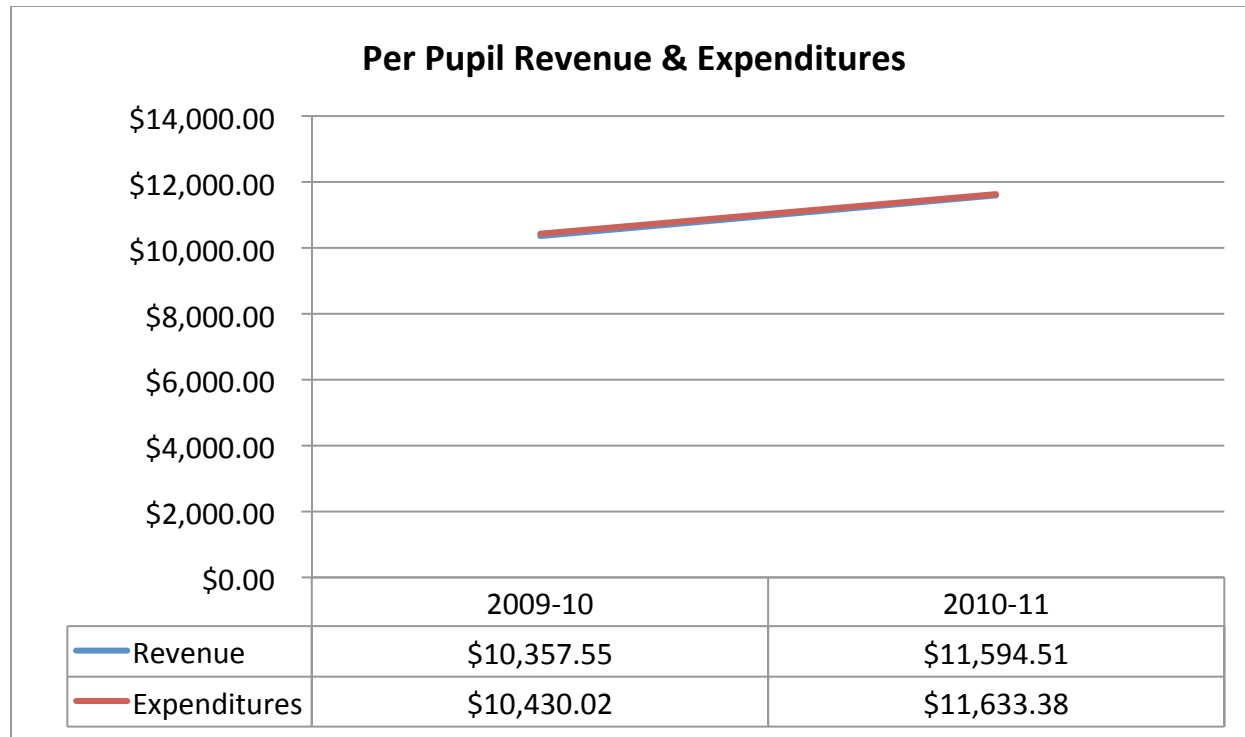
This graph shows the percent of students scoring at or above the national NWEA MAP norm in the Spring of each year. There is no overall trend to the data.

Figure 24.



Total revenues and expenditures are nearly identical for the two-year period and reflect funds received from state and federal sources.

Figure 25.



Per pupil revenues and expenditures are nearly identical for the two-year period and reflect funds received from state and federal sources.

# **MILWAUKEE COLLEGE PREPARATORY SCHOOL**

## **A CASE STUDY**

**By  
Robert Kattman**

### **SHARED MISSION, BELIEFS, AND VALUES**

Milwaukee College Preparatory School (MCP) became a mission driven school by:

1. By consistently making decisions guided by and in line with the mission.
2. By hiring and promoting individuals who believe in the mission and values of the school.
3. By terminating individuals who are not able make the mission a reality within their work.
4. By making the mission a living, visible document.
5. By building into the school structure activities that reinforce the mission on a regular and consistent basis.

The mission of MCP is “Knowledge plus character paves the way to college and beyond.” The mission was distilled to this simple statement in 2010 to capture the essence of the school’s culture. The two factors, the development of positive character and the acquisition of the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in college define MCP, direct decisions and create the social norms that guide staff and students.

Within the MCP community, there is a universal belief in the mission. Board members, administrators, teachers, staff, students and parents understand and support the mission. In the eighteen interviews with Board members, administrators, and teachers, every individual explained the mission in almost the same words. “We will do everything in our power to see that our students are prepared to enter a strong college preparatory program in high school and that they have the moral character and determination to be successful in life.” Almost to a person, teachers stated, “If a student does not learn it is my fault.”

The leaders of MCPS state that the school is “unabashedly college prep.” With that understanding decisions have been made and actions taken to make the mission a reality. The curriculum has been revised on numerous occasions and new instructional techniques required. Data gathering, analysis and use have been improved. New instructional programs have been added to reinforce student learning.

Students wear uniforms similar to expensive prep schools as a statement of the schools intent. The curriculum is advanced by one year to ensure that students are exposed to concepts and information needed in a college prep high school. Critical thinking is built into the curriculum to improve creativity and students ability to analyze problems. Students are made aware of their progress on a regular basis and consistently challenged to improve.

The Declaration of Excellence that students recite at the beginning of each school day clearly articulates the vision of MCP to create responsible, dedicated scholars.

“Today is a new day. I will use this day to the fullest in my quest to know who I am, what I want, and where I am going. I believe in the relentless pursuit of excellence. Education and success are my birthright.

My superior thoughts, discipline, dedication and desire are the tools I use to pave the road less traveled to college and beyond. I am determined to build a better tomorrow for my family, my community and me.

I am the captain of my own ship. I am fully responsible for the choices I make. I always strive to be proactive. I will surround myself with people that lift me higher and will not empower other negatively. Names may hurt me, but I will not allow them to dictate my destiny. I will always keep my compass focused on the mission possible.

There are no shortcuts in the pursuit of excellence. The only place where success comes before work is in the dictionary. I am never in the land of the done, but always in the land of doing. I never rest until my good is better and my better is best.

I walk on the shoulders of giants who have gone before me. I am Aesop and May Angelou. I am Benjamin Banneker and the Bard. I am Dr. Carson and Marva Collins. I am Zarlenga. From A to Z, I celebrate, emulate, and commemorate their example.

I am not awed by the challenges of reality, but believe that I can change the world and establish my legacy in it. I am self-determined, self-generated, self-propelled

and self-reliant. I believe that is my time and my place. I will find a way to achieve excellence or I will make one.”

## **LEADERSHIP**

As a leadership team and as individuals, the leaders of MCP are highly competent educators who hold high ideals, are mission driven, and are able to motivate others to share their vision. The leaders of MCP create and maintain a high performing school by:

1. Clearly articulating the mission in both word and deed.
2. Hiring individuals who agree with the mission and values of MCPS and are committed to educating urban students.
3. Putting the right people in the right positions, giving them responsibility, and trusting them to accomplish the job assigned to them.
4. Terminating employees who do not measure up to expectations.
5. Having high academic and behavioral expectations for students and staff.
6. Extending themselves to enable others to do their jobs better, encouraging them, and showing respect for them.
7. Being committed to the professional growth of everyone within the organization.
8. Creating and maintaining a feeling of community for both students and staff.

The leaders of MCPS live the school’s mission and engage teachers and students to accomplish this mission. The mission statement and the beliefs it supports are kept in front of students throughout the day. Each day begins with a “community” gathering through which the mission and beliefs are highlighted. Teachers continue the mission directed leadership with students, quoting the mission often and using it as a tool to guide student behavior and achievement. Each class as a whole and each student individually develop a mission statement based on the school’s mission. Staff development activities follow a similar format using the mission statement and school beliefs to determine how new programs and activities will better meet the needs of the students. Almost all teachers interviewed for this project quoted the mission statement sometime during the interview. The mission is central to decision-making both at the school and classroom level.

The leaders of MCP practice what they term as “mission based hiring,” carefully screening potential candidates to obtain the best people. “To accomplish our mission, we must have excellent teachers who support our mission.” MCP rarely hires on the open market. Rather teachers come to MCP by recommendations from existing teachers, parents, and supporters of the school. Individuals are asked to apply but not hired until extensive interviews are held and the individual is watched in action. If a hiring decision turns out to be wrong, they are quick to remedy the situation. As the Executive Principal pointed out, a new hire was let go after participating in two days of the teacher pre-school staff development program because, “We could see that she was just not going to make it.” Teachers support this action. One teacher interviewed stated: “We just couldn’t have people who do not believe in our mission.” They

would just have to leave.” In other words, MCP administrators hire the right people and keep the right people at MCP to accomplish the school’s mission.

The leadership of MCP has created a culture that has made the school successful. In talking with board members, administrators, and teachers one consistently hears three refrains: “all children can learn”, “we will do everything possible to see that all children learn”, and “children don’t fail, schools and teachers do.” Leadership at MCP begins with the school’s founder who “wanted to return something to the community” that had been so good to him.” He chose to start an inner city school to serve disadvantaged children and followed that choice with action. He realized that he knew little about starting or running a school. To achieve his dream he hired a highly competent executive principal who shared his vision. As the school grew and more funds became available the principal hired others who complemented him through what he terms as “deficit hiring.” In other words, hiring people who have a high level of skill in a specific area such as curriculum development in which he does not excel or chooses not to lead. Board members and senior leaders are quick to give others credit. When asked about the success of the school, the school’s founder says: “I hired the best administrator I could find.” The Executive Principal is quick to point out that “great teachers” are responsible for the school’s success. “We use “mission based hiring” to find teachers that believe that all children can learn and that students don’t fail – schools and teachers do.” Our teachers “are very goal oriented.” To a person, the leaders of MCP give credit to teachers for the success of the school.

The Executive Principal further states: “We are not a top down organization. Teachers are respected. They feel part of the organization.” “Our teachers believe – they buy into the mission”. Leadership at MCP is, in fact, both top down and bottom up. The senior leaders have established the mission, beliefs and values that serve as the school’s foundation. They set the requirements for both behavior and academic results. The leaders have consistently hired individuals who support the mission and have the ability to achieve the expected results. Beyond this, leadership often comes from teachers who determine best practices for obtaining the expected results.

Once hired, teachers are supported. They have the opportunity to participate in many activities that establish practices throughout the school. Once these practices are agreed upon, they are reinforced through staff development, colleague mentors, and direct assistance from administrators. Administrators visit each classroom daily giving “glows and grows” to support positive practices and suggest ways individual teachers can improve. Together, administrators and teachers have created an evaluation system that rewards teachers for accomplishing the mission within the schools values and beliefs. The evaluation system requires extensive discussion and feedback. Administrators conduct two formal evaluations per year based on numerous observations both formal and informal. Administrators visit the classroom on a daily basis to note the climate and level of instructional rigor. Teachers receive additional pay each year based on the level to which they meet requirements.

The Executive Principal is described as a person with high ideals and values, a “people person” who listens, questions, and thinks. Once a person is given responsibility, he trusts them to get the job done. He consistently encourages others to care for and trust their colleagues. MCP leaders are able to articulate their goals and create ways to accomplish them. For example, the Office of Charter Schools required all schools to adopt the Northwest Evaluation Association’s Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test. The response of the Executive Principal was to acknowledge the requirement and say: “OK, if we have to use the test, we will do it better than anyone else.” He assigned the responsibility to the C&I Director who quickly became an expert on using MAP to further instruction. Teachers were trained in the use of MAP with an emphasis on its use to move individual students forward. She created a process through which teachers received data in a timely and usable manner, assisted them in its use, documented the progress, and continually improved the process. Use of MAP is now credited as having a major impact on the continual improvement of student achievement.

Together, the leaders developed a program of high expectations for student behavior and academic achievement. They created a rigorous curriculum and developed instructional methodology to bring the curriculum to the students in an engaging manner. These high expectations manifest themselves through the mantra “sweat the small stuff.” By this, they mean two things – pay attention to details and be consistent. If there is a rule regarding behavior it must be enforced at all times. If any child is having academic difficulty steps must be taken to overcome the difficulty.

Administrators extend themselves to complement teachers and other staff members as they move through the halls and visit classrooms. They encourage students and offer to help if a difficult situation arises. Administrators are involved with instruction at all levels. The Principal states: “I know (each child’s) data as well as the teacher.” “We analyze the data together.” This allows administrators to make certain that teachers are addressing each child’s needs.

The continued growth of teachers is considered extremely important. New teachers receive two full weeks of staff development prior to school opening each fall. Since the culture is so important to the school’s success, administrators start at the very beginning with new teachers showing them how to teach according to the school’s requirements. They then join veteran teachers for another full week of staff development prior to school. Using the prior year’s evaluation data, the Principal states: “ We ask them, how can we help you.” This sets the stage for their goals for the year.

Teachers new to MCP are taught how to utilize the “Proactive” disciplinary system. They learn the proverbs and stories used to teach character education. They are taught how to engage students so that all students are involved in the lesson and how to utilize in depth questioning to help students gain full understanding of concepts. New teachers learn the MCP phonics instructional process that leads to students being able to pronounce any word they encounter.



Perhaps one of the most unique characteristics of MCPS is that these processes and practices are universally accepted and universally deployed. As one teacher stated, “We can’t have teachers that are not part of the team.” The power of this unity cannot be underestimated. It allows the school to be very agile in making necessary changes.

Administrators realize that the creation of a feeling of community is key to success. Both students and staff must buy in for the program to be successful. As the Principal states, “There are no islands.” Everyone has to be part of the community. “We have to convince the students that this is going to save their lives.” The sense of community is created through the morning assemblies, the consistent expectations, and common practices. As the Principal states, “The same language is heard throughout the building.” “It becomes contagious and everyone wants to be part of it.” “Failure is not an option.”

## **HIGH BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS**

Positive social behavior is created by:

1. Defining behavior expectations in terms of what students should do, not what they should not do.
2. Uniformly enforcing and reinforcing behavior requirements.
3. Approaching discipline from a positive, respectful basis.
4. Teaching character education through informal and formal methods throughout each day.
5. Consistently praising and rewarding students for making the right behavior choices.
6. Holding hard work and perseverance as positive traits needed to succeed.

Positive student behavior is essential for academic achievement. When students exhibit good behavior, teachers can teach. Time is not wasted on behavioral control. At MCP positive student behavior is achieved through the interwoven character education program that teaches students what to do rather than what not to do. The constant use of positive language reinforces expectations and relationship building creates positive interactions between and among students and teachers.

Students learn and sign the code of conduct at the beginning of each school year. The code is discussed on a regular basis with students defining what action is needed to be in accordance with the code. Students understand that they will be accountable for everything that they do.

All teachers utilize the same methodology for enforcement and reinforcement of student behavior. The same expectations are evident from classroom to classroom and from grade to grade. One hears the same questions, statements, and phrases from every teacher as he/she works with students on behavior. A “proactive” methodology is used through which students are always treated with respect. They are never yelled at, put down, or exposed to sarcasm. Teachers consistently refer to the student’s responsibility and the student’s ability to make the correct choices.

Teachers begin each day with a fable or story that highlights a positive character trait. Students are taught Sean Covey's Seven Habits of Effective Students. Together these "character" lessons help students to understand their responsibilities within the school and classroom and how to work and live with others in a positive manner. Teachers use a set of "proverbs" in response to student words and actions that spotlight the expected behavior.

Students are consistently praised and rewarded for positive behavior. Students receive "virtuous dollars" in a school account for positive behavior. These dollars can be used to "purchase" special privileges during the school year. Students are praised during the morning assemblies and in class for positive behavior. Teachers "sweat the small stuff" not allowing any breach of decorum pass without helping students to understand their responsibilities. This is done in a "proactive" (positive) manner with reference to the Code of Conduct and the "Seven Habits."

Teachers build close relationships with students by constantly showing that they care about them. Teachers learn about the student and his/her family. They listen to student concerns. They follow through to address student needs both academically and emotionally.

## **HIGH ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS**

High academic expectations and results are obtained by:

1. Having uniform agreement that the students can learn and learn at a high level.
2. Collecting, analyzing, and utilizing student academic growth and achievement data on a regular and consistent basis.
3. Administrators closely monitoring student growth and achievement.
4. Creating a teacher evaluation system that encourages teachers to seek help when individual students are not making appropriate progress.
5. Providing assistance to help teacher meet the academic needs of students.
6. Teaching student work skills in a similar manner to behavioral expectations.
7. Beginning lessons with an "end in mind" so that students know what they are expected to know and be able to do.
8. Informing students on a regular and consistent basis about the academic growth they have achieved and their achievement level.
9. Rewarding students regularly and consistently for academic growth and achievement.

Establishing high academic expectations is both a mind-set and a series of actions. Teachers must believe that poor urban children can learn and achieve the necessary knowledge to enter college. Parents, who have never had a family member go to college, must see that it is possible for their children, and students must buy into the dream of going to college. This mind set, however, is not enough. Curriculum and instruction must be robust, providing the academic knowledge and skills that makes the dream attainable.

The emphasis on being prepared for college begins the moment one enters MCP. Each room is named for a college, often the institution that the teacher graduated from. The colleges that

alumni have or are attending are prominently posted. Administrators and teachers constantly talk about college entrance and its requirements. Students learn college cheers, songs and information about the college. Seventh and eighth graders visit colleges in the local area and as far away as Washington D.C.

The MCPS curriculum is challenging. The curriculum is advanced one grade for all students. In other words, students in grade two receive instruction at the grade three level, etc. The expectations are that all four-year-old kindergarten students will begin to read. MCP leaders state that this done: “with hard work and love. Balancing high expectations with compassion and nurturing helps shape the whole student.”

Each lesson begins with the “end in mind.” Teachers post the expectations for each lesson so that students understand what they are expected to accomplish. They use a variety of techniques to ensure that all students are positively engaged with the lesson. Teachers insist on an answer being correct. A partially correct answer is not accepted. Discussion and analysis continue until the fully correct answer is obtained. This ensures understanding of concepts and reduces misconceptions on the part of students. The hard work necessary to obtain mastery is constantly emphasized. The mantra, “The only place success comes before work is in the dictionary” is heard daily. Students are expected to both ask and answer questions in full sentences. They are encouraged to explore multiple answers and multiple paths of understanding.

The productive use of time is also a major factor in the success of MCP. There is little down time between classes. Transitions happen quickly, both between classrooms and between different lessons within a single classroom. Students are taught the value of time and to understand how it helps them to achieve their goals. Once students are in the classroom, lessons start immediately and students are expected to be ready for the lesson. Instruction is often conducted in a “boisterous” manner that creates a fast paced learning environment and at the same time makes the lesson engaging for the students.

Data are collected and analyzed on a regular basis. A continuous flow of data from MAP, Compass Learning, the WKCE, and classroom assessment is provided to teachers. This allows them to make informed decisions regarding the next steps for each student. When teachers are not able to meet individual student’s needs help is given to the teacher to meet the needs of the student. This could take the form of staff development or mentoring if the need is to improve the teacher’s skill set. It could also take the form of intervention from tutors or special education teachers. Computer assisted instruction may also be used to meet student needs.

Administrators closely monitor instruction and student outcomes by being in each classroom on a daily basis and meeting with teachers regarding student progress each week. As they stop in the classroom, they off leave short notes called “grows and glows” to point out instruction that they want to praise or improve. During the weekly meeting the administrator review each student’s progress with the intent of knowing the student “as well as the classroom teacher.”

Teacher evaluations are based on part on the success of their students. This motivates teachers to try different instructional techniques and to seek additional help.

Work skills, like character education, are taught throughout the day. Like positive behavior, hard work is consistently praised and rewarded. Academic expectations are clearly defined for students. Students are informed about their academic growth and achievement on a regular basis. They know their “RIT” score prior to taking the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test and the gain on the test that they are expected to make. They work daily both at school and at home on Odyssey Learning’s Compass Learning a computer assisted learning program that aligns with MAP. Students may utilize Compass Learning from home or local libraries when not in school. For example, over one spring vacation MCPS students logged more than 1,000 hours on the program. Students earn “virtuous dollars” for strong academic work. Their efforts are consistently praised and rewarded.

## **COMMUNITY**

Students and staff are united as a community by:

1. Giving students the sense that they are part of something special through statement and action.
2. Giving students the feeling of being part of a team through the college named classrooms that provide a special identification.
3. Holding regular whole school gatherings that reinforce the school as being special and the children within the school as being part of something important.
4. Setting high academic and behavioral expectations that give students a feeling of accomplishment.
5. Intensively training teachers in the instructional techniques utilized by MCPS.
6. Teachers using similar language and techniques as they work with students on social behavior and academic instruction.

The term “Community” refers to those actions and activities that unite students and staff to accomplish the mission of the school. Creating community is a leadership function. The importance of community cannot be stressed enough. It is the glue that brings all other aspects of the school together. The universal acceptance of the mission and the belief that all students can learn and that “students don’t fail, schools and teachers do” is unique and a major factor in the success of the school. The unanimity of mission and beliefs exists only because of the strong sense of community felt by all.

At MCP, the development of community is a series of well-planned actions that keep the school’s mission in focus on a daily basis. Hiring practices make the job of creating community easier in that the school’s leaders begin creating this sense of community with like-minded individuals. The strong sense of community is bolstered through staff development activities that teaches new staff members to utilize the “proactive” discipline system, integrate character

education into each lesson, and utilize common instructional strategies for the teaching of phonics and other curricular components.

The development of the chain of mission statements from school, to classroom, to individual further unites staff and students. The mission statements personalize responsibility. The mission statements are not written and then set aside. They become living documents that are referred to often to determine if the individual, classroom, and school are living up to the mission.

The emphasis on college is another uniting factor. Students identify with the room's selected college and become part of the team. The identification is reinforced and made fun through cheers, chants and dances. The sense of "belonging" helps to develop the culture of the classroom and school.

The morning gatherings are, perhaps, the strongest developer of "community." Morning assemblies are held each day during which the mission is reinforced through the recitation of the "Declaration of Excellence." Students and staff are honored for hard work and character and academic achievement. Competitions develop around each room's college with students chanting and sometimes dancing to songs about their class's college. The songs, chants, and dances in an almost pep rally atmosphere heighten the sense of community.

The use of common discipline and instructional practices is also a strong uniting factor. Students have the same behavioral expectations from classroom to classroom and from grade to grade. The "proactive" discipline system accentuates student responsibility and maintains the dignity of the student. Common instructional practices help students to understand their need to work hard and help each other to gain conceptual understanding. These practices also instill a "joy" factor into learning that makes learning fun for the students.

Taken together these activities unite students and staff around the mission and beliefs of the school and the instructional rigor required to advanced the college bound curriculum.

# **Milwaukee College Preparatory School**

## **Achievement and Evaluation Data**

Milwaukee College Preparatory School (MCPS) is located at 2449 N. 36<sup>th</sup> Street, Milwaukee, WI 53210 in the heart of the Metcalf Neighborhood, one of the poorest neighborhoods of the City. MCPS was founded as the Marva Collins Preparatory School in 1998; a private school utilizing the instructional framework and beliefs created by Ms. Collins in Chicago, IL. Mr. Ronald Sadoff founded the school with permission from Ms. Collins after the CBS series 60 Minutes aired a program touting her success with poor urban children. In 2002, MCPS became a public charter school authorized by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

The mission of MCPS is: Knowledge plus character pave the road to college and beyond. The school culture is built around five values: trust, respect, excellence, courage, and knowledge. School life is based on the Seven Habits for Happy Kids by Sean Covey. Positive affirmation is at the heart of relations among and between adults and children.

Milwaukee College Prep is a school of uncompromising academic and social expectations. In addition to core curriculum of phonics, reading, poetry, vocabulary, foreign language and mathematics, Milwaukee College Prep offers physical education, technology, art and music classes.

The educational program focuses on a heavy dose of positive affirmation and critical thinking skills complimented by basic, a no nonsense educational pedagogy. The positive affirmations and critical thinking skills are intertwined with everything that is taught. Students are constantly being praised for good choices or academic endeavors and they are constantly being pushed to make connections, inferences or comparisons in a Socratic way.

The core of the language arts program is a holistic reading series and phonics program. The phonics' wall cards, which the students go through in a rather boisterous fashion each day, supply the students with the skills to decode and read any word in the English language. The teaching of the phonics and math each morning is predominantly done through direct instruction.

MCPS has adopted the Saxon math curriculum and is following it almost verbatim, with the exception of promoting all students one year ahead of schedule (i.e.: the 2nd grade completes the third grade material). Students are expected to have completed algebra by the

end of 8th grade. The Saxon mathematics program and the reading program are complimented with the Accelerated Math and Reading programs from Renaissance Learning. The Accelerated Mathematics Program emphasizes basic skills. The Reading program encourages students to read independently from a variety of genres at their grade level. It helps increase fluency and exposes students to many new experiences via literature. The 6+1 Traits writing program has been adopted as a framework for teaching writing school wide.

The most essential part of the program is the school culture of empowerment and learning through the Proactive discipline system. MCPS has earned a reputation for holding high expectations for students both academically and socially. It is expected that all students will live up to those standards. The discipline system is based on a Proactivity Chart, which is based on the tenets of Steven Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. The first premise of this program is teaching the students that they are always responsible for the decisions that they make. In other words, they are always proactive, not reactive. Students are taught several skills to use when making decisions. These are based on strategies developed by Edward de Bono, an author and lecturer on the teaching of critical thinking skills. The strategies are:

- a) CAF – Consider All Factors before making a decision.
- b) OPV – consider Other People's Views before making a decision.
- c) FIP – make sure that your focus is on your First Important Priority when making a decision.
- d) APC – realize that there are always numerous Alternatives, Possibilities and Choices when solving a problem. There is never just one solution to a problem.
- e) C&C – remember that for every Choice there is a Consequence. Good choices most often result in good consequences; bad choices most often result in bad consequences.
- f) C&S – remember also there is a long-term effect, Choices and Sequel, for the choices that one makes. For example, one can build a positive reputation by consistently making good choices, and vice versa.
- g) AGO – always begin with the end in mind, or focus on the big picture. Students begin the year by writing a Mission Statement, where they focus on their lifetime Aims, Goals and Objectives.

### Days and Hours of Instruction

While maintaining a common school calendar, MCPS increases instructional time by extending the school day. As shown in the chart below, elementary students (5K -4) receive 7 hours and 10 minutes of instruction while students in grades six through eight receive seven hours and 35 minutes of instruction each day.

1	Grade Levels	<b>K4</b>	<b>K5-4</b>	<b>Grades 6-8</b>
2	Start Time of Student Instructional Day	8:05	8:05	8:05
3	End Time of Student Instructional Day	11:35	3:15	3:40
4	Start-To-Close Instructional Day Minutes (Lines 3 - 2)	210	430	455
5	Number of Minutes for Lunch	30	30	30
6	Recess Time in Excess of 30 Minutes	0	0	0
7	Number of Instructional Minutes Per Day (Lines 4 -5 -6)	180	400	425
8	Total Number of Days In Teacher Calendar	194	194	194
9	Number of Teacher Pre-service/Professional Development Days	16	16	16
10	Number of Parent/Teacher Conference Days	3	3	3
11	Number of Student Instructional Days (Lines 8 -9 -10)	175	175	175
12	Total Instructional Minutes Per Year (Lines 7 x 11)	31,500	70,000	74,375



13	Late Arrival/Early Release Minutes for Professional Development	0	0	0
14	Total Instructional Minutes (Lines 12 - 13)	31,500	70,000	74,375
15	Hours of Instruction Per Year (Lines 11 / 60)	525.00	1166.67	1239.58

### **Board and Administrative Organization**

MCPS has a large, sixteen member, board composed of individuals selected for their ability to assist the school. The Board is led by co-founders Ron and Mickey Sadoff. Members of the Board are: Ronald Sadoff, President; Mickey Sadoff, Vice President; Steven Chernof, Secretary; Patrick English, Treasurer; and board members Tim Sheehy, Ray Manista, Thomas Schmid, Charles Trainer, Leslie Dixon, Tom Florsheim, Corey Hoze, William Johnson, Sr, Demond Means, Renita Robertson, Jim Rowe, and Teddy Werner.

The administrative team is composed of: Robert Rauh, Executive Principal; Kari Whalen, Curriculum Director; Kristen Foster, Principal; Tom Sprague, Business Manager.

### **Assessment**

MCPS participates in the state Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) on an annual basis. The assessment is given once a year during the month of November. Results of the test are utilized by the Department of Public Instruction to determine annual yearly progress under the federal No Child Left Behind act. The school utilizes the assessment to make determination about the strength of the overall instructional program. The WKCE is a static assessment that determines a student's level of proficiency in reading, mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies at a single point in time.

MCPS also uses the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) examination developed by the Northwest Evaluation Association. MAP is given to students three times during each school year (September, January, May). The test measures the amount of growth a student makes between each testing period and provides students with goals for improvement and teachers with recommended instructional content to help the student grow academically.

MCPS also utilizes Compass Learning, a computerized instructional program aligned with the MAP. Students spend time during the school day, after school, and at home with the program to increase their understanding in reading and mathematics.

Results of the WKCE are shown below. Overall MCPS results show steady improvement each year in contrast to both the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) and State of Wisconsin (state) results which are static over the five-year period. MCPS results exceed the results for both the MPS and the State of Wisconsin. Eighth grade results mirror those for the combined grades (3 – 8) but show somewhat more volatility as can be expected for a smaller number of students.

Figure 1.

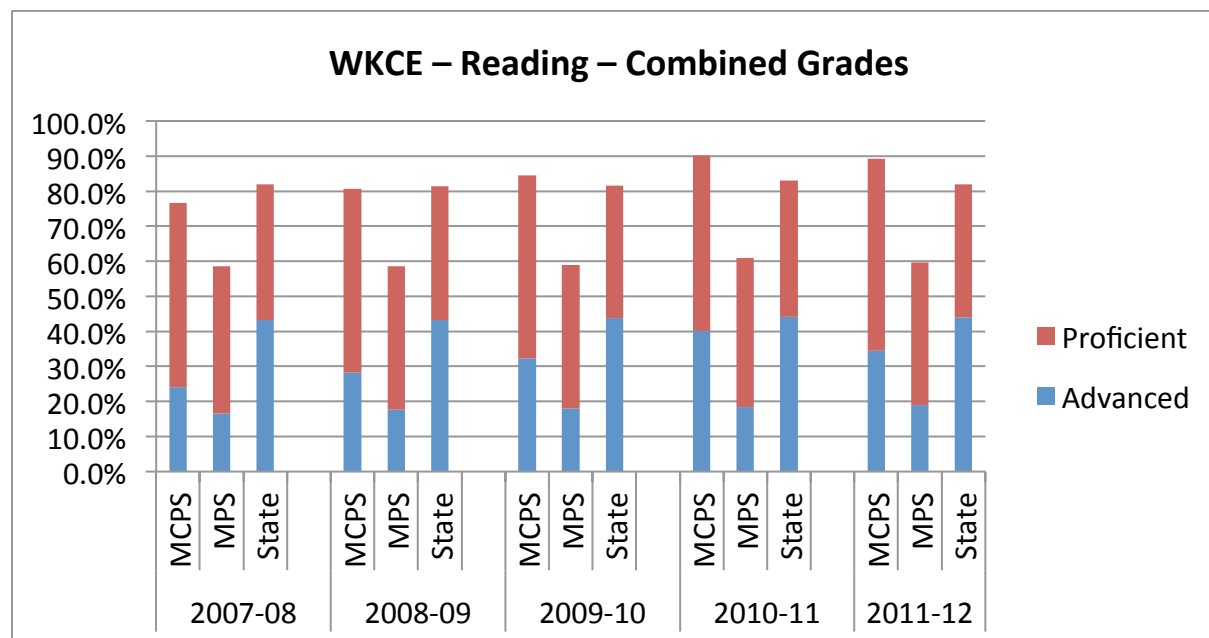


Table 1.

Reading	2007-08			2008-09			2009-10			2010-11			2011-12		
	MCPS	MPS	State	MCPS	MPS	State	MCPS	MPS	State	MCPS	MPS	State	MCPS	MPS	State
<b>Advanced</b>	24.0%	16.5%	43.2%	28.2%	17.6%	43.3%	32.2%	18.1%	43.7%	40.2%	18.4%	44.2%	34.5%	18.9%	44.0%
<b>Proficient</b>	52.7%	42.0%	38.7%	52.5%	41.0%	38.1%	52.2%	40.8%	37.8%	50.0%	42.5%	38.8%	54.7%	40.8%	37.9%
<b>Basic</b>	18.7%	23.9%	11.8%	15.1%	24.9%	12.3%	12.6%	24.2%	12.2%	9.4%	23.8%	11.5%	10.1%	23.8%	12.0%
<b>Minimal</b>	4.6%	15.3%	5.4%	3.9%	15.2%	5.6%	2.6%	16.3%	5.7%	0.4%	14.7%	5.0%	0.7%	15.7%	5.4%
<b>No WSAS</b>	0.0%	2.3%	0.9%	0.4%	1.4%	0.7%	0.4%	0.6%	0.5%	0.0%	0.6%	0.6%	0.0%	0.7%	0.6%

Figure 2.

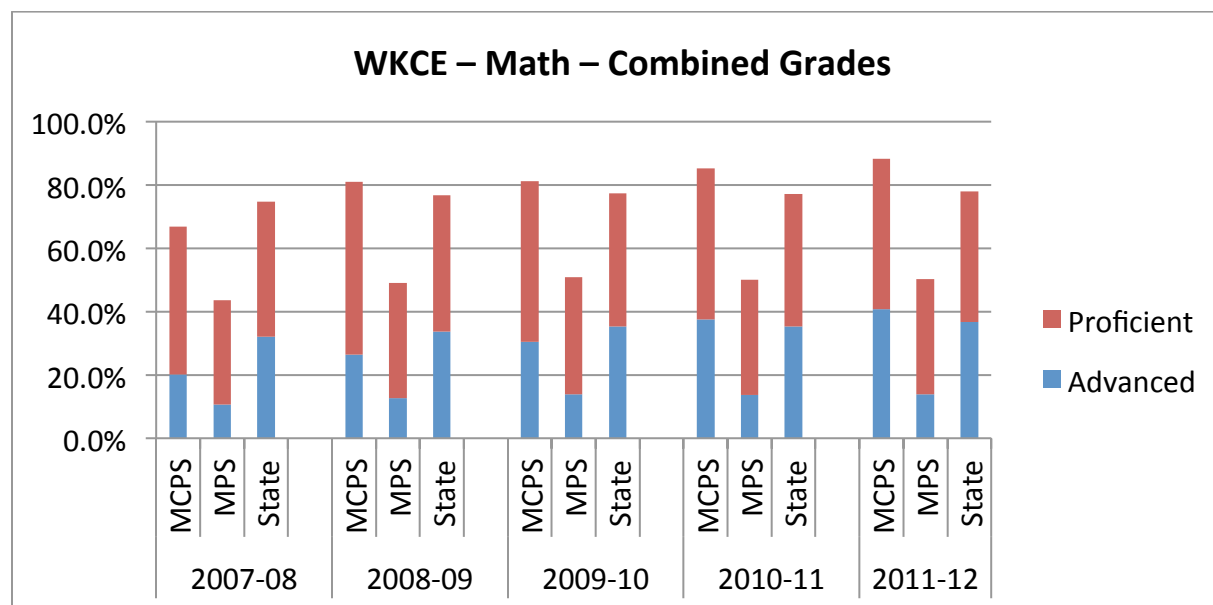


Table 2.

Math	2007-08			2008-09			2009-10			2010-11			2011-12		
	MCPS	MPS	State	MCPS	MPS	State	MCPS	MPS	State	MCPS	MPS	State	MCPS	MPS	State
<b>Advanced</b>	20.2%	10.7%	32.0%	26.4%	12.6%	33.6%	30.4%	13.9%	35.4%	37.6%	13.6%	35.3%	40.8%	13.8%	36.8%
<b>Proficient</b>	46.6%	32.9%	42.7%	54.6%	36.5%	43.1%	50.7%	36.9%	41.9%	47.7%	36.4%	41.9%	47.4%	36.5%	41.2%
<b>Basic</b>	19.1%	18.3%	11.4%	11.3%	18.5%	11.0%	11.1%	18.0%	10.7%	10.5%	17.8%	10.7%	8.7%	17.7%	10.2%
<b>Minimal</b>	14.1%	36.6%	13.3%	7.4%	31.6%	11.8%	7.4%	30.5%	11.7%	4.1%	31.5%	11.7%	3.1%	31.3%	11.4%
<b>No WSAS</b>	0.0%	1.6%	0.6%	0.4%	0.8%	0.4%	0.4%	0.7%	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%	0.3%	0.0%	0.7%	0.4%

Figure 3.

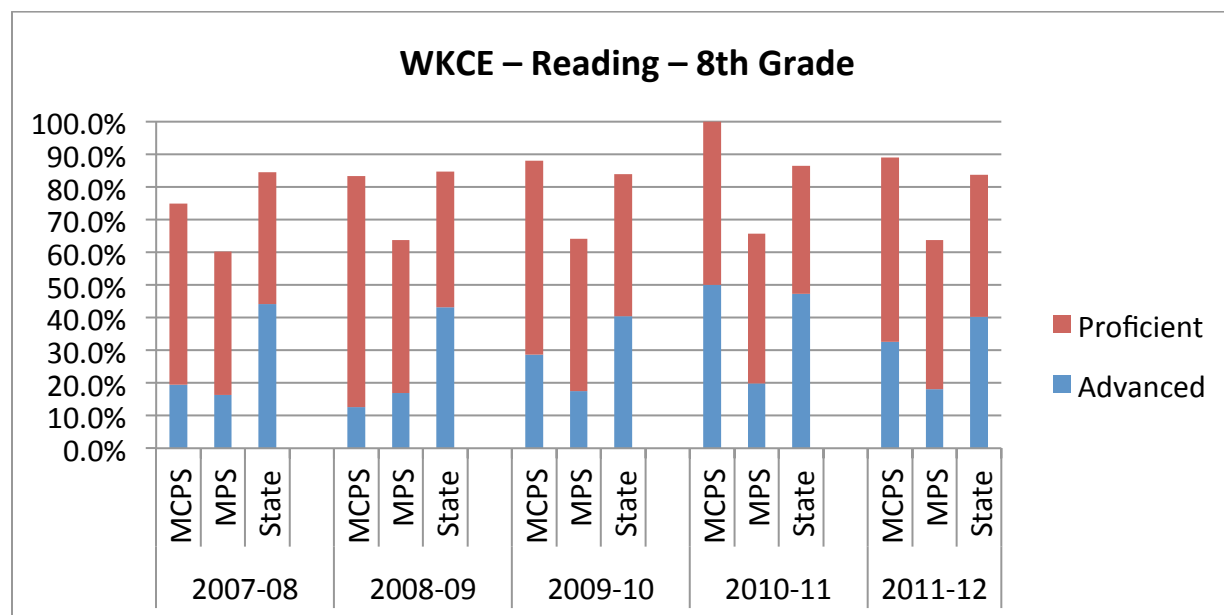


Table 3.

8th Reading	2007-08			2008-09			2009-10			2010-11			2011-12		
	MCPS	MPS	State	MCPS	MPS	State	MCPS	MPS	State	MCPS	MPS	State	MCPS	MPS	State
<b>Advanced</b>	19.4%	16.3%	44.1%	12.5%	16.9%	43.1%	28.6%	17.5%	40.4%	50.0%	19.8%	47.2%	32.6%	18.0%	40.2%
<b>Proficient</b>	55.6%	43.9%	40.4%	70.8%	46.9%	41.7%	59.5%	46.7%	43.6%	50.0%	45.9%	39.3%	56.5%	45.7%	43.5%
<b>Basic</b>	22.2%	20.3%	9.0%	12.5%	19.6%	9.2%	9.5%	20.1%	10.0%	0.0%	18.9%	8.3%	10.9%	20.1%	10.2%
<b>Minimal</b>	2.8%	17.5%	5.8%	2.1%	15.0%	5.5%	2.4%	15.3%	5.5%	0.0%	14.6%	4.7%	0.0%	15.5%	5.4%
<b>No WSAS</b>	0.0%	2.1%	0.8%	2.1%	1.7%	0.6%	0.0%	0.4%	0.5%	0.0%	0.8%	0.5%	0.0%	0.7%	0.6%

Figure 4.

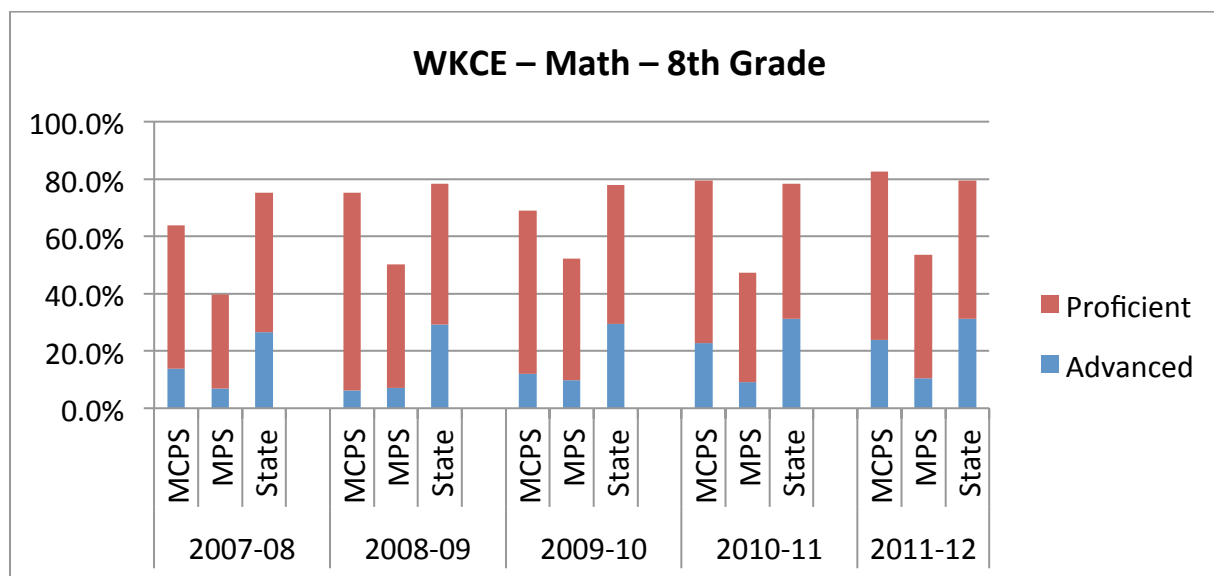
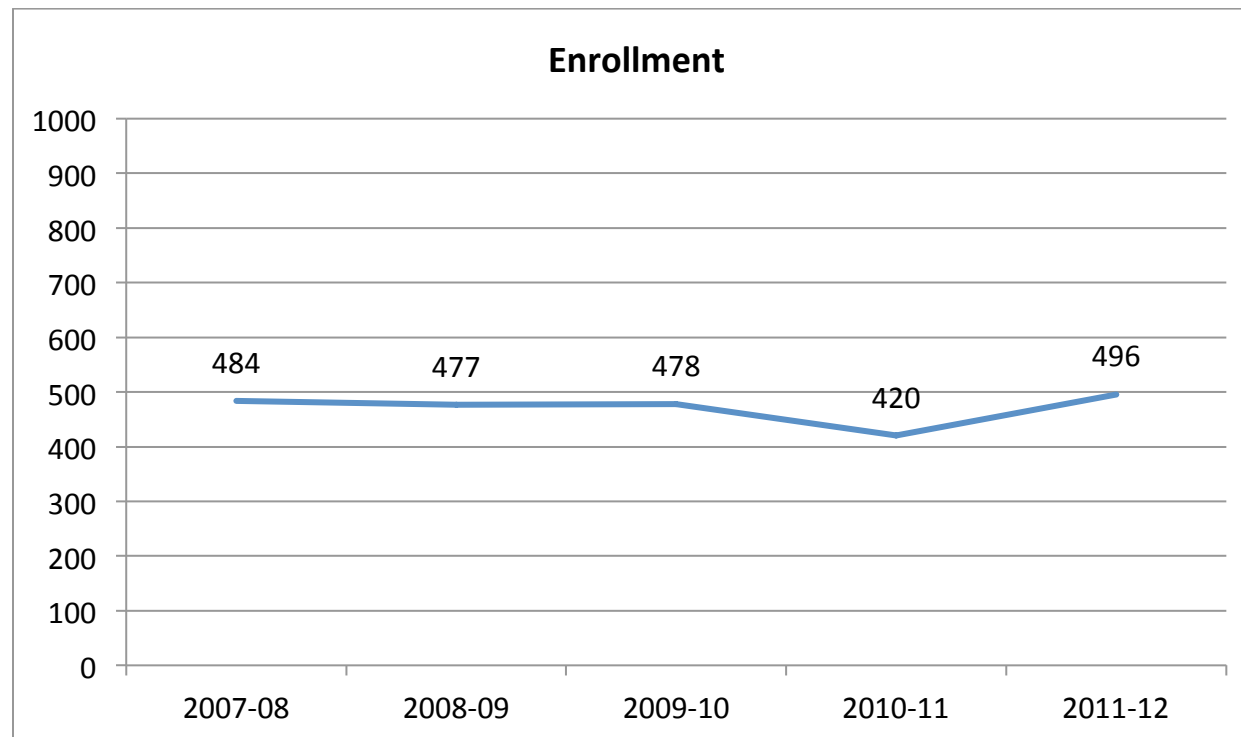


Table 4.

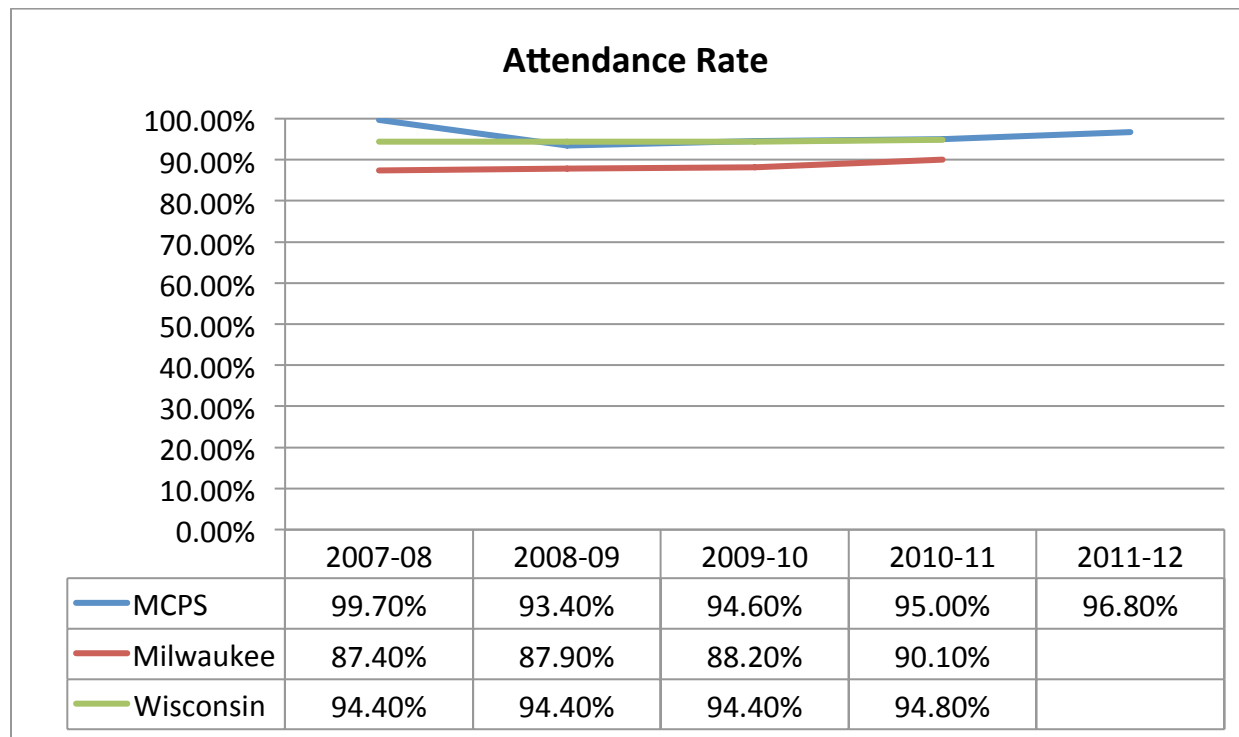
8th Math	2007-08			2008-09			2009-10			2010-11			2011-12		
	MCPS	MPS	State	MCPS	MPS	State	MCPS	MPS	State	MCPS	MPS	State	MCPS	MPS	State
<b>Advanced</b>	13.9%	6.8%	26.5%	6.3%	7.1%	29.3%	11.9%	9.7%	29.5%	22.7%	9.2%	31.2%	23.9%	10.4%	31.2%
<b>Proficient</b>	50.0%	33.0%	48.8%	68.8%	43.1%	49.1%	57.1%	42.4%	48.4%	56.8%	38.2%	47.1%	58.7%	43.2%	48.2%
<b>Basic</b>	22.2%	23.0%	13.1%	14.6%	26.0%	13.0%	21.4%	23.4%	13.0%	15.9%	23.0%	12.0%	13.0%	22.8%	12.0%
<b>Minimal</b>	13.9%	35.1%	11.0%	8.3%	22.9%	8.3%	9.5%	24.0%	8.7%	4.5%	28.7%	9.3%	4.3%	22.8%	8.3%
<b>No WSAS</b>	0.0%	2.1%	0.6%	2.1%	0.9%	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%	0.3%	0.0%	0.9%	0.4%	0.0%	0.8%	0.4%

Figure 5.



Enrollment, by design, has remained steady throughout the five-year period.

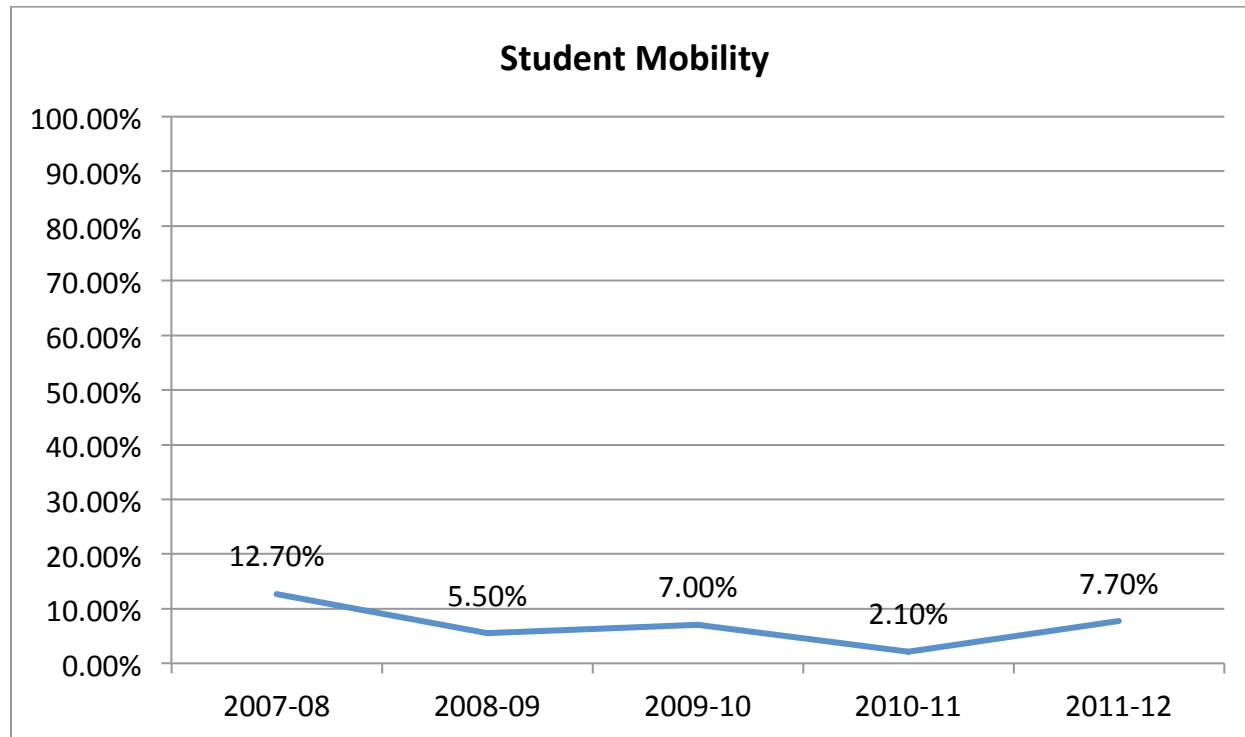
Figure 6.



Average daily attendance rates are steady from year to year, exceed the rate for MPS, and are very similar to the overall state rate of attendance.

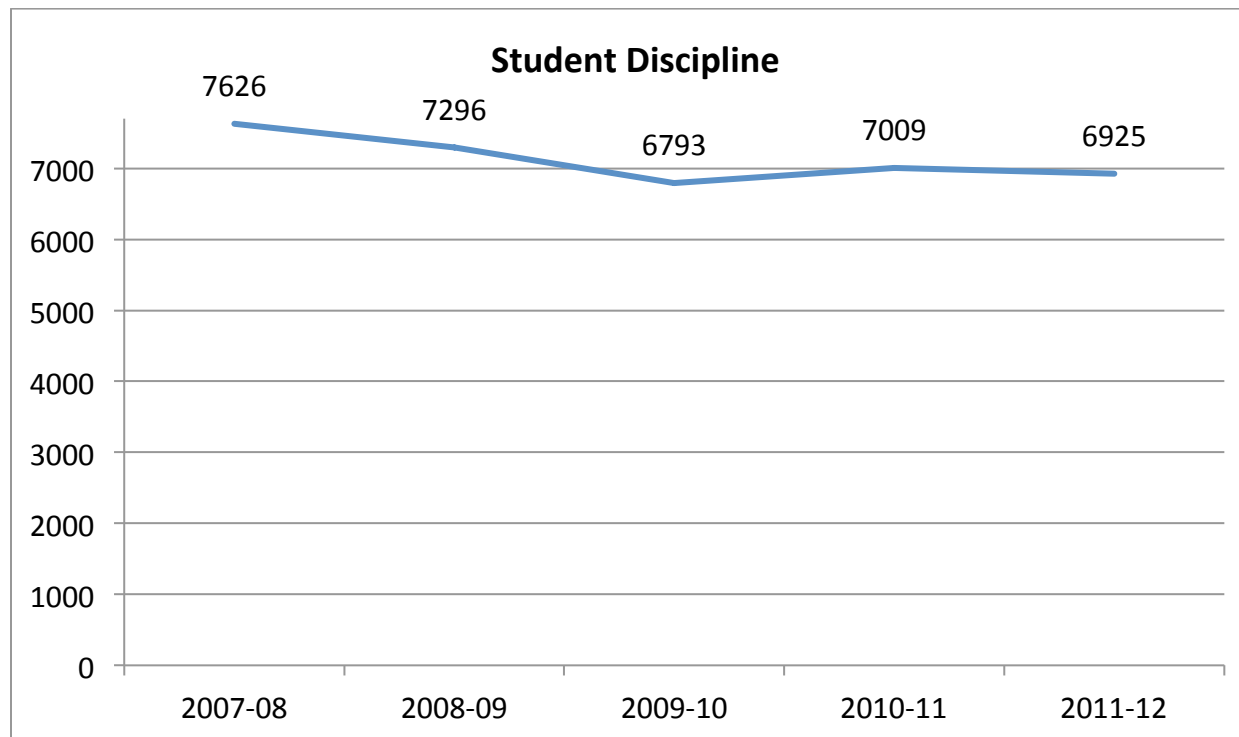


Figure 7.



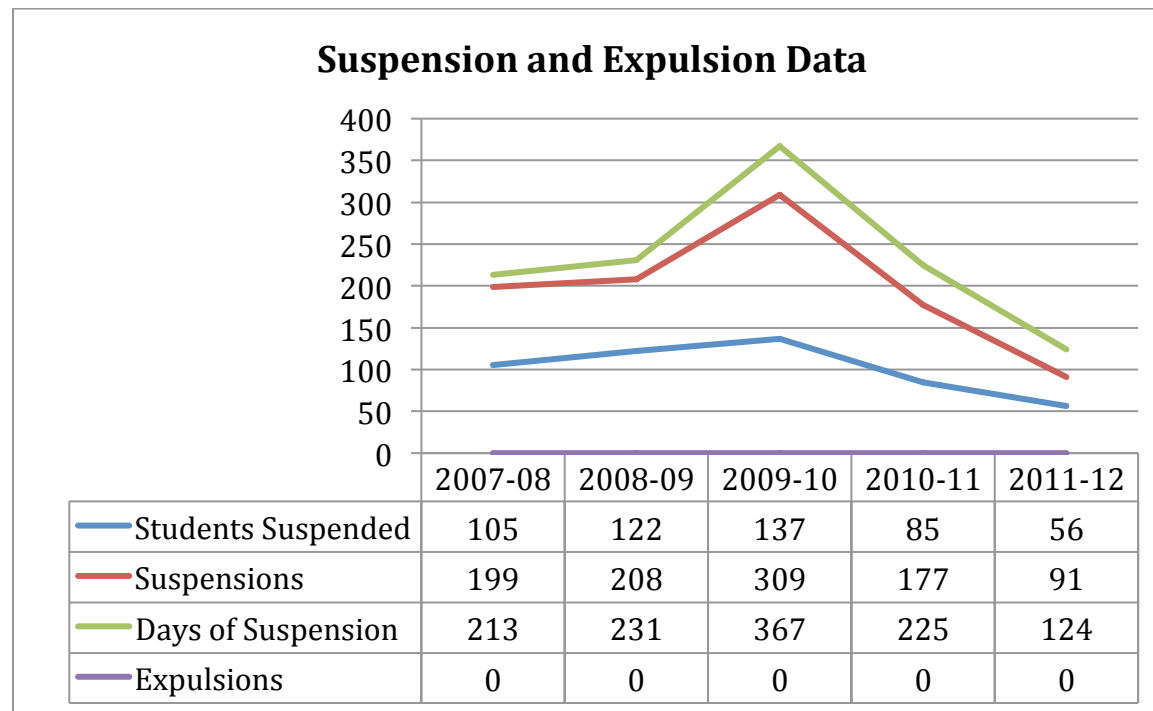
Student mobility is exceedingly low for an inner city school. With few exceptions, once a student enrolls they remain enrolled in the school.

Figure 8.



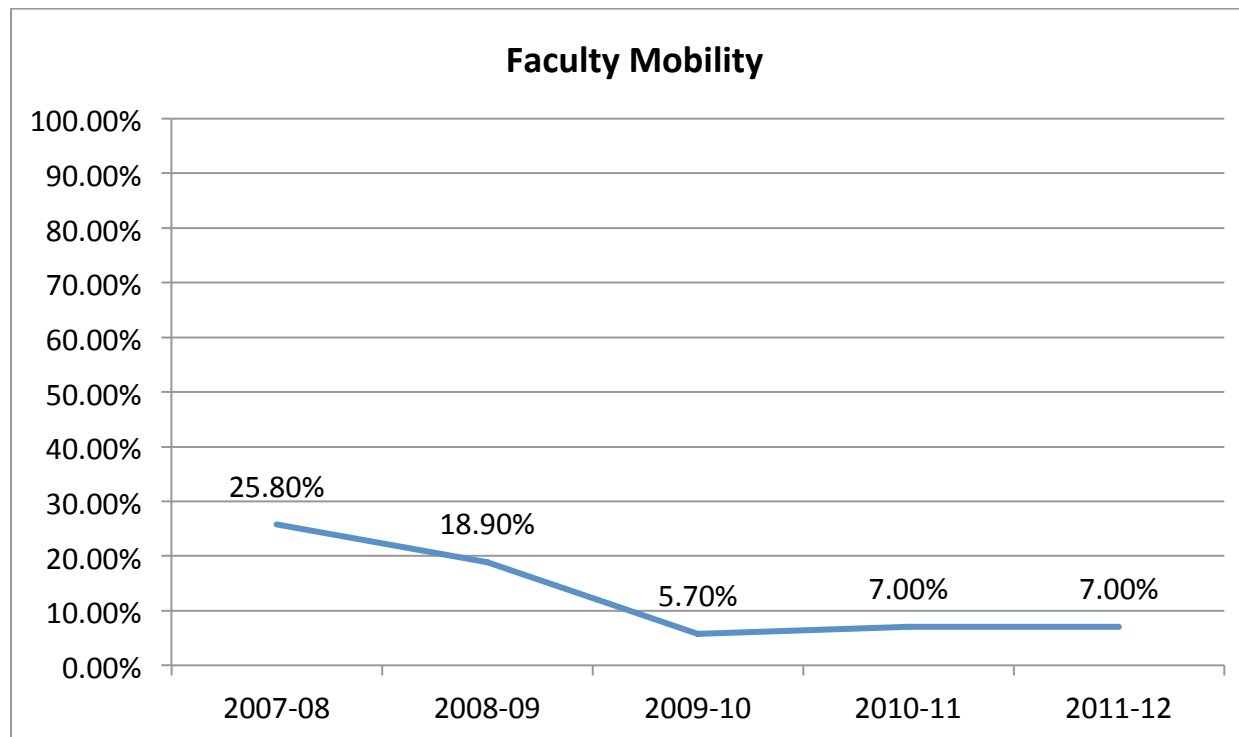
Discipline numbers presented above are very different from those presented by other schools. MCPS uses a “Virtuous Dollar” program wherein student make “deposits” or “withdrawals” form their account based on behavior and performance. Thus, the numbers presented above reflect the number of “withdrawal.” Discipline data at other schools reflect the number of times students are sent to the School Office. Thus, MCPS discipline data cannot be compared to that of the other five schools.

Figure 9.



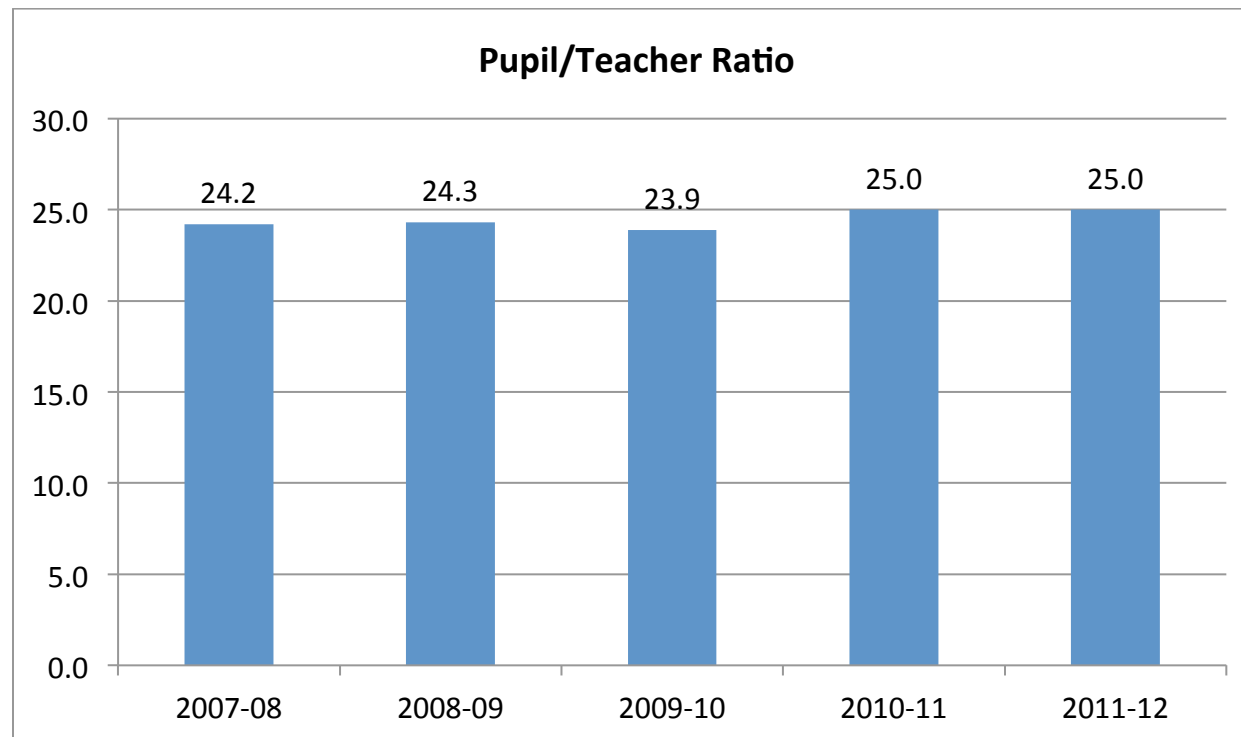
Between 2007-08 and 2009-10 the number of students suspended increased slightly from 105 to 137 while the number of suspensions and number of days of suspension increased at a higher rate indicated that some students were being suspended more often and for a greater number of days. Conversely, the number of students suspended, the number of suspensions and the number of days of suspensions declined dramatically from 2009-10 to 2011-12. During the entire five-year period, there were no students expelled.

Figure 10.



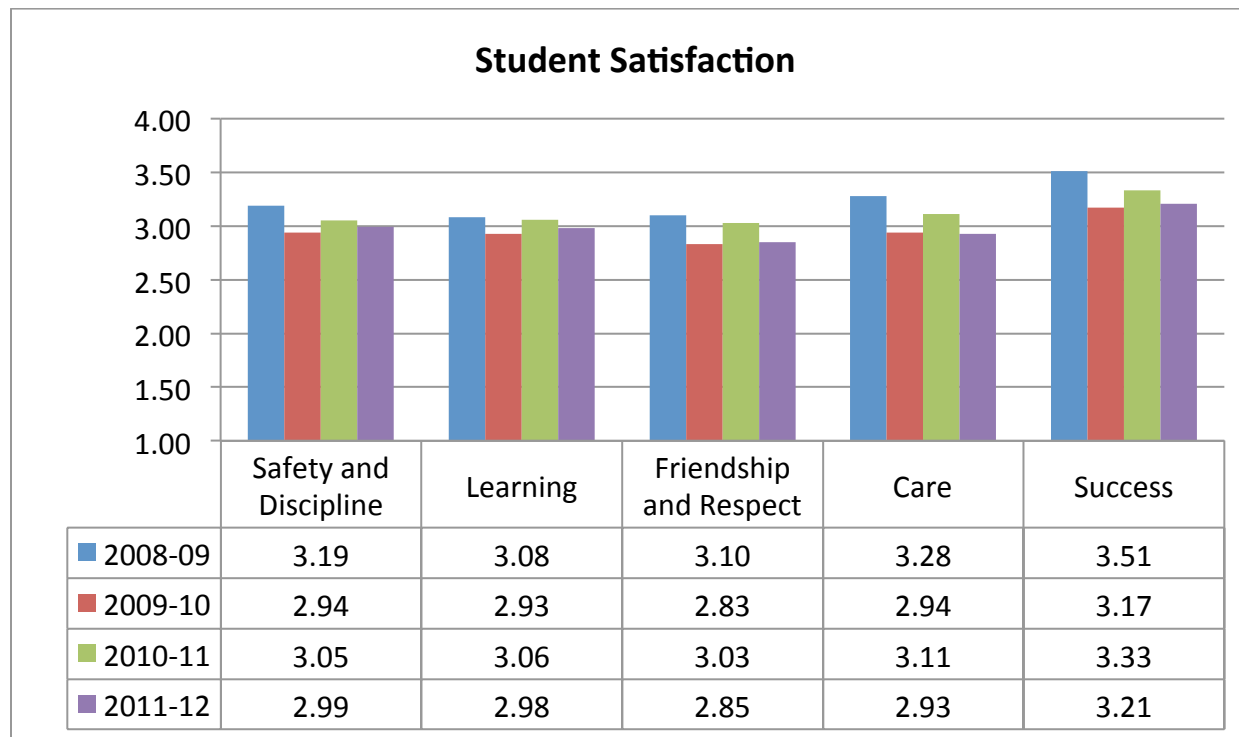
The number of teachers leaving MCPS each year declined significantly from 2007-08 to 2009-10 and has remained at this low level for the past three years. Stability of the teaching corps can be a major factor in student achievement.

Figure 11.



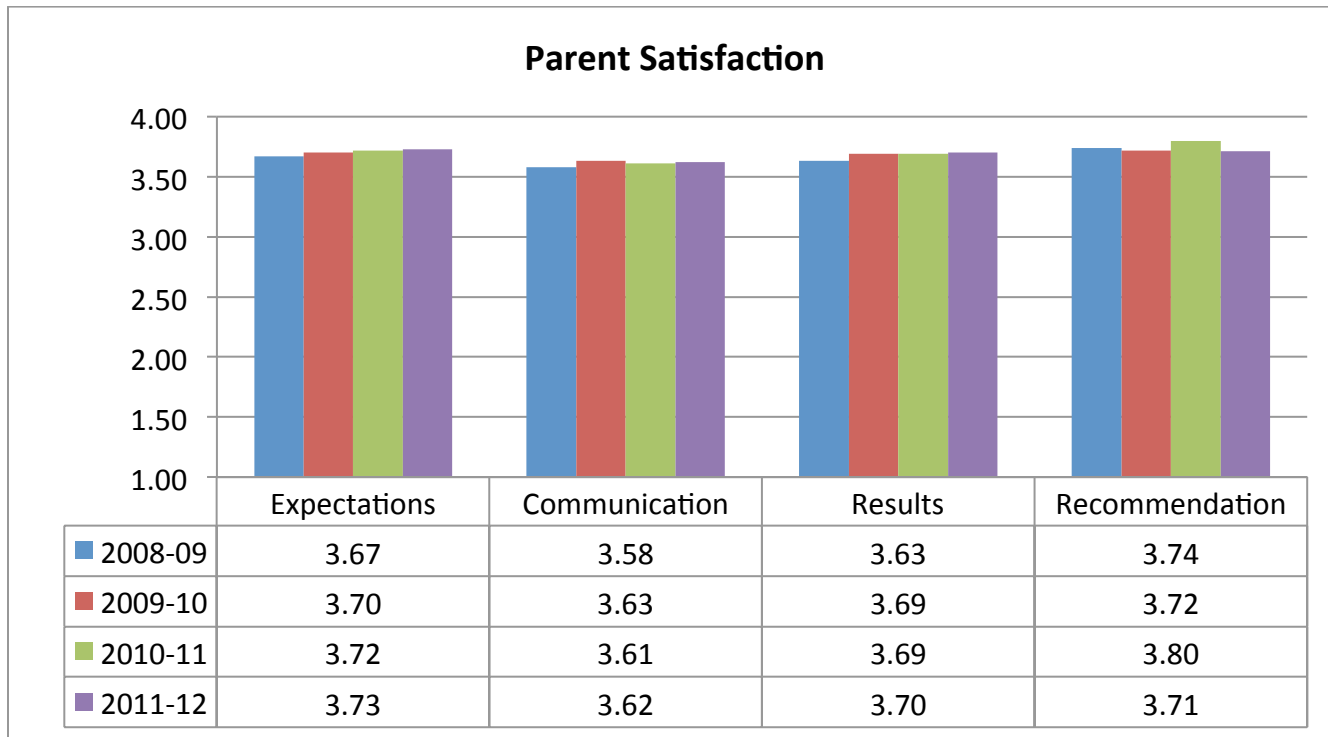
The ratio of students to classroom teachers has remained consistent over the past five years.

Figure 12.



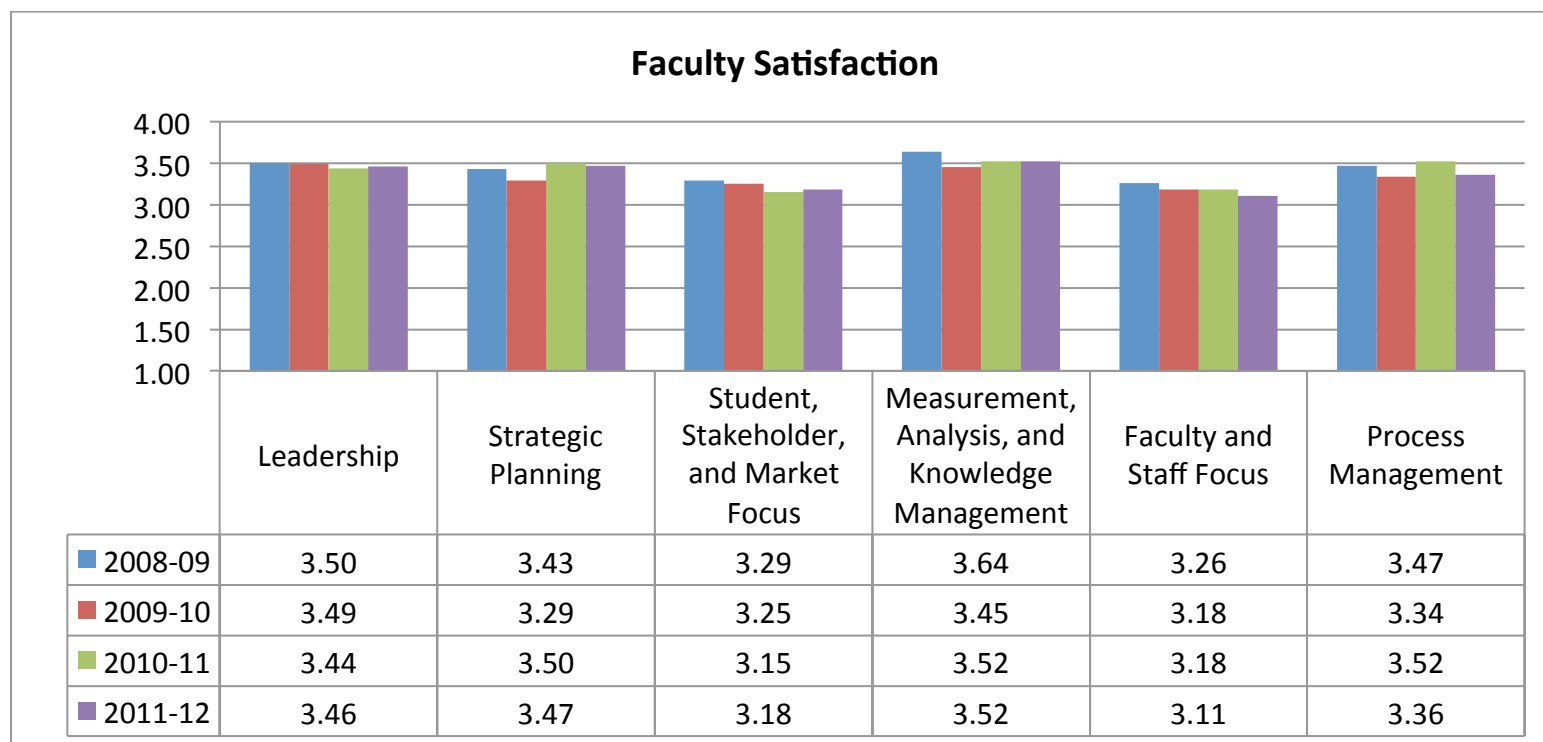
Student satisfaction with MCPS is consistently high. Importantly, students consistently rank their academic success the highest.

Figure 13.



Parent satisfaction is also consistently high.

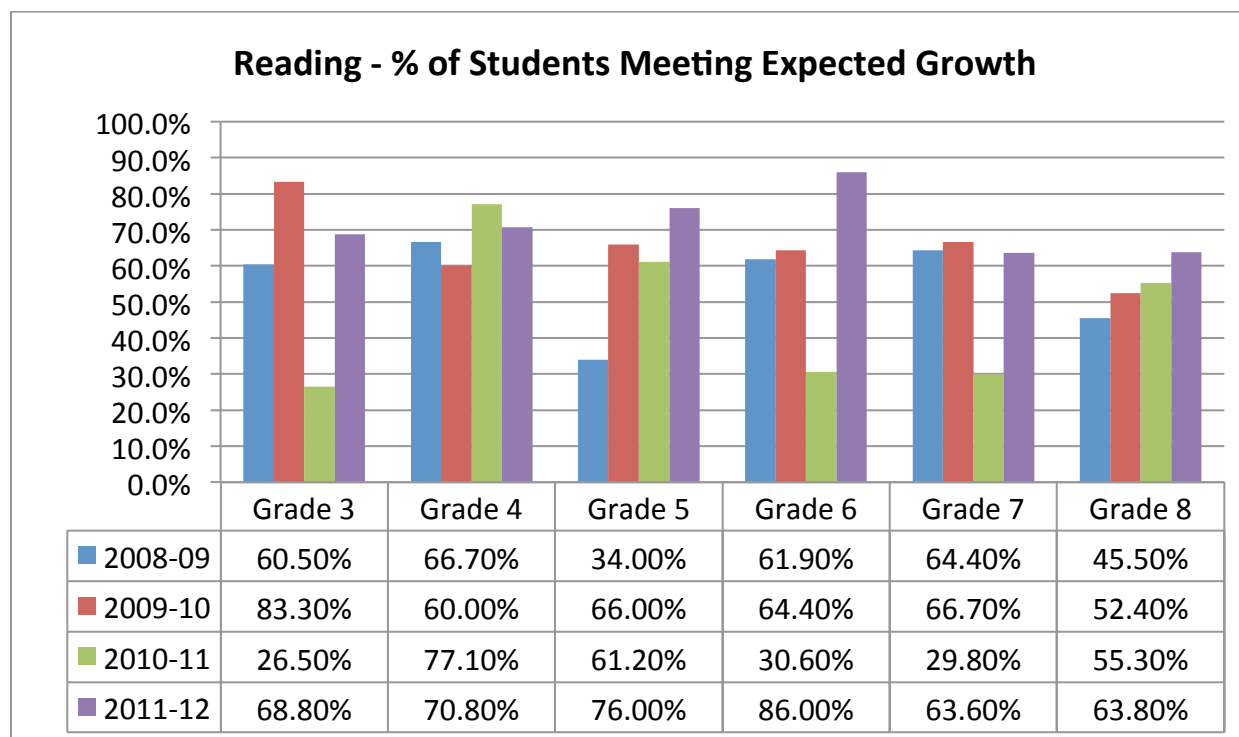
Figure 14.



The faculty survey is based on the Baldrige Criteria for Educational Excellence and measures the quality level that faculty members believe exists with certain aspects of the school. Results reveal that the faculty believes that MCPS is achieving a high level of quality in these areas.

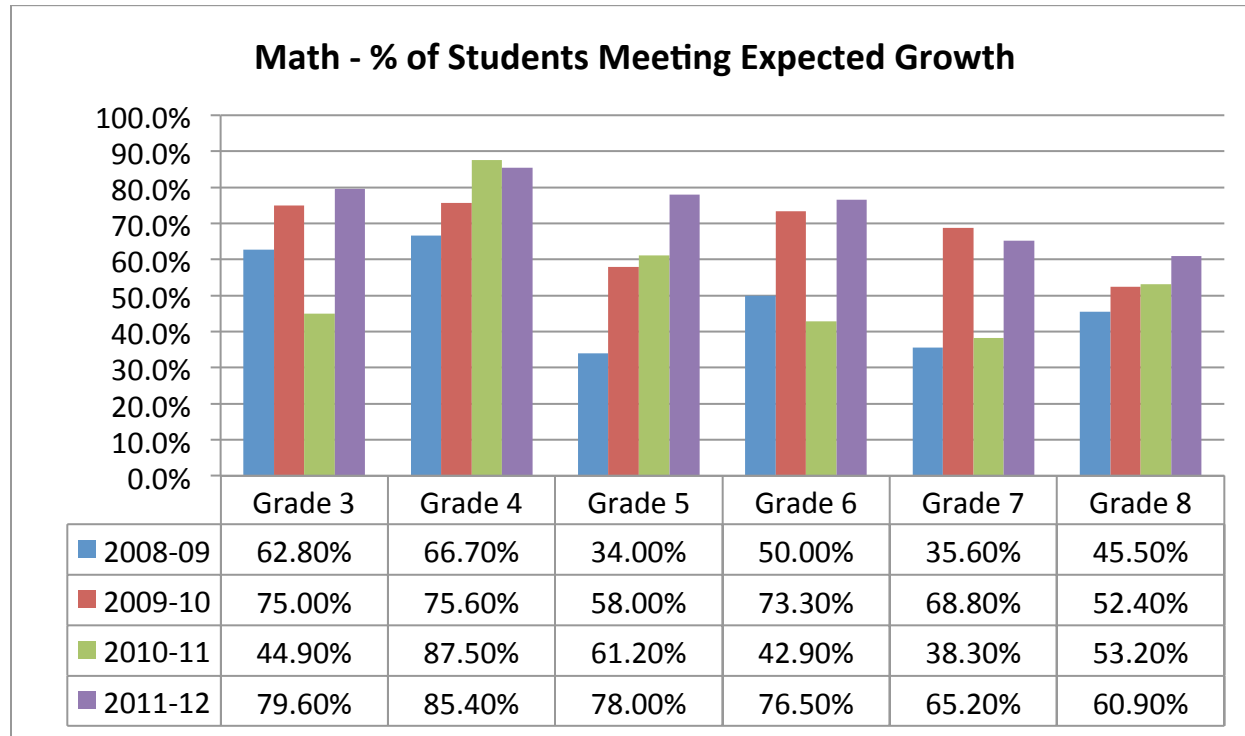


Figure 15.



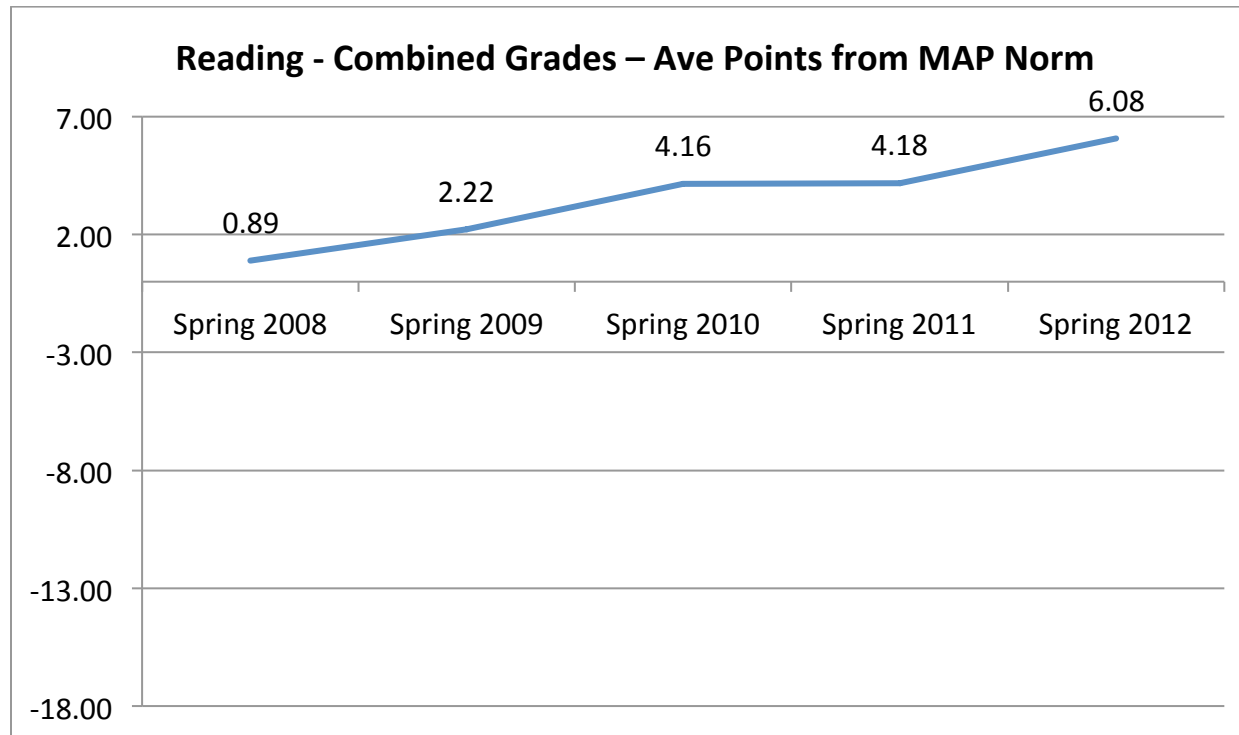
Each MCPS student takes MAP assessments in Reading and Math in both the Fall and the Spring semester. NWEA MAP assessments are nationally normed. In addition, Fall MAP assessment results include an expectation of the average amount of growth a student is expected to make by the Spring, based on that student's Fall RIT score and their grade level. The graph above shows the percent of students that met their expected Fall to Spring growth in Reading. There is some variability in the results, however, there does appear to be a general upward trend with a larger percentage of students meeting their expected growth in the 2011-12 school year than in the 3 years prior.

Figure 16.



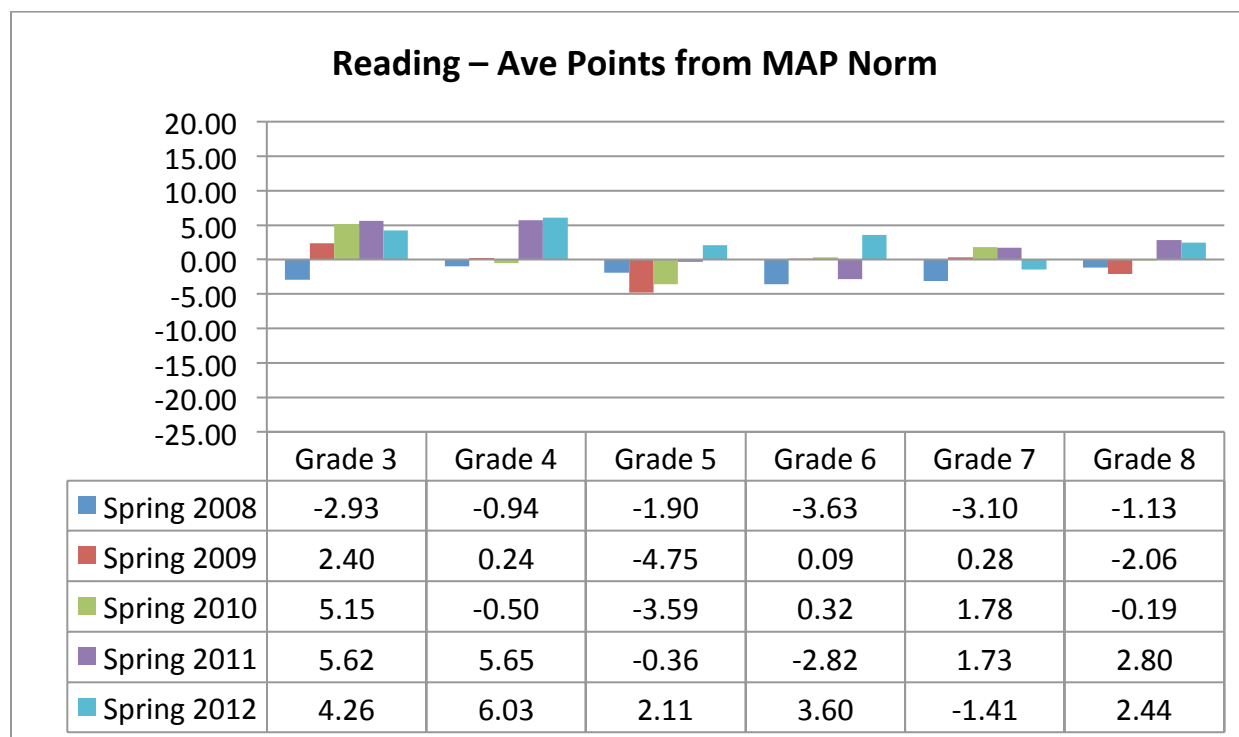
A similar trend was found in Math with a higher percentage of students meeting their expected Fall to Spring growth in the 2011-12 school year than in the previous three school years.

Figure 17.



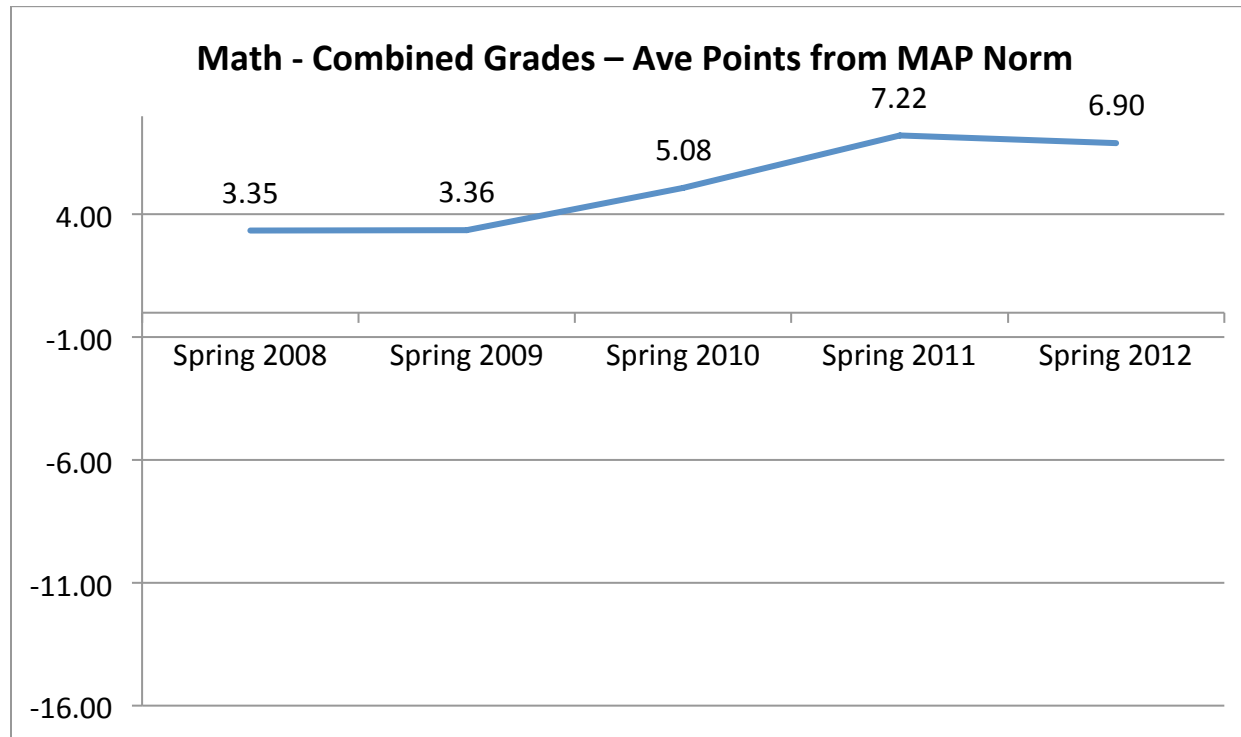
NWEA MAP tests are nationally normed. This graph shows that the average MCPS student (grades K-8) in Spring of 2008 scored less than 1 point above the MAP national norm in Reading. This number has risen steadily from one year to the next with the average MCPS student (Grades K-8) in the Spring of 2012 scoring over 6 points above the national MAP norm in Reading.

Figure 18.



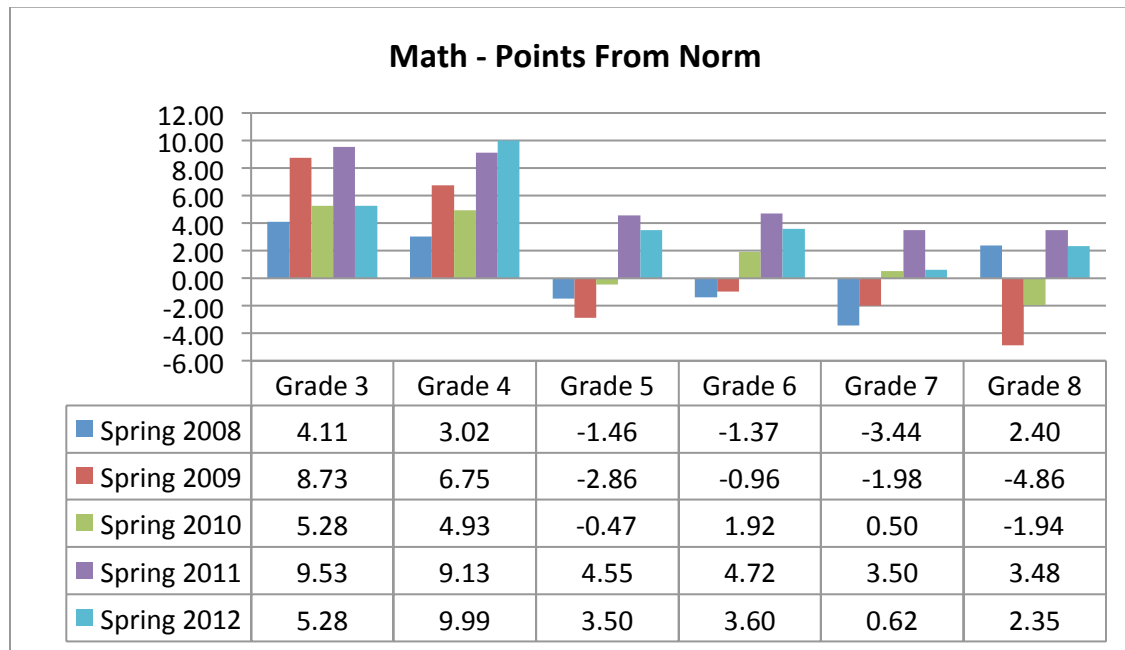
When looking at the average points above/below the national norm by grade level there is more variability in the results. However, in the Spring of 2008, the average student in all grades (Grade 3-8) scored below the national MAP Reading norm. By the Spring of 2012, the average student in nearly all grades (Grade 3-6 and 8) scored above the national MAP Reading norm.

Figure 19.



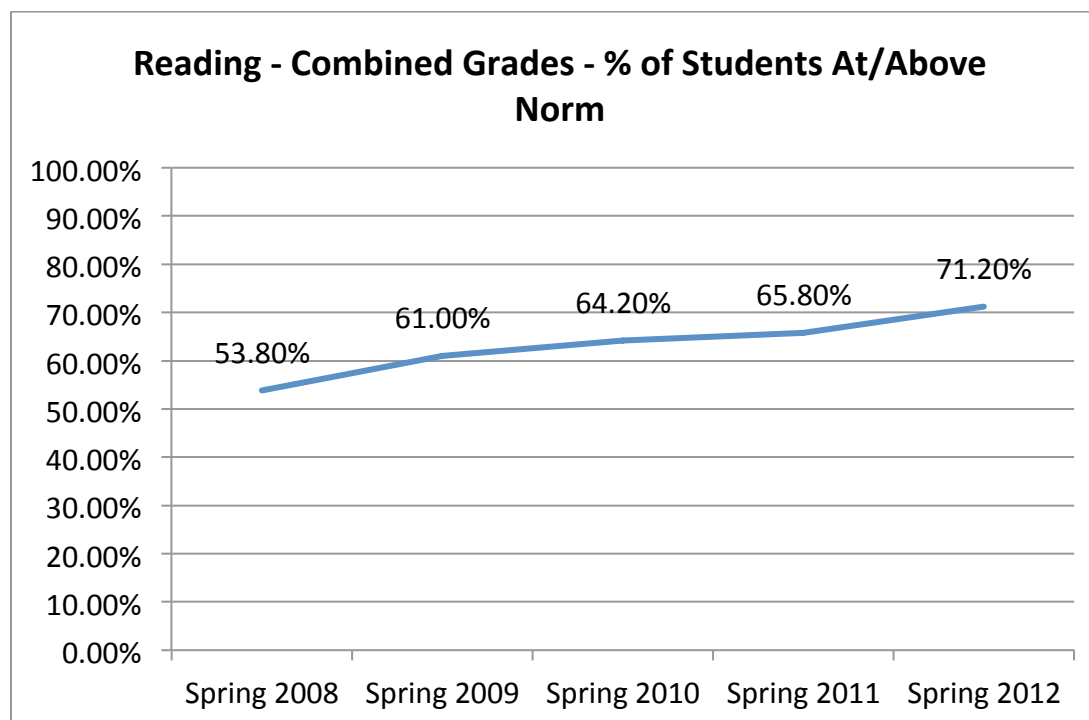
This graph shows that the average MCPS student (grades K-8) in Spring of 2008 scored about 3 points above the MAP national norm in Math. This number has risen steadily from one year to the next with the average MCPS student (Grades K-8) in the Spring of 2012 scoring nearly 7 points above the national MAP norm in Math.

Figure 20.



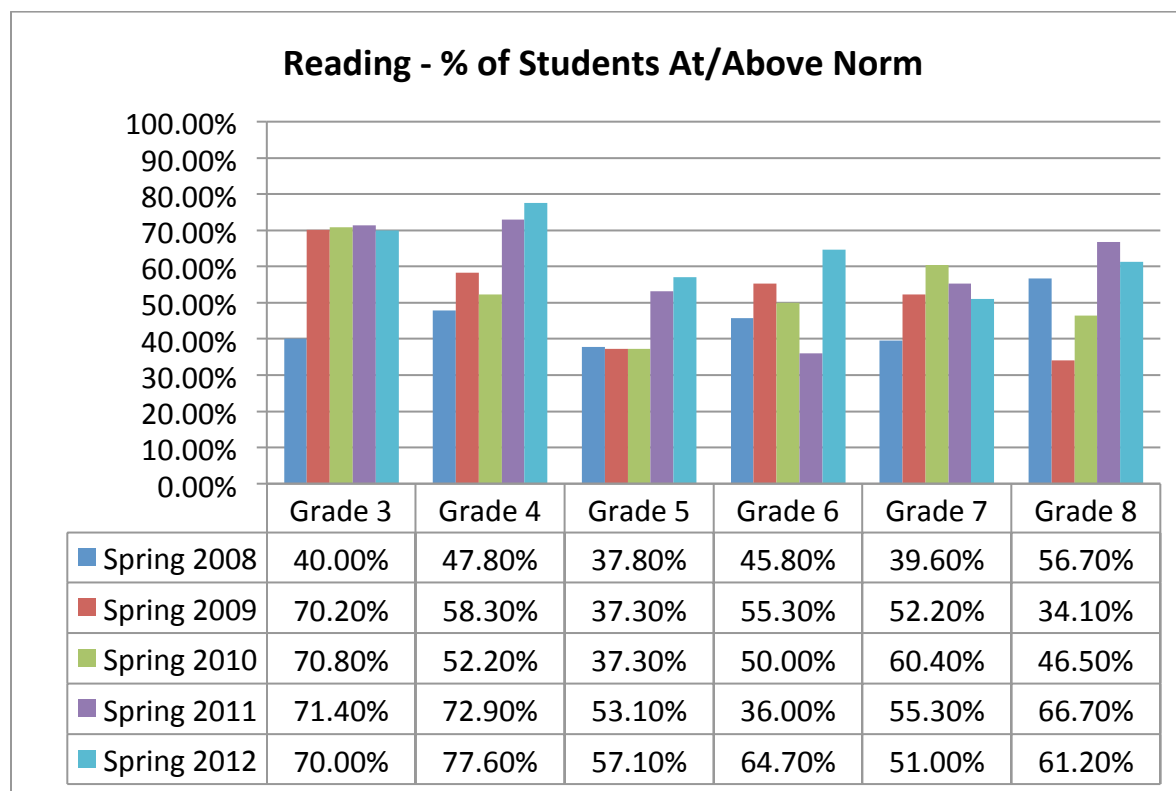
When looking at the average points above/below the national norm by grade level there is more variability in the results. However, the average MCPS student in the Spring of 2012 scored more above the national NWEA MAP math norm than the average MCPS student in the Spring of 2008.

Figure 21.



Because NWEA MAP assessments have national norms for each grade level and subject area, it is possible to determine the percent of students that score above the average. This graph shows that the percent of students (Grade K-8) scoring above average in Reading at MCPS has been steadily increasing for the past 5 years, with over 71% of students scoring above average in Reading in the Spring of 2012.

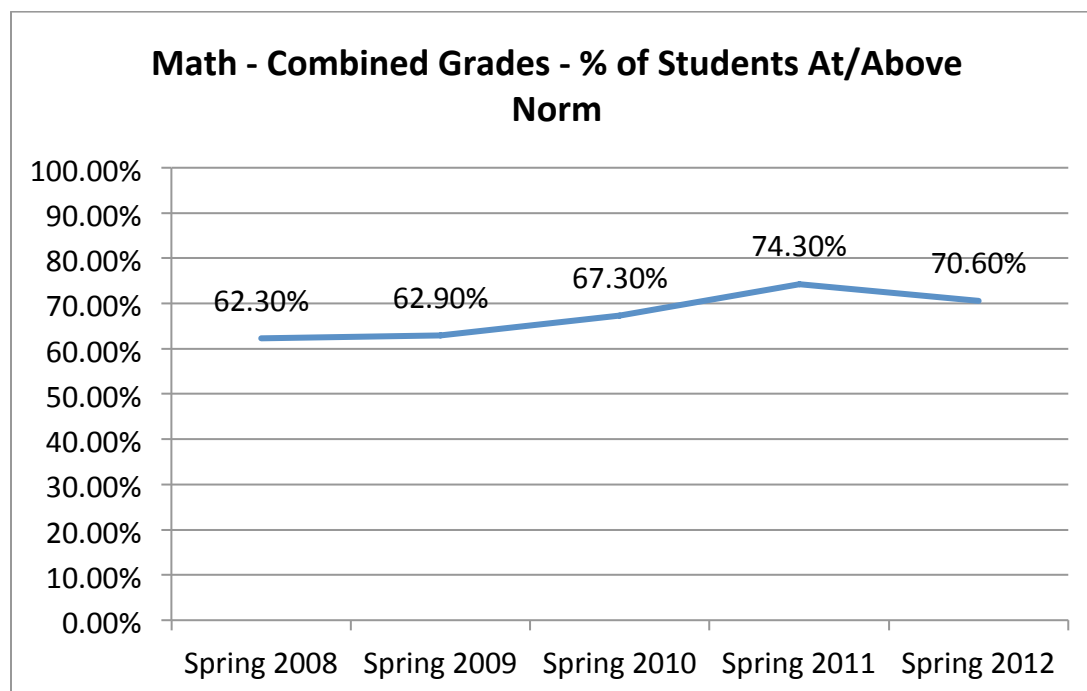
Figure 22.



When looking at the percent of students scoring at or above the national NWEA MAP norm in Reading by grade level, the results are more variable. However there is a general increase across all grade levels in the percent of students scoring at or above the national norm in Reading over the past 5 years – especially in grades 4 through 6.

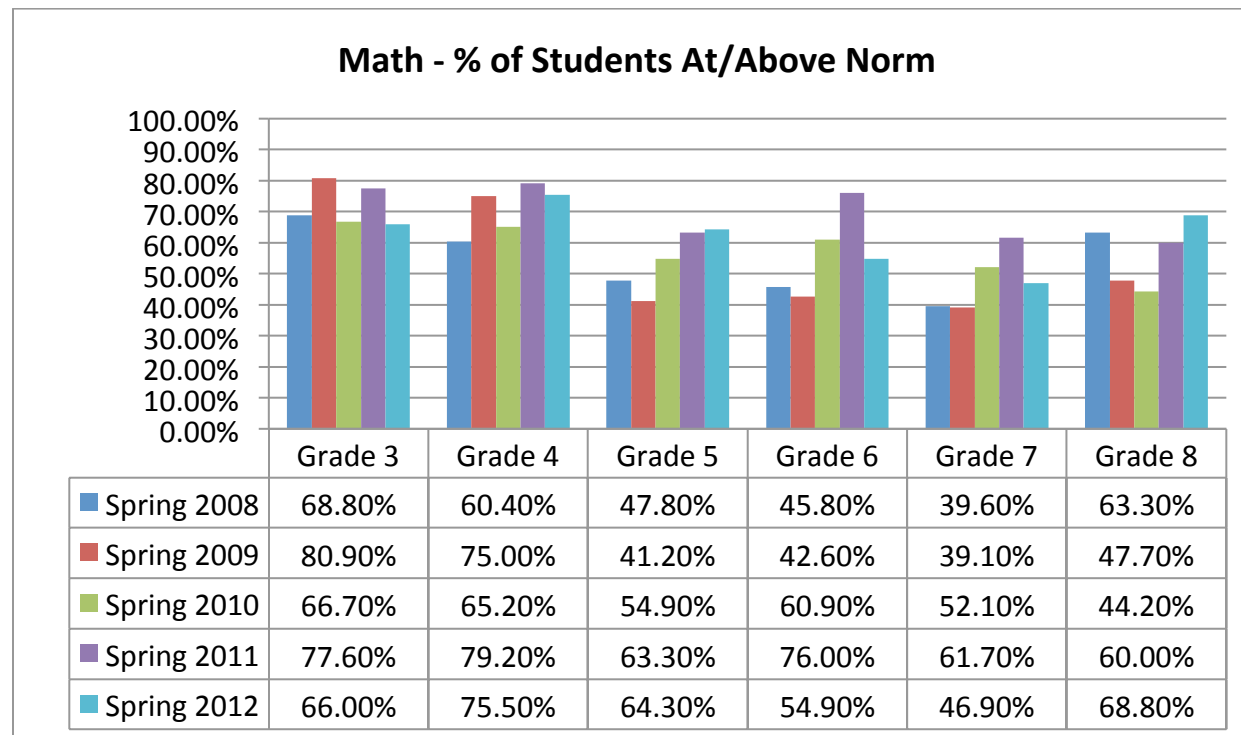


Figure 23.



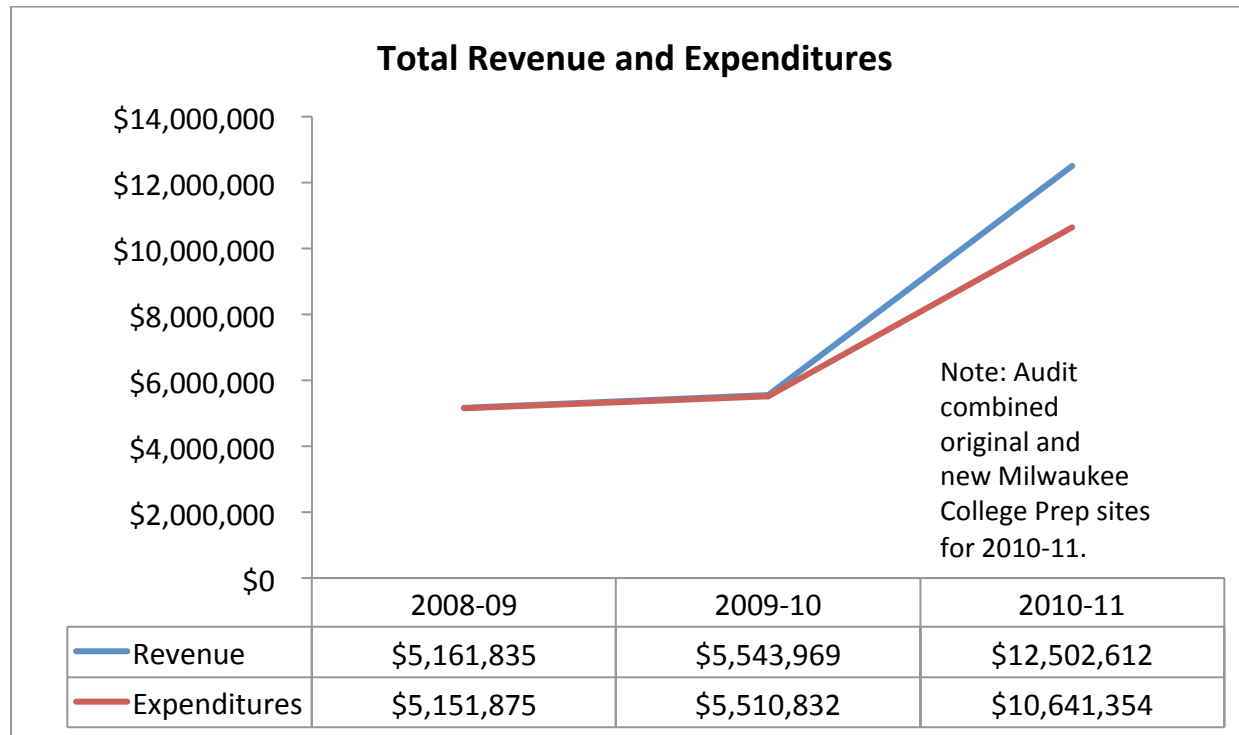
This graph shows that the percent of students (Grade K-8) scoring at or above the national NWEA MAP average in Math at MCPS steadily increased from Spring 2008 to Spring 2011, with a slight decrease from Spring 2011 to Spring 2012. However, in the Spring of 2012 there were still nearly 71% of MCPS students that scored at or above the national average.

Figure 24.



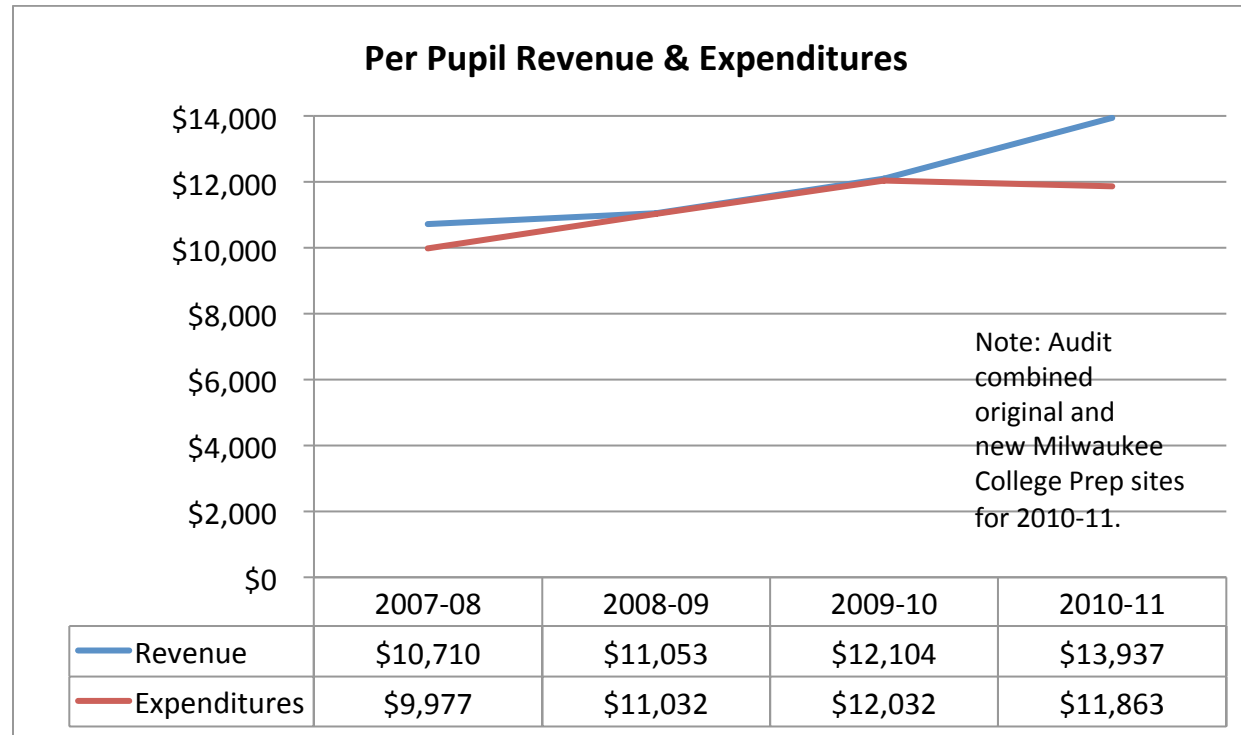
This graph shows that the percent of students scoring at or above the national NWEA MAP norm in the Spring of 2012 was higher than the percent of students scoring at or above the national NWEA MAP norm in the Spring of 2008 for grades 4 through 8.

Figure 25.



Revenues for MCPS consistently exceeds expenditures on a year-by-year basis. In part this occurs because of the Board's ability to raise funds through donations. State and federal funding of the schools is in line with other charter schools.

Figure 26.



The per pupil funding level of MCPS exceeds that provided by state and federal funds as a result of donations received by the school from private sources.

# **Seeds of Health Elementary School “Windlake”**

## **A CASE STUDY**

**By  
Julie Kremer**

### **LEADERSHIP**

When reflecting about leadership at Seeds of Health Elementary School, several factors come to mind. But since the keys to success are extremely important, there remains one substantial attribute which seemed to leap forward in all the discussions with staff members and the administrative team. The Elementary Director’s sense of attitude toward the students and staff was everywhere. The attitude of being capable and doing your best was posted, spoken and acted out in the halls, the lunchroom, the playground and in the classroom. Through observations and discussions with staff members, it was evident that the leaders loved their work and cared for the people (students, staff & parents) within the organization. A teacher stated the following:

“The leader’s vision & management, which shapes our program, is exceptional. She is 150% on top of it with a staff that is willing to go with her. It is about the leadership.”

All the individual characteristics point to this single factor. The Elementary Director and her team of leaders loved what they did, created a culture where people needed one another and wrapped it up as doing something very important for their students and families. It is this sense of attitude while working together to complete the mission that is at the heart of success at Seeds of Health Elementary School (Windlake Elementary, K4-4 grades & Windlake Academy, 5-8 grades).

In a discussion of the individual components of leadership success, an unwavering and uncompromising focus on the mission is definitely present. This is a constant task of the leader. In our discussions, she revealed that she spends extra time writing the Friday Focus to make sure she includes mission driven ideals and reinforcing bits about the happenings within the school in order to create a strong sense of belonging and pride in the school. Therefore the staff knows the mission and understands its importance. This is done by spending time with all individuals in the school from the lunch room ladies to the safety coordinator on the evening shift. The importance and contributions of their jobs is specifically linked to the mission in a natural way. It is through hallway conversations, recognition and affirmations. The staff is constantly reminded of their strengths and reinforced in a positive way. Walking down the halls one hears a teacher or assistant express the positive way the children are moving to their special class (music, art, library or physical education.) This then transfers into the classroom. Evidence of the teachers’ good work is seen through their willingness to go beyond what is expected. The teachers and the school provide numerous activities that require extra time and effort from the staff at Windlake.

It is shown in the homework club, soccer club, or “Mad Hat” dancing club. Within this strong culture promoting community and working together, the children benefit.

The result of a strong mission is that the leader, also, must focus on the people. The Elementary Director understood this concept that you manage things but lead people, for it is the people that are at the core of the leadership activities within the school. Here are the actions from the leader and her team:

- Be accessible to all staff members.
- Provide appropriate training, staff development and feedback required for success.
- Keep staff in the “what’s going on” information loop.
- Demonstrate respect for staff members’ time, talents, ideas and concerns.
- Help everyone grow, learn and develop.

Because it is staff who ultimately make the mission happen, hiring is a huge responsibility. The administrative team is part of the process, but the final decision rests with the Elementary Director. The investment of time and effort is a big pay off over time. The school’s mission and service to children succeeding is the number one element in the hiring process. There is very little turnover at Seeds of Health Elementary, but occasionally a new teacher must be hired. This is a thorough process of reading applications and having two to three interviews with the selected candidates before a decision is final. Hiring right is a very serious concern of the leader, and it shows when questioned about the process.

Seeds of Health Elementary School is situated in two different locations in rather old buildings, but the leader established a culture that what happens inside the walls was the most important thing at the schools. Seeds of Health Elementary established its values early in its history and maintained those beliefs through the following 17 years. Successful leaders know that modeling the values is a constant force within the school culture. In order to be effective, the leader constantly models the desired behaviors. Respect, integrity, quality, responsibility and working together are not only posted on the walls of the school but are spoken on a regular basis. The leader’s job was to make sure everyone knew the values, and then to help everyone turn these good beliefs into everyday behaviors. The result is a great place to work. A teacher’s quote sums it up-“We are here because we want to teach here and no other place.”

## **SHARED MISSION, BELIEFS and VALUES**

“The Seeds of Health Elementary mission is to work in strong partnership with parents and community to fully develop physical, emotional, social and intellectual potential of each child in a safe and supportive learning environment.” This is not merely a statement in the handbook, but instead a natural part of daily activities and procedures at Windlake. It is spoken during staff meetings, written in newsletters, the Friday Focus message and various emails and modeled continuously by the administrative team. The administrator begins the staff meeting with a story about an urban child who succeeds or a child who won a writing contest and will get to continue to the next step. It is about all things positive and good things to share. As stated in the case study, the Elementary Director stated the following:

The mission holds us together. It is the common thread that binds the staff into developing learning strategies that help, understand and individualize learning opportunities for each child that enters the school. It is underneath all decisions in the agency as well as filtering down into the classrooms.

In today's educational atmosphere comprised of unrelenting accountability, common core standards, increased diversity of learners and expanded societal pressures, maintaining the focus on the true mission of supporting each and every child becomes a challenge. It takes strong leadership dedicated to simple truths and beliefs. Some 17 years ago the leadership team formulated a set of ideals and formed these into a mission that holds true today. This mission of attitude and behaviors was embraced internally and not imposed externally. This is one of the major keys to success. The Elementary Director has stood strong on the following actions knowing that holding to them would result in success over time. The clear articulation of the mission, beliefs and core values happen by doing the following:

- The mission is an unwavering and uncompromising focus of the entire system.
- Empathy and encouragement is demonstrated on a daily basis. It is intentional and constant.
- A strong sense of personal best and achievement is evident throughout the building.

There is a solid connection between the formalized strategic plan and the school's mission. There is an annual accountability plan connected to school goals and school improvement plans. These are the more formal procedures that exist in most school systems. The most important factors of building a sense of mission within the school happens quietly, yet intentionally, every day. The spending time with individual staff members, making the mission the core component of decision-making and work planning processes, and developing the mission as the focus are the steps required of Seeds of Health's leadership team in order to sustain success in this area.

During the staff interviews, the purpose and mission of Windlake Elementary was so evident, because all staff members believed that what they agreed to do was challenging, possible and worthy. The resounding expression was "we are in this together." Adults as well as students were affirmed of doing their best and being capable in their pursuit of achievement. Messages of personal best draped the hallways along with numerous expressions of gratitude for their teaching quality at staff meetings and team meetings. The teachers discussed students at team meetings and not just the weekly activities. Teachers embraced staff development opportunities in order to learn more ways to meet the needs of individual students. Putting the core beliefs into practice seemed to be a natural state culminating in a strong sense of mission. These educators then shared their mission and vision with the school community. Learning was important. Messages were sent home that instilled a sense of pride and trust in the school. Parents were welcomed and invited to become involved in their child's learning opportunities. Communication between school and community was daily. Teachers had a chance every day to meet and greet parents at the door while dropping off their children. Then at the day's end when parents picked them up another time for teachers to touch base with a parent. Over the years this became an extremely effective tool for sharing information to go between school and home.

## **POSITIVE SOCIAL BEHAVIORS**

The Seeds of Health Elementary approach to classroom management and behavior is centered on the belief that students want to do well and can learn how to get along in a positive manner. The strong relationship foundation allows a proactive system to permeate the school. Students are treated with respect and encouragement in order to problem solve and to make good choices in a variety of situations. Each adult in the building has had the Capturing Kids' Hearts training module. They continuously model the fundamental beliefs of the program like building a classroom social contract, encourage leaders from within, encourage behaviors around character words of the month, and giving positive affirmations to one another on a regular basis. It is a feel good environment from September to June. The CKH 's program is founded on the principle that a loving, nurturing culture will reduce disruptions and behavior problems by making students and families feel like they are welcome partners at the school. This program has existed at Seeds of Health Elementary for over ten years. Therefore, the program provides the staff with a common language and approach as the basis for interactions with students and families. Another CKH concept is that "if you have a child's heart you will have his/her mind." This is the road map for Seeds of Health Elementary.

Through my various observations of the two locations and the staff, I would say that the attitude for success is based on this Capturing Kids' Hearts philosophy. This really seems to be one of the core targets of the school. The adults and the students (families) are connected in words and actions. They are building a better school by being a better person through high expectations and the various character development activities. This school wide action is present at all times. It is totally accepted as the way we do things around here. The teachers greet the students at the door in the mornings. They seek out something special in order to develop a relationship with each and every child. It is as simple as saying "hey new haircut. I like it!" It is a reaching out behavior which expresses to the child that I am the teacher but I care about you. All staff members believe in the program and adhere to its ideas. The result is it brings everyone together supporting children in a similar fashion. This helps to maintain and reduce the need for any guessing on the child's part. Conversations concerning how to behave, how to react in different circumstances and what behavior is expected are an ongoing part of school life at Seeds of Health. This occurs on a regular basis with students in K4 -8<sup>th</sup> grades.

## **HIGH ACADEMIC RESULTS**

Through the Seeds of Health's strategic planning process, a five-year academic plan was developed for 2010-2015. During the alignment process, the focus for teaching became preparing students academically to be successful in life. This was accomplished through a traditionally based academic program presented in a concept based approach. The concept based format was connected to the works of Lynn Erikson's *Concept Based Curriculum and Instruction*, Joseph Novak and Robert Gowin's *Learning How to Learn* and John Bransford's *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience and School*. The focus has been to improve basis reading and mathematics scores. The addition of student monitoring through ongoing assessments became a significant piece of the planning process. The organization of a data management system and structuring staff meetings to analyze student data has provided the means to adjust instruction to



student needs. This was a huge staff development project. The end products were the development of academic support programs like the following: pull out reading & math for either individuals or small groups, direct instruction, increased vocabulary skills, bilingual support, after school tutoring, and extended summer school. Student achievement has had consistent growth as measured through the WKCE ( Wisconsin Knowledge and Concept Examination), the MAP test and also classroom assessments.

Utilizing the MAP testing format provided the staff a means to evaluate student performance and then to be responsible for improvement. Data decision making confirmed what was working and revealed any gaps in a student's learning. Team meetings were held after each MAP testing session in the fall, in January and in spring. Individual student scores and whole class trends are discussed using meaningful data. The first round of testing provides information so that teachers can develop intervention strategies, and then the mid year session establishes growth and progress towards established expectations. The classroom work and the assessments helped to bring reality to the continuous improvements needed for students. Further development in the assessment process has allowed for individualized support and instruction for all students who need something different in their educational plan. This informed decision making tool has supported teachers in a way so that they can meet challenges and provide interventions for the student population.

## **BUILDING COMMUNITY**

Building a sense of community is a major focus for the members of the administrative team at Seeds of Health K4-8<sup>th</sup> grade charter school. It appears in two very distinct ways. First and foremost, community is within the building among each and every staff member, which is then reinforced in the individual classrooms. Secondly, community is outside the walls of the school but permeates into the building like water seeping into the ground. It is not only a great place to work for the adults but a safe and healthy place for children. Building “Community” is the role of the leader, the Windlake administrator.

In the 2011-2012 annual report, she stated the following:

I was brought up to believe that a community is built on respect. I believe there is value in giving and receiving. I believe that everyone has a commitment to give back. And the best way to move forward in life is to look to the gifts of one another and build on those.

The concept that we are in this together can not be underestimated. The staff not only models it but lives it creating a strong foundation built upon this belief. It is the unwritten focus that truly places children at the center. One teacher stated that the climate drives the school.

When the “Capturing Kids’ Hearts” model began at Windlake, the family belief was already established, and this model just pulled everything together. The major premise in the model is how do you want to be treated and how are you going to treat others. The social contract is first established between adults during the August workshop days. Then the teacher and the children develop their individual social contracts those first few weeks in September. The contracts become a regular weekly tool that supports the expected behaviors within the school setting. It becomes a living tool and not just words pasted on a chart. The social contract is utilized instead of various other discipline procedures. Once again the adults have modeled the expected behavior and translate that into the classroom culture. This is a powerful example of excellence.

Through the elementary Director’s leadership, numerous partnerships have been established and the wider Milwaukee community is a definite part of Seeds of Health Elementary. From Lens Crafters, Henry Schein Dental, the Catholic Church next door to other suburban elementary schools have partnered with the school in order to support the children. There are more than 45 longstanding partnerships with community organizations, businesses, schools and individuals involved. With all these contacts in the outside community, people come forward willing to volunteer at the two schools. Retired teachers, Kiwanis Club members, and relatives of the staff show up at the doors willing to give of their time and effort.

Through this total commitment of sharing, a sense of support to the lives of the children is provided, which then enhances a feeling of well being, caring and dedication not only to the staff members but especially to the parents. The Seeds of Health Parent Council meets six times per year. Their input is valued and discussions include goals, performance reports, and program

updates. The school hosts “Parent Sharing” sessions throughout the year. This is a safe place for parents to come and get information on technology, literacy at home, or health related issues. Since the parents are engaged, they feel a shared sense of responsibility to their child’s progress.

The parents feel good about the school, which is reported in the annual survey conducted by UWM. In each of the 24 categories on the survey Seeds of health Elementary outscored the UWM average significantly. Parent/Teacher conferences are 100% attended. The final result of this type of dedication to the whole child is that the families feel connected and involved with the school. This feeling creates pride and a sense of my child is safe at this school. Then the parents go out into the community and spread the good news about Seeds of Health Elementary School.

The final conclusion when reviewing the aspect of “Community” at Seeds of Health Elementary is the significance of building relationships. It is all about the focus on the whole child through support systems, which then reach out to the family. It all comes with the school, home and community working together. A teacher stated that “the sense of community is essential for together we are stronger.”

## **SUMMARY THOUGHTS**

My summary of the elements of success was rooted in the belief that this kind of school, this kind of magical place of learning located in the heart of a high poverty area could and would be a success. The school as a competent system must have a shared mission with all parties involved. The staff knows what the school should look like when the core beliefs are put into practice. The vision is unanimous, clear and energized. On one hand it appears very complex and the other hand simplified into attitude and actions. This researcher tried to manifest the complexities of the Seeds of Health School System, while looking deeper into the real achievable elements that result in better performance for everyone within the system and enhanced learning and achievement for the Windlake students.

# **SEEDS OF HEALTH ELEMENTARY**

## **Achievement and Evaluation Data**

Seeds of Health Elementary is a part of the larger unit of Seeds of Health, Inc. comprised of five individual, educational programs. The elementary program is a K4-8<sup>th</sup> grade program housed at two locations. The K4-4<sup>th</sup> grade school is Windlake Elementary located at 2433 South 15<sup>th</sup> and the 5-8<sup>th</sup> grade program is at Windlake Academy located at 1445 S. 32<sup>nd</sup> Street. The school originally opened as a Milwaukee Public Schools Partnership School in 1996 and then became a charter school in 2007 with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

The Seeds of Health mission is to work in strong partnership with parents and community to fully develop the physical, emotional, social and intellectual potential of each child in a safe and supportive learning environment. Another way to describe the way things are done at Windlake is that “the mission of Seeds of Health is to cultivate the full potential of urban children in mind, body and character through research-based best practices that develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions important to academic, social and economic success.”

The school culture is highlighted through a sense of belonging that is apparent at the door of every classroom with an energetic “Good Morning.” The school’s core philosophy is built on respect and looking for goodness in everyone including the adults as well as the children. The staff maintains a consistent attitude of helping every child through individualized learning. This belief permeates the relationships within the school. The leader has initiated a model called “Capturing Kids’ Hearts” designed by the Flippen Group located in College Station, Texas. This program utilizes non-traditional methods of school-wide behavior accountability based upon how to treat one another. The results are that Seeds of Health Elementary is an extremely high relationship school. Within this context, high academic expectations are fostered, encouraged and expected.

The focus of their academic program is to prepare children to be successful in life. The staff uses a concept based approach from the work of Lynn Erikson, “Concept Based Curriculum and Instruction,” Joseph Novak and Robert Gowin, “Learning How to Learn” and

John Bransford, “How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience and School.” The reading program is based on a DI (direct instruction) program called *Reading Mastery* and also one called trophies by Harcourt. The math program is *Expressions* by McGraw Hill.

**Calendar (Days and Hours of Instruction)**

1	Grade Levels	<b>K4 – 4th</b>	<b>5-6</b>	<b>7-8</b>
2	Start Time of Student Instructional Day	8:50	8:45	8:45
3	End Time of Student Instructional Day	3:40	3:35	3:45
4	Start-To-Close Instructional Day Minutes (Lines 3 - 2)	410	410	420
5	Number of Minutes for Lunch	30	30	30
6	Recess Time in Excess of 30 Minutes	0	0	0
7	Number of Instructional Minutes Per Day (Lines 4 -5 -6)	380	380	390
8	Total Number of Days In Teacher Calendar	191	191	191
9	Number of Teacher Pre-service/Professional Development Days	11	11	11
10	Number of Parent/Teacher Conference Days	2	2	2
11	Number of Student Instructional Days (Lines 8 -9 -10)	175	175	175
12	Total Instructional Minutes Per Year (Lines 7 x 11)	66,540	66,540	68,250
13	Late Arrival/Early Release Minutes for Professional Development	0	0	0
14	Total Instructional Minutes (Lines 12 - 13)	66,540	66,540	68,250
15	Hours of Instruction Per Year (Lines 11 / 60)	1,109	1,109	1,138

The calendar reflects a typical Wisconsin school calendar both in days and hours of instruction.

**Board and Administrative Organization**

Seeds of Health, Inc. Board of Directors have an experienced base in the field of education. They provide a foundation that is dedicated to providing children with solid and differentiated educational models. Their strong belief ignites their actions that all children regardless of their background should have the opportunity to receive a quality education.

*Board Members are:*

David Hase, President; Marcia Spector, Vice President & Executive Director; John Petersburs, Secretary/Treasurer; Bruce Marne, David Cullen and Michael Aldana, Members.

*Administrative Team Members:*

Karen Rutt, Director of Elementary Education and Mark Schneider, Academy Principal

**Assessment**

The WKCE (Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination) is a statewide standardized exam given each year in November to students in grades 3 through 8. The exam measures student achievement in five subject areas; reading, math, language arts, science & social studies. The combined grade level average (last 3 years) in reading was 73.8% proficient/advanced. Their math scores increased to 72.3% from 69.5% the previous year. Student performance is reported in proficiency categories and used to determine adequate yearly progress of students at the school, district and state levels. The Grade 4 results were higher than the state average in reading, math and social studies and higher than MPS in all five areas.

Seeds of Health schools use MAP (Measure of Academic Progress) testing to assess student learning. Students are tested three times within the school year. MAP provides data that the schools use to provide individualized instruction. Educational trends and analysis of grade level performance can be used for program implementation. MAP is the key component for measuring growth and predicting proficiency over time. Substantial progress was made from the fall to spring testing time period in reading and math. The staff attended a summer workshop offered by NWEA titled “Climbing the Data Ladder.” The intent is to provide training and in depth knowledge of how to utilize data to improve individualized instruction. And recognize student strengths and weaknesses.

A daily computer reading and math instruction program called *Successmaker* is used to gauge progress and student performance. The school teams are engaged in collaborative discussions using student data, classroom performance and teacher observations. In their strategic plan there are four separate goals dealing with academic school performance.

Figure 1.

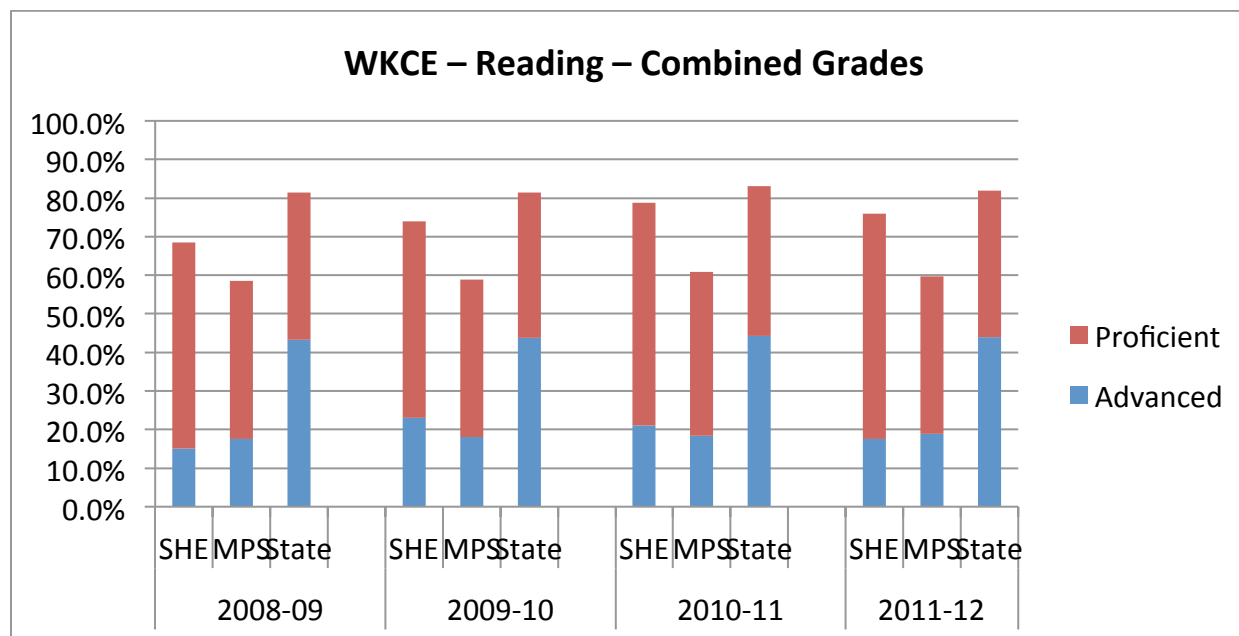


Table 1.

	2008-09			2009-10			2010-11			2011-12		
	SHE	MPS	State	SHE	MPS	State	SHE	MPS	State	SHE	MPS	State
<b>Advanced</b>	15.1%	17.6%	43.3%	23.1%	18.1%	43.7%	21.1%	18.4%	44.2%	17.6%	18.9%	44.0%
<b>Proficient</b>	53.4%	41.0%	38.1%	50.9%	40.8%	37.8%	57.7%	42.5%	38.8%	58.3%	40.8%	37.9%
<b>Basic</b>	24.0%	24.9%	12.3%	18.9%	24.2%	12.2%	14.6%	23.8%	11.5%	16.6%	23.8%	12.0%
<b>Minimal</b>	7.5%	15.2%	5.6%	7.1%	16.3%	5.7%	6.6%	14.7%	5.0%	7.5%	15.7%	5.4%
<b>No WSAS</b>	0.0%	1.4%	0.7%	0.0%	0.6%	0.5%	0.0%	0.6%	0.6%	0.0%	0.7%	0.6%

Figure 2.

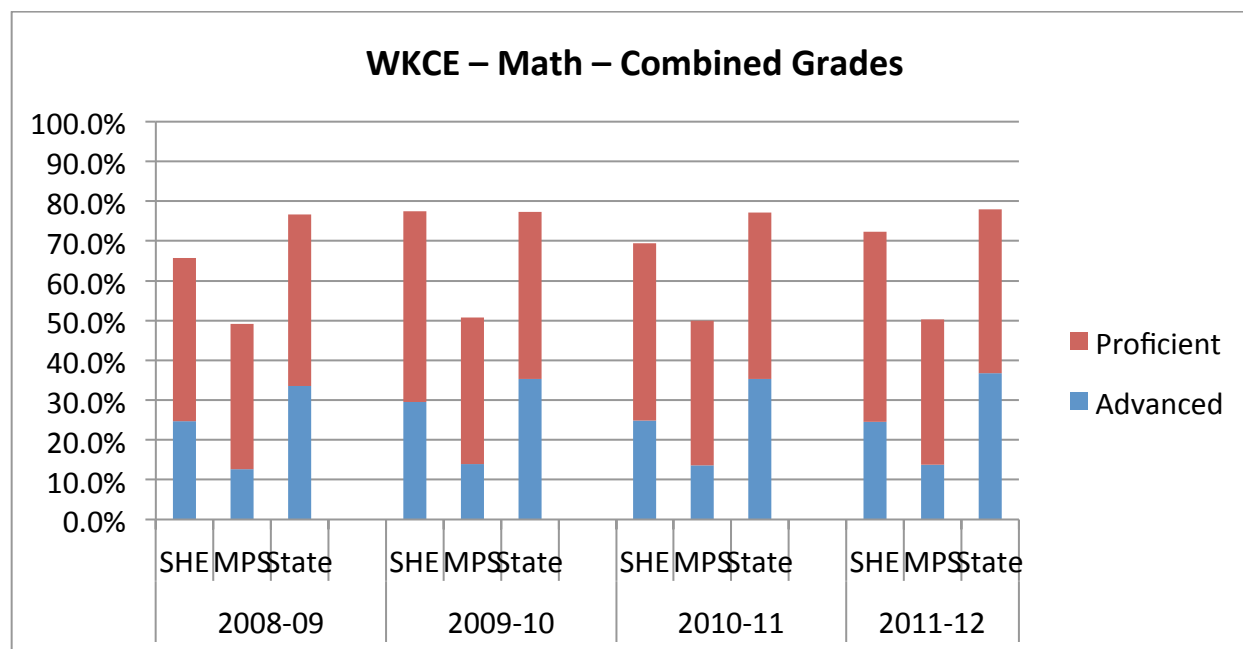
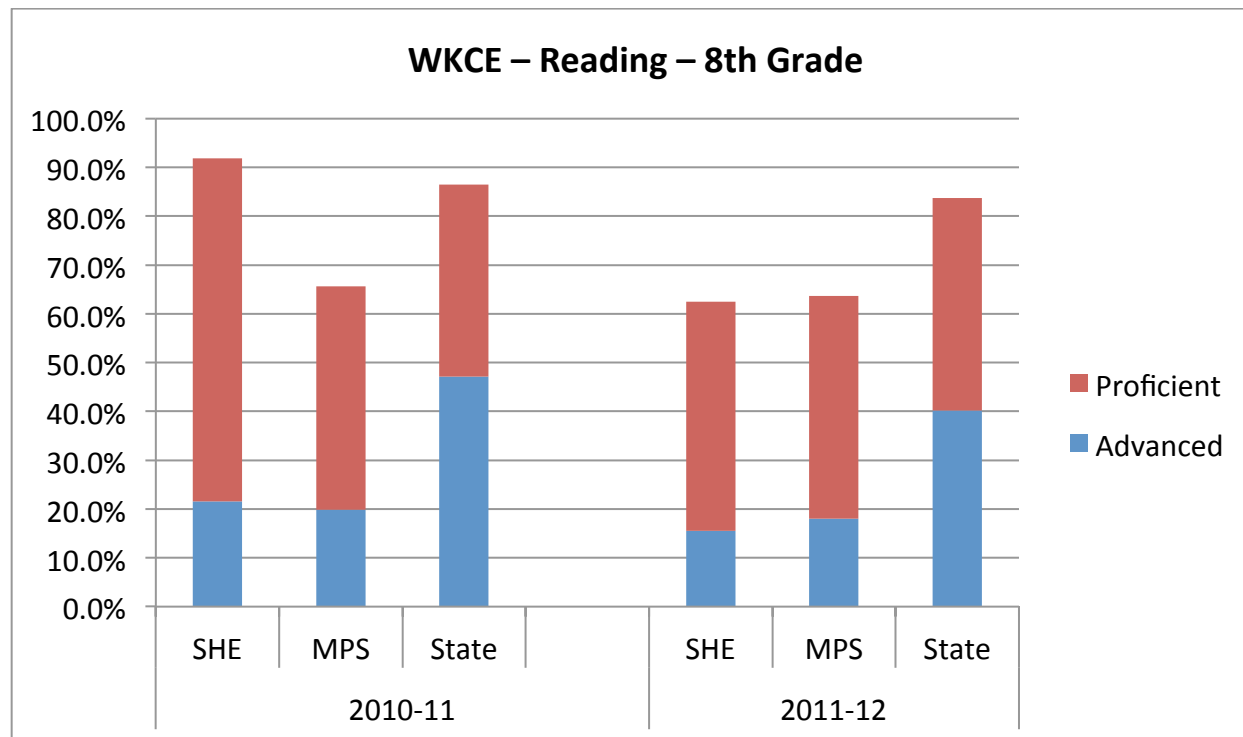


Table 2.

	2008-09			2009-10			2010-11			2011-12		
	SHE	MPS	State	SHE	MPS	State	SHE	MPS	State	SHE	MPS	State
<b>Advanced</b>	24.7%	12.6%	33.6%	29.6%	13.9%	35.4%	24.9%	13.6%	35.3%	24.6%	13.8%	36.8%
<b>Proficient</b>	41.1%	36.5%	43.1%	47.9%	36.9%	41.9%	44.6%	36.4%	41.9%	47.7%	36.5%	41.2%
<b>Basic</b>	12.3%	18.5%	11.0%	7.1%	18.0%	10.7%	16.9%	17.8%	10.7%	14.1%	17.7%	10.2%
<b>Minimal</b>	21.9%	31.6%	11.8%	15.4%	30.5%	11.7%	13.6%	31.5%	11.7%	13.6%	31.3%	11.4%
<b>No WSAS</b>	0.0%	0.8%	0.4%	0.0%	0.7%	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%	0.3%	0.0%	0.7%	0.4%



Figure 3.



<b>Table 3.</b>	<b>2010-11</b>			<b>2011-12</b>		
	SHE	MPS	State	SHE	MPS	State
<b>Advanced</b>	21.6%	19.8%	47.2%	15.6%	18.0%	40.2%
<b>Proficient</b>	70.3%	45.9%	39.3%	46.9%	45.7%	43.5%
<b>Basic</b>	5.4%	18.9%	8.3%	25.0%	20.1%	10.2%
<b>Minimal</b>	2.7%	14.6%	4.7%	12.5%	15.5%	5.4%
<b>No WSAS</b>	0.0%	0.8%	0.5%	0.0%	0.7%	0.6%

Figure 4.

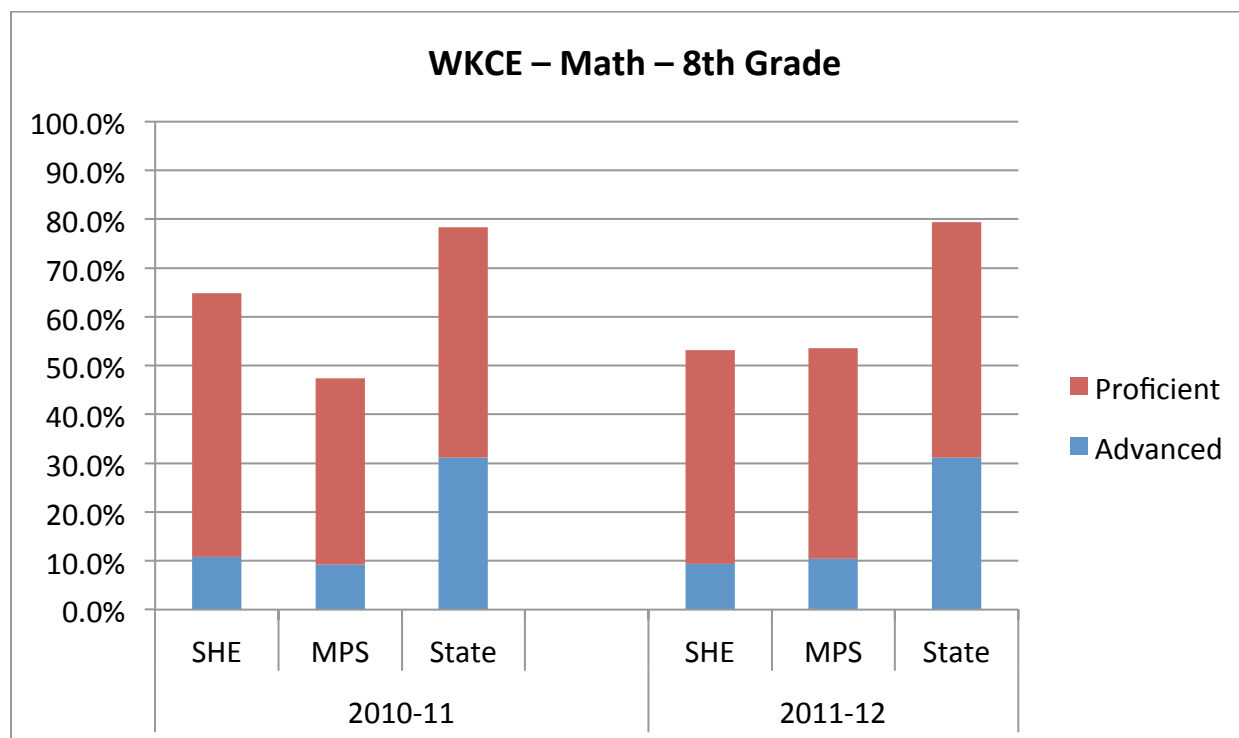
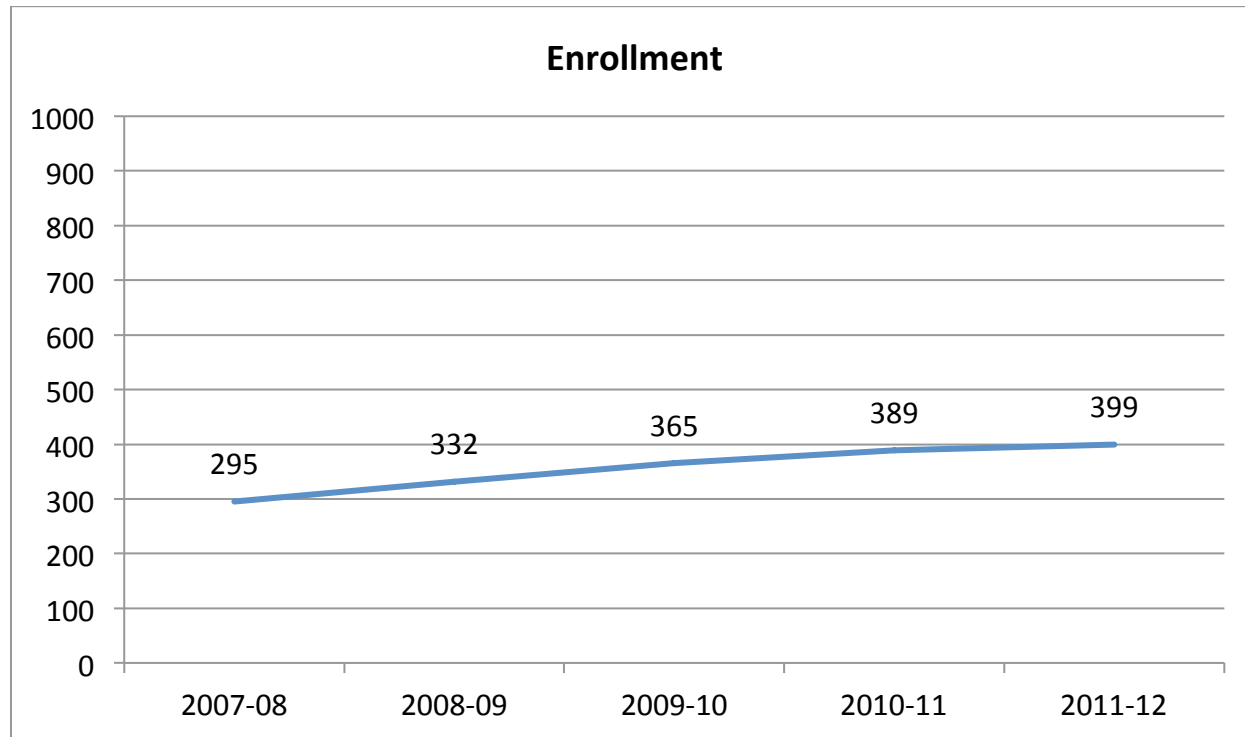


Table 4.

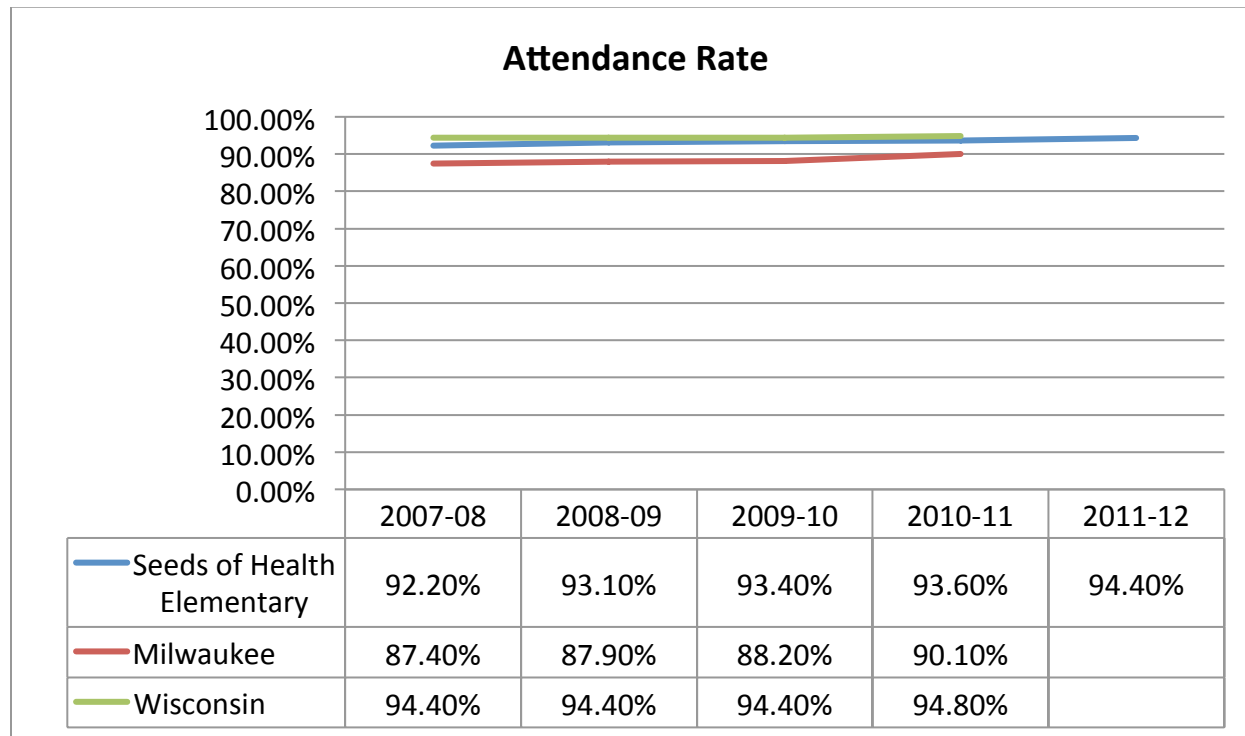
8 <sup>th</sup> Math	2010-11			2011-12		
	SHE	MPS	State	SHE	MPS	State
<b>Advanced</b>	10.8%	9.2%	31.2%	9.4%	10.4%	31.2%
<b>Proficient</b>	54.1%	38.2%	47.1%	43.8%	43.2%	48.2%
<b>Basic</b>	32.4%	23.0%	12.0%	25.0%	22.8%	12.0%
<b>Minimal</b>	2.7%	28.7%	9.3%	21.9%	22.8%	8.3%
<b>No WSAS</b>	0.0%	0.9%	0.4%	0.0%	0.8%	0.4%

Figure 5.



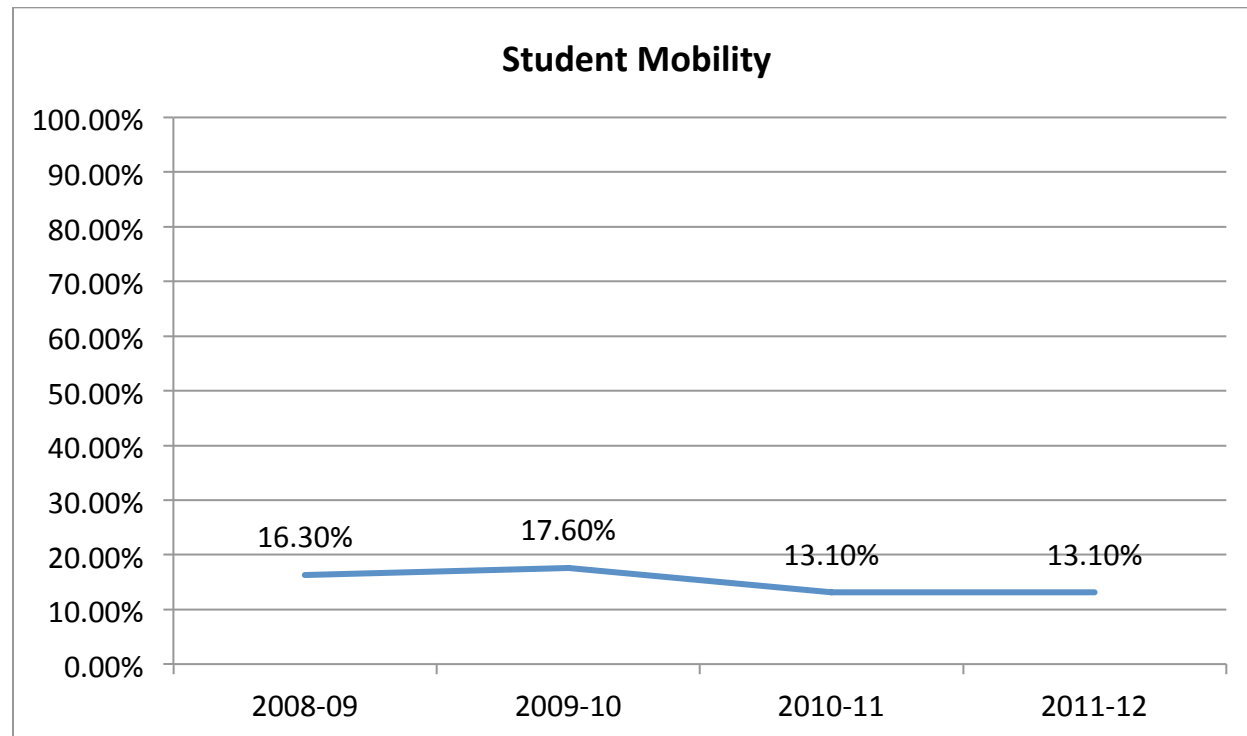
Enrollment has increased year-over-year and the school has grown from K-5 to a K-8. The enrollment increase has been accommodated by the acquisition of a second building to house middle school students.

Figure 6.



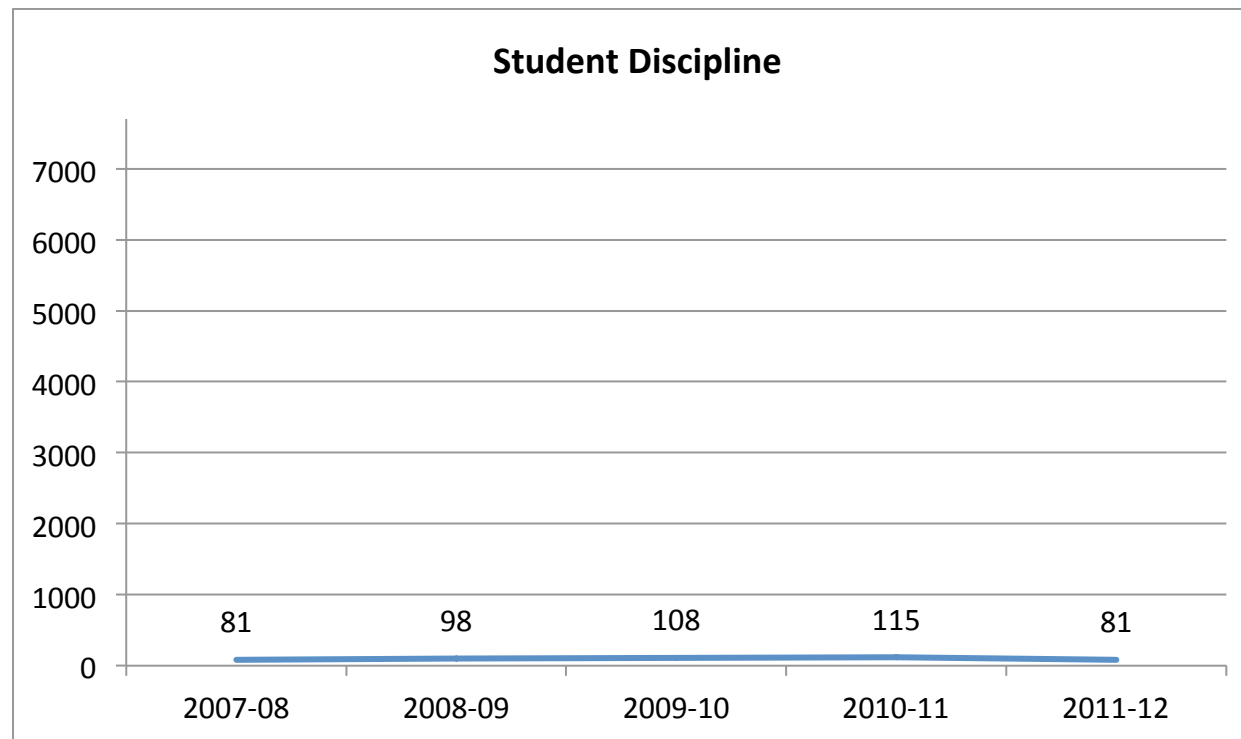
Attendance is high and comparable to statewide results.

Figure 7.



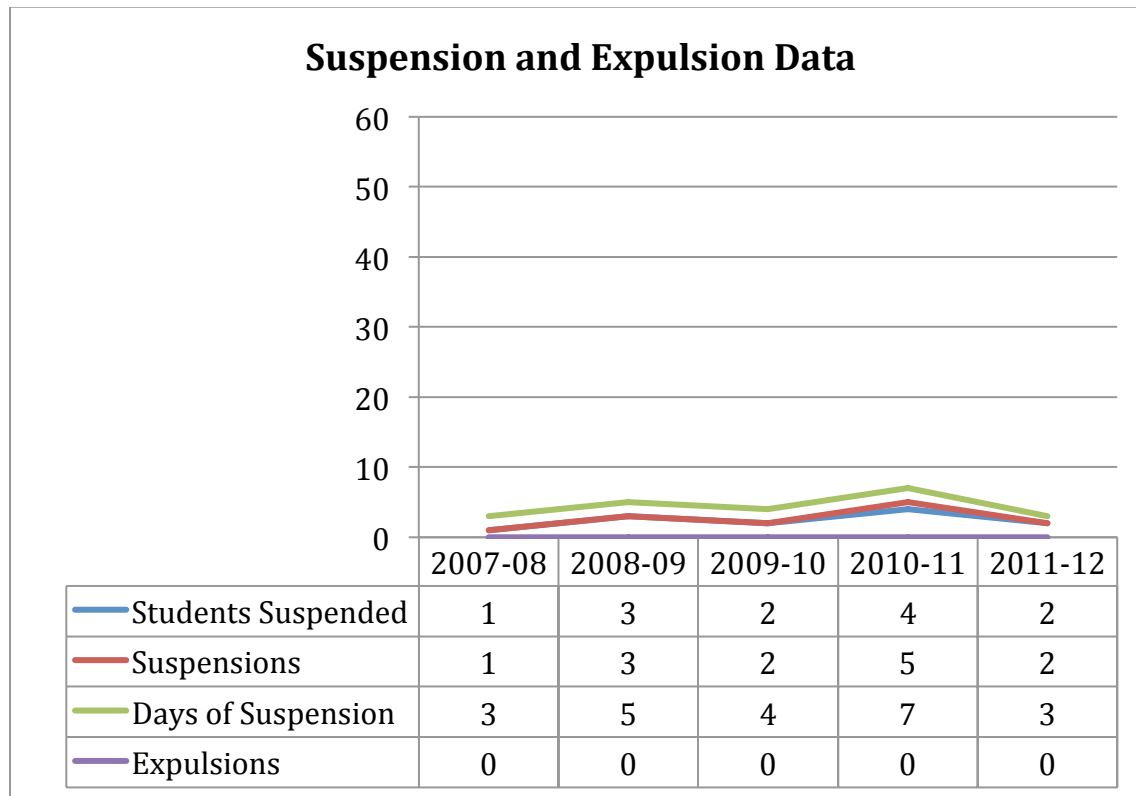
Student mobility is moderate and trending lower.

Figure 8.



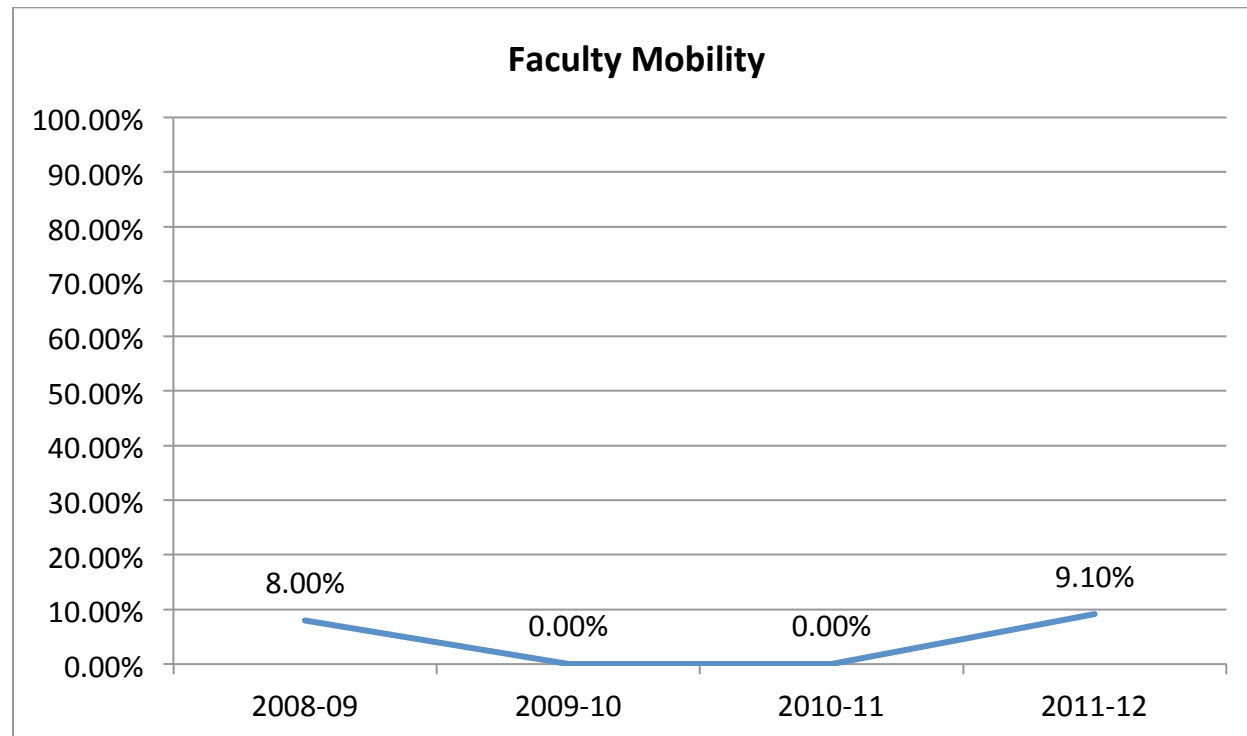
Student discipline incidences have varied only slightly from year to mirroring the increase enrollment. The sharp decrease in 2011-12 is notable.

Figure 9.



Few students are suspended from SOHE. The number of suspensions and the number of days students are suspended is markedly low. There have been no student expulsions.

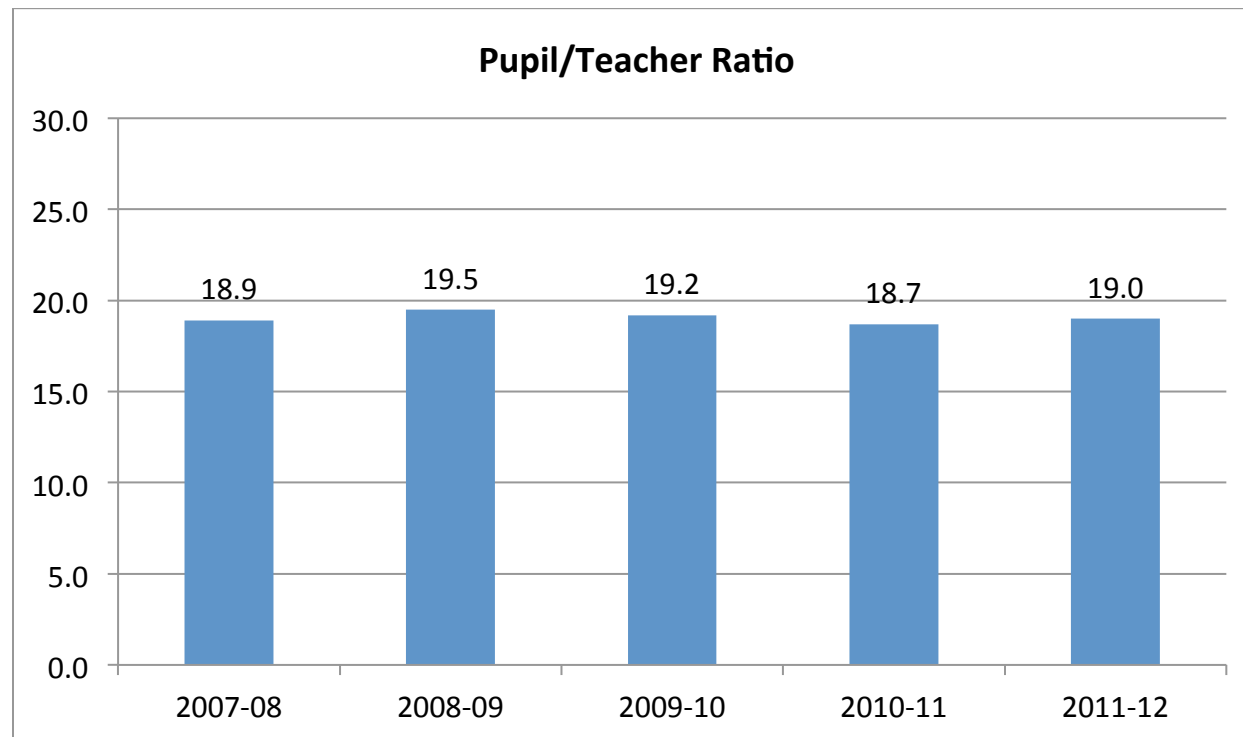
Figure 10.



The mobility of the faculty is very low. This is an important factor in student achievement.

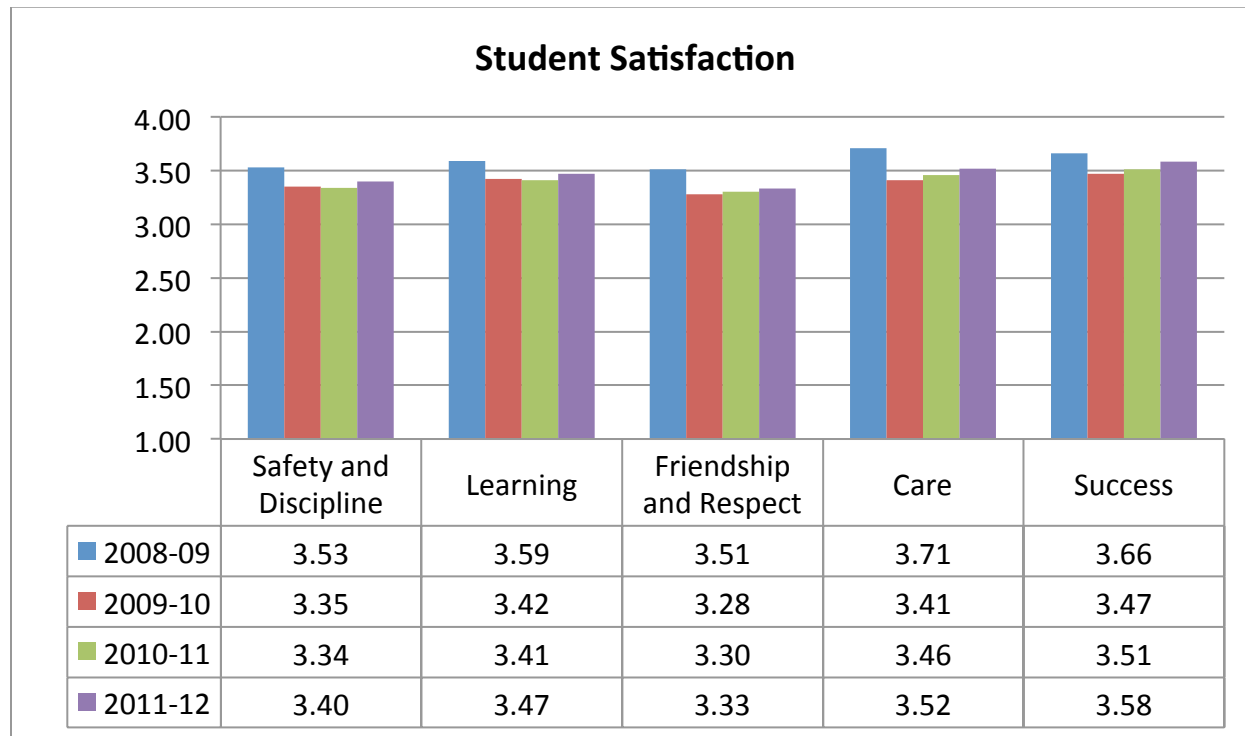


Figure 11.



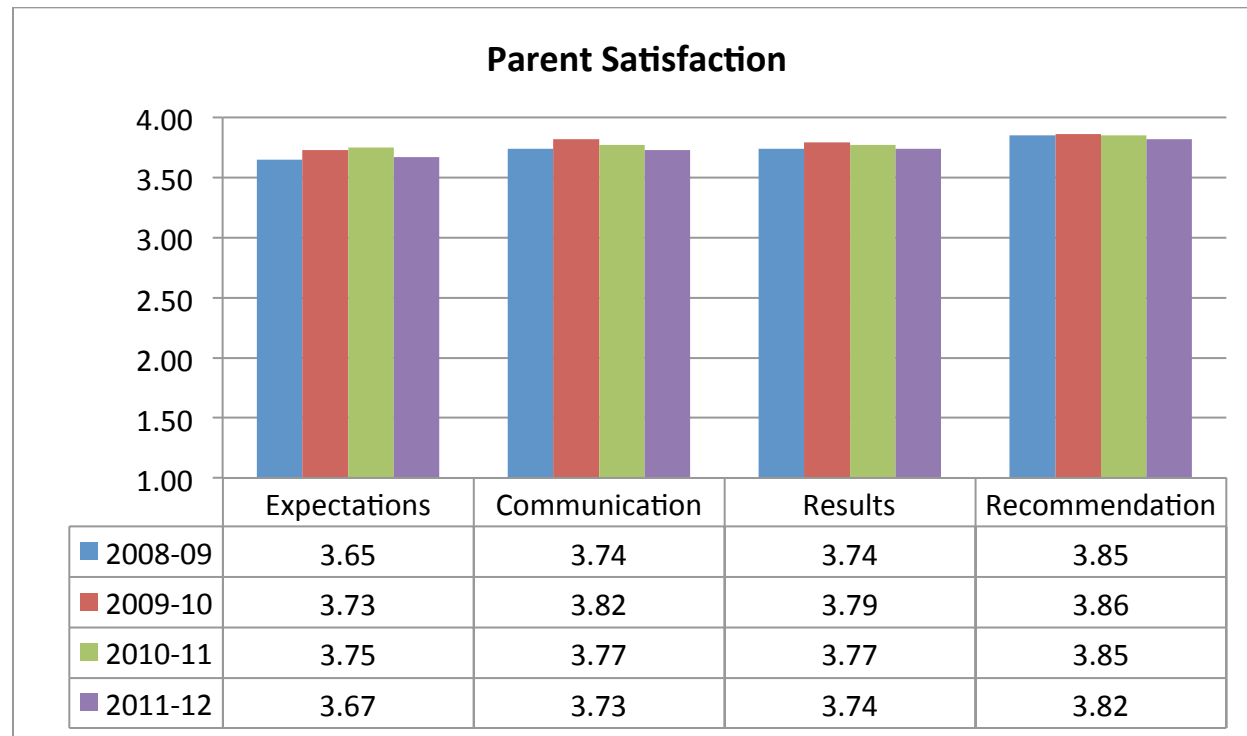
Teacher-pupil ratios remain consistent from year-to-year.

Figure 12.



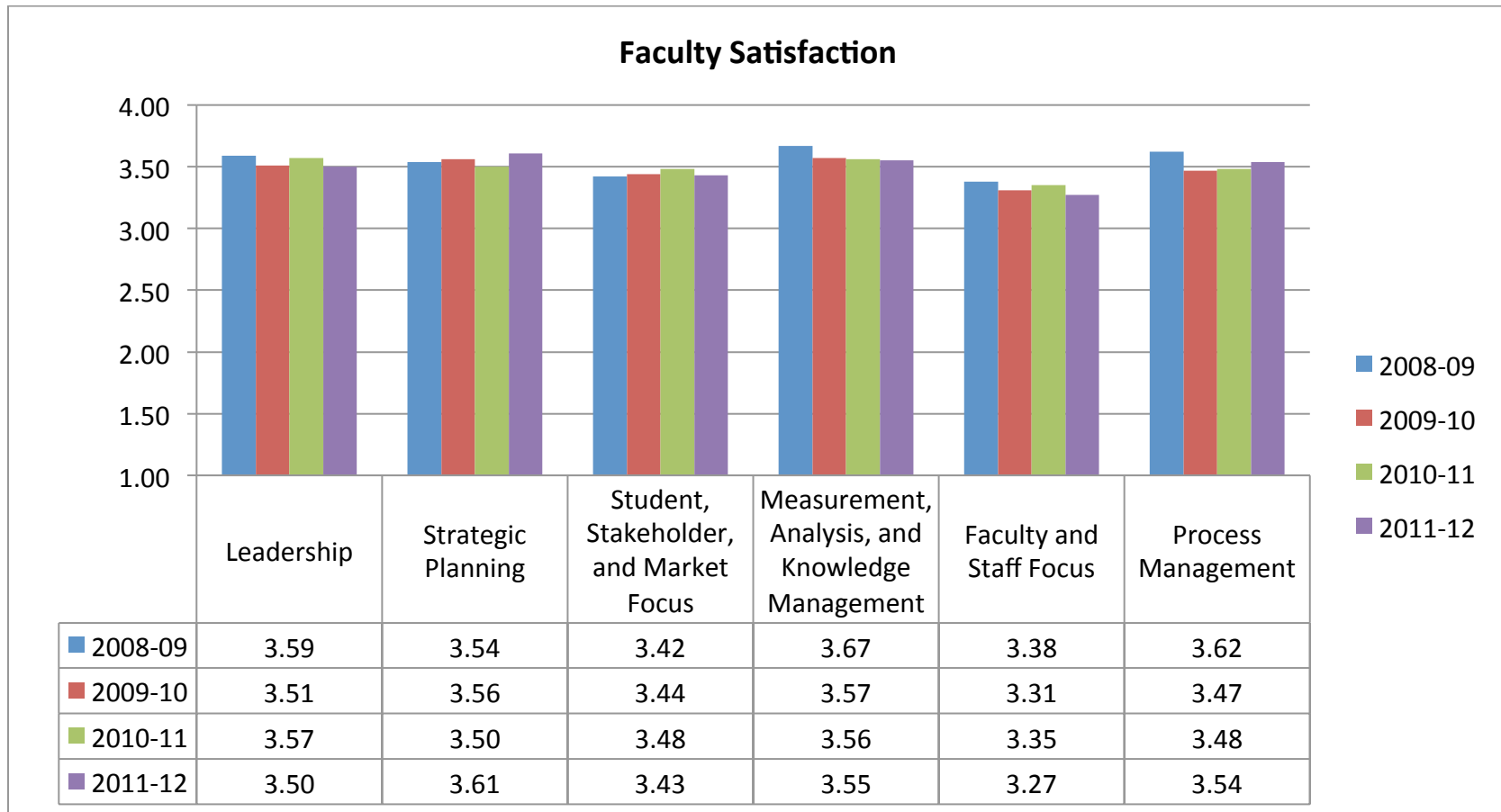
Student satisfaction is very high and is the highest for any school authorized by UWM.

Figure 13.



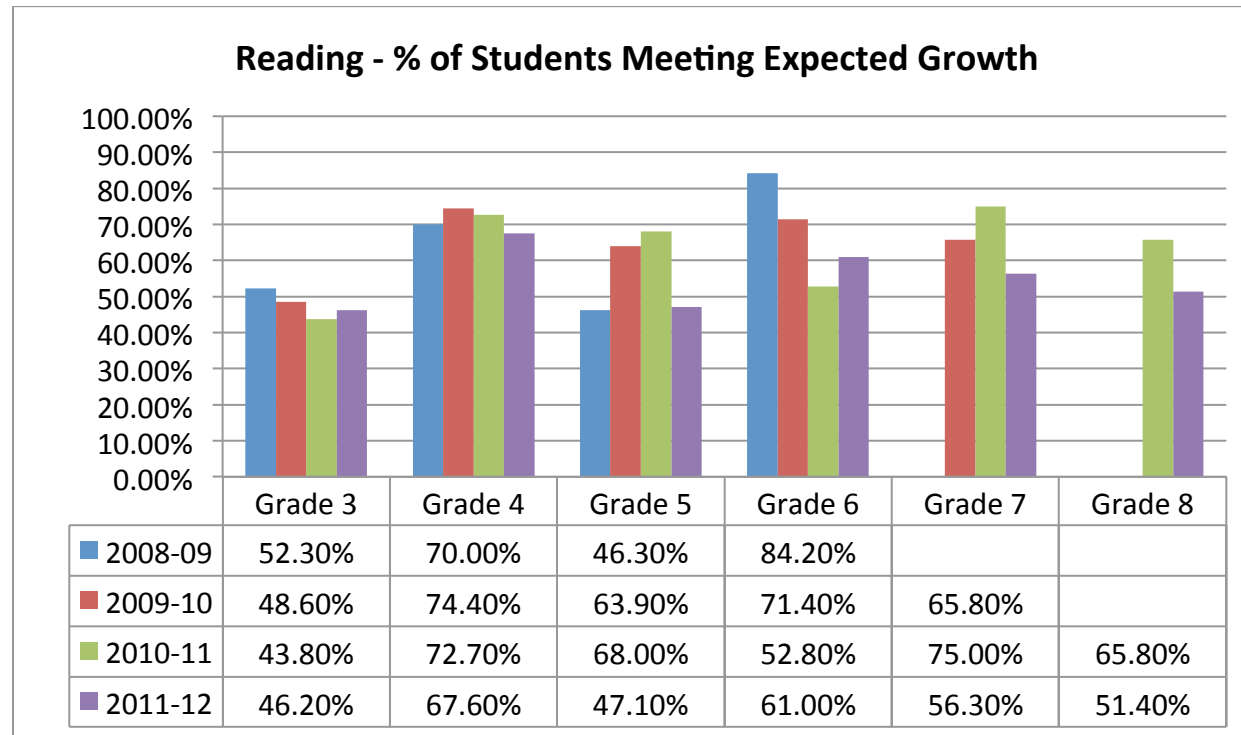
Parental satisfaction is al

Figure 14.



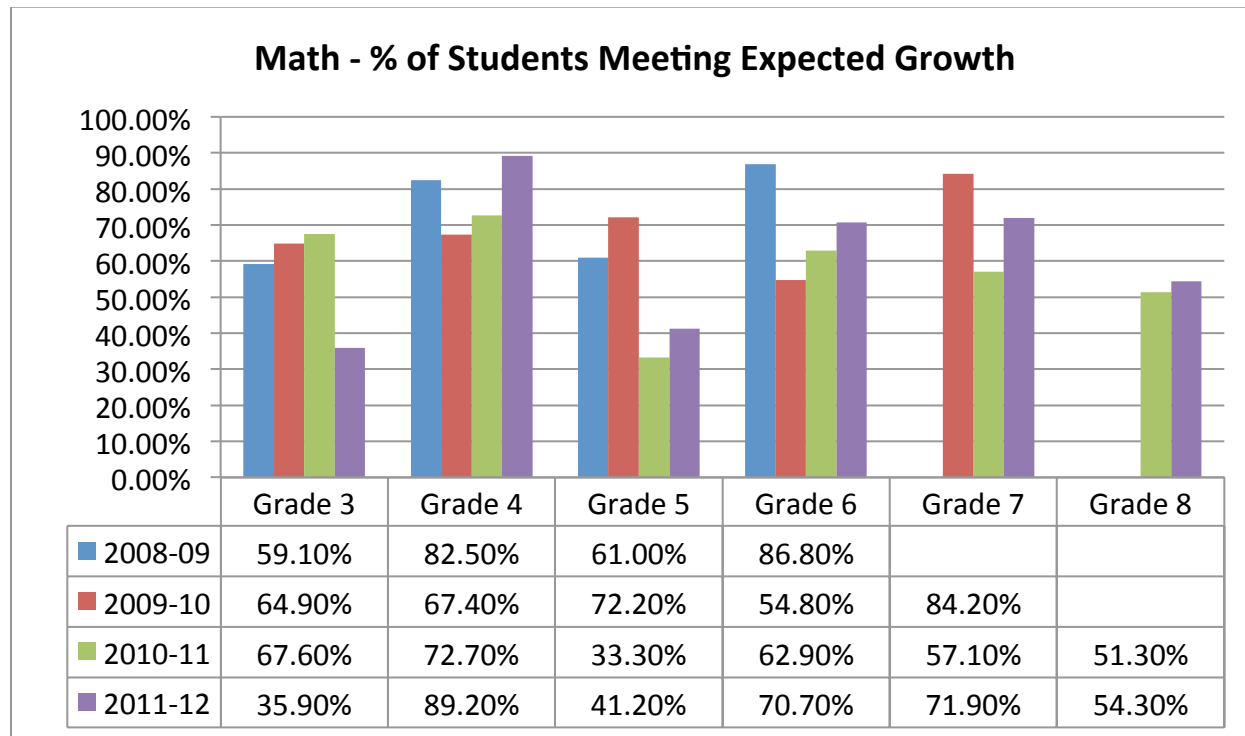
The faculty survey is based on the Baldrige Criteria for Educational Excellence and measures the quality level that faculty members believe exists with certain aspects of the school. Results reveal that the faculty believes that SOHE is achieving a high level of quality in these areas.

Figure 15.



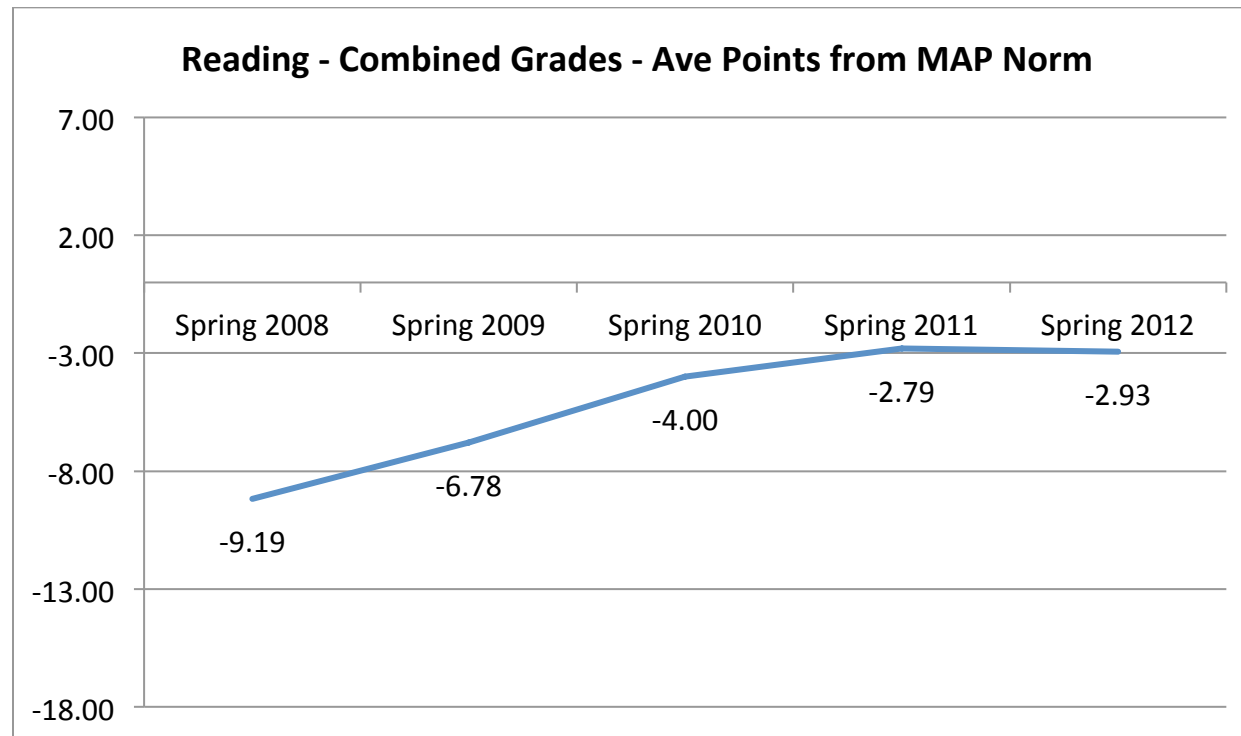
Each SOHE student takes MAP assessments in Reading and Math in both the Fall and the Spring semester. NWEA MAP assessments are nationally normed. In addition, Fall MAP assessment results include an expectation of the average amount of growth a student is expected to make by the Spring, based on that student's Fall RIT score and their grade level. The graph above shows the percent of students that met their expected Fall to Spring growth in Reading. The lack of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade data reflect the fact that the school did not serve those grades in the designated year. No trends are evident.

Figure 16.



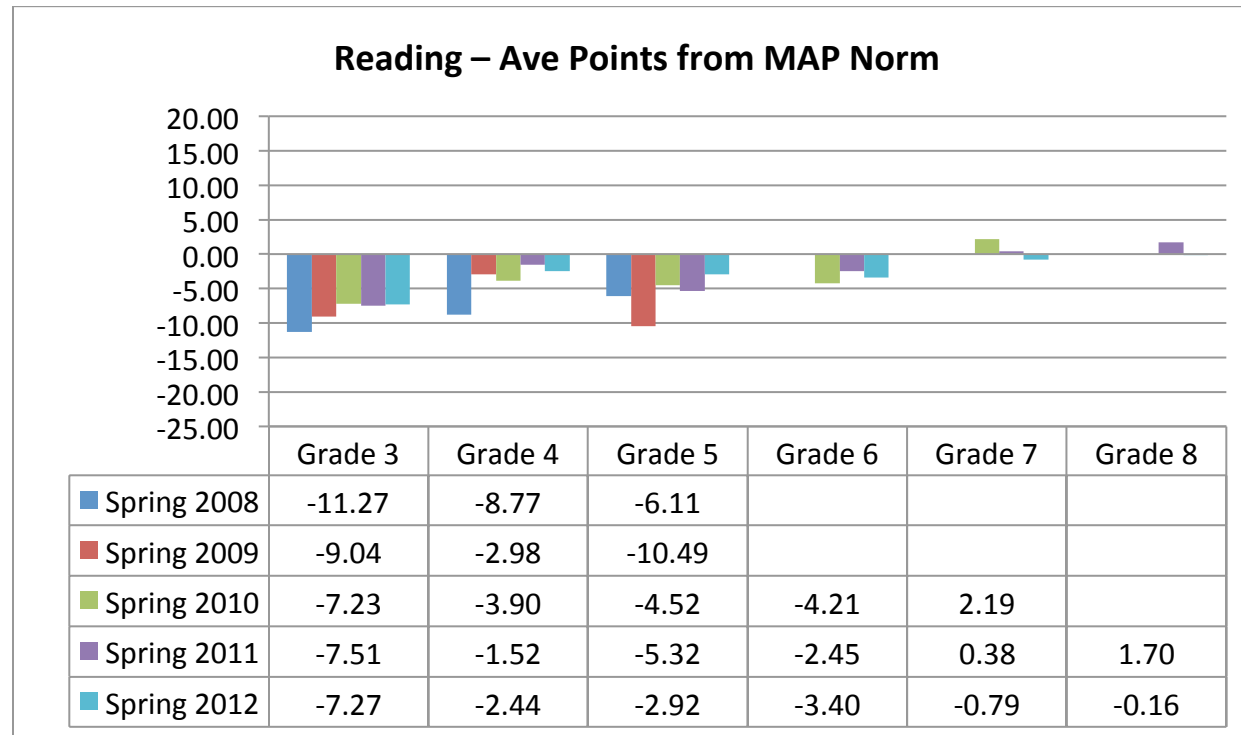
As with reading, no trends are evident.

Figure 17.



NWEA MAP tests are nationally normed. This graph shows that the average MCPS student (grades K-8) in Spring of 2008 scored less than 1 point above the MAP national norm in Reading. This number has risen steadily from one year to the next with the average SOHE student (Grades K-8) in the Spring of 2012 scoring over 6 points above the Spring 2008 students and reducing the deficit with the national MAP norm in Reading.

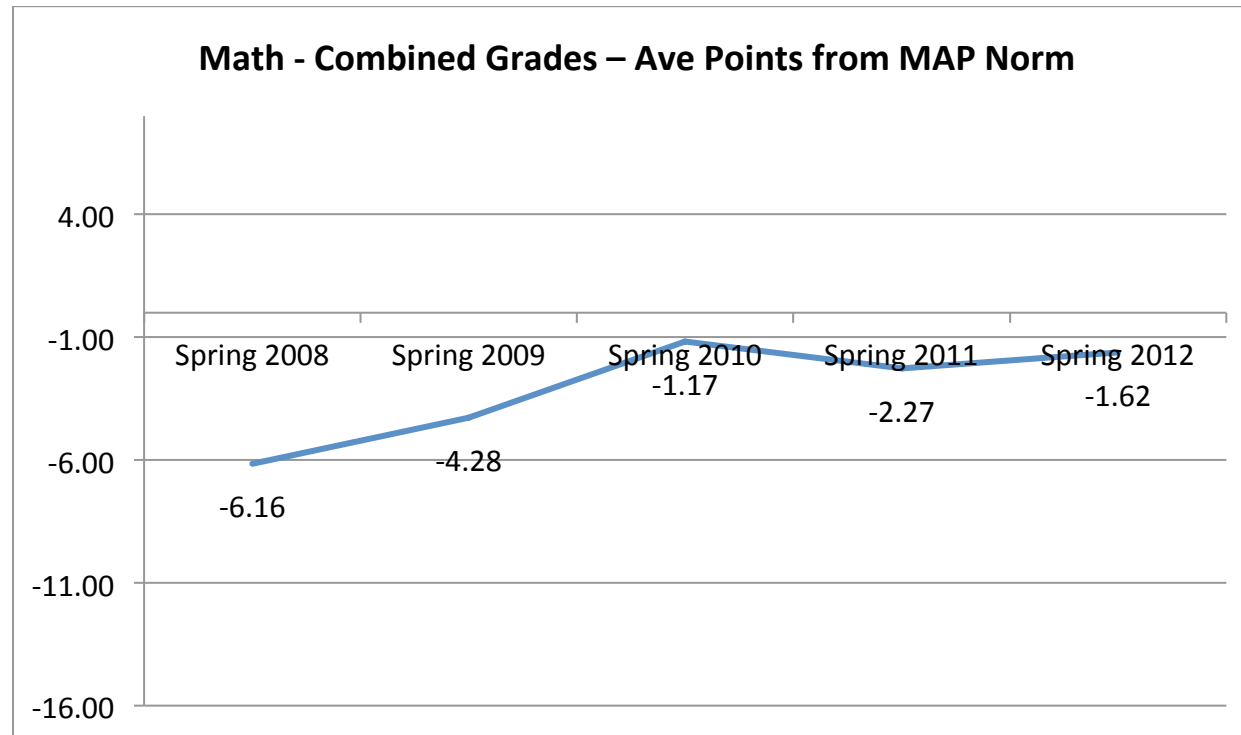
Figure 18.



When looking at the average points above/below the national norm by grade level there is more variability in the results. However, in the Spring of 2008, the average student in all grades (Grade 3-8) scored below the national MAP Reading norm. By the Spring of 2012, students in grades 7 and 8 were scoring very near the national MAP Reading norm.

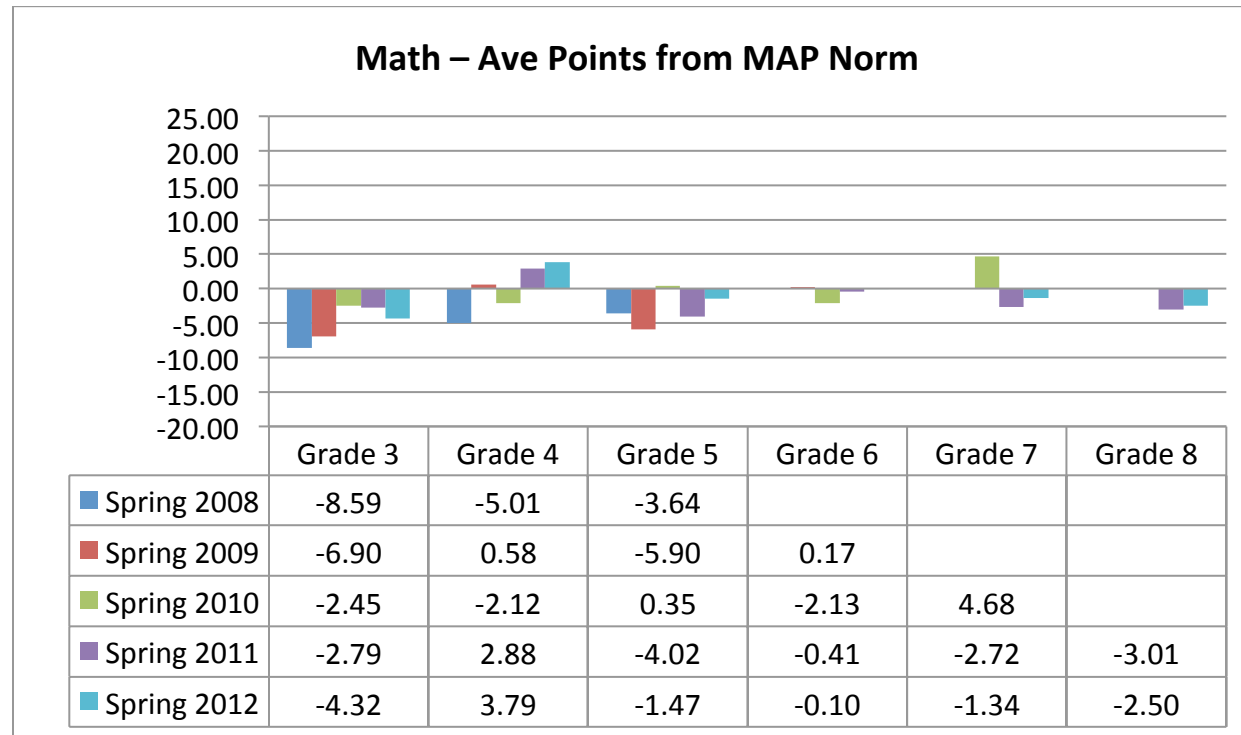


Figure 19.



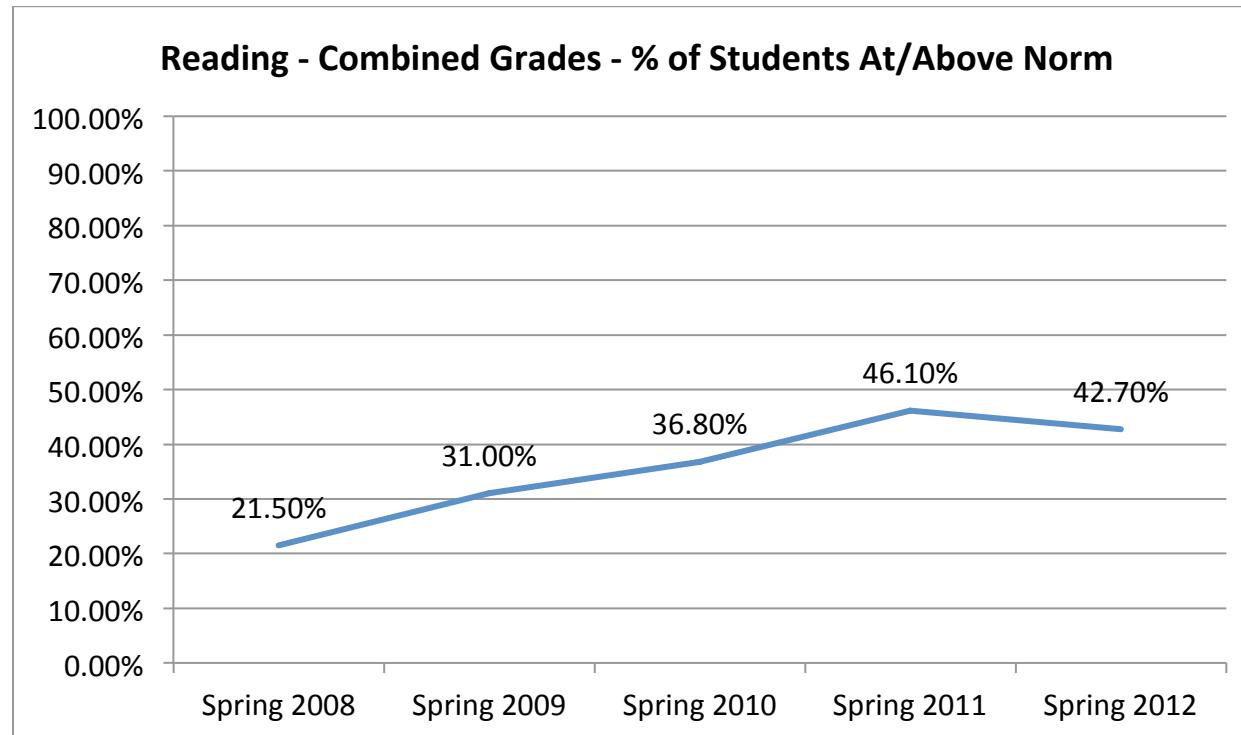
This graph shows that the average SOHE student (grades K-5) in Spring of 2008 scored about 6 points below the MAP national norm in Math. This number rose in 2009 and 2010 and then stabilized for (grades K-8) in 2011 and 2012 with the average SOHE student (Grades K-8) in the Spring of 2012 scoring less than two points below the national MAP norm in Math.

Figure 20.



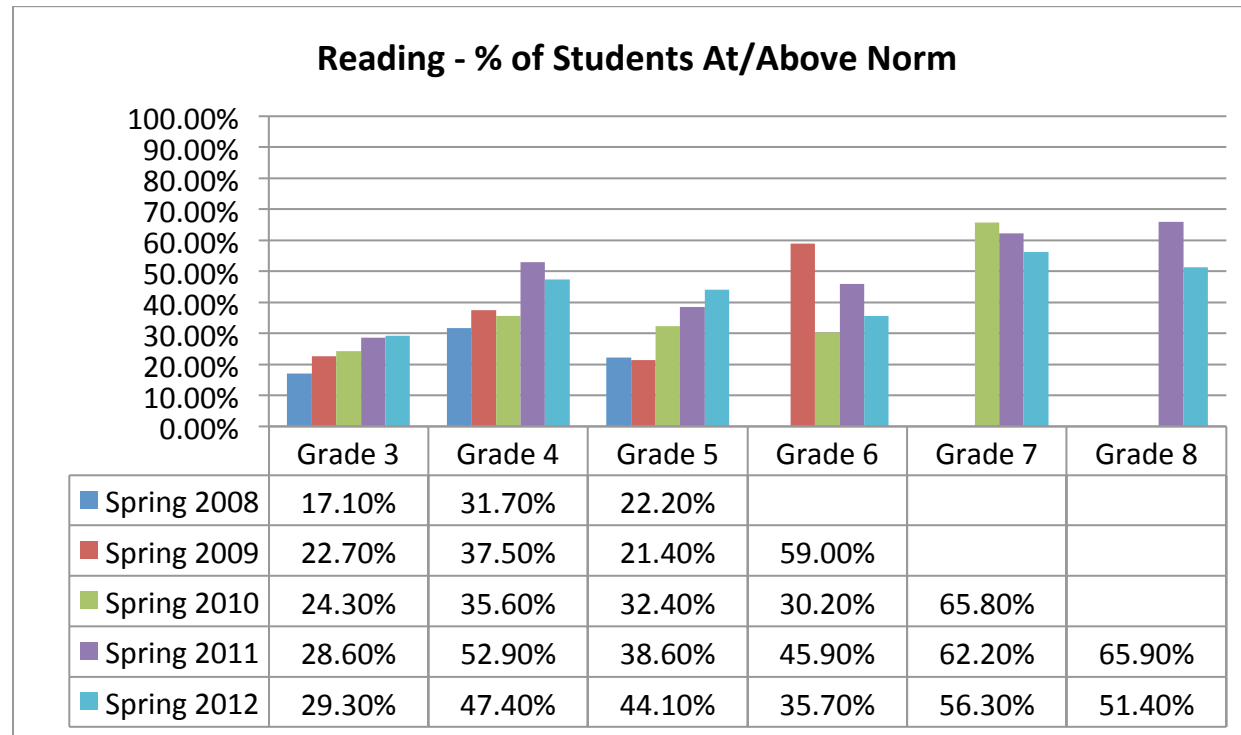
When looking at the average points above/below the national norm by grade level there is more variability in the results. However, the average SOHE student in the Spring of 2012 scored higher, in comparison to the national NWEA MAP math norm than the average SOHE student in the Spring of 2008.

Figure 21.



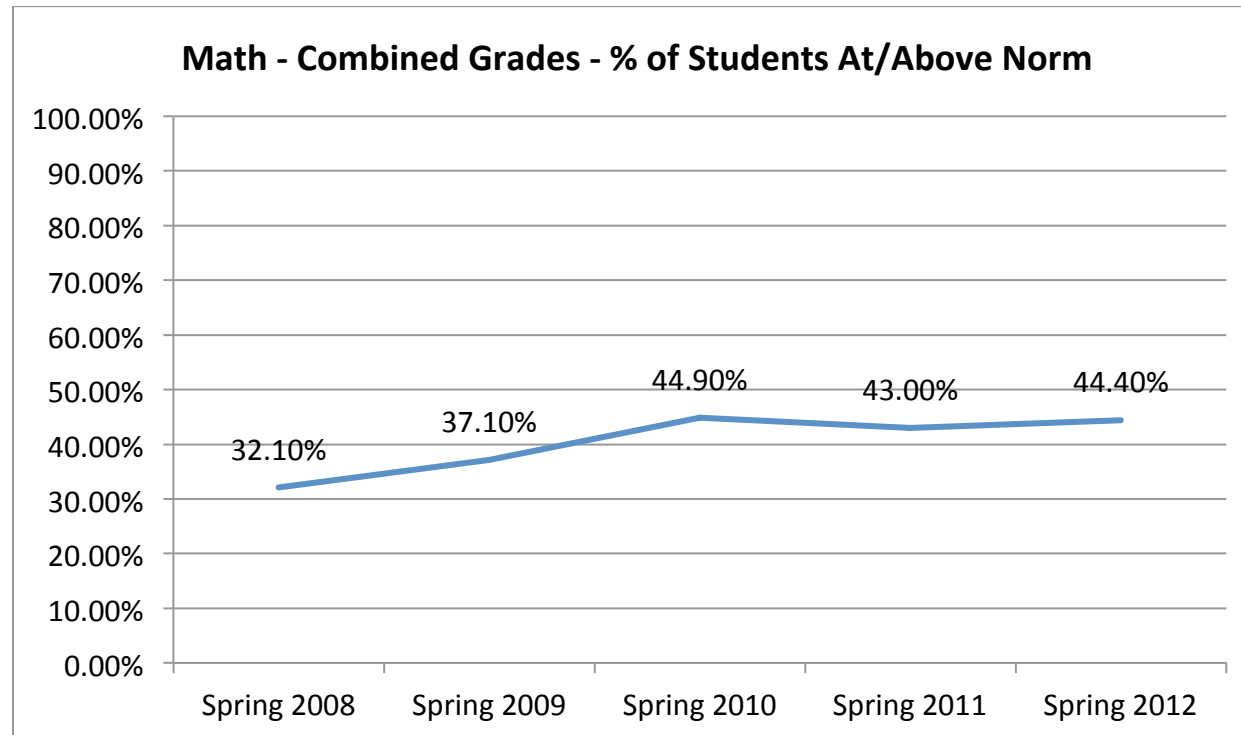
Because NWEA MAP assessments have national norms for each grade level and subject area, it is possible to determine the percent of students that score above the average. This graph shows that the percent of students (Grade K-8) scoring above average in Reading at SOHE has been steadily increasing for the past 5 years, with over 40% of students scoring above average in Reading in the Spring of 2011 and 2012.

Figure 22.



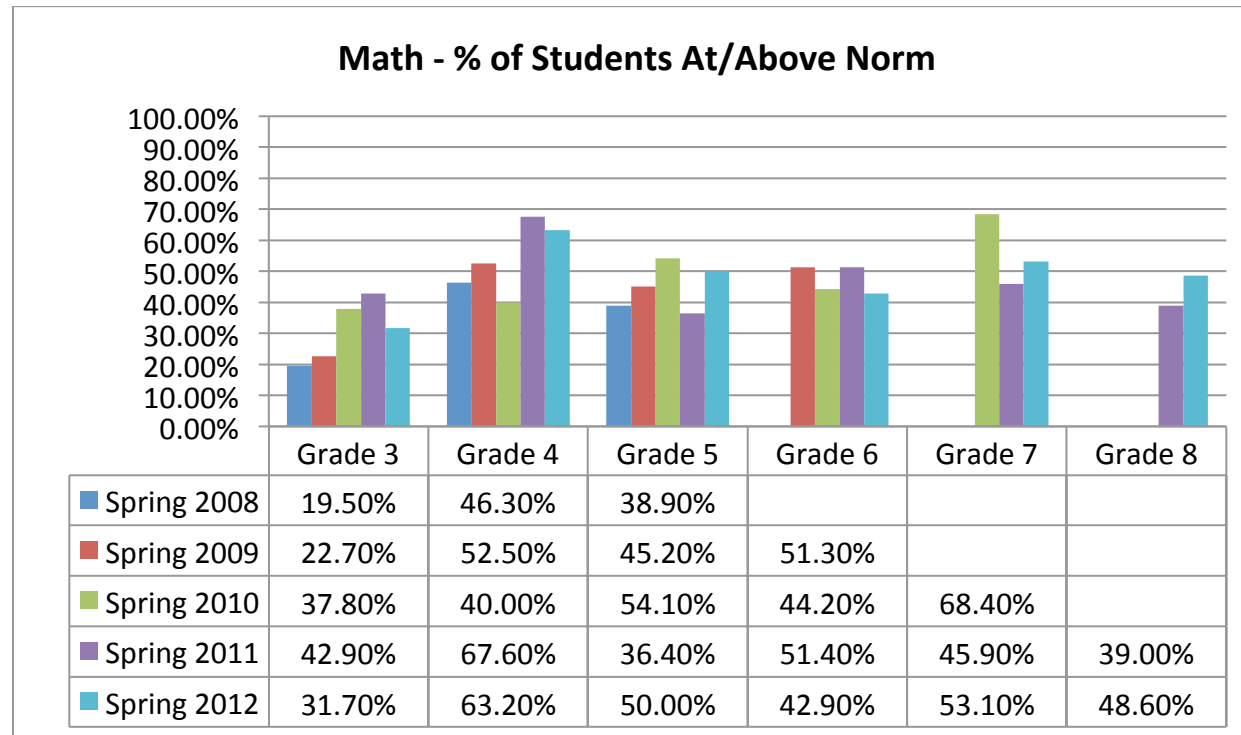
When looking at the percent of students scoring at or above the national NWEA MAP norm in Reading by grade level, the results are more variable.

Figure 23.



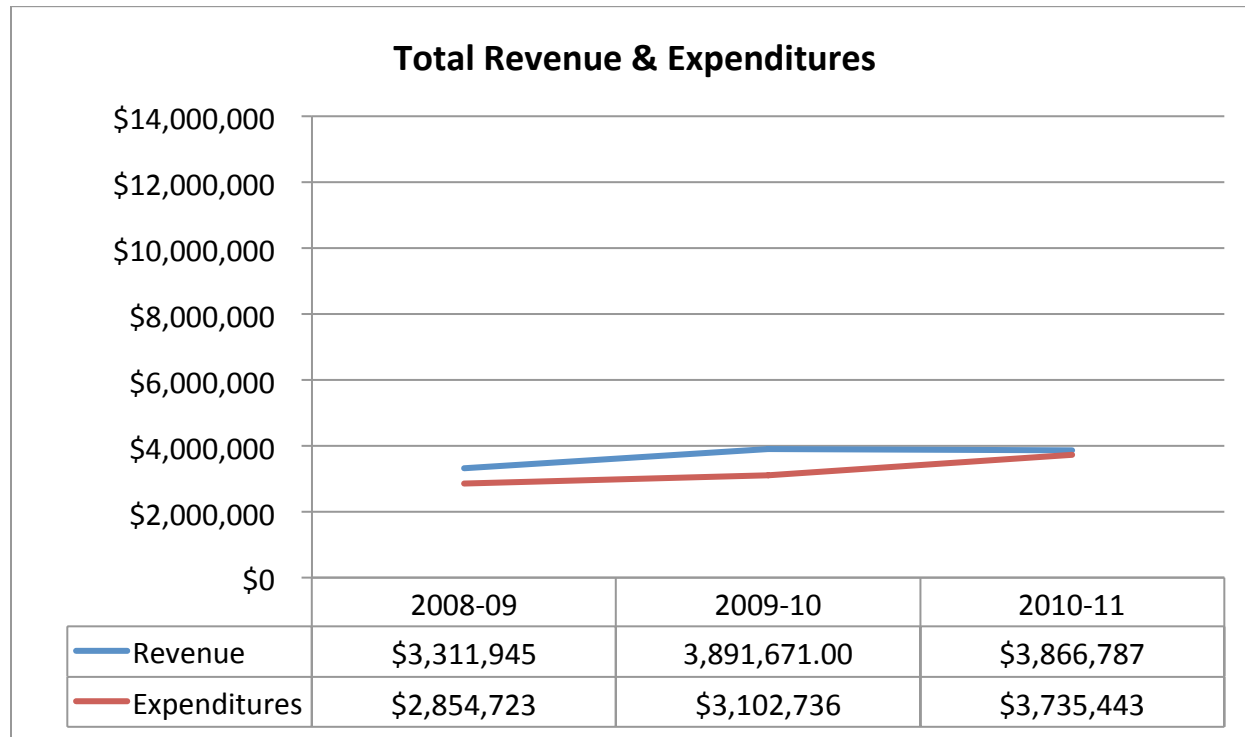
This graph shows that the percent of students (Grade K-8) scoring at or above the national NWEA MAP average in Math at SOHE steadily increased from Spring 2008 to Spring 2010, with a slight decrease from Spring 2011 to Spring 2012. However, in the Spring of 2012 there were still over 40% of MCPS students that scored at or above the national average.

Figure 24.



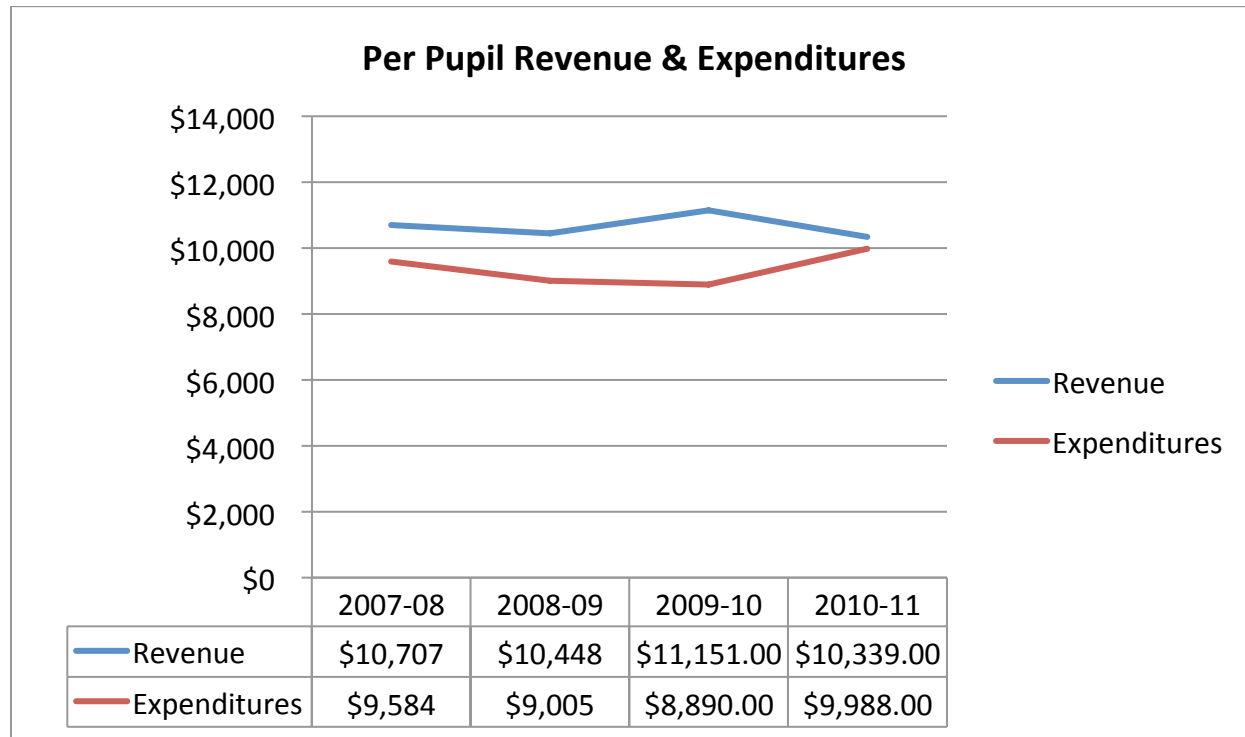
This graph shows that the percent of students scoring at or above the national NWEA MAP norm in the Spring of 2012 was on the average higher than the percent of students scoring at or above the national NWEA MAP norm in the Spring of 2008 for grades 4 through 8.

Figure 25.



Total revenue has consistently been higher than total expenditures over the three year period shown in the graph above.

Figure 26.



Similar to total revenues and expenditures, per pupil revenue is higher during each year shown above.



# **Woodlands School**

## **A Case Study**

### **Introduction**

Woodlands School is a K-8 charter school that is authorized by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM). Under state statutes (118.40.2r) this school is an independent charter school with its own school board and budget and is not associated with any school district. Under Wisconsin law Woodlands (WS) is a public school and its enrollment is open to any resident of the City of Milwaukee. In charter terminology this type of school is referred to as a 2r school, taken from the section in state law that defines the independent charter.

Prior to becoming a UWM charter school in 2003, WS had a long history as an education institution and program. The school's original role was that of a campus school for Alverno College, a women's college in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In 1889 the school separated from Alverno and became an independent private school eventually accredited by the Independent Schools Association of the Central States. It relocated from the Alverno campus into a former catholic school on the south side of Milwaukee and remained there until the archdiocese of Milwaukee sought to reclaim the space for another school. Woodlands moved from that site to their current location at 5510 West Bluemound Avenue in Milwaukee in 2001. This facility was formerly a catholic elementary school that was closed a number of years ago.

Currently the WS board of directors and leadership staff are opening a second school to satisfy the demand for enrollment in this particular program. The expansion to a second location is considered to be a measure of success as well as meeting parent demand.

### **Philosophy**

The Woodlands School has developed its philosophy over the years and presents it in the parent handbook (p.2) as follows:

“Woodlands School is a community of persons creating an environment in which teachers, parents and children share the responsibility for learning. Students are encouraged to discover, explore and create in order to develop the attitudes and skills necessary for effective living. Prime consideration is given to developing moral and spiritual values, a positive attitude toward life and a healthy self-concept. The design reflects the belief that learning to live with a flexible environment and the openness to change foster in the child the ability to cope with and increasingly complex body of knowledge and rapidly changing society. The school philosophy further emphasizes that involvement with people of many races and cultures enriches the growth of human understanding. Education founded in these beliefs give rise to both a happy, sensitive, creative child and an adult who while intellectually free, is morally and social responsible.”

The school's mission and vision statements, from the same handbook, that amplifies their focus:

**Mission:** Woodlands School-Creating the character of the community through diverse education

**Vision:** Internal- Woodlands will be a nationally recognized model school where whole child achievement is respected and nurtured. External – The best of what an urban education can be.

From a professional perspective the language of these statements promotes or reflects a “whole child” approach to education. This implies, but is not limited to an educational approach that places an emphasis on both the academic and social behavior dimension of a child’s growth and development. These statements trace their history to the work of John Dewey and the progressive movement that found momentum in education beginning in the 1920s and into the 1950s.

Apparent in the interviews of the staff and administration is a guiding principle(s) that is used to organize and express the culture of the school. They call it the *WOODLAND WAY*. It consists of the following general principles:

1. **Time for Living** – Students, teachers and staff focus on their rights and responsibilities to themselves, the community and the world.
2. **Diversity** – Diversity adds another dimension hopefully reflecting the diversity of the community. Learning focuses on the student strengths, challenges and individual approaches to learning.
3. **Discovery Based Learning** – Teachers work together to integrate individual disciplines into a common theme. Themes are used to allow students to put basic skills into a real life context.
4. **Integrated Curriculum** – The academic areas of Woodlands are:
  - Art
  - French
  - Library/Technology
  - Music
  - Physical Education
  - Language Arts
  - Math
  - Science
5. **Excellence for Every Child** – Identify each child’s strength and needs. The teachers’ goal is to grow the needs and enrich the strengths. Developing a learner who understands her or his own learning and can effectively manage their academic performance.
6. **Life-Long Learning** – Woodlands promote life-long learning through ongoing assessment, students’ learn to value and assess their own performance and can demonstrate their learning through continuous demonstration and expression of the outcomes of their personal efforts.

These elements are operationalized by use of the following model that is stressed by all staff to and with students to create a school culture that defines the major expectations for academic and behavioral performance at the school.

## **School Culture**

The academic culture of the school is shaped by the following mnemonic device- RESPECT- that is stressed with students and parents to create the integration of the schools philosophy and guiding principles.

**Respect for Learning (Create a Culture for Learning)**  
**Education that is Integrated (Interdisciplinary work that is collaborative and connected)**  
**Set Up Life Long Learning (Meaningful Learning)**  
**Pride in Diversity (Value and Honor for All)**  
**Excellence (Growth to reach Potential)**  
**Creative Discovery-Based Learning (Problem Solving/Learning by Doing)**  
**Time for Living (Respect and Responsibility to Others)**

The school believes these tenets describe the character building aspect of the culture of their school. These elements of the Woodland Way are expressed consistently by staff and administration in their approach to developing both their instruction, organization of curriculum, and approach to the social development of the child.

Woodlands has defined goals for students that express how the philosophy of the school guides expectations for students:

1. To develop a positive perception of one's self.
2. To initiate the process of becoming a life-long learner.
3. To accept responsibility for behavior and learning.
4. To develop those attitudes and skills necessary for effective living.
5. To creatively respond to and positively effect change.
6. To participate in the discovery of moral and ethical values.
7. To acquire the basic tools of learning in reading language arts, mathematics, science, social science and the arts.
8. To relate to people of other races and cultures with understanding, respect and concern.

## **Unique Characteristics of School**

### **Multi-grade**

Woodlands School prides itself on its multi-grade approach with two grades of students in a classroom. Thus you get the following grade arrangements:

K4/K5, 1/2, 3/4, 5/6, and 7/8

The placement of students is such that each year approximately one-half of the students are new to the teacher and the other half are students the teacher had the year before. While most elementary schools operate on the single grade model, Woodlands is a strong advocate of the multi-grade approach. They cite certain benefits of this model, 1) students who return to the same teacher (sometimes referred to as "looping") set the behavioral standards for new students in the classroom because they know what the teacher expects; 2) teachers expect returning

students to be of assistance (generally academically) but also help to establish the routines for the classroom quickly and 3) the multi-grade focus places demands on the teacher to be able to differentiate her or his instruction to meet the varying needs of children.

### **Time for Living**

This thematic is one of the guiding principles. Each month a Time for Living team meets with one of the staff to conduct a session that has a predefined theme for discussion i.e. “What does personal responsibility mean to you?” Each team consists of one child from grades 1-8 and a student remains with that team for every year of attendance. Thus each year a student would progress in seniority so to speak with one student exiting (graduation or moving) and one student entering the team.

These groups depend not only on the adult leader, but after a few years of membership older students become a role model for the new students. The monthly theme is predetermined by a teacher team, but could be modified to adapt to a particular issue that may prove to be opportune. This group process is aided by the fact that neither student nor staff turnover is high, thus there is a consistency to the groups and experiences are shared over time.

### **Guided Movement**

Whenever a class moves to another location a teacher or aid is always with the group. This is practical given the layout of the school which the author would describe as a “rabbit warren”. While this would be expected for small children, commonly upper grade students would move without adult oversight. However, for Woodlands these are also teaching/learning/social growth opportunities that promote the overall approach to the whole student. This also facilitates an orderly transition to the new class with the teacher assisting the specialty teacher in the transition of the students and to inform each other of any specific concerns that may have arisen during the instructional session.

### **Quiet Lunch**

The initial observation of the school lunchroom by this author was somewhat disturbing in that for at least 10 and maybe 12 minutes there was complete silence. It was quiet, an unusual experience, for just about any public school lunchroom setting. At a set interval a teacher raises her or his hand and the general sounds of lunchrooms begins. When asked why this was done, teachers indicated that this was developed years ago to assure that students ate their lunch or at least most of it before socialization began. The implication was that at times the lunch period focused too much on social dynamics and a lot of food was either not consumed or thrown away. What was unique is that students did this willingly as they understood the need to eat. No doubt a topic for Time for Living at one time.

### **Portfolio Review**

Woodlands uses the student portfolio concept as a way to both demonstrate student accomplishment and growth over time. Most portfolios reflect works from across the curriculum and in 8<sup>th</sup> grade students assemble a graduation portfolio along with an essay on their accomplishment and personal growth while at Woodlands. In general the essays reflect the Woodland Way and its impact upon the graduating student. The portfolios are then presented to teams of reviewers, most from outside the school, who discuss and critique the portfolio for the students. Maintaining these portfolios requires strong commitment from students and staff.

## **Classroom Aides**

Woodlands is committed to the idea of having a teacher and teacher-aide in each classroom save for grades 7 and 8 which share aides. Observationally a visitor has to work hard to figure out who is the teacher and who is the aide. Aides are part of the overall plan and provide instruction as well as assistance for students. A number of aides are certified teachers, in some cases hoping to gain a teacher position when a vacancy occurs. The communication between teachers and aides appears to be almost unspoken as they seem to anticipate the other in managing both instruction and behavior.

## **Buddies**

The Buddies program is the linking of 7/8 students with students in Kindergarten and first grade. This linkage of one older student with one or two younger students is played out in support for reading, assistance with art projects and serving as escorts at the end of the school day to insure that the very young students get the parent's car safely. The older students seem to relish serving in this role and this also facilitates the use of role models in shaping behavior and expectations at Woodlands.

## **Transportation**

Charters schools that are considered to be independent (2r) are not eligible for transportation under a quirk in state law. Thus there is no yellow bus and all transportation is parent based for drop-off and pick-up daily. The system used by Woodlands is to have a staff member stand at the parking lot entrance and as each car enters they call out, via walkie-talkie the number given to the parent/child over the school's intercom system. When a student hears the number he or she is allowed to leave the classroom. Younger students all have buddies to escort them for pick-up. There is also a before and after school program, paid for by the parent, that provides supervision until the parent can arrive.

## **What elements contribute to the success of this school?**

### **Results of Interviews**

In virtually every interview of teachers and staff there was a consistent way of describing the success and culture of the school. Terms such as "whole child", "The Woodlands Way", "life-long learning", "respect for oneself and others" were used to describe the focus of the culture of

the school. Teachers and staff found that they could work together because of this common understanding or agreement.

Teachers specifically noted that they were “allowed to teach” in this school, this statement was made in the context of many not all of the teachers had taught elsewhere. Their comparison with previous working environments was capped by the comments of one teacher who said she/ he took a “\$10,000” pay cut to teach here. Another teacher drives well over an hour to get to this school and feels that she/he is willing to do that to be able to teach with a sense of “meaningfulness” rather than just regimented periods. Being allowed to teach did not imply an individualistic approach but rather the opportunity to work with other professionals in a unified commitment to educate and inform young people.

An additional element that was probed during the interviews was the social/behavioral culture of the school. Almost all staff felt that they contributed to the child’s developing sense of self and that this was part of their role in the total development of the child. Teachers seem to enjoy the relationship with students. Turnover or mobility of students is low as well as low staff turnover thus creating an environment of familiarity over time. As one staff member noted, this place is like Cheers, the old TV show, “where everybody knows your name.” Lower elementary teachers can maintain a continuity of contact even with 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. The nature of the building promotes ongoing contact as students young and old must interact on many occasions during the day. This contact between young and old students is further promoted by the “Buddy Program” discussed earlier.

Interviews suggested that staff were pleased with leadership and understood the challenges of a school whose fiscal resources are limited, but respected the efforts to address their needs in a meaningful and respectful way. Teachers generally accepted idea of certain administrative duties being assigned to them, whether it was developing next year’s academic calendar, grouping students for the following year, working cooperatively and knowing that if the school and its students were to be successful that they needed to pitch in. Leadership at the school was viewed as facilitative of the mission, a gentle urging for things to be done, openness to questions and problem solving. One person characterized leadership as “motherly” but when necessary a clear decision to resolve an issue.

Even when some issues festered, internet connectivity was one such issue, staff seemed willing to be patient and not constantly grumbling about inconsistent access. The one topic that it seemed leadership couldn’t solve was the salary gap between teachers at this school and the Milwaukee Public Schools. A continuing gap of \$10,000 to \$15,000 is evident in their data and may at some point cause staff to leave to meet the needs of their family, particularly if they were the major bread-winner.

Remarkable in the interviews was the expressed support for the multi-grade approach for Woodlands. Teachers enjoyed the model and preferred it to their previous teaching positions. Many staff commented on the nonuse of textbooks. They took pride that they could build a curriculum using their knowledge, the team perspective and where appropriate each team member being the goto expert in a particular subject. An example would be the in grades 4/5 one teacher is the language arts expert, one is the social studies expert and one is the math expert.

Asking another teacher how to do something or gaining from observing someone else's teaching is common and expected.

### **Results of Classroom Observation**

The researcher had the opportunity to visit and observe in almost every class, except French, scheduling just didn't work. Most classrooms have an aide, many certified teachers, who do teach and operate as a colleague, part of the team and are viewed by students in the same light as the teacher. Most classes are around 23-25 in size and students move from one room to another depending on the subject. Movement of students is efficient, with a limited amount of hassle and always supervised by an adult to insure timely transitions and is always considered to be a teachable moment should the opportunity arise.

Student behavior requires few prompts to transition, begin work, finish work or reset their behavior. One unique observation was that since teachers stress pro-social development and cooperation they do not need to waste time to begin a lesson or to get the appropriate attention needed. Students work with little wasted effort nor do they engage in extended socializing wasting both instructional and independent work time. It was not unusual to have students in the higher grade helping students in the lower grade in a classroom. In many respects this seems to be the desired outcome and there is little resistance among the students to such activity.

Teachers were well prepared and demonstrated an ability to adapt curriculum when giving one-on-one instruction. Working in a multi-grade environment means that teachers must prepare broadly and need to adapt readily should a lesson not possess meaningful outcomes. The demand of a multi-grade curriculum seems to help expand the teacher's range of instruction and also promotes a level of confidence to handle a wide range of subject matters and issues.

Woodlands curriculum stresses a lot of project based learning with students developing greater levels of independence in defining and shaping these projects as they advance through the grades. Rarely did any teacher raise their voice except for an occasional surprise of praise at a positive outcome.

By third grade students have a large three ring binder for their work and this becomes their bible for school. There is a learning curve for students to use the binder, keeping it organized and being consistent from teacher to teacher to use the binder in an effective way. Selectively, as each year goes by the students seem to know how to use the binder and selected some of their best work for the portfolio they will develop for a final presentation in May of 8<sup>th</sup> grade; a graduate thesis so to speak.

When a behavioral issue arises in the classroom or hallway, staff will revert to the elements of the Woodland Way to correct, redirect or define what needs be brought to the fore for resolution. Problem solving is not postponed to later and then forgotten. Problem solving in the moment is a characteristic of the program.

Teachers were universally satisfied in their opportunity to teach, their enthusiasm for the opportunity to assist in the development of their students is evidenced in their commitment to

working on projects that demonstrate that the student has mastered or at least understood the concept/principle being advanced by the teacher. If a student offers a unique or questionable interpretation, it would be common in the upper grades for teacher to ask student to verify their position, i.e. research the idea and then report back, rarely was there a statement of disapproval or outright rejection of a student's statement. Learning to analyze what one says or believes was stressed as part of the Woodlands Way.

### **Role of Curriculum**

Curriculum at this school is teacher drive as informed by the MAP testing as well as professional judgment of teachers. It is quite evident in interviews that teachers take pride in not being dependent on textbooks to determine their curriculum. While textbooks are available as a resource, teachers almost express disdain for any type of dependence on it. Teachers and aides must work across at least two grade levels because of the multi-grade practices of the school. Additionally teachers and aids take great pride in developing curriculum, being able to adapt it and then frequently tie the subject into a project that is defined as integrating the concept with application. Teachers focus on having students demonstrate their competencies in applied ways encouraging student to integrate the subject in a broader perspective. For example in teaching math student might be encourage to display how a concept could be applied in other academic areas.

The lack of textbooks to define the student curriculum requires teacher to develop their knowledge base of curriculum and seems to encourage positive interactions at the unit level to share information, instructional strategies and content more readily.

This adds to the cooperative environment that seems to define a portion of the schools success.

### **Why does this school work?**

There are potentially many factors that make the school a success, a school that "exceeds expectations" rating from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. But some major themes emerge from both observation and interviews. One is the commitment of all staff to the mission of the school. A willingness to integrate this philosophy into the operation of their classroom in both the management of behavior and the academic program, but the high expectations they have for their students. These expectations are clearly communicated to students and parents and seem to be an essential element.

A second theme that emerged was the willingness of staff to cooperate to achieve the mission/vision. This is an environment/culture where colleagues recognize the contributions of staff and are openly public about their about their appreciation. They almost to a person teach with their doors open, save for the music room which occupies a room adjacent to a major walkway with lots of student movement throughout the day.

Evident in the interviews was the role of leadership. Leadership has a democratic quality/style that motivates, respects, and advocates for staff and students. Leadership also evidences a "facilitator" style to seek solutions and resources in an environment where there are clear fiscal



limitations. Leadership never loses focus on the priorities for student learning and when pressed to explain it in more detail, the answer is always, “it requires good teachers to implement the mission”.

Often the research literature on successful schools focuses on the leadership style as a critical element, especially for schools that are failing to achieve public stated academic standards, i.e. standardized testing. However, this school is not failing by state standards, so what is the leadership role? Certainly the transformational leader is not called for as the school needs to sustain its success not change it. Nor does the transactional model/ style of leadership describe Woodlands. Rather this leader must bring together a number of themes or practices to sustain the school. These include continual promotion of the mission/vision, hiring of professionals, “who want to teach” and recognizing that teaching is more than certification, teachers must become members of the community or team within the vision of the school. When asked about modifying their curriculum to meet the new common core standards, she note, that this will not be a challenge, because teachers at Woodlands are always looking for opportunities to improve.

The drive to sustain student achievement and the recognition that curriculum and teaching are critical is paramount in this environment. As noted earlier, teachers enjoy working in this school, it sustains their professional role and provides a continuous feedback loop on student progress. Administration works hard to maintain this collegial and productive culture. Listening to staff is seen as critical in that they want and need to be heard.

Observationally, I have concluded that all the elements of this school, leadership, teachers, aides, staff and parents are in agreement on the authority patterns present at Woodlands. These authority patterns are the results of leadership and staff agreeing/collaborating to operate within a set of guidelines, The Woodland Way, implementing these principles for both social and academic expectations. For students these authority patterns create the structures in which they can succeed and share with others. The opportunity to succeed and share is powerful in this school’s culture.

## **Woodlands School Achievement and Evaluation Data**

Academic performance plays a critical role in the accountability standards used by UWM to grant an initial charter and at time of contract renewal (contract are for a maximum of five years). The major standards used by UWM are the established state of Wisconsin exam known Wisconsin Knowledge and Concept Exam or WKCE. This test covers reading, math, language arts, science and social studies from grades three through eight and at tenth grade. In addition to the state required exams UWM requires the use of the NWEA Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) which measures student growth from year to year and establishes growth targets for adequate progress. This test is very helpful for teachers in their academic planning and is administered, in fall, winter and spring.

In addition to the state exams, UWM Charters are required to have comparison schools, i.e. schools that have similar demographics, for evaluative purpose and comparison is always made to Milwaukee Public School district average. This academic data allows for relative comparisons to determine if a charter school is meeting or exceeding performance standards. The data that follows presents this information as well as additional descriptive information that further help describe the characteristics of this school.

Figure 1:

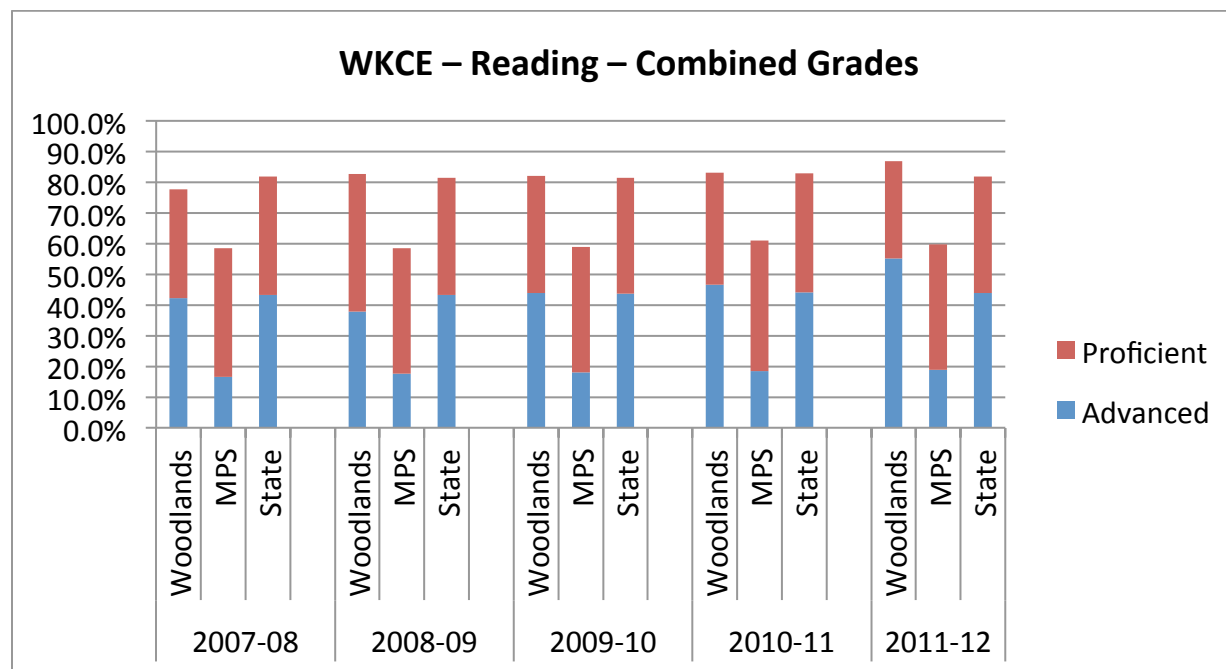


Table 1

	2007-08			2008-09			2009-10			2010-11			2011-12		
	WL	MPS	State	WL	MPS	State	WL	MPS	State	WL	MPS	State	WL	MPS	State
<b>Advanced</b>	42.3%	16.5%	43.2%	37.9%	17.6%	43.3%	43.9%	18.1%	43.7%	46.6%	18.4%	44.2%	55.1%	18.9%	44.0%
<b>Proficient</b>	35.4%	42.0%	38.7%	44.7%	41.0%	38.1%	38.2%	40.8%	37.8%	36.5%	42.5%	38.8%	31.8%	40.8%	37.9%
<b>Basic</b>	14.6%	23.9%	11.8%	11.8%	24.9%	12.3%	15.0%	24.2%	12.2%	11.2%	23.8%	11.5%	9.1%	23.8%	12.0%
<b>Minimal</b>	6.2%	15.3%	5.4%	3.7%	15.2%	5.6%	2.3%	16.3%	5.7%	4.5%	14.7%	5.0%	4.0%	15.7%	5.4%

<b>No WSAS</b>	1.5%	2.3%	0.9%	1.9%	1.4%	0.7%	0.6%	0.6%	0.5%	1.1%	0.6%	0.6%	0.0%	0.7%	0.6%
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Results suggest that Woodlands consistently outperforms MPS WKCE results and parallels state-wide test results.

Figure 2.

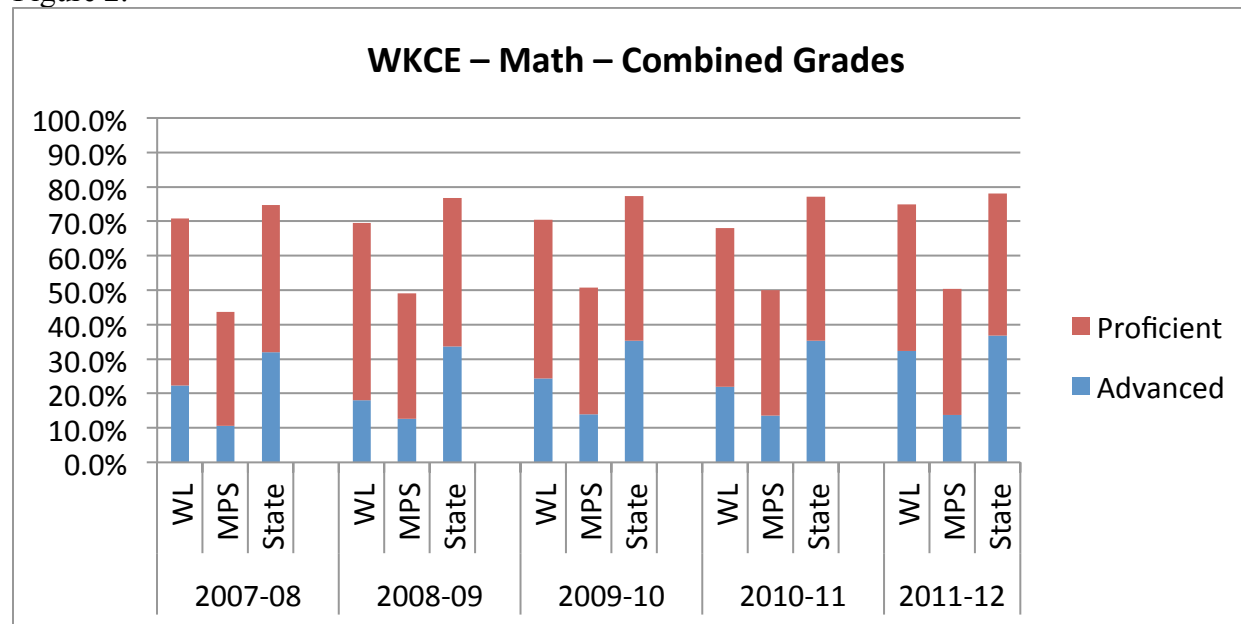
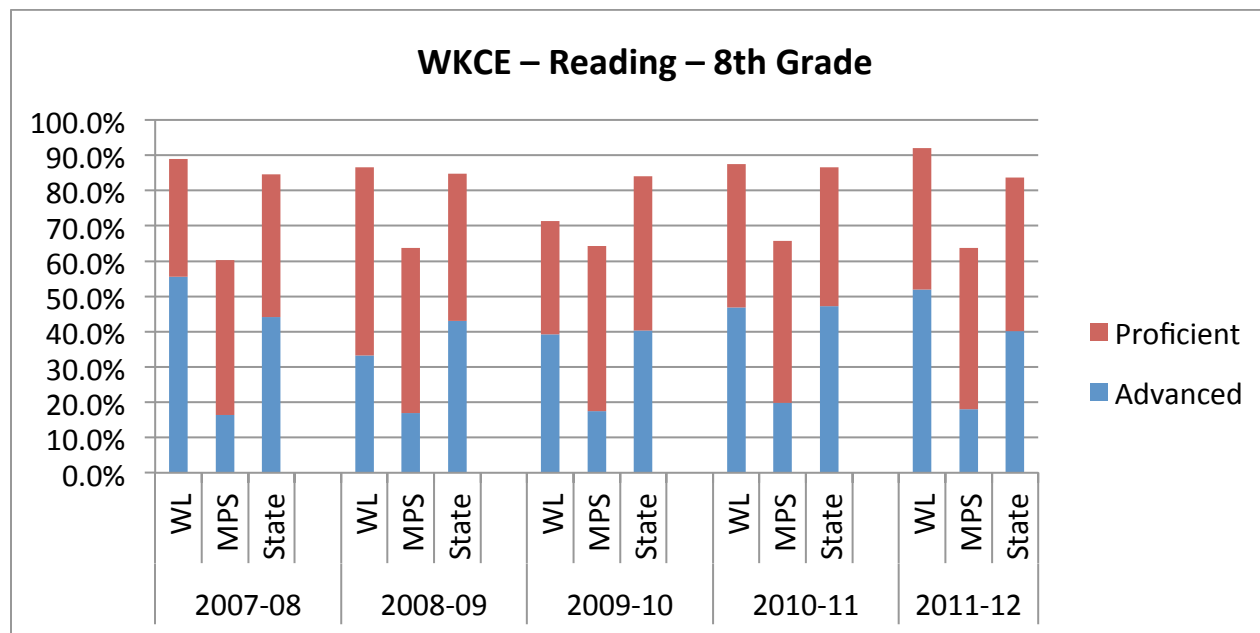


Figure 3.



<b>Table 3.</b>	<b>2007-08</b>			<b>2008-09</b>			<b>2009-10</b>			<b>2010-11</b>			<b>2011-12</b>		
	WL	MPS	State	WL	MPS	State	WL	MPS	State	WL	MPS	State	WL	MPS	State
<b>Advanced</b>	55.6%	16.3%	44.1%	33.3%	16.9%	43.1%	39.3%	17.5%	40.4%	46.9%	19.8%	47.2%	52.0%	18.0%	40.2%
<b>Proficient</b>	33.3%	43.9%	40.4%	53.3%	46.9%	41.7%	32.1%	46.7%	43.6%	40.6%	45.9%	39.3%	40.0%	45.7%	43.5%
<b>Basic</b>	11.1%	20.3%	9.0%	13.3%	19.6%	9.2%	21.4%	20.1%	10.0%	12.5%	18.9%	8.3%	8.0%	20.1%	10.2%

<b>Minimal</b>	0.0%	17.5%	5.8%	0.0%	15.0%	5.5%	7.1%	15.3%	5.5%	0.0%	14.6%	4.7%	0.0%	15.5%	5.4%
<b>No WSAS</b>	0.0%	2.1%	0.8%	0.0%	1.7%	0.6%	0.0%	0.4%	0.5%	0.0%	0.8%	0.5%	0.0%	0.7%	0.6%

Test results clearly indicate that at 8<sup>th</sup> grade, the exit year or culmination of the schools curriculum, the school generally exceeds the state-wide WKCE. This data suggest that Woodlands students are well prepared to enter high school.

Figure 4.

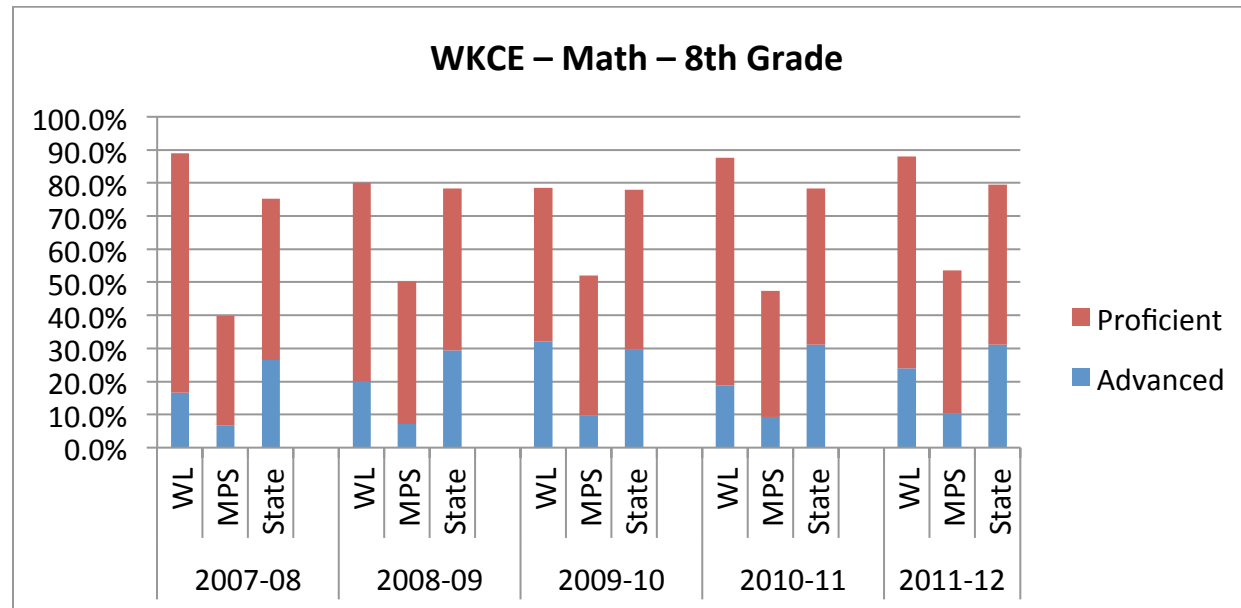
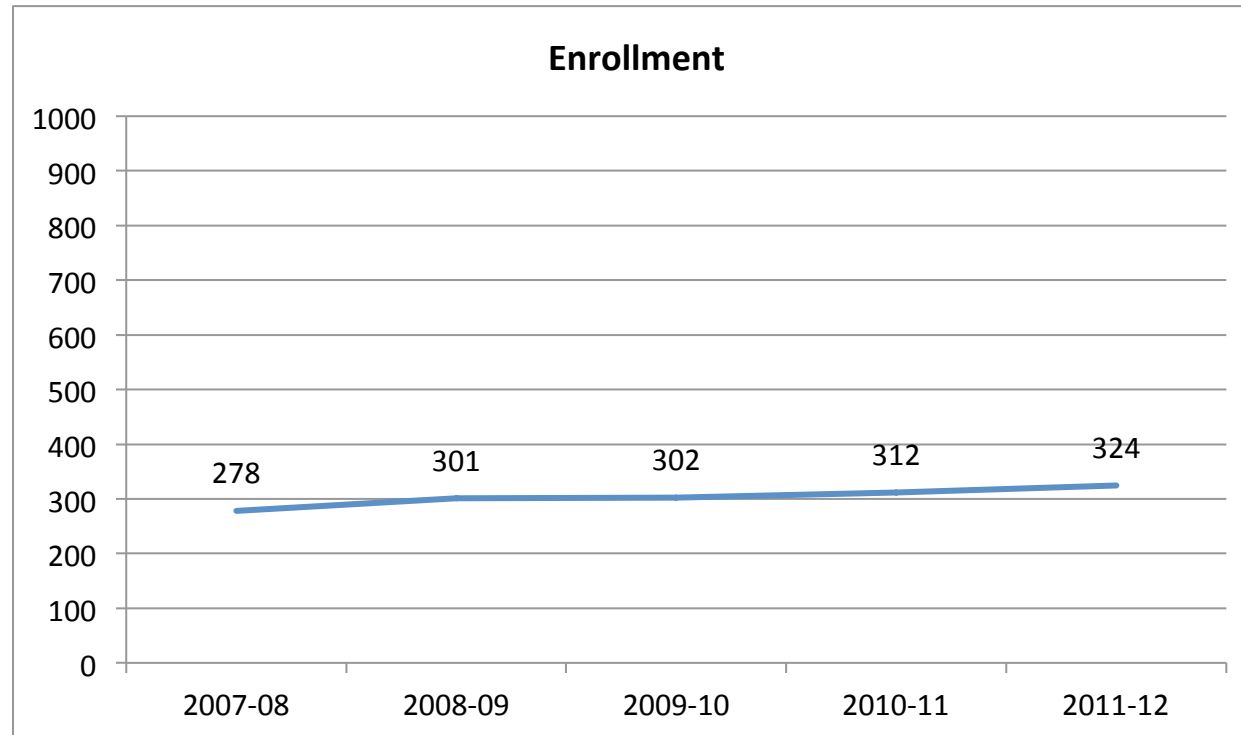


Table 4.	2007-08			2008-09			2009-10			2010-11			2011-12		
	WL	MPS	State	WL	MPS	State	WL	MPS	State	WL	MPS	State	WL	MPS	State
<b>Advanced</b>	16.7%	6.8%	26.5%	20.0%	7.1%	29.3%	32.1%	9.7%	29.5%	18.8%	9.2%	31.2%	24.0%	10.4%	31.2%
<b>Proficient</b>	72.2%	33.0%	48.8%	60.0%	43.1%	49.1%	46.4%	42.4%	48.4%	68.8%	38.2%	47.1%	64.0%	43.2%	48.2%
<b>Basic</b>	11.1%	23.0%	13.1%	20.0%	26.0%	13.0%	14.3%	23.4%	13.0%	12.5%	23.0%	12.0%	8.0%	22.8%	12.0%
<b>Minimal</b>	0.0%	35.1%	11.0%	0.0%	22.9%	8.3%	7.1%	24.0%	8.7%	0.0%	28.7%	9.3%	4.0%	22.8%	8.3%

<b>No</b>	0.0%	2.1%	0.6%	0.0%	0.9%	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%	0.3%	0.0%	0.9%	0.4%	0.0%	0.8%	0.4%
<b>WSAS</b>															

As suggested by the reading results, albeit with greater variability, 8<sup>th</sup> grade Math test results again equal or exceed state-wide averages.

Figure 5.



Both enrollment data and attendance data (shown below) suggest a very stable program.

Figure 6:

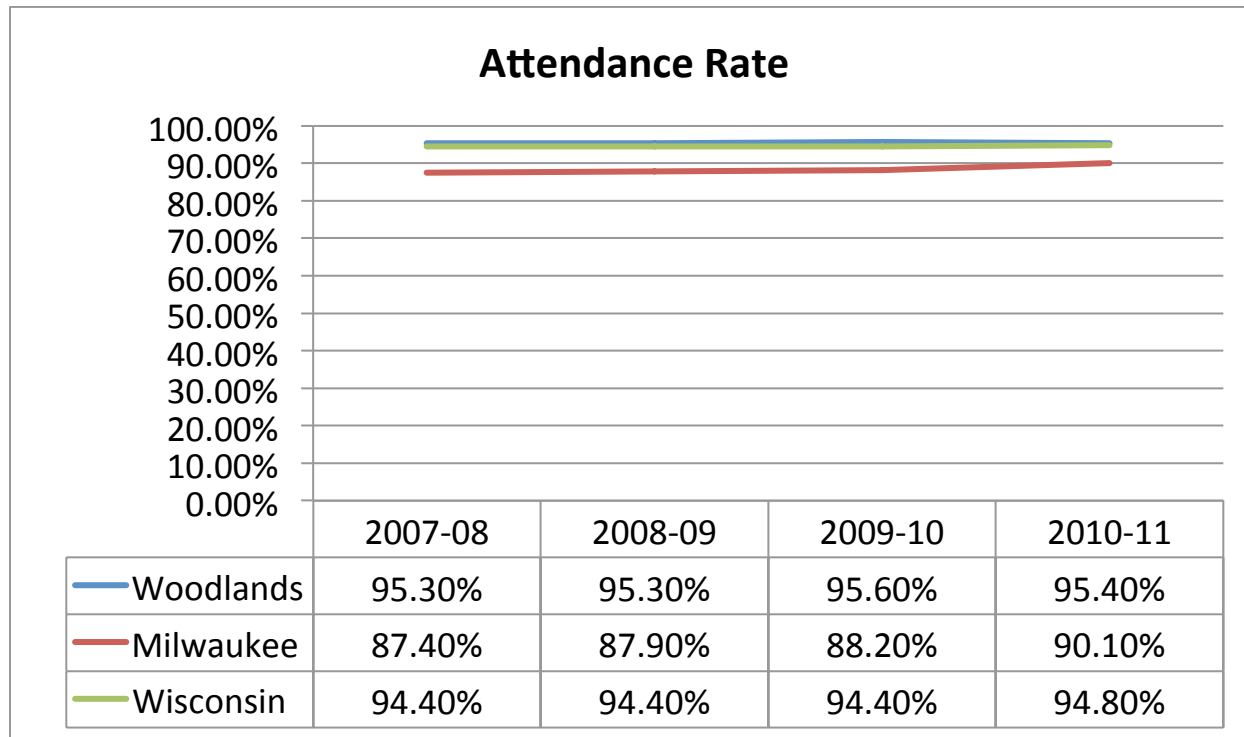
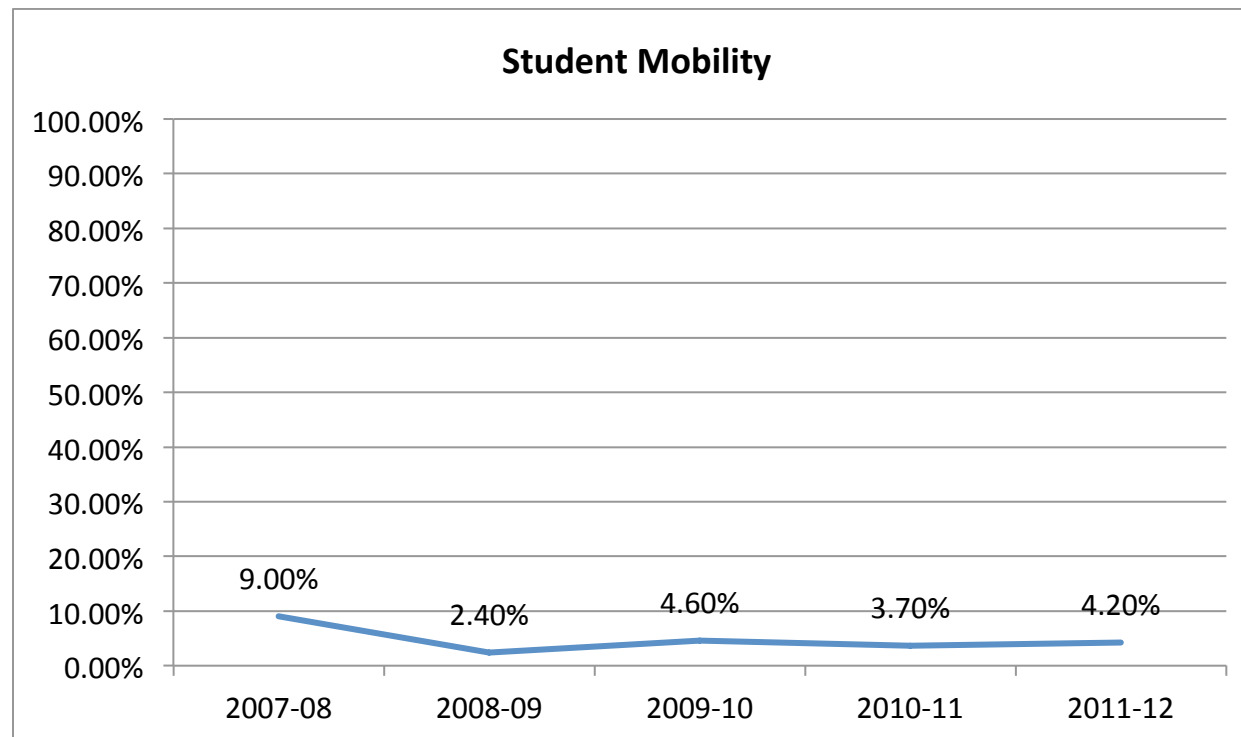


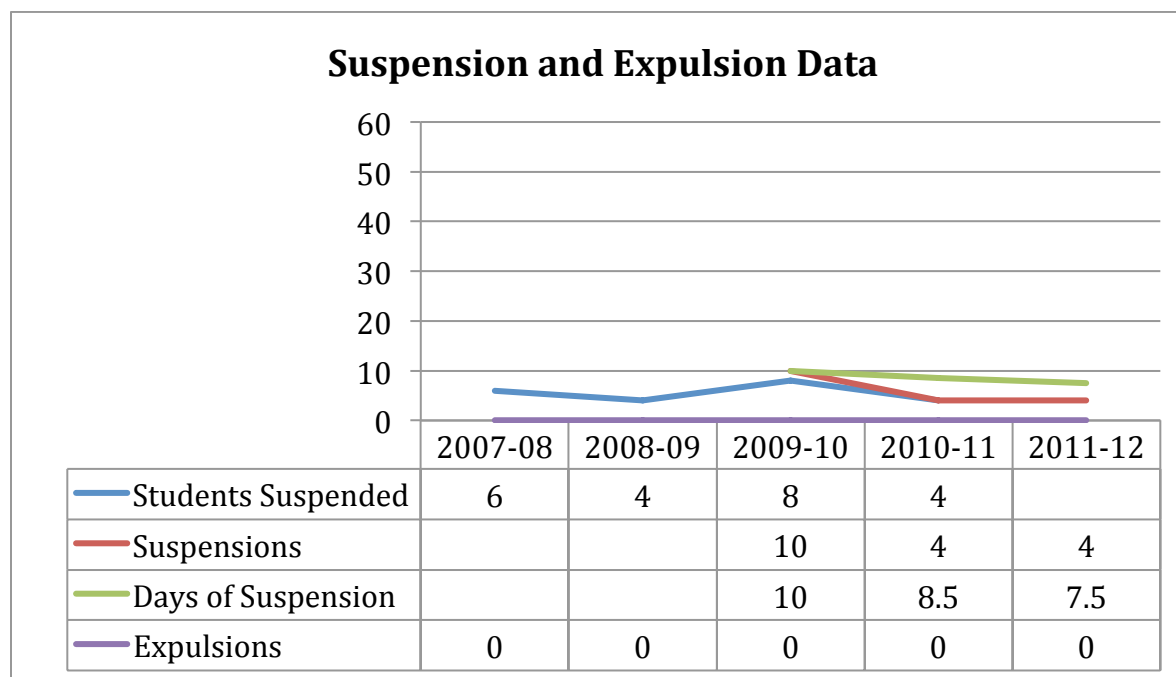


Figure 7.



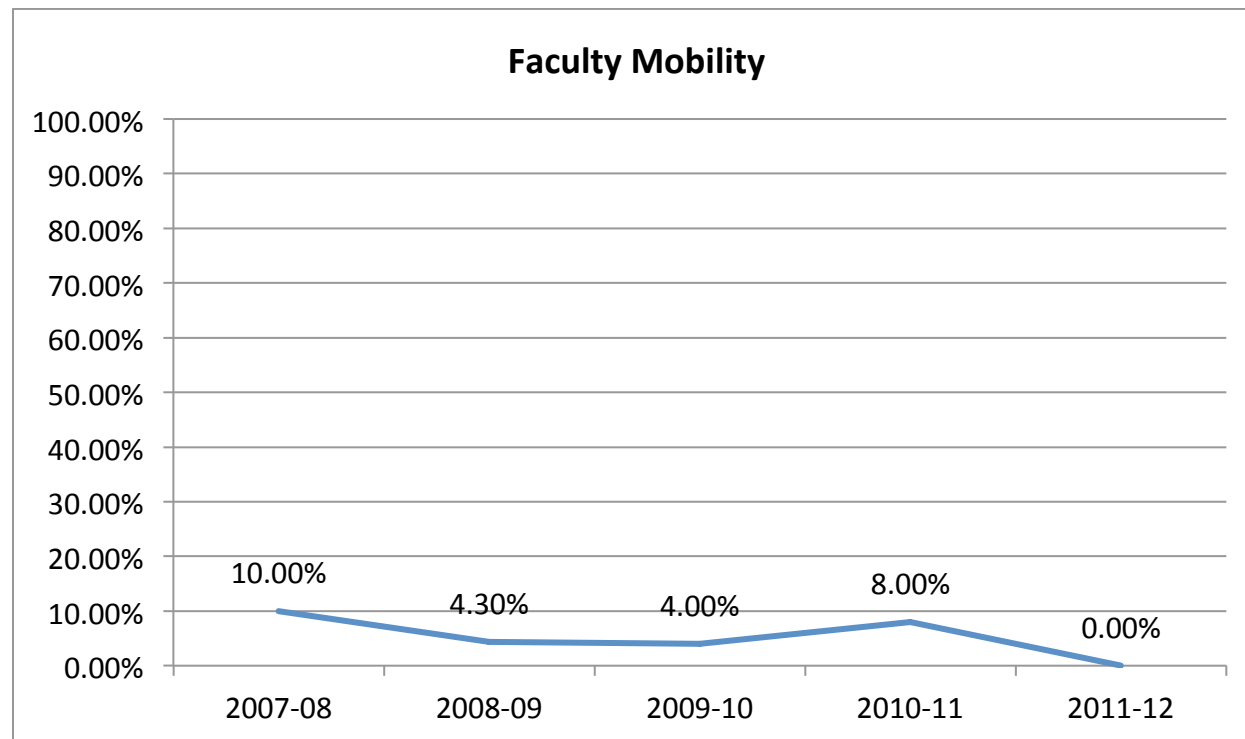
Woodlands school shows very little turnover of students from year to year. The results are positive.

Figure 8.



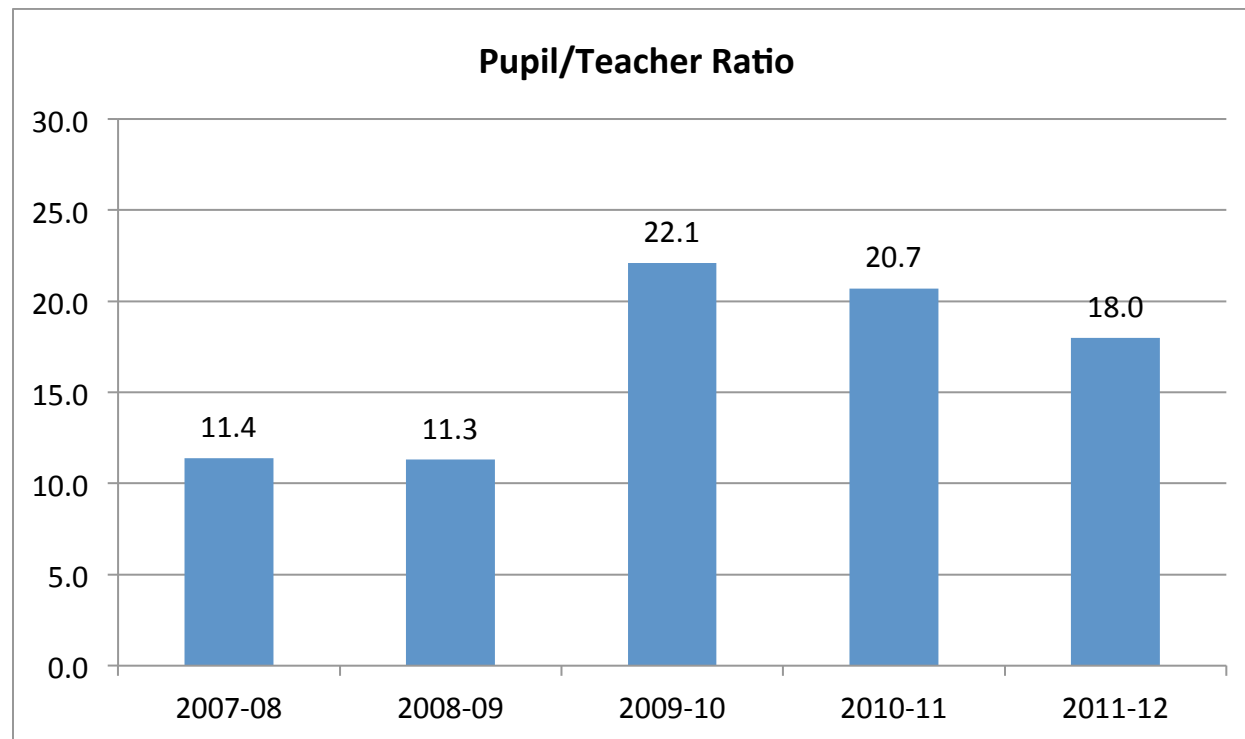
The chart on discipline demonstrates a learning environment with few behavioral/discipline issues and suggests a school that promotes positive behavior.

Figure 9.



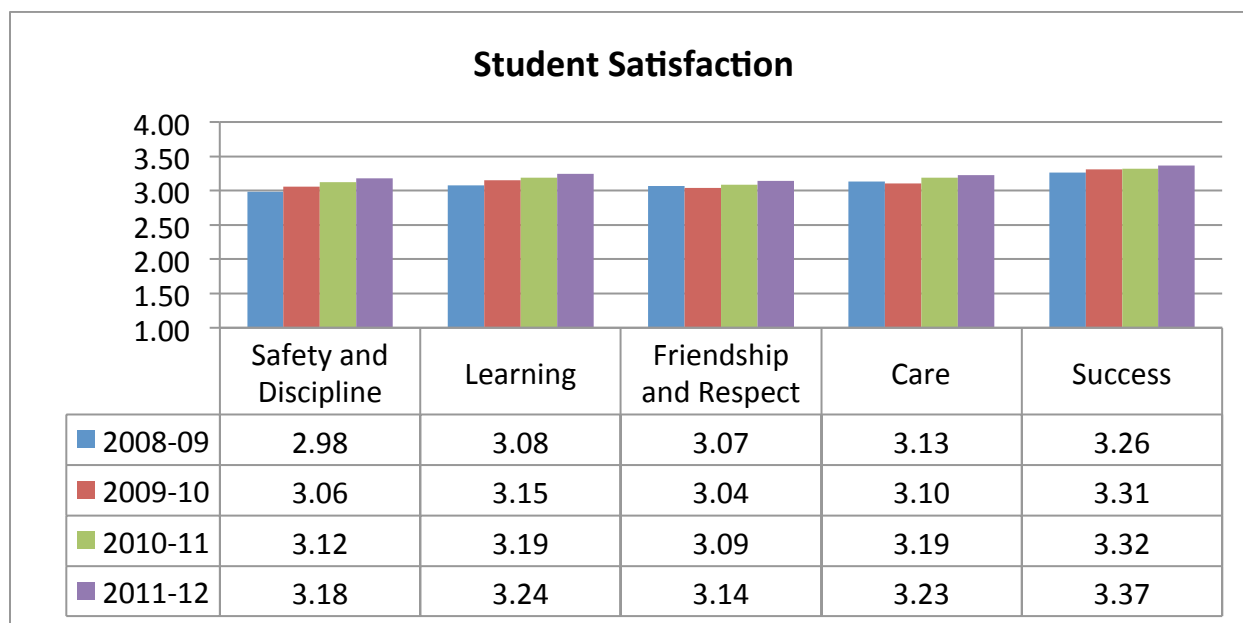
These rates of faculty mobility/turnover are very small suggesting stability and a desirable environment.

Figure 10.



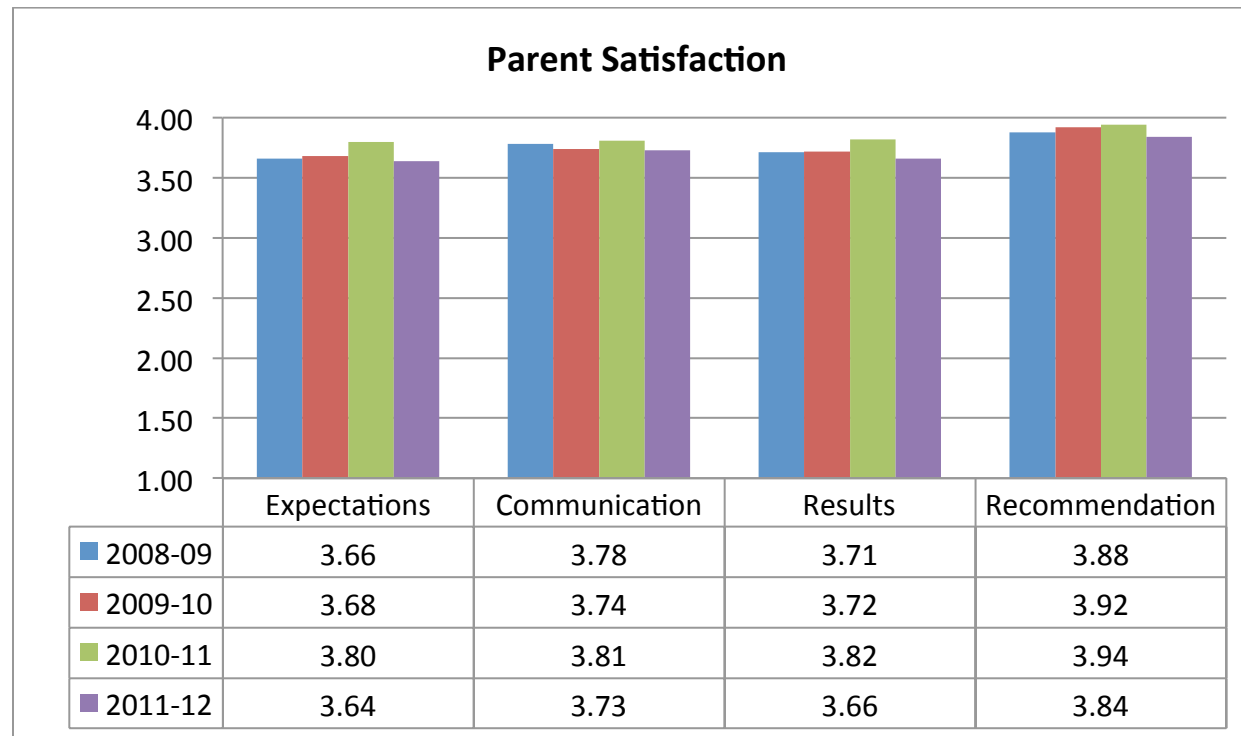
The teacher/pupil ratio has shown variance from year to year. Student, staff and parent satisfaction data are collected annually by UWM's Charter School Office.

Figure 11.



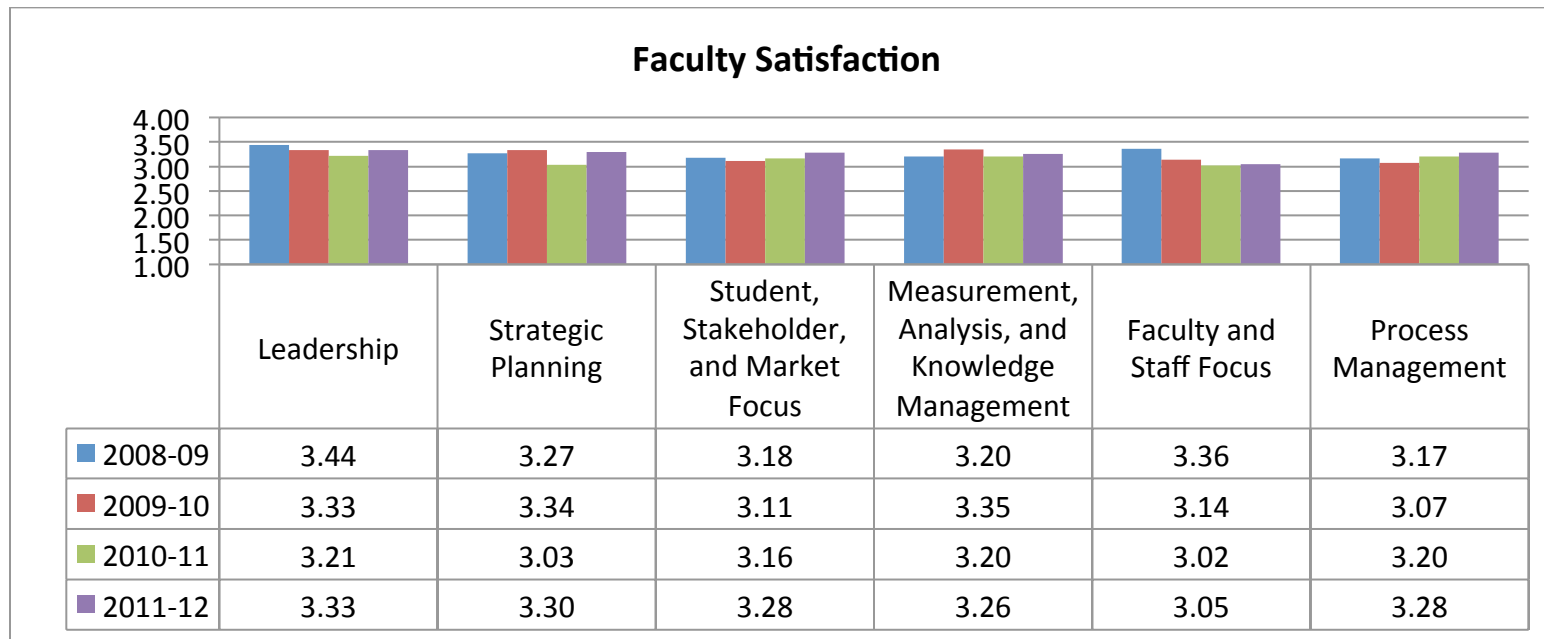
Students show a high degree of, and gradually increasing level of satisfaction.

Figure 12.



Parent satisfaction for this school has remained consistently high.

Figure 13.



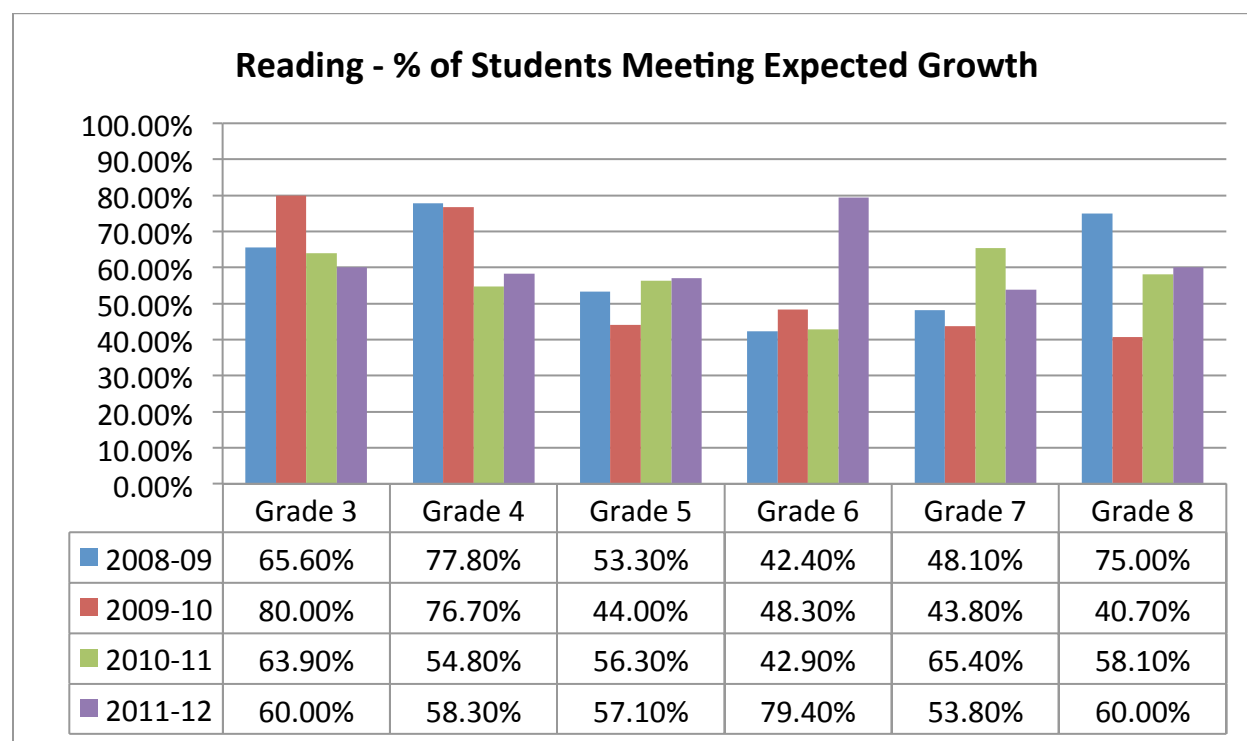
The faculty survey is based on the Baldrige Criteria for Educational Excellence and measures the quality level that faculty members believe exists with certain aspects of the school. Results reveal that the faculty believes that SOHE is achieving a high level of quality in these areas.

## MAP SCORES

The following tables and graphs report test results for a test called Measures of Academic Progress (MAP). This test does not report grade results but uses a standardized measure of academic growth. It measures how much progress a student has made to comparison students and academic standards. The test reports the “academic growth” and then characterizes those results into major categories: Meeting Expected Growth, Exceeding Expected Growth, Not Meeting Expected Growth, and Below Growth.

The advantage of this test is that it provides to both teachers and students more feedback on their performance than the WKCE required by the State of Wisconsin.

Figure 14.

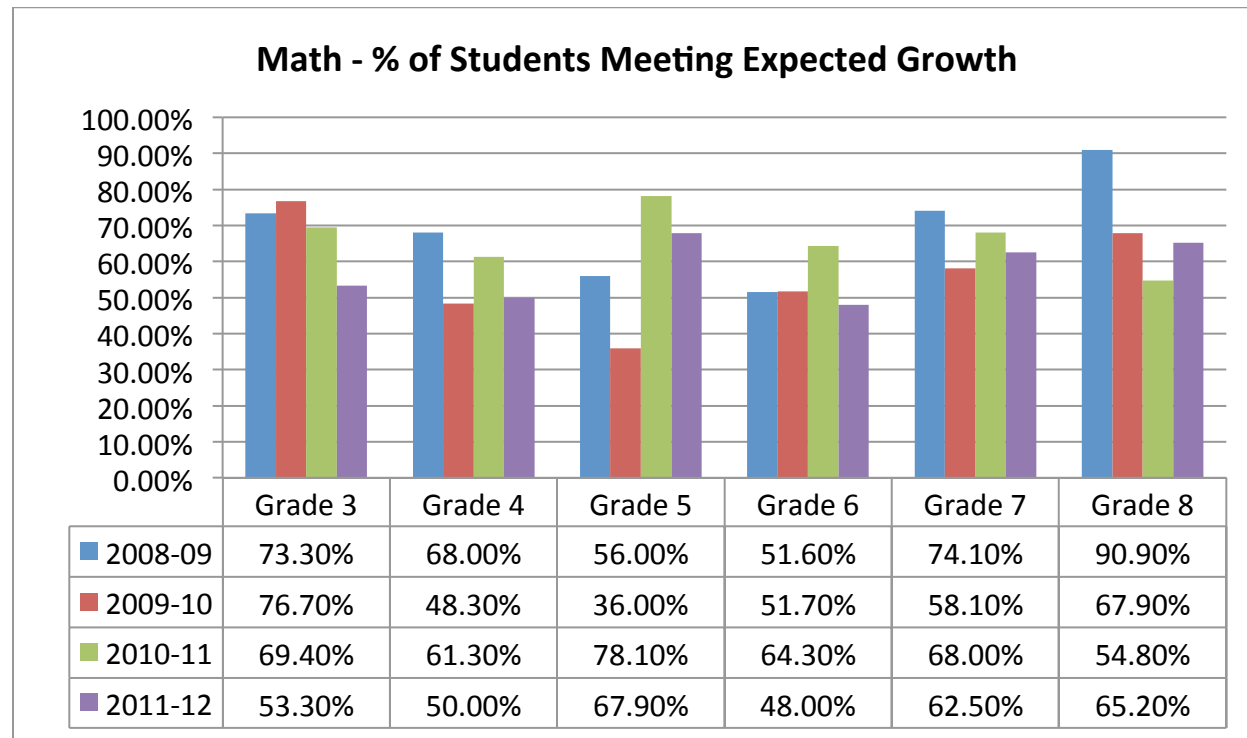


Each WLS student takes MAP assessments in Reading and Math in both the Fall and the Spring semester. NWEA MAP assessments are nationally normed. In addition, Fall MAP assessment results include an expectation of the average amount of growth a student is



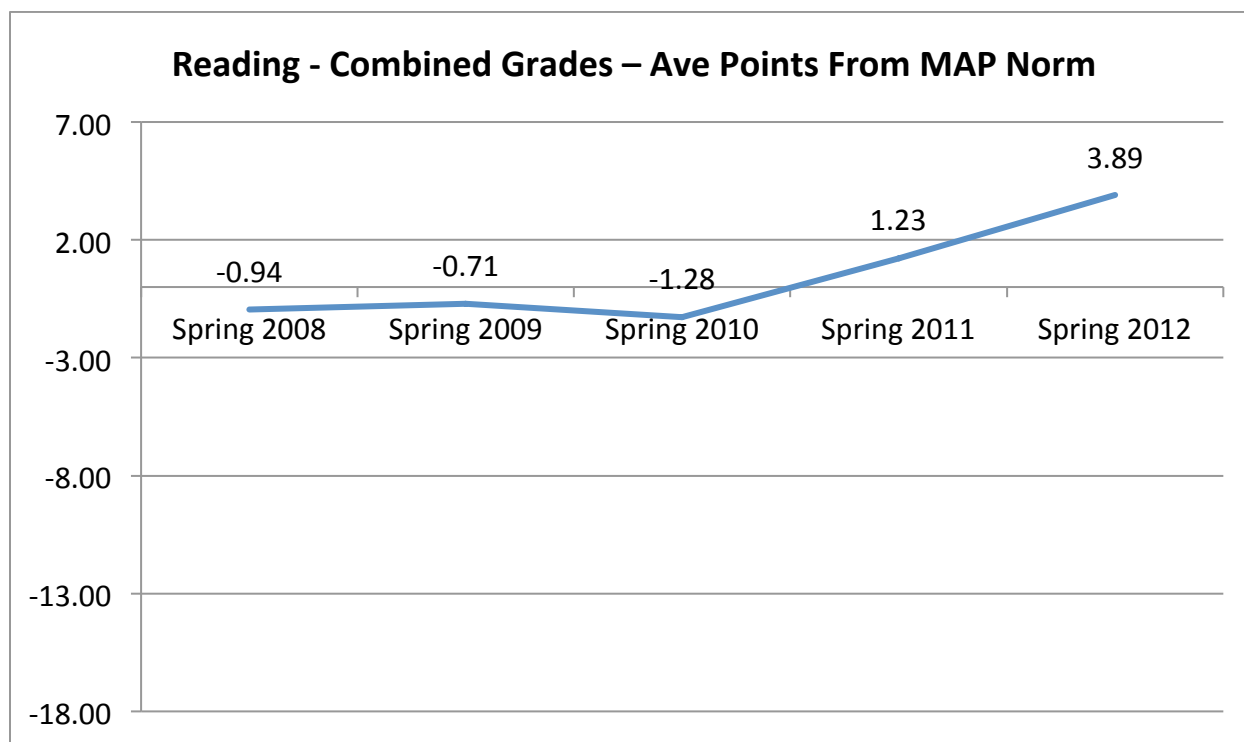
expected to make by the Spring, based on that student's Fall RIT score and their grade level. The graph above shows the percent of students that met their expected Fall to Spring growth in Reading. There is variability in the results.

Figure 15.



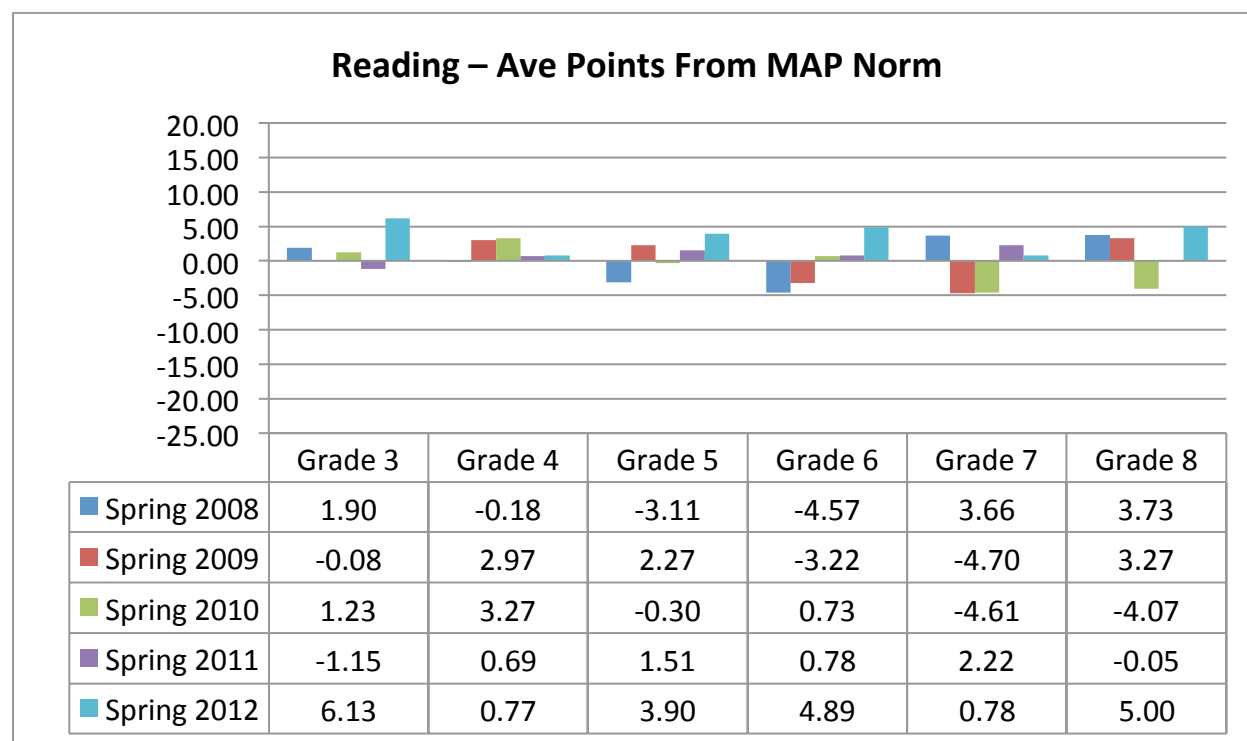
Variability was also found in Math in the percentage of students meeting their expected Fall to Spring growth.

Figure 16.



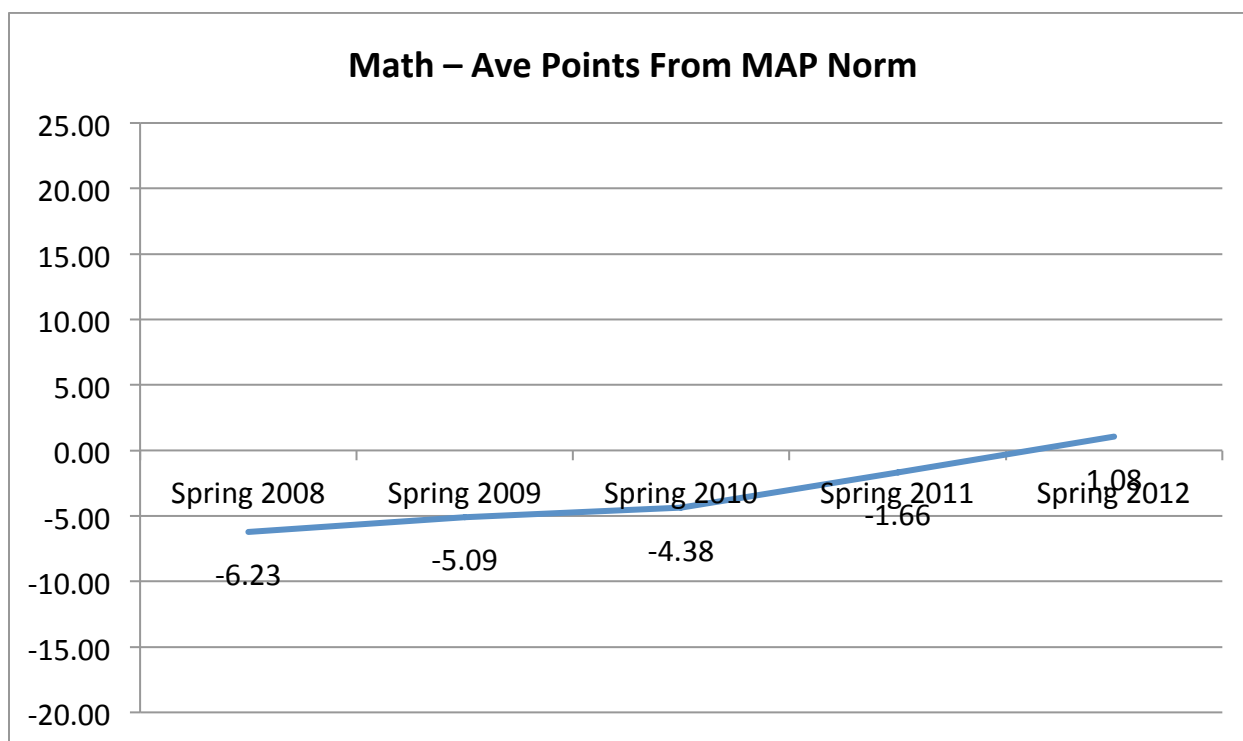
NWEA MAP tests are nationally normed. This graph shows that the average WLS student (grades K-8) in Spring of 2008 scored less than 1 point above the MAP national norm in Reading. This number has risen steadily from one year to the next with the average WLS student (Grades K-8) in the Spring of 2012 scoring over 3 points above the national MAP norm in Reading.

Figure 17.



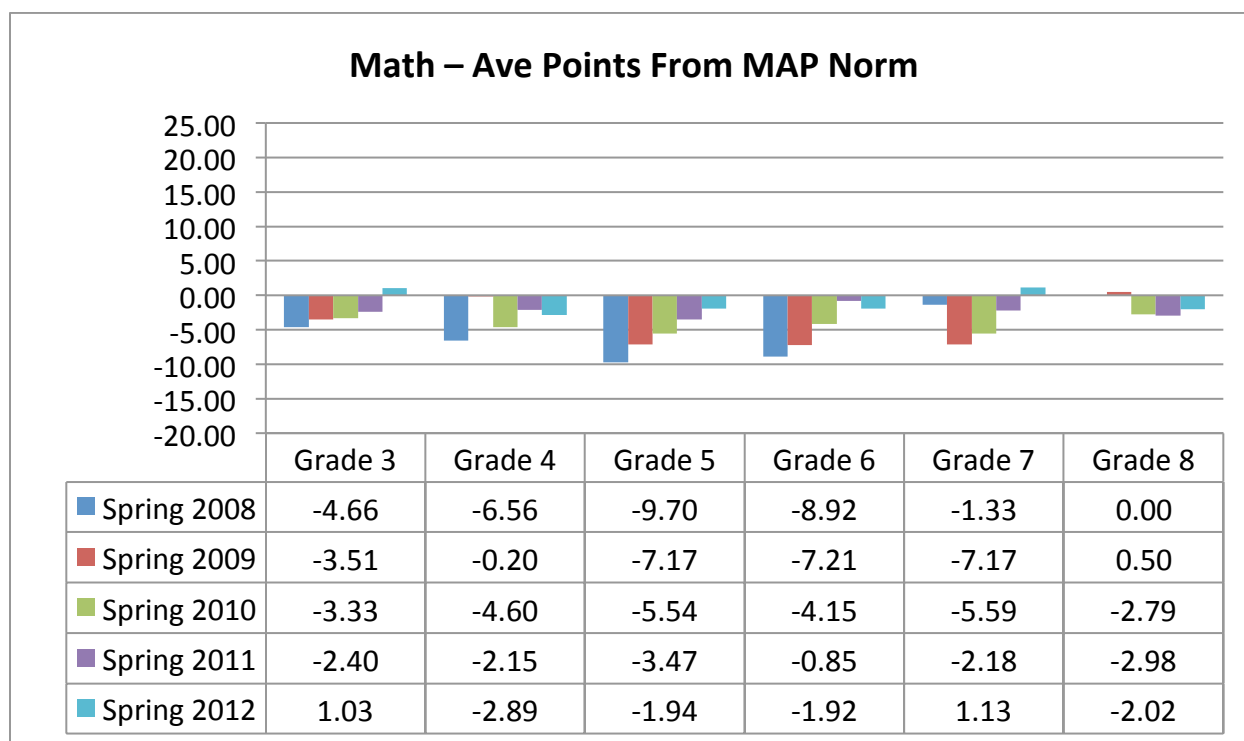
When looking at the average points above/below the national norm by grade level there is more variability in the results.

Figure 18.



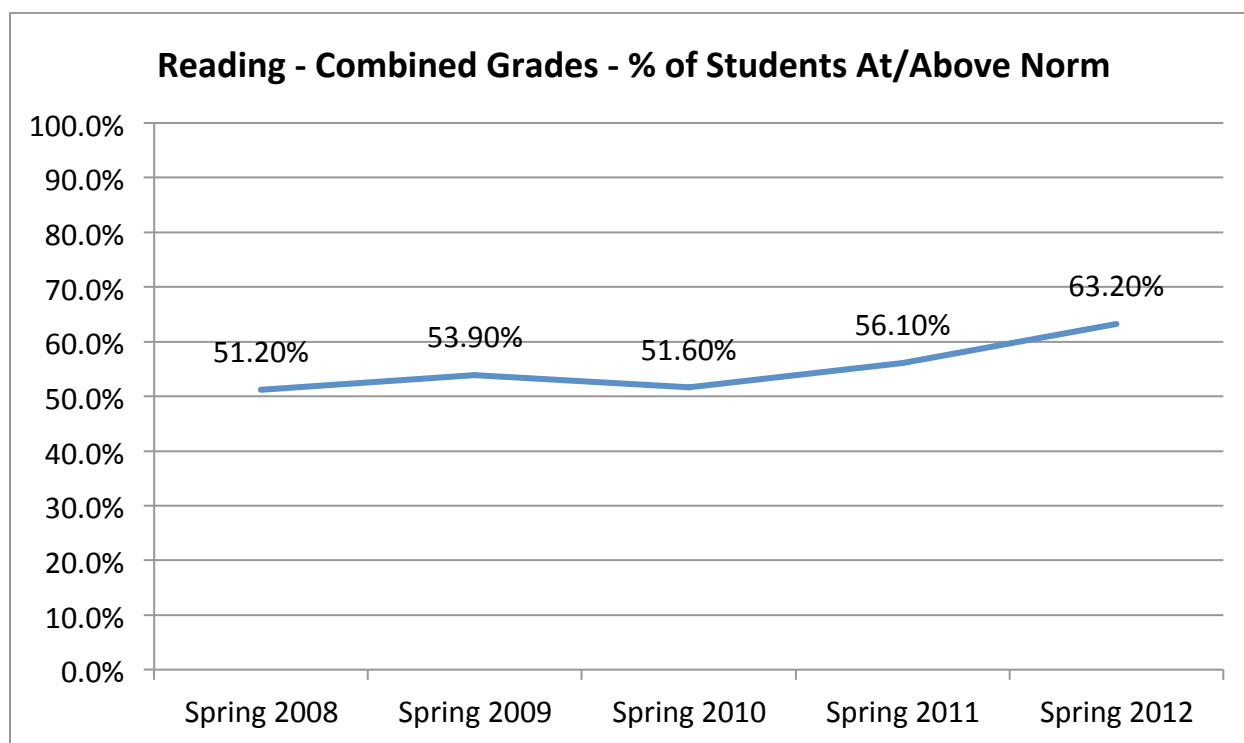
This graph shows that the average WLS student (grades K-8) in Spring of 2008 scored about 6 points below the MAP national norm in Math. This number has risen steadily from one year to the next with the average MCPS student (Grades K-8) in the Spring of 2012 scoring 1 point above the national MAP norm in Math.

Figure 19.



When looking at the average points above/below the national norm by grade level there is more variability in the results. However, the average WLS student in the Spring of 2012 scored less below the national NWEA MAP math norm than the average Wisconsin student in the Spring of 2008.

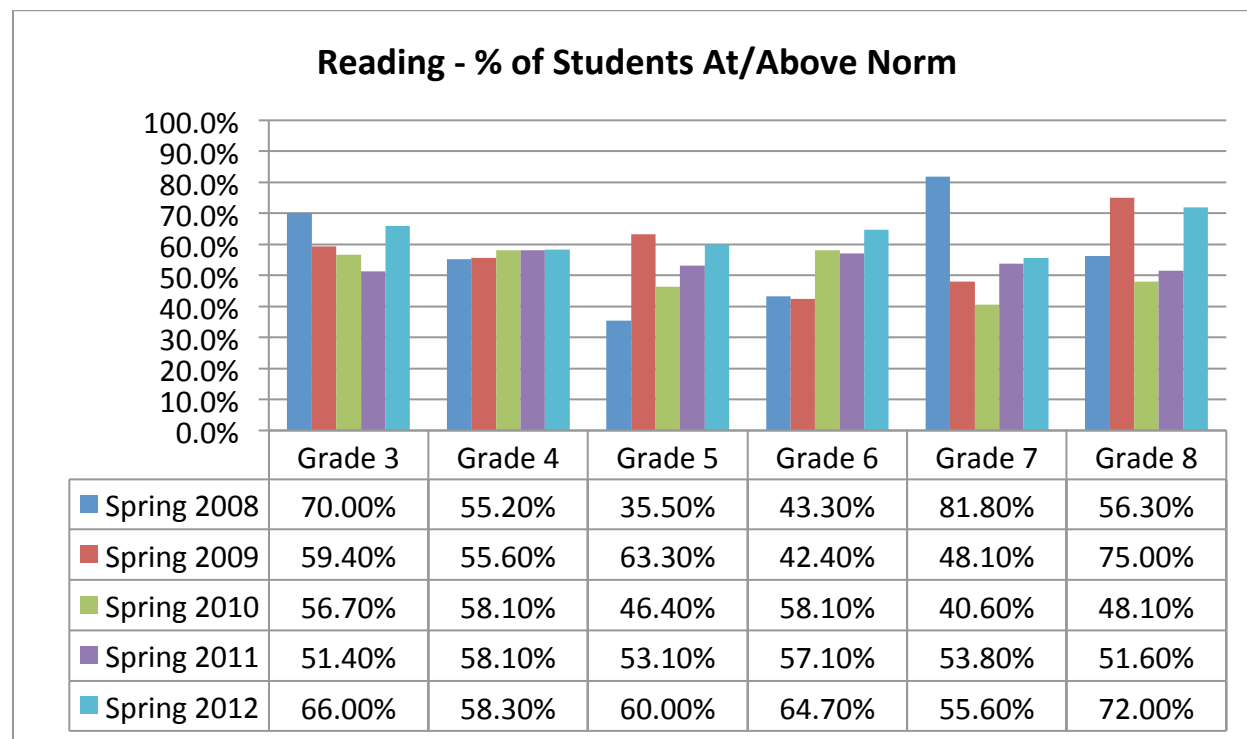
Figure 20.



Because NWEA MAP assessments have national norms for each grade level and subject area, it is possible to determine the percent of students that score above the average. This graph shows that the percent of students (Grade K-8) scoring above average in Reading at

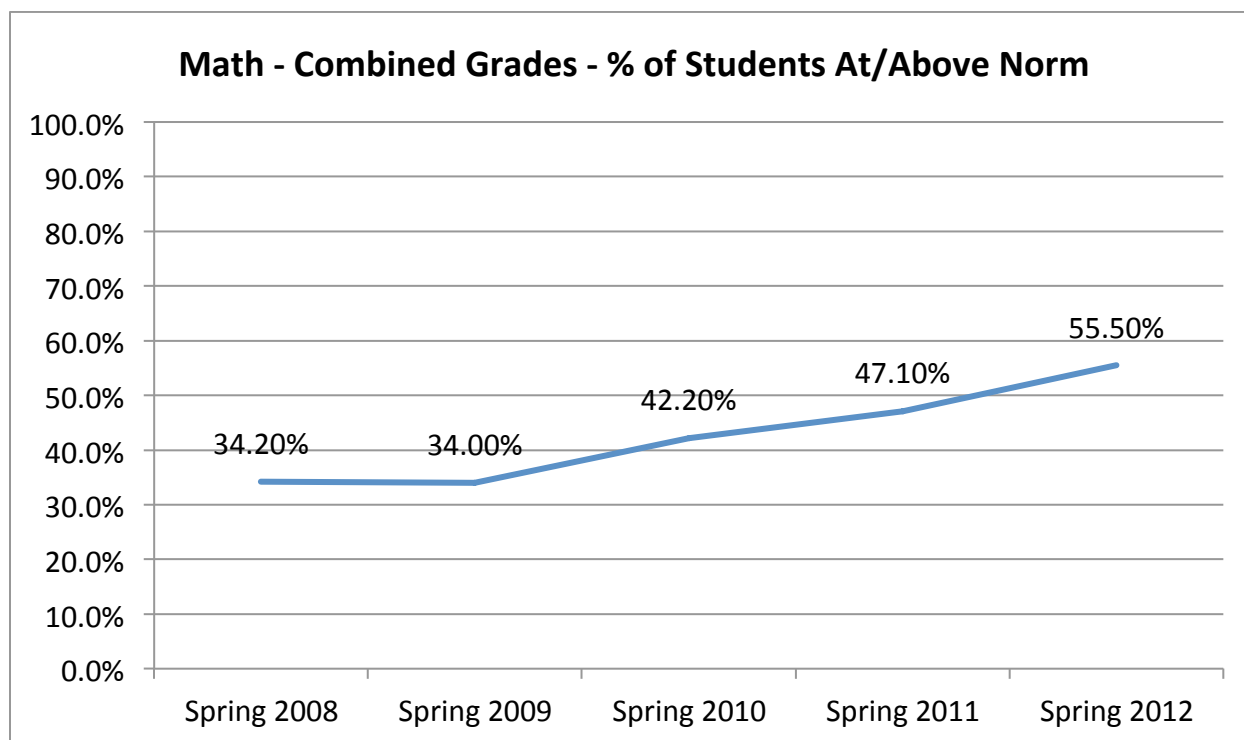
WLS has been steadily increasing for the past 5 years, with over 63% of students scoring above average in Reading in the Spring of 2012.

Figure 21.



When looking at the percent of students scoring at or above the national NWEA MAP norm in Reading by grade level, the results are more variable.

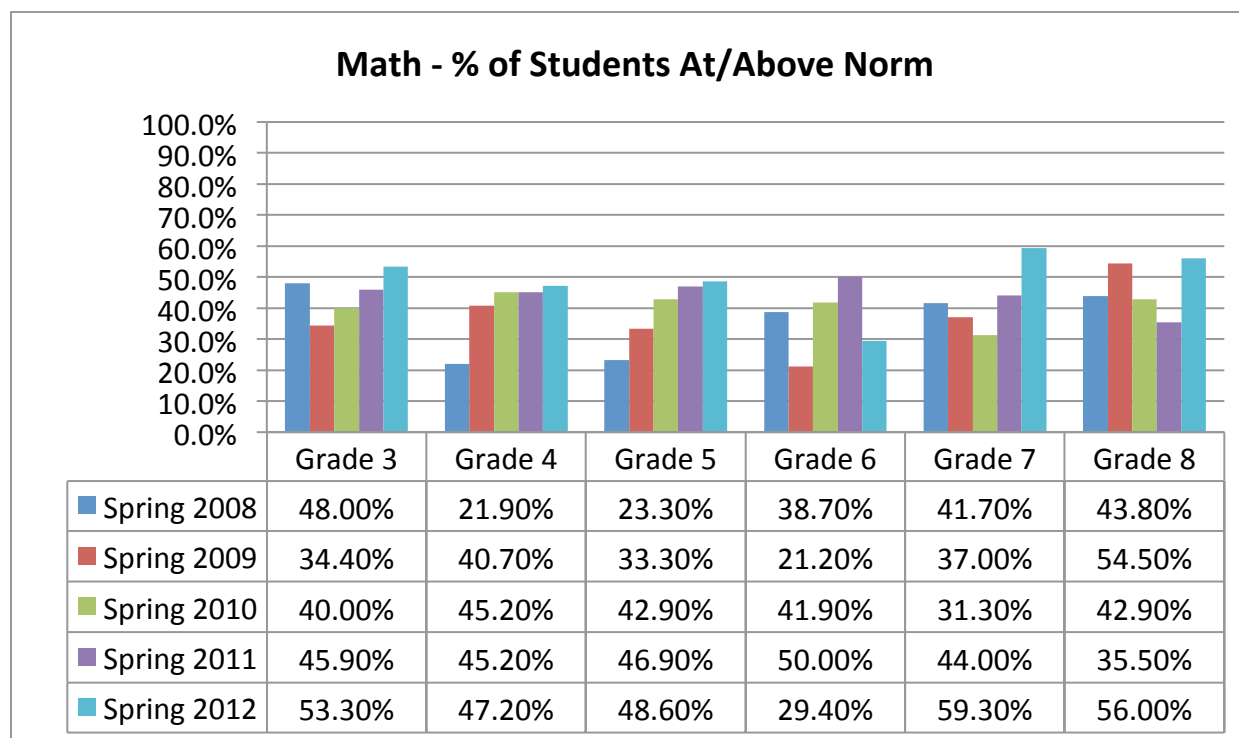
Figure 22.



This graph shows that the percent of students (Grade K-8) scoring at or above the national NWEA MAP average in Math at WLS steadily increased from Spring 2008 to Spring 2012. In the Spring of 2012 there were over 55% of Wisconsin students that scored at or above the national average.



Figure 23.



This graph shows that the percent of students scoring at or above the national NWEA MAP norm in the Spring of 2012 was higher than the percent of students scoring at or above the national NWEA MAP norm in the Spring of 2008 for grades 4 through 8.

Total revenues and revenues per student (shown below) are consistently, slightly higher than total expenditures and expenditures per pupil.

Figure 24.

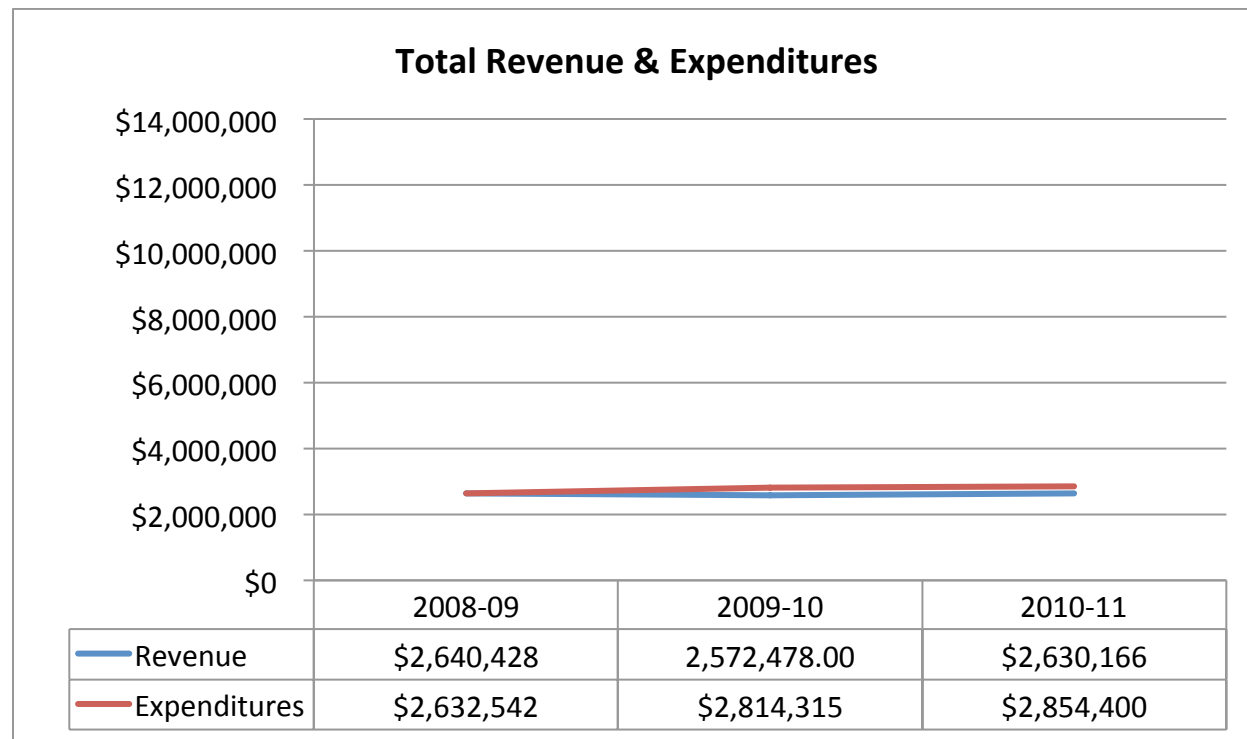
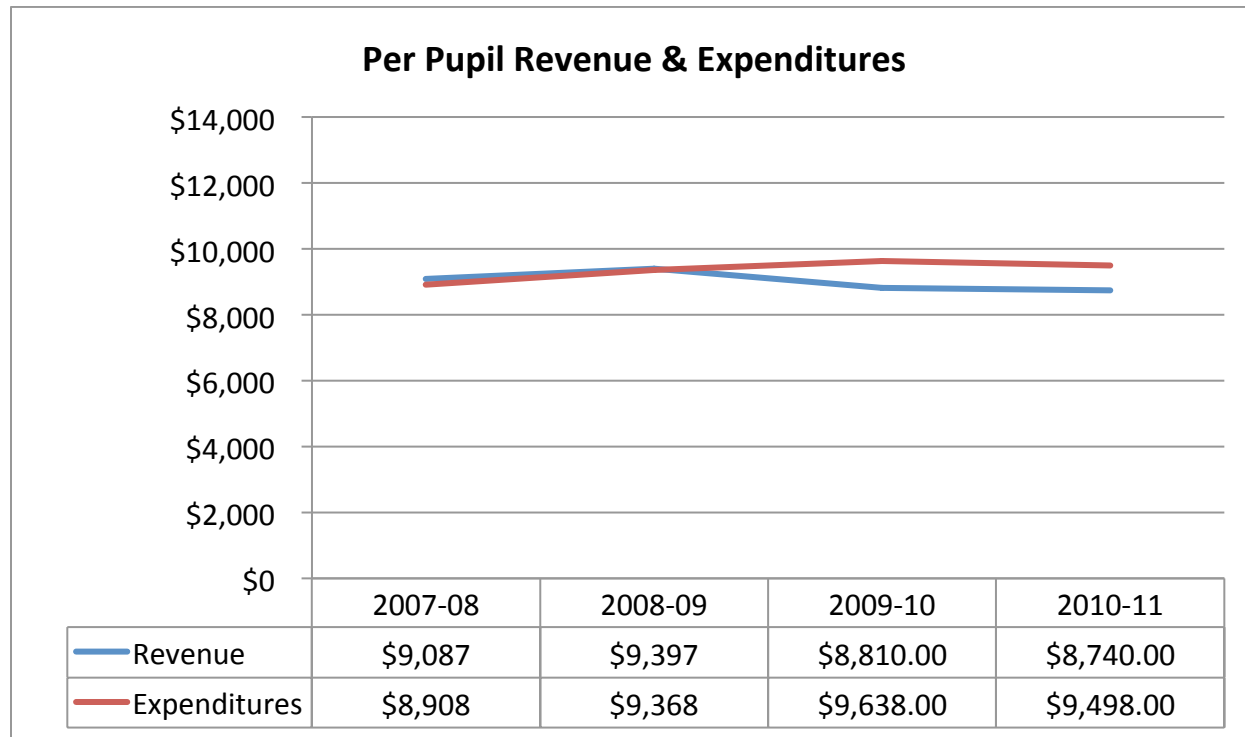


Figure 25.



In the 2010-11 school year MPS per pupil expenditures were in excess of \$14,000 and the State-Wide Average was just below \$12,000.

Woodlands has been a strong academic performance school since its inception as a charter school. Performance has always exceeded that of MPS and frequently meets or exceeds state averages on the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam. Realistically comparisons with suburban districts may be more meaningful.

Figure 26: Comparison of combined (grades 3-8) **WKCE Reading** results for WDS and Milwaukee County suburban schools.

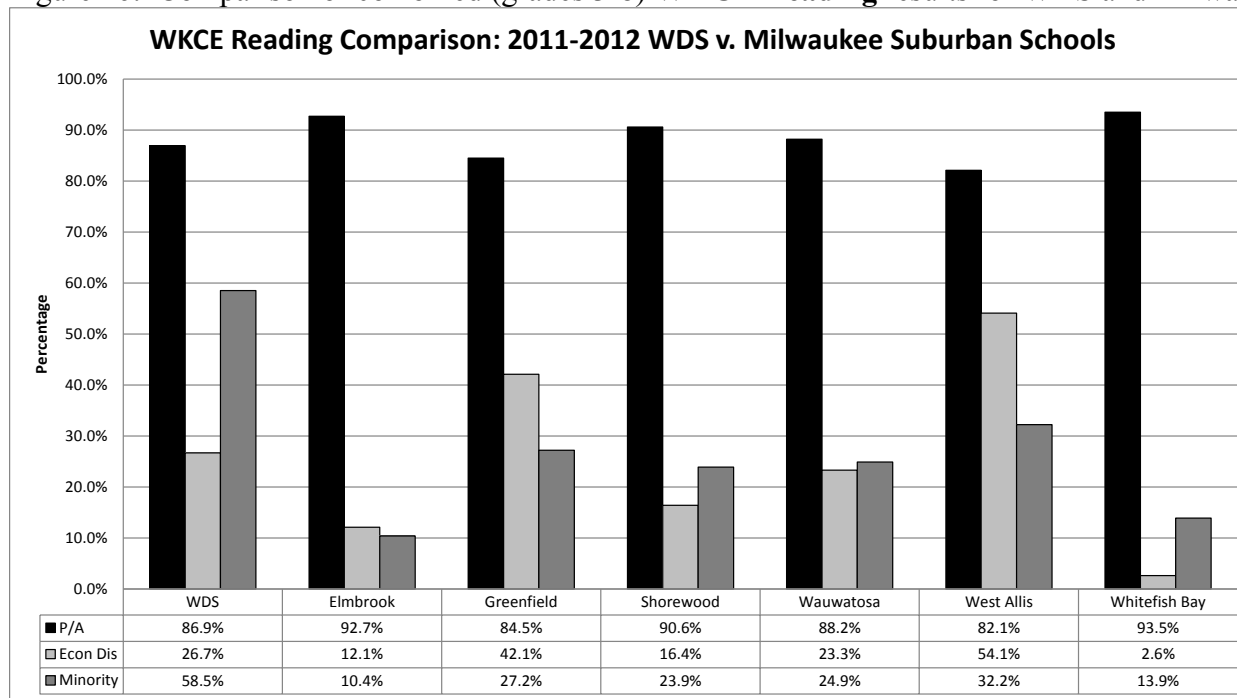
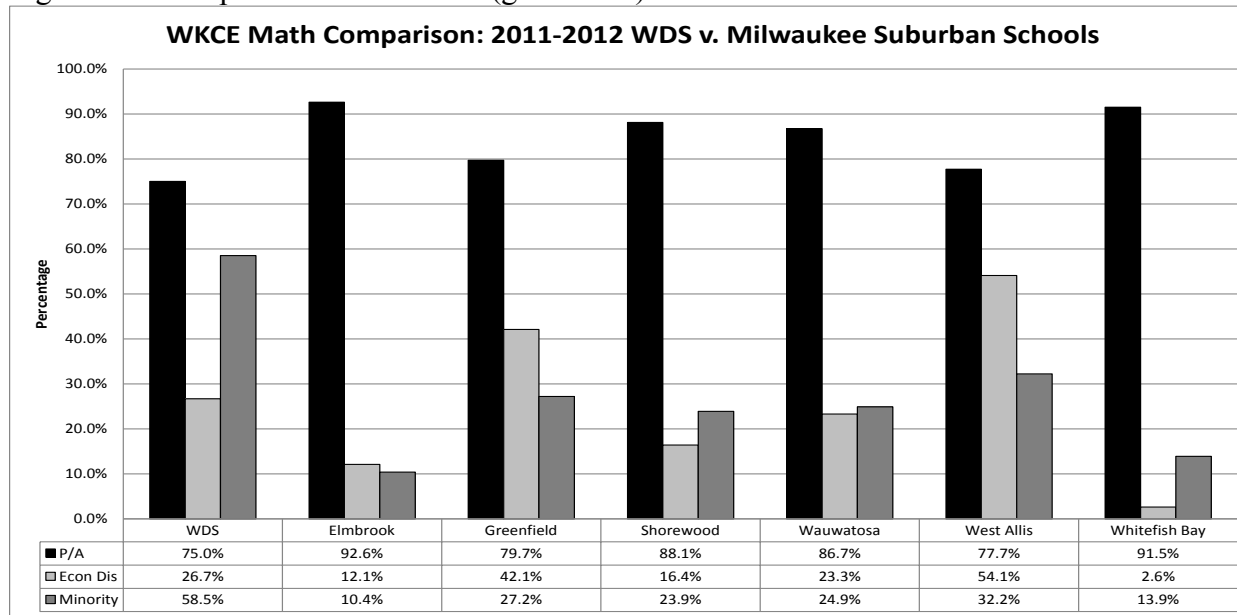


Figure 27: Comparison of combined (grades 3-8) **WKCE Mathematics** results for WDS and Milwaukee County suburban schools.





# **Young Leaders Academy**

## **A Case Study**

**By**  
**Alfonzo Thurman**

### **Leadership**

The Young Leaders Academy grew out of a belief by the YMCA that every young child should have the opportunity to learn the vital building blocks of life and to do so in a safe and orderly environment for the mind, body and soul and that in doing so one should learn to give back to their community. In this way young leaders would be developed. The YMCA hired an executive principal who would develop a school that would model:

- Highly effective and positive mission, belief and value systems
- Engaged and effective leadership practices for staff and students, provide rigorous academic expectations and highly positive social behaviors
- Effective community development practices within and outside of the boundaries

The Young Leaders Academy's leadership is "mission driven." The YLA administration, teachers and staff are very conscious of end goal of their "college bound, character strong" mission recognizing that they must build strong character and academic prowess via a rigorous differentiated curriculum if they are to meet their goal gaining entry for their graduates into Milwaukee's better high schools which will afford their students the opportunity to go on to a college or university. Administrators and teachers do so through conscientious attention to their military style of discipline (not punishment) in and outside of the classroom.

Being mission driven was very important at the stage this research project was undertaken (beginning in June 2012) as the Young Leaders Academy was undergoing a transition in Leadership from its Founding Executive Principal to its new leader. The new Executive Principal was selected the previous Spring from among the previously existing leadership team and had been an Assistant Principal for Intermediate Grades with nine years of experience with the YLA and had fifteen years of teaching experience.

The new Executive Principal felt that it "is important that the mission, academic traditions, established beliefs, values and vision continue while we build out the teaching and leadership team to best serve our students and community," she said in our first interview. As we walked down the hall she continued, "We have an established culture with our assemblage, which you'll have to see, and the way we engage our parents when they drop off the kids and the marching from class to class, the eagerness to answer questions. It's just a good place to be. You'll see. It's not that we don't have our problems, but it's still a good place." "Hi, Ms. Gandy," a teacher called out as we walked.

Respect for all is important and is demonstrated by the adults through the everyday assembly and the way they interact throughout the day which is often as the principal, assistant principals and dean of students walk the hallways and enter and observe classrooms. Any of these individuals may engage the teacher and sometimes the students in the classroom (usually without undue interruption of the classroom).

The aforementioned Assembly begins each morning and is interactive between teachers, students and student leaders, parents and occasional community people and guests. At the Assembly, which is held outside on the playground when it is warm and inside the YMCA's gymnasium during rainy or cold weather, a limited number of announcements are made, student poetry or short stories may be read or their songs may be sung, grade level initiatives may be started, and an occasional academic challenge with a travelling trophy going to the winner initiated. Most of the activities are led by student leaders ("young leaders") who are selected for their academic and leadership qualities by adult leaders (teachers and administrators) as well as by their peers in grade level and/or school wide elections. Recognition is provided through academic achievement, leadership in and out of the classroom (e.g., clubs, sports, other organizations). High expectations in adult and student behavior are rewarded through attainment of "badges" or other types of awards (e.g., different color ties, blazers, patches) or induction into various clubs or societies (leadership organizations). Such honors are highly prized by students and they clearly understand what it takes to earn it.

In all instances, the leadership is equipping the administrative, teaching and other professional staff and students to understand that a commitment to and expectation of excellence.

## **Mission**

YLA's mission has evolved over the course of its 10 years existence but maintains its principle purpose "to develop life-long learners who are prepared to contribute purposefully to society" but has sharpened its focus to concentrate on "preparing each student for a college education." The YLA, in its everyday practice, concentrates on leadership development, high academic standards, student discipline, responsibility, respect for others, community involvement, and multicultural learning. In doing so, all students, teachers, staff, administrators, and parents proudly espouse as their motto and mission "college bound, character strong."

These statements are built from the core values of the YMCA which is the founding body of the YLA which center on:

**Youth Development:** Nurturing the potential of every child and teen (We believe the values and skills learned early on are vital building blocks for life)

**Healthy Living:** Improving the nation's health and well-being (Being healthy means more than simply being physically active. It's about maintaining a balanced spirit, mind and body.)

**Social Responsibility:** Giving back and supporting our neighbors (The generosity of others is at the core of the Y's existence as a nonprofit.)



The Board embraces these core values as a part of the school's formal mission statement which, states "The Young Leaders Academy's program is based on the fundamental belief that each child has a birthright to a first-class education, which adds meaning, dignity and a sense of community." Board members note that the school believes in nurturing the children in the development of leadership, life and social skills, to help prepare them to become informed, responsible and productive citizens, not only of their immediate community but of the city, state, nation and world.

Teachers and administrators take the mission, vision and core values seriously and earnestly. A founding member of the teaching staff says, "Our mission and core values set the tone for the school and are at the center of the school's culture." She and other teachers and administrators regularly noted that the school's culture was based on the YLA's intentional establishment of order with a "no nonsense" attitude and expectation of students, teachers, and administrators in all of the YLA's spaces. Another long term YLA teacher who taught at two other schools and had been employed by YMCA prior to becoming a YLA teacher, says that everything the school does revolves around mission and vision of the school. All employees, he states, "believe that every child in the school has a right to a first-class education and those who don't believe that don't last long. Some, he said, have been terminated in their fourth or fifth weeks into the school year."

Typically in classrooms, hallways, the lunchrooms, and assembly areas resonate with respectful behavior whether instruction, play or eating is taking place and regardless of whether an adult or student leader is in charge. This is largely due, according to those interviewed, to the values and beliefs systems held by the YLA and fostered in its culture. Teachers see children as they would their own child and "we have to make things work for our kids" one primary grade teacher said. "If we don't do everything we can to assure that child learns, who will?" he asked. He went on to talk about the amount of time it takes for children to learn a concept and at YLA teachers will take the time for that child. "At a MPS school," he said, "that is not likely to happen but we make it happen here!" He went on to note, with emphasis, that a group of like-minded YLA teachers use the phrase "make it happen here" often to emphasize that at YLA they will go the extra mile for "their kids" to be successful "because that's what we're about here at YLA."

## Behavior

There are high expectations of order and discipline in the classroom, hallways, cafeteria, gymnasium, swimming pool which was established partly through the military style of marching to and from one space to another in the hallways, stopping on command, no talking unless recognized (through the raising of the hand and when called upon by the teacher or student leader), standing "at rest" or "at attention" (students are in line, at least an arm's length from the person in front and to the side of them, and are standing straight – no slouching, and are attentive to the leader (teacher or student leader).

The uniforms worn by both students and staff reinforce the type of order and behavior expected of everyone in the school. In discussions with teachers, administrators and the front desk personnel who are stationed in the hallway, most of the students follow the rules of marching softly while in the hallways; however, there are some – particularly those new to the school –

talk and otherwise disrupt the quiet, consistent march to their destination. The marching, waiting for recognition before speaking, standing at attention or at rest and the wearing of uniforms are designed to help build community within the school.

The “rules of engagement” within the classroom as established by the teachers, paraprofessionals and administrators during times of instruction are instrumental in establishing the educational norms of the YLA. Coming to school and being dropped off by the parents where both the parents and students are greeted by the teachers; students have their homework completed and signed by parents; they enter the classroom and seat themselves prepared to eat breakfast (for those who do not do so at home); and come to attention promptly at 8:30 a.m.

The students know too, that they must raise their hands in order to be recognized for any reason, such as the need to use the restroom and that they cannot do so by themselves but must be accompanied by another student and to do so quietly in the military style they have been taught. They are penalized to do otherwise.

Another means of establishing modes of behavior is through the efforts of building community such as that of the daily assembly or community gathering where students, teachers, administrators and staff gather with the students. Parents and visitors are welcome to participate in the activities. The school year begins with such a gathering and parents typically stay for this communal event. A great deal of information about the school and expectations of students, parents, teachers and administrators is provided. Students who were at YLA in the previous year along with YLA teachers and staff provide information and entertainment geared to newcomers to the school.

## Academic

The YLA holds a number of core values and principles which frame and inform the day-to-day operation of the school. The YLA’s program is based on the fundamental belief that every child has a birthright to a first class education, which adds meaning, dignity and a sense of community. The school facilitates the learning process within an environment that encourages the development of a positive value system. The school nurtures the children in the development of leadership, life and social skills; thus, preparing them to become informed, responsible and productive world citizens. The core values of the YMCA (Caring, Respect, Responsibility, and Honesty) are also incorporated into the YLA experience.

Teachers and administrators take the mission, vision and core values seriously and earnestly. A founding member of the teaching staff says, “Our mission and core values set the tone for the school and are at the center of the school’s culture.” She and other teachers and administrators regularly noted that the school’s culture was based on the YLA’s leadership’s (especially its founding principal) intentional establishment of order with a “no nonsense” attitude and expectation of students, teachers, administrators in all of the YLA’s spaces. Another long term YLA teacher who taught at two other schools and had been employed by YMCA prior to becoming a YLA teacher, says that everything the school does revolves around mission and vision of the school. All employees, he states, “believe that every child in the school has a right

to a first-class education and those who don't believe that don't last long. Some, he said, have been terminated in their fourth or fifth weeks into the school year."

After the roll is taken students, generally by desk row or some other grouping, are asked to bring their signed (by parents) homework to the teacher. If an assignment is unsigned it is given back to the student or the student is asked to call home so that the teacher can verify with the parent that the student indeed completed their homework. If a homework assignment is not handed in, the student is asked to call a parent so that the teacher can talk to them.

Parents are asked to call the teacher (at school or at home) when the student is having a problem whether it is with homework or something personal. In several classrooms I visited, teachers were using their lunch time to talk with parents or guardians discussing behavioral, health or homework concerns. I asked them if they found this inconvenient, and all answered similarly that this was part of their job and it fit with the mission and core beliefs related to building a positive value system for students and the community along with the fundamental belief that every had has a right to a first class education. One teacher was very succinct and to the point, saying "This is the right thing to do, it helps them to understand that we care about them personally and it helps build community."

Students raise their hands if they wish to answer a question or go to the board to demonstrate that they can respond to the question. They walk with precision to the chalk board and back to their seat. Those who create noise not associated with responding to a question or problem may be asked to stand quietly next to their desk or to come and stand near the teacher. The teacher determines when a student may return to their seat and the student does so, usually with a verbal reprimand.

Students are praised and often rewarded for responding positively to questions regarding their homework, correct answers to questions posed in the classroom, respectfulness and assistance to each other during class, and achieving 100% on assigned mathematics, reading and writing assignments and their names are placed prominently on the classroom's board.

The language arts and mathematics programs are taught using a direct instruction approach. The reading program is a holistic reading series and phonics program. The phonics wall cards are a key to the reading program as is the repetitive reading of them and practice activities led by the teacher each morning. This is bolstered by daily homework assignments which reflect the multicultural emphasis noted in the school's mission statement. Mathematics is treated similarly with students using the "Power Up" Lessons in class on a daily basis with homework assignments to reinforce and build on their in-class experience (with a few exceptions depending upon their success).

As anticipated in a military style, excellent discipline is expected at all times including having textbooks, folios, workbooks, paper and pencils in the upper right hand corner of the desk with all other materials inside the desk and are to be changed only when the class moves to another subject and the teacher directs the students to change their materials. Feet are to be on the floor at all times, if a student wishes to answer a question they raise their hands and wait without talking to be called upon to respond. Failure to do so may result in a reprimand or punishment (e.g.,

standing at attention in front of or in back of the classroom). Hallway discipline may result in standing an arm's length from the person ahead of them and holding that position until told otherwise. This is a common punishment for not obeying a direct order from the teacher or group leader.

Reading, writing, mathematics, and social studies make up the core of the daily academic program. Science, music, the fine arts, and physical education make up the rest of the day.

## **Community**

Building community is an important aspect of the YLA and was very noticeable in the transition from the Founding Principal to the new leader that occurred during the initial year of this research project. The new Executive Principal noted in the first interview that she was very conscious of the need to maintain the focus of the mission and culture of the school and that she was dedicated to doing so. These things she said are the reason for the success of the Young Leaders Academy and she had no reason to deviate from them and my goal is to further strengthen our teaching and leadership team to build on the success we've already had."

For community to exist the YLA believes that there must be a collegial approach between all sectors of the school to around its mission, vision, beliefs, and culture. YLA administrators and teachers are expected to be visible and participative in all parts of the facility and programs. All YLA personnel are held accountable for modeling the expected leadership behaviors. An expectation of the administration is that the Board will provide adequate funding for personnel and material support.

Students coming to the daily YLA assembly form a line according to grade and class and are directed by either their teacher and/or student leader. After the first gathering, students take the lead on conducting the opening activities with assistance from their teachers. There are times when the principal or assistant principal provides information and encouragement to those gathered. Not all students are at the school when the assembly begins, however, they typically come in and quietly join their classmates. There are also competitive events, usually related to a specific educational topic, between a selected grade level, specific class, and a wing of a floor. There is a traveling trophy in each of the aforementioned areas and obtaining and keeping the trophy is intense. The competitions are not only designed to build competitive educational skills but also to continue to build community and leadership skills.

The Dean of Students was a new part-time position added to the staffing pattern in 2012. The incumbent noted that his role was to assist the teachers, administrators and staff in working with students to find the best high school for graduating students and to assist with student discipline. He also saw his role as strengthening student behavior by developing student respect, social responsibility, honesty and integrity. He worked with teachers, administrators and students in classrooms, clubs and other organizations teaching and demonstrating how leaders behave as a means of strengthening the YLA community.

Not unexpectedly there is a strong Christian belief within the YLA led by about a dozen teachers and paraprofessionals who speak openly in class about "God." They believe this has helped some of the young African American males come to grips with concentrating their time and attention on their studies versus gang activity. As one of the teachers indicated during an interview, "Yeah, we're a public school, but I believe in God, as does the 'Y' so why shouldn't I use such an important element to turn a young person's life around? It's worked and more than once. If I can get a young person interested in doing what is right, I'm going to use it."

This teacher also noted that this group of teachers come together to pray and discuss their teaching and how they can further enhance their teaching and the guidance of young people through their religious practice. This, he believes, is part of his "mission work," part of what he was put here on earth to do. He not only teaches through the Word of God but through his example in the classroom and in the work he does outside of the classroom and "he is a living testimony."

The aforementioned example, too, shows the extent to which one teacher went to assure that a student received the assistance he needed to succeed. This example of commitment is repeated often at the YLA by teachers and administrators. Others are not necessarily religious based, but are nonetheless just as dedicated.

## **Young Leaders Academy**

### **Assessment and Evaluation Data**

Young Leaders Academy (YLA) – “College Bound, Character Strong” is housed at 1350 West North Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 532—in the YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee building and is located among the poorest of neighborhoods in the City of Milwaukee. The YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee is the founding organization of the Young Leaders Academy (YLA) which opened in 2002 as a University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee authorized public charter school.

YLA’s mission is to develop life-long learners who are prepared to contribute purposefully to society. The Academy focus is on leadership development, high academic standards, student discipline, responsibility, respect for others, community involvement, multicultural learning, and extensive access to multimedia computer technology as an authentic learning tool. YLA has sharpened its focus to concentrate on preparing each student for a college education.

YLA holds a number of core values and principles which frame and inform the day-to-day operation of the school. YLA’s program is based on the fundamental belief that every child has a birthright to a first class education, which adds meaning, dignity and a sense of community. That birthright is delivered by combining the beneficial rigors of a classical education with the latest in technology and the best teaching and learning practices worldwide. The school facilitates the learning process within an environment that encourages the development of a positive value system. The school nurtures the children in the development of leadership, life and social skills, preparing them to become informed, responsible and productive world citizens. The core values of the YMCA will also be incorporated into the YLA experience: Caring, Respect, Responsibility, and Honesty.

The overall school plan includes a year-round academic program; extended school day; a primary department, intermediate department, and middle school department; gifted and talented programs, science department, art department, tutoring program, music department, physical education (including YMCA swimming); foreign language department; support services and special education department; and Advanced Placement (AP) sections for grades 3 through 8. YLA’s innovative curriculum content includes Leaders Come Alive Curriculum which is based on two key beliefs about the power of learning and knowledge. The first belief is that human

knowledge is most powerful when it is interdisciplinary. The second belief is that knowledge is essential to vision the vision of the Academy, and together they produce a powerful conception of knowledge that will produce strong leaders.

Reading is a key component of the YLA curriculum. YLA teaches content-rich classic and multicultural literature in conjunction with explicit phonics instruction to develop reading skills in K-2 when children are making the transition from learning to read to reading to learn. Other key features include Social Skills/Leadership Development Curriculum; Strong basic skills based on 3Rs (Reading, wRiting, aRithmetic) plus aRts, Reasoning, and Research; an integrated social studies/humanities program (including social science, literature, philosophy, drama, music, art, science, history, geography, and character development through the hands-on study of world culture). Critical thinking activities, Spanish instruction, full-day kindergarten, no social promotions, extensive technology, pre and post testing of students annually and conducting MAP tests three times yearly, established clubs for academic leaders, educational outings/field trips and special classroom presentations on unique cultural events and more characterize YLA.

The Special Education Department includes a part-time coordinator, one full-time special education teacher, and one full time paraprofessional. Students referred for special education needs are evaluated following federal and state laws and Department of Public Instruction regulations. Services are delivered to students meeting the criteria for special education through pullout groups and inclusion. Related services are secured and delivered based on students individual educational program (IEP) needs, including speech and language, occupational therapy, physical therapy, psychological services, and social work services. The Special Education Department and the Gifted and Talented Department collaborate to provide the best possible student services. They also provide in-service training for teachers to develop their skills in teaching and managing students with special needs. For the visually impaired students a Special Education Aide provides one-to-one services four hours per day.

Student success is recognized and honored in many ways. Academic success is recognized through a time honored means, the Honor Roll but also through the “Academic Calvary” for the top 10% of their grade level and the Elite Club for those scoring in the top 20% based on national tests. Leadership is recognized and honored through several clubs: Discovering our Destiny (a Girls Leadership Program), 50 Top Men, the Leaders Come Alive program (a school-wide Economic Leadership Program), the Trailblazers Society (for those displaying top leadership skills).

### **Days and Hours of Instruction**

YLA has a year-around calendar with the number of days and hours typical of Wisconsin schools.

1	Grade Levels	K4-8
2	Start Time of Student Instructional Day	8:00 AM
3	End Time of Student Instructional Day	3:30 PM
4	Start-To-Close Instructional Day Minutes (Lines 3-20)	450
5	Number of Minutes for Lunch	30
6	Recess Time in Excess of 30 Minutes	0
7	Number of Instructional Minutes Per Day (Lines 4-5-6)	420
8	Total Number of Days In Teacher Calendar	189
9	Number of Teacher Pre-service/Professional Development Days	17
10	Number of Parent/Teacher Conference Days	6
11	Number of Student Instructional Days (Lines 8-9-10)	166
12	Total Instructional Minutes Per Year (Lines 7 x11)	69,720
13	Late Arrival/Early Release Minutes for Professional Development	0
14	Total Instructional Minutes (Lines 12-13)	69,720
15	Hours of instruction Per Year (Lines 11/60)	1,162

### **Board and Administrative Organization**

The Young Leaders Academy has a twelve member board. Officers of the Board are: Bob Heger, President, Ann Rieger, Chair, Jonathan Maxwell, Treasurer, and Debra Klepp, Secretary. Members in addition to the officers include: Austin Doherty, Renee Herzing, Bruce Jacobs, Al Kaczmarek, Antoinette Mensah, Mary Tucker, Devon Turner and Shawn Sallee.



The administrative team is composed of: Trina Gandy, Executive Principal; Danielle Davis, Assistant Principal, Middle School; xxx, Assistant Principal, Intermediate Department, LaShawnda Holland, Assistant Principal, Primary Department and Molly Legaj, Business Manager.

### **Assessment**

The Academy participates in the state Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) on an annual basis. The assessment is given once a year during the month of November. Results of the test are utilized by the Department of Instruction to determine annual yearly progress under the federal No Child Left Behind Act. The school utilizes the assessment to make determinations about the strength of the overall instructional program. The WKCE is a static assessment that determines a student's level of proficiency in reading, mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies at a single point in time.

The Academy also uses the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) examination developed by the Northwest Evaluation Association. The MAP is given to students three (3) times during each school year (September, January, and May). The test measures the amount of growth a student makes between each testing period and provides students with goals for improvement and teachers with recommended instructional content to help the student grow academically.

The Academy also utilizes Compass Learning, a computerized instructional program aligned with the MAP. Students spend time during the school day, after school, and at home with the program to increase their understanding in reading and mathematics.

Results of the WKCE are shown in the four figures below. Overall Academy WKCE combined reading results show steady improvement with test results exceeding MPS and continuously approaching the state level. The Academy's 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading exceeds both MPS and the state average in Reading and Math in 2010-11.

Figure 1.

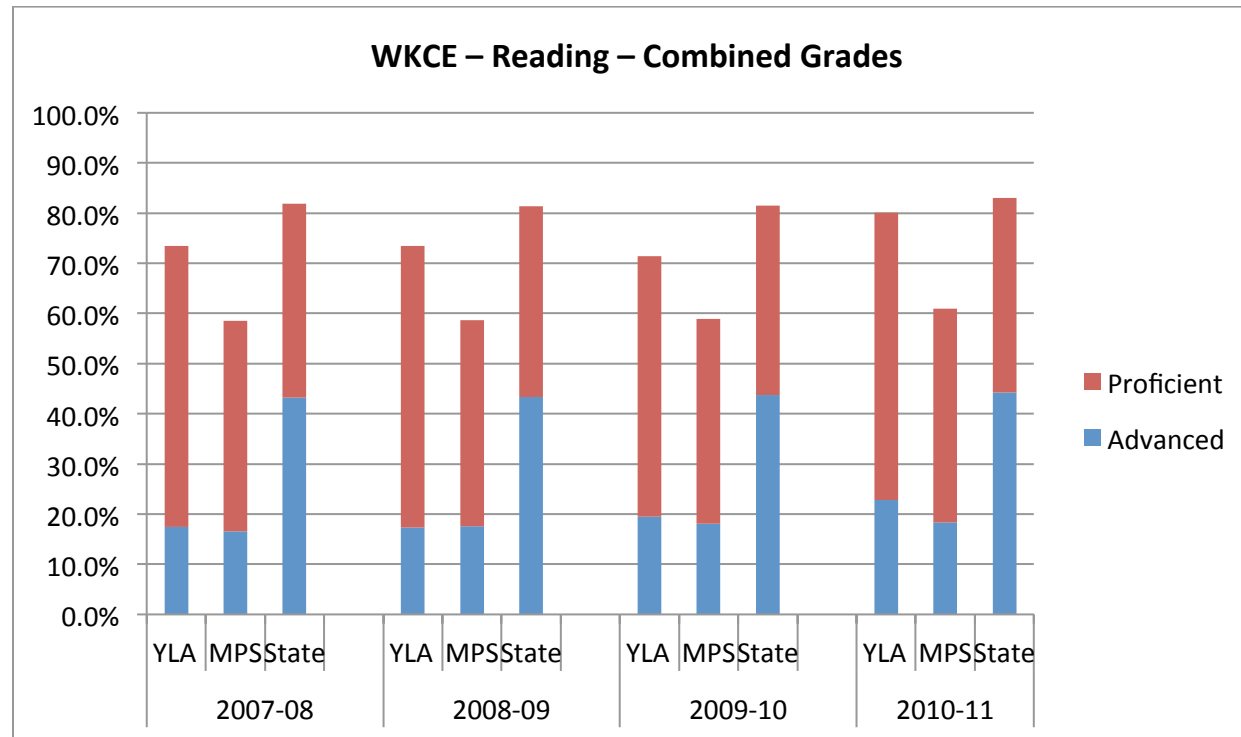


Table 1.

	2007-08			2008-09			2009-10			2010-11			2011-12		
	YLA	MPS	State	YLA	MPS	State	YLA	MPS	State	YLA	MPS	State	YLA	MPS	State
<b>Advanced</b>	17.4%	16.5%	43.2%	17.3%	17.6%	43.3%	19.5%	18.1%	43.7%	22.8%	18.4%	44.2%	23.0%	18.9%	44.0%
<b>Proficient</b>	56.0%	42.0%	38.7%	56.2%	41.0%	38.1%	51.9%	40.8%	37.8%	57.3%	42.5%	38.8%	57.8%	40.8%	37.9%
<b>Basic</b>	17.1%	23.9%	11.8%	21.6%	24.9%	12.3%	22.0%	24.2%	12.2%	14.2%	23.8%	11.5%	14.1%	23.8%	12.0%
<b>Minimal</b>	8.4%	15.3%	5.4%	4.9%	15.2%	5.6%	6.6%	16.3%	5.7%	5.7%	14.7%	5.0%	5.2%	15.7%	5.4%
<b>No WSAS</b>	1.0%	2.3%	0.9%	0.0%	1.4%	0.7%	0.0%	0.6%	0.5%	0.0%	0.6%	0.6%	0.0%	0.7%	0.6%

Figure 2.

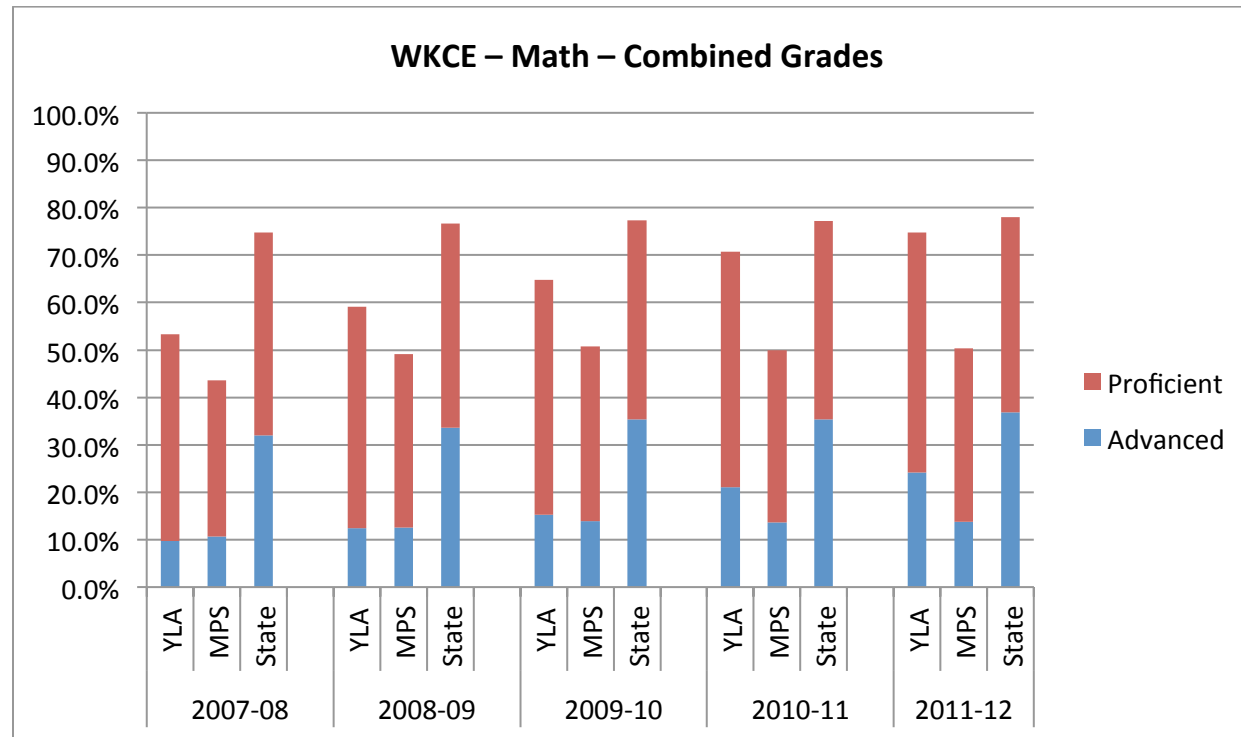


Table 2.

	2007-08			2008-09			2009-10			2010-11			2011-12		
	YLA	MPS	State	YLA	MPS	State	YLA	MPS	State	YLA	MPS	State	YLA	MPS	State
<b>Advanced</b>	9.7%	10.7%	32.0%	12.4%	12.6%	33.6%	15.3%	13.9%	35.4%	21.1%	13.6%	35.3%	24.1%	13.8%	36.8%
<b>Proficient</b>	43.6%	32.9%	42.7%	46.7%	36.5%	43.1%	49.5%	36.9%	41.9%	49.6%	36.4%	41.9%	50.7%	36.5%	41.2%
<b>Basic</b>	22.1%	18.3%	11.4%	13.7%	18.5%	11.0%	15.3%	18.0%	10.7%	13.0%	17.8%	10.7%	13.0%	17.7%	10.2%
<b>Minimal</b>	23.2%	36.6%	13.3%	27.1%	31.6%	11.8%	19.9%	30.5%	11.7%	16.3%	31.5%	11.7%	12.2%	31.3%	11.4%
<b>No WSAS</b>	1.3%	1.6%	0.6%	0.0%	0.8%	0.4%	0.0%	0.7%	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%	0.3%	0.0%	0.7%	0.4%

Figure 3.

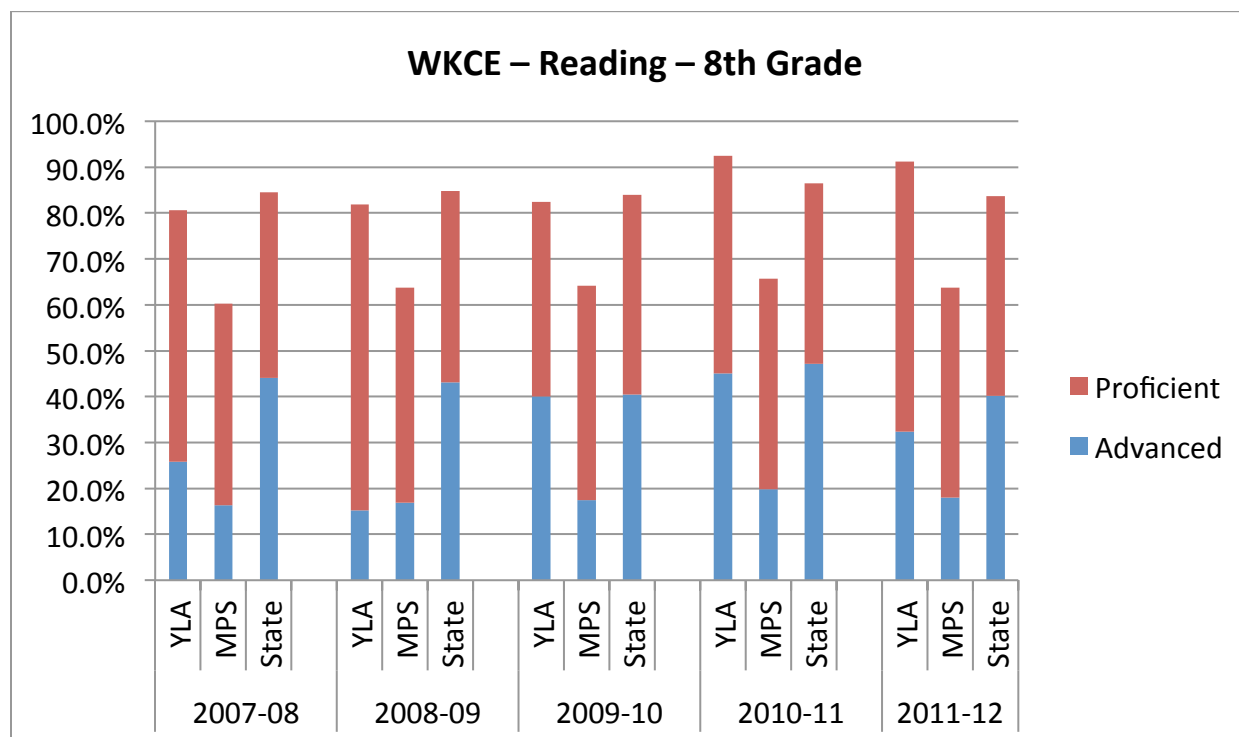


Table 3.

	2007-08			2008-09			2009-10			2010-11			2011-12		
	YLA	MPS	State	YLA	MPS	State	YLA	MPS	State	YLA	MPS	State	YLA	MPS	State
<b>Advanced</b>	25.8%	16.3%	44.1%	15.2%	16.9%	43.1%	40.0%	17.5%	40.4%	45.0%	19.8%	47.2%	32.4%	18.0%	40.2%
<b>Proficient</b>	54.8%	43.9%	40.4%	66.7%	46.9%	41.7%	42.5%	46.7%	43.6%	47.5%	45.9%	39.3%	58.8%	45.7%	43.5%
<b>Basic</b>	12.9%	20.3%	9.0%	18.2%	19.6%	9.2%	10.0%	20.1%	10.0%	0.0%	18.9%	8.3%	5.9%	20.1%	10.2%
<b>Minimal</b>	6.5%	17.5%	5.8%	0.0%	15.0%	5.5%	7.5%	15.3%	5.5%	7.5%	14.6%	4.7%	2.9%	15.5%	5.4%
<b>No WSAS</b>	0.0%	2.1%	0.8%	0.0%	1.7%	0.6%	0.0%	0.4%	0.5%	0.0%	0.8%	0.5%	0.0%	0.7%	0.6%

Figure 4.

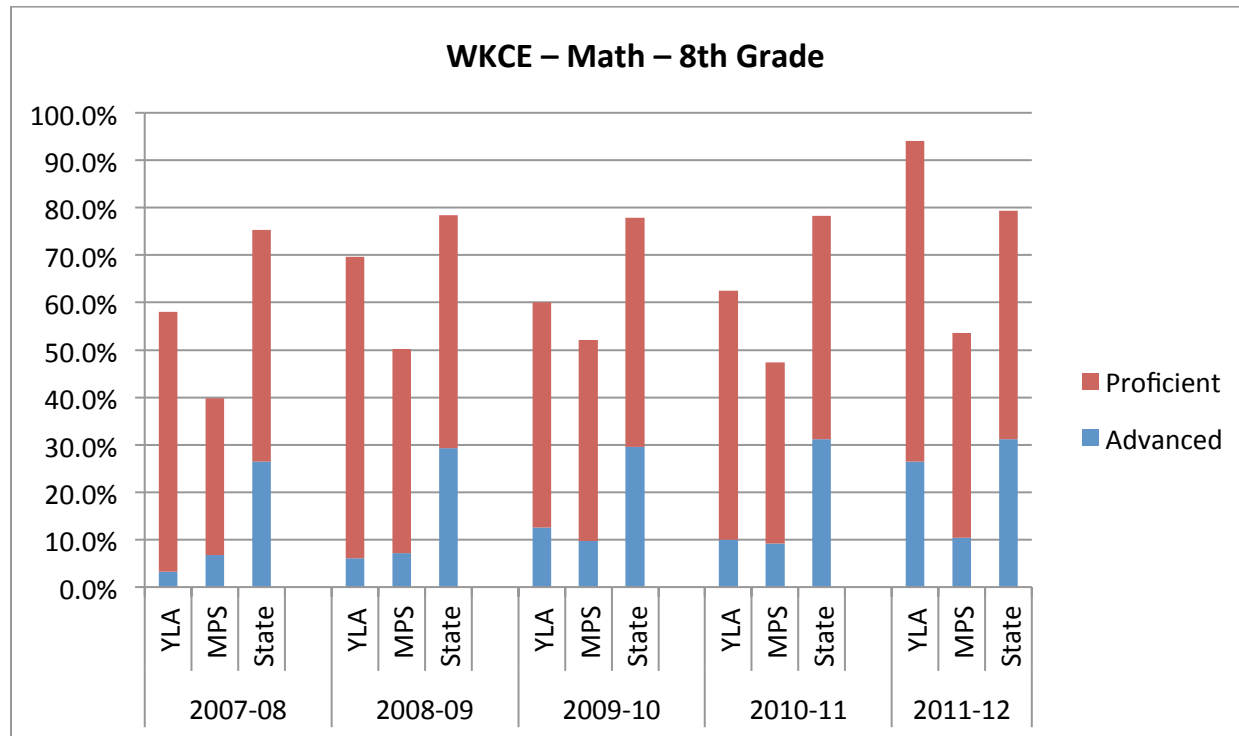
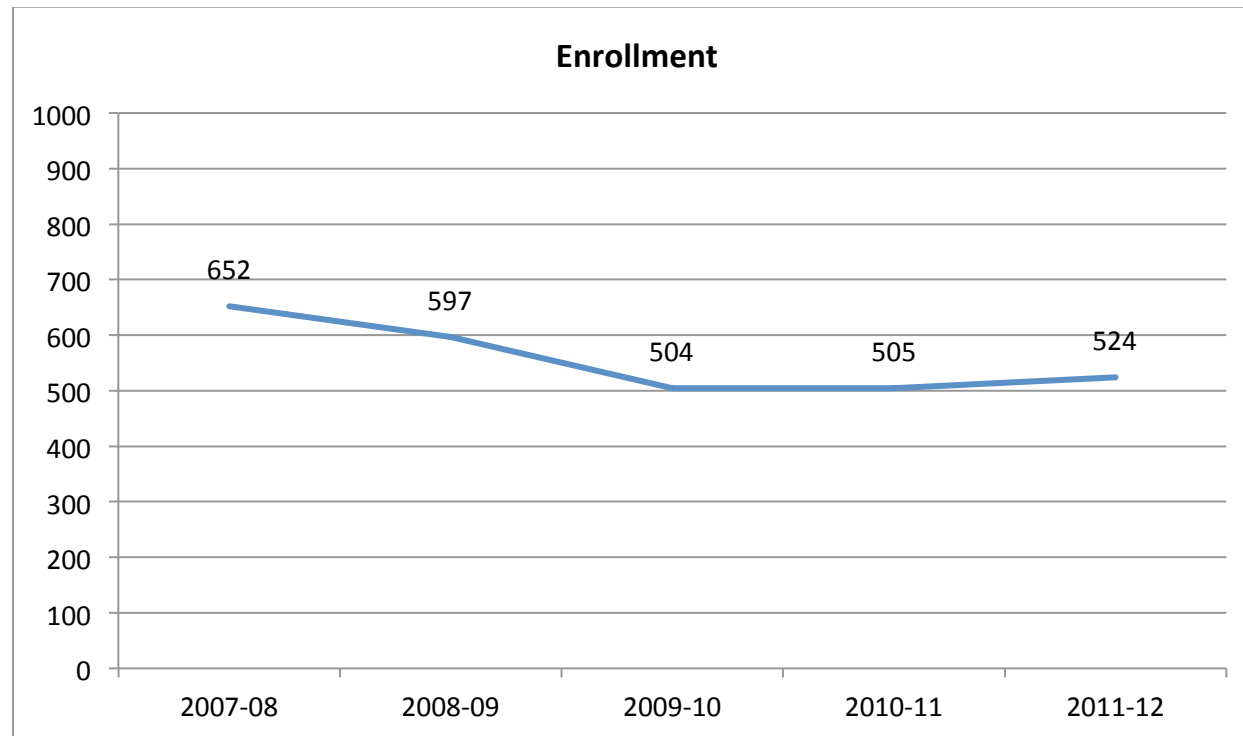


Table 4.

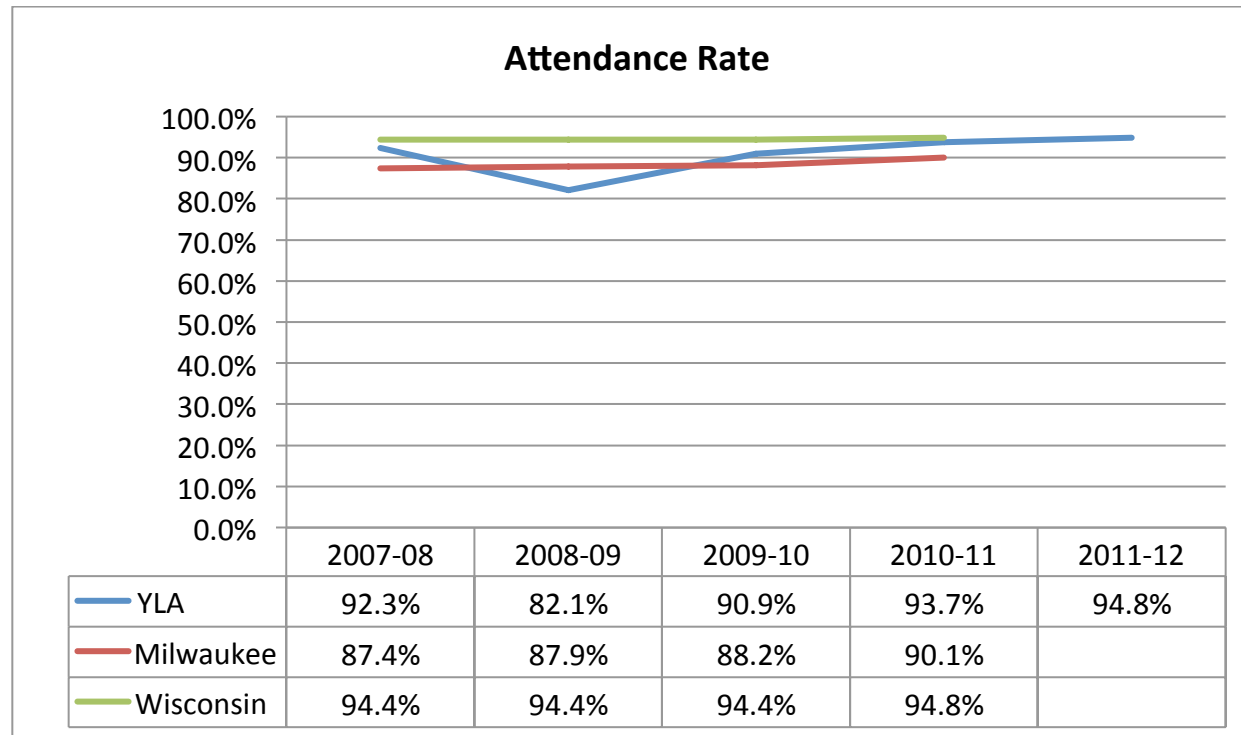
	2007-08			2008-09			2009-10			2010-11			2011-12		
	YLA	MPS	State	YLA	MPS	State	YLA	MPS	State	YLA	MPS	State	YLA	MPS	State
<b>Advanced</b>	3.2%	6.8%	26.5%	6.1%	7.1%	29.3%	12.5%	9.7%	29.5%	10.0%	9.2%	31.2%	26.5%	10.4%	31.2%
<b>Proficient</b>	54.8%	33.0%	48.8%	63.6%	43.1%	49.1%	47.5%	42.4%	48.4%	52.5%	38.2%	47.1%	67.6%	43.2%	48.2%
<b>Basic</b>	16.1%	23.0%	13.1%	18.2%	26.0%	13.0%	25.0%	23.4%	13.0%	17.5%	23.0%	12.0%	2.9%	22.8%	12.0%
<b>Minimal</b>	25.8%	35.1%	11.0%	12.1%	22.9%	8.3%	15.0%	24.0%	8.7%	20.0%	28.7%	9.3%	2.9%	22.8%	8.3%
<b>No WSAS</b>	0.0%	2.1%	0.6%	0.0%	0.9%	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%	0.3%	0.0%	0.9%	0.4%	0.0%	0.8%	0.4%

Figure 5.



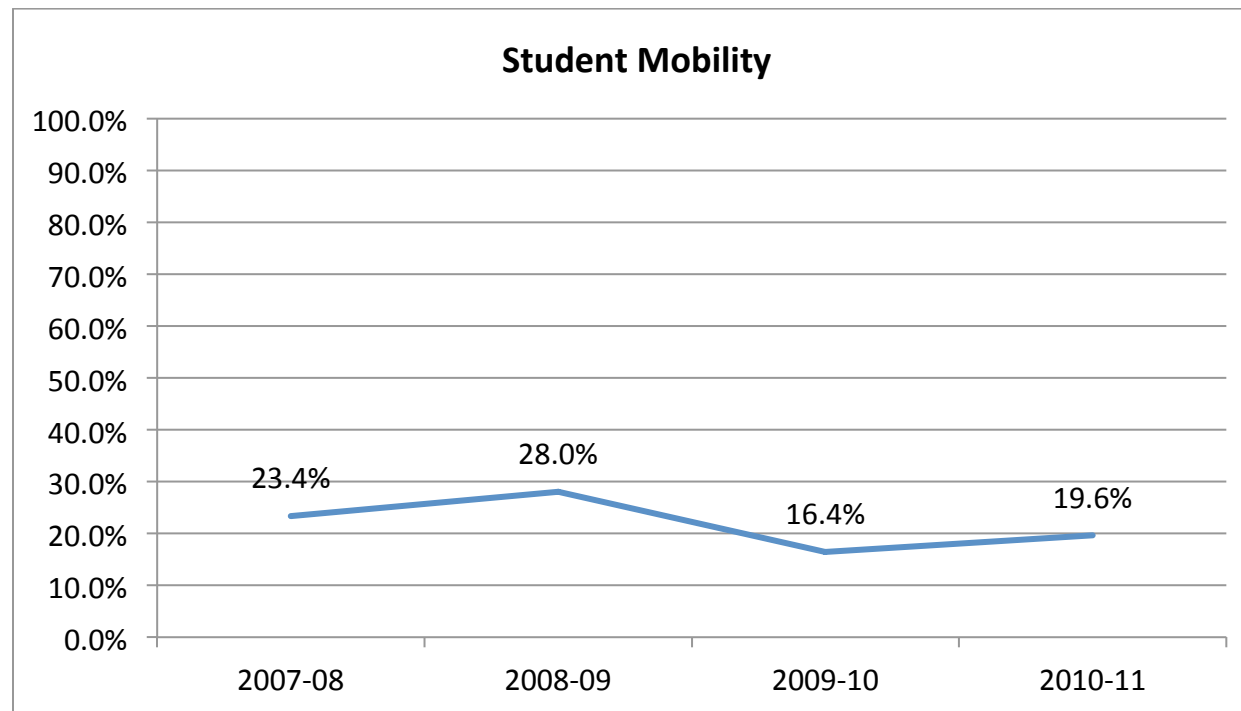
Prior to the 2007-08 school year, YLA had around 500 students. In 2007 a decision was made to increase the number of students to support a bussing program. After the 2008-09 school year, the Board determined that this had been a mistake in that the number of students was too great for the facility. Bussing was eliminated and the school returned to around 500 students.

Figure 6.



Attendance rates except for the 2008-09 school year are high and consistent with rate for the schools throughout the state.

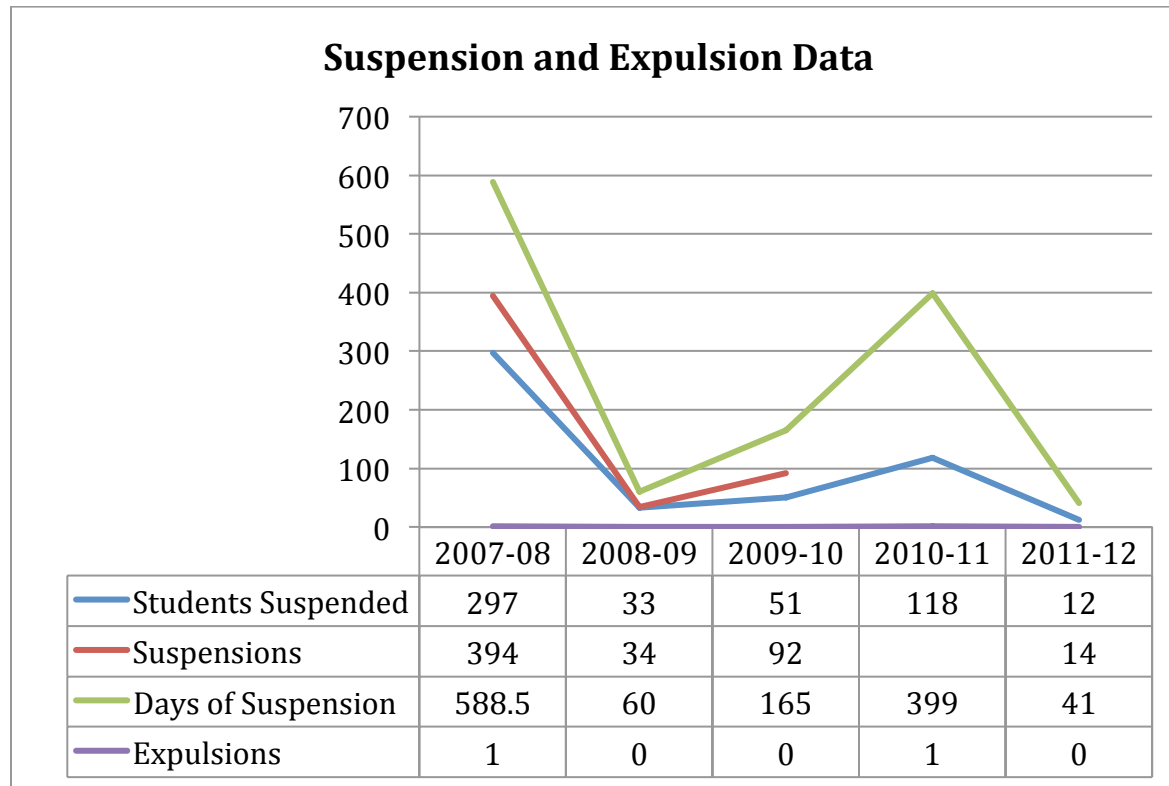
Figure 7.



Student mobility is higher than that for the other schools in this study but decreased somewhat after the 2008-09 school year.

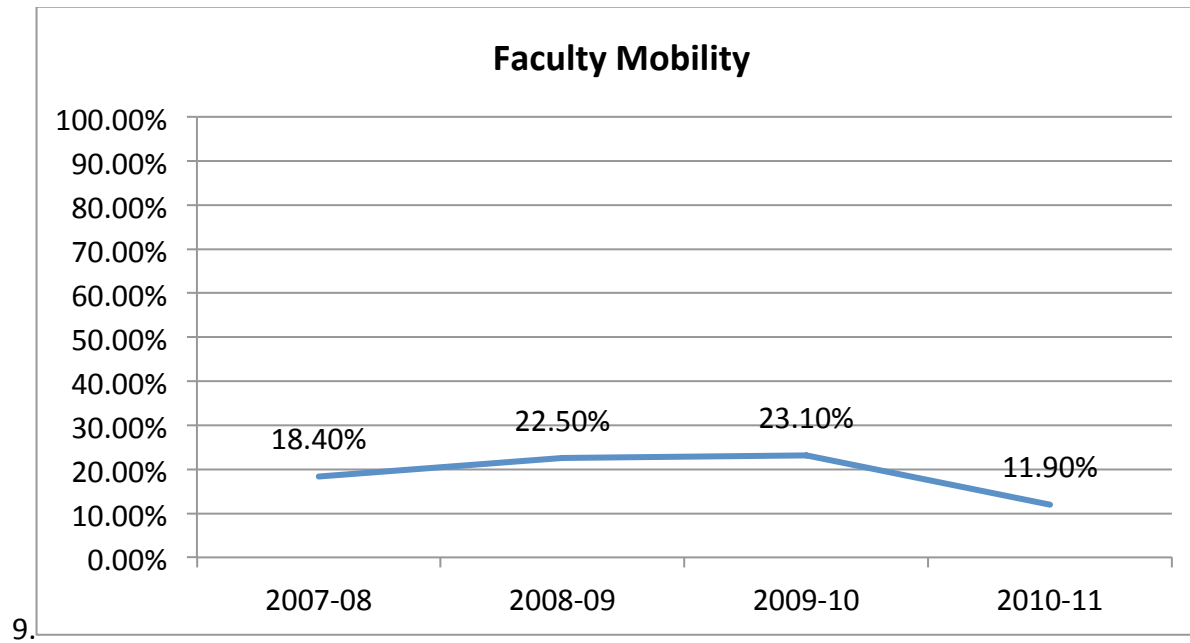


Figure 8.



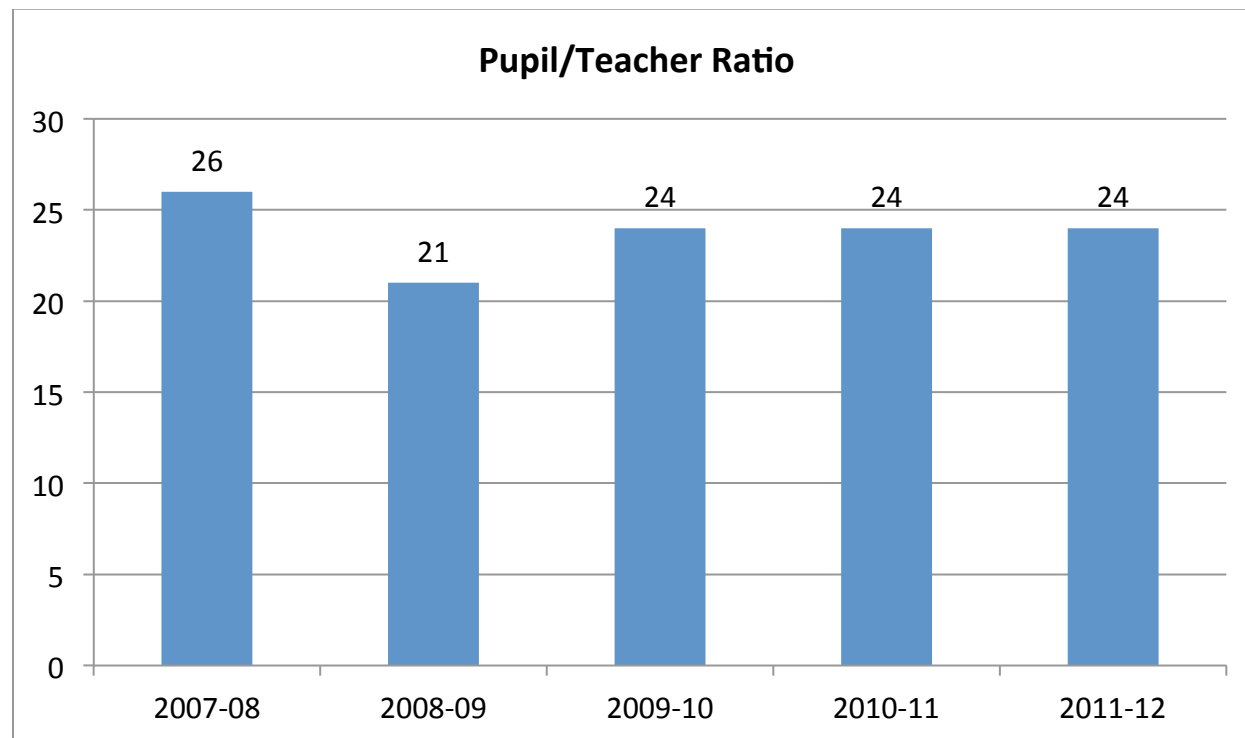
Suspension data show a great deal of variability from year to year. There have been no expulsions during the five year period.

Figure 9.



Faculty mobility is relatively high. It is too early to determine if the decrease for the 2010-11 year will establish a trend to a lower turnover rate.

Figure 10.



The pupil-teacher ratio is stable.

Figure 11.

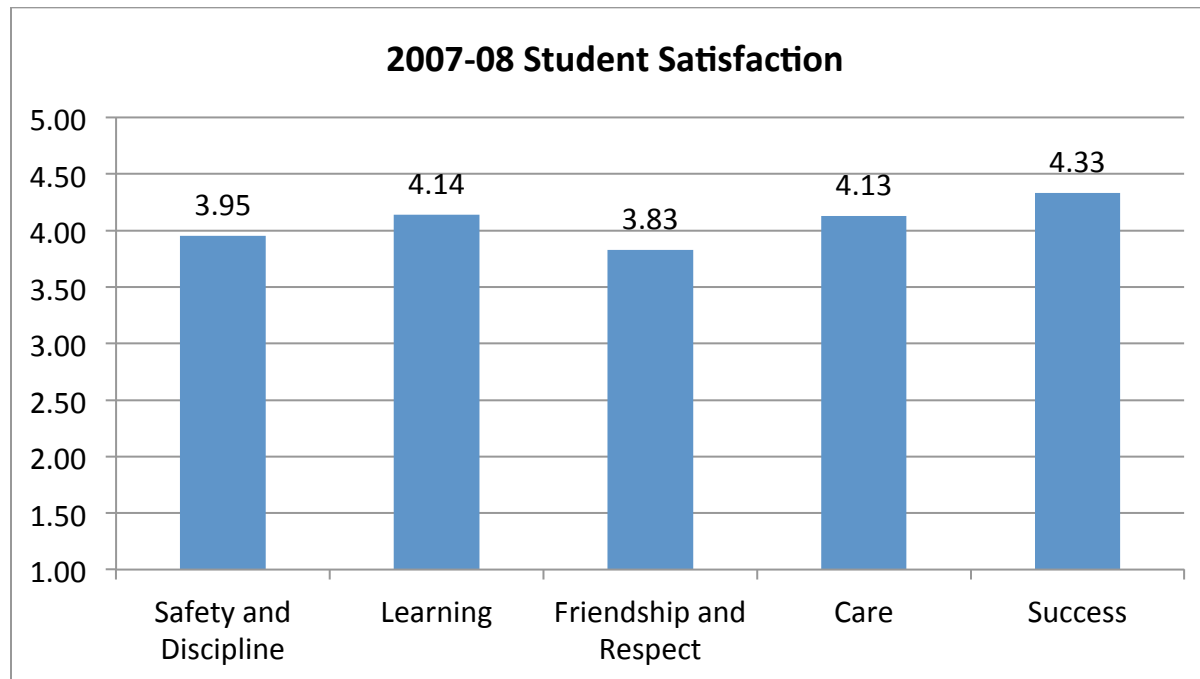


Figure 12.

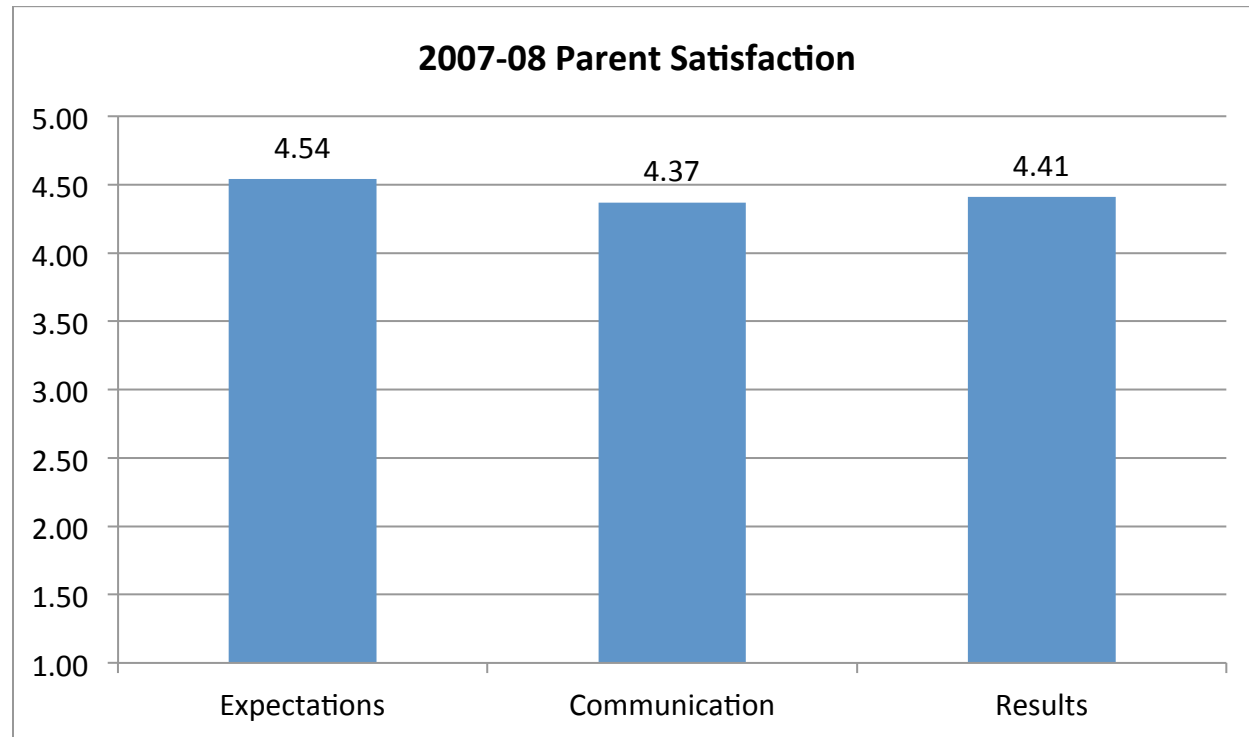


Figure 13.

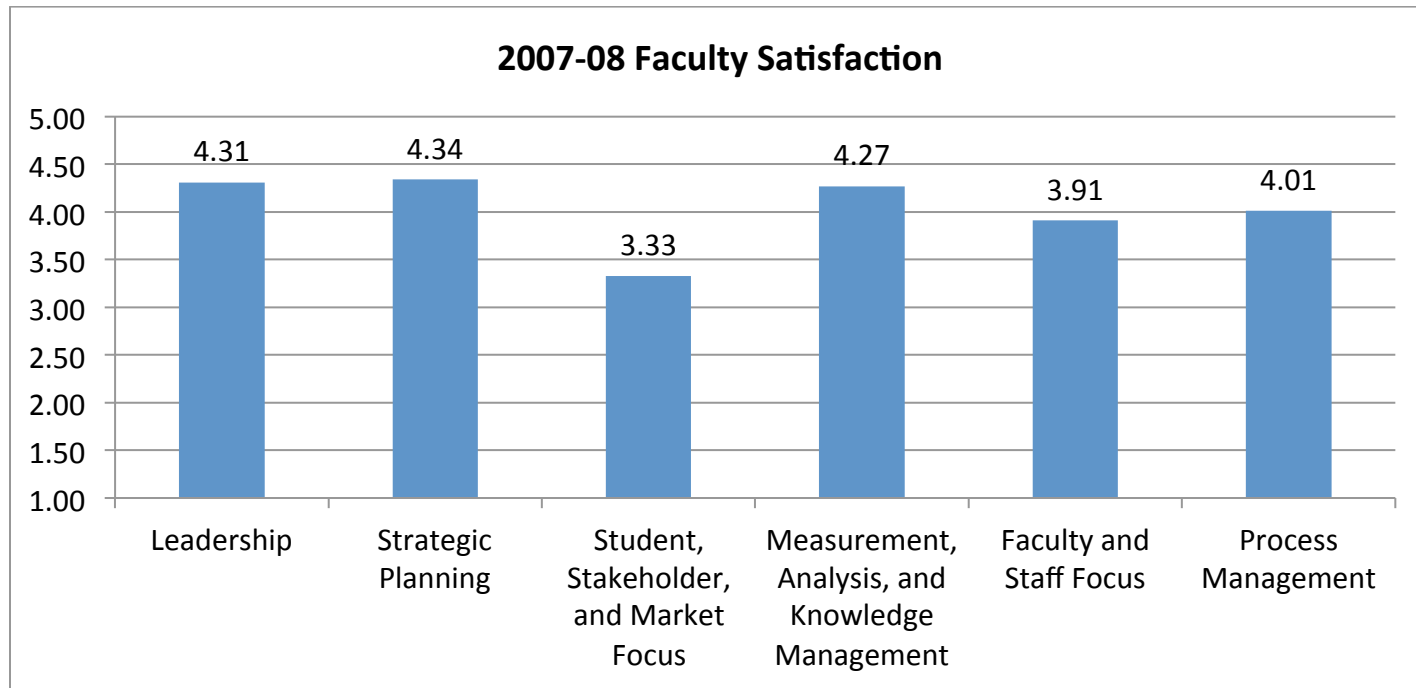
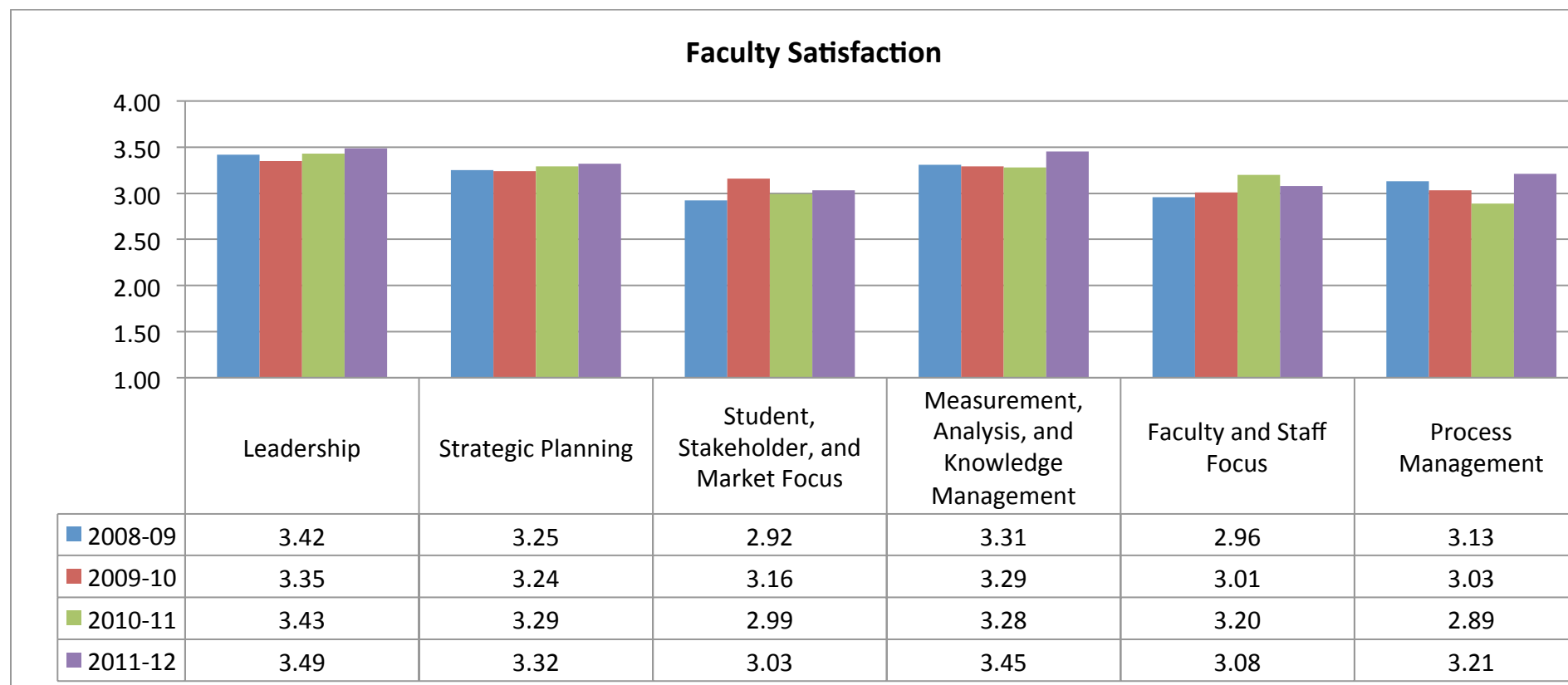
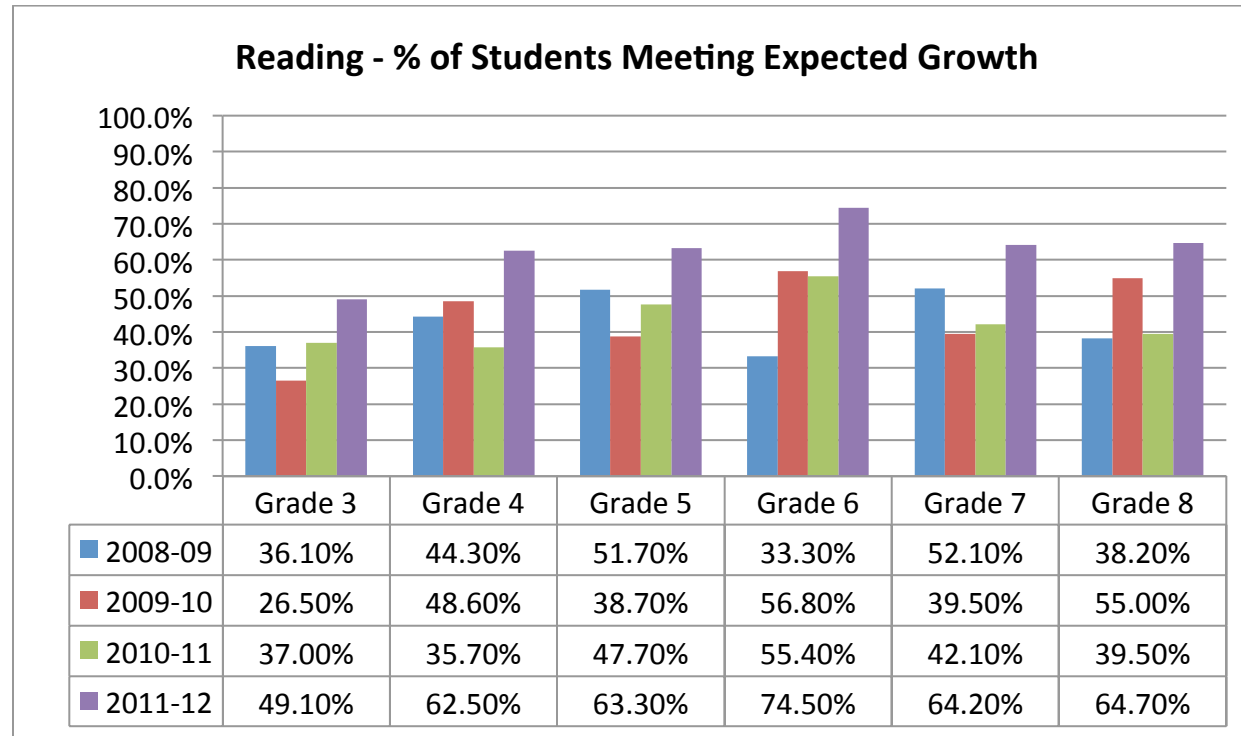


Figure 14.



The faculty survey is based on the Baldrige Criteria for Educational Excellence and measures the quality level that faculty members believe exists with certain aspects of the school. Results reveal that the faculty believes that YLA is achieving a high level of quality in all areas except Student, Stakeholder, and Market Focus.

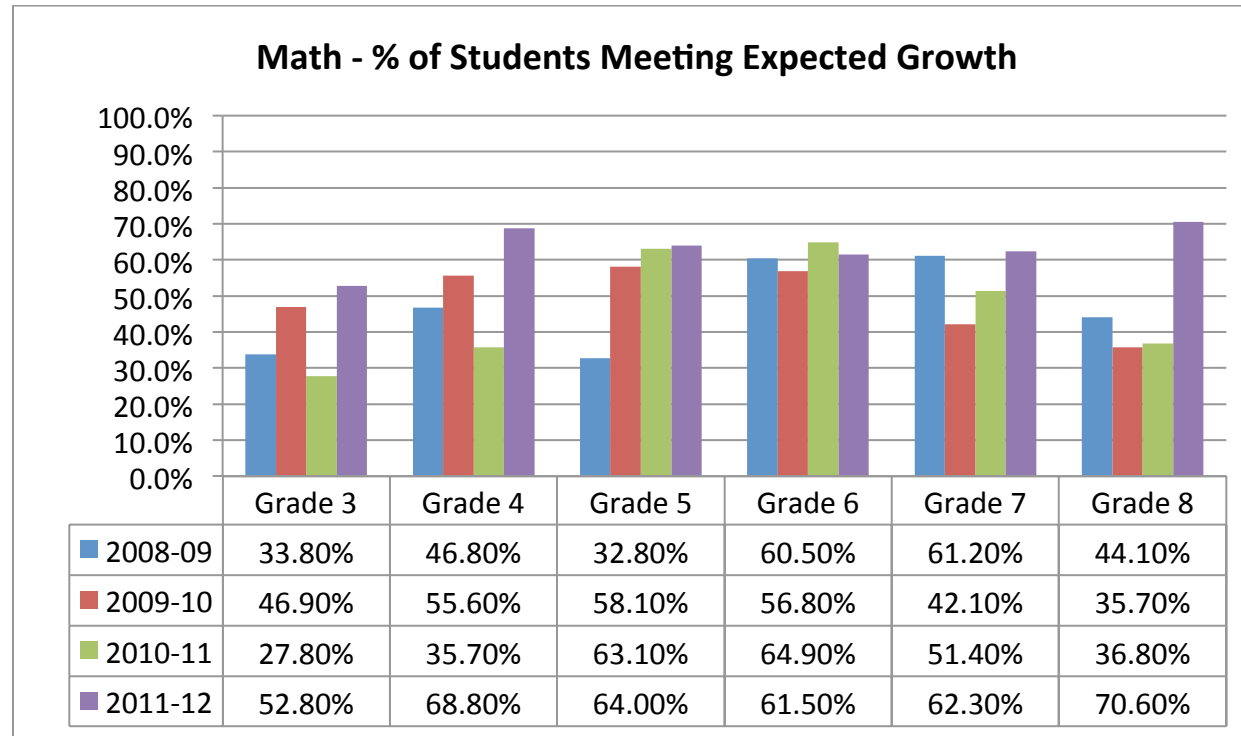
Figure 15.



Each YLA student takes MAP assessments in Reading and Math in both the Fall and the Spring semester. NWEA MAP assessments are nationally normed. In addition, Fall MAP assessment results include an expectation of the average amount of growth a student is expected to make by the Spring, based on that student's Fall RIT score and their grade level. The graph above shows the percent of students that met their expected Fall to Spring growth in Reading. There is some variability in the results, however, there does appear to be a general upward trend with a larger percentage of students meeting their expected growth in the 2011-12 school year than in the 3 years prior.



Figure 16.



Although not as well defined, a similar trend was found in Math with a higher percentage of students meeting their expected Fall to Spring growth in the 2011-12 school year than in the previous three school years.

Figure 17.

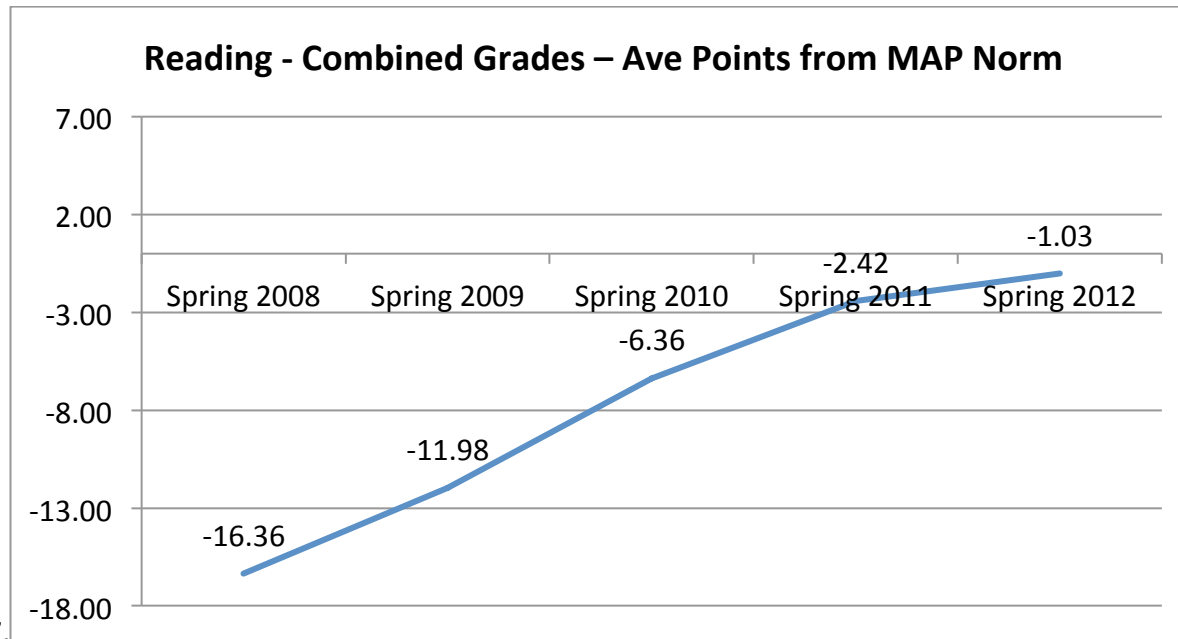
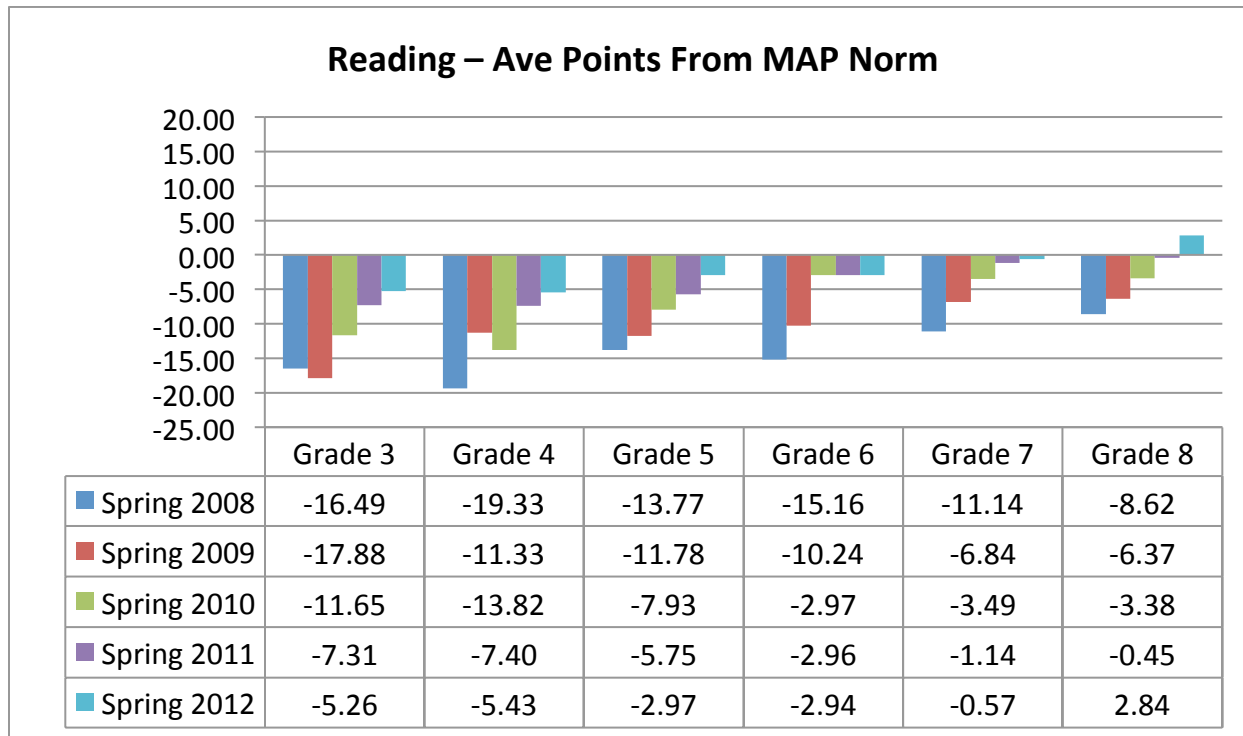


Figure17.

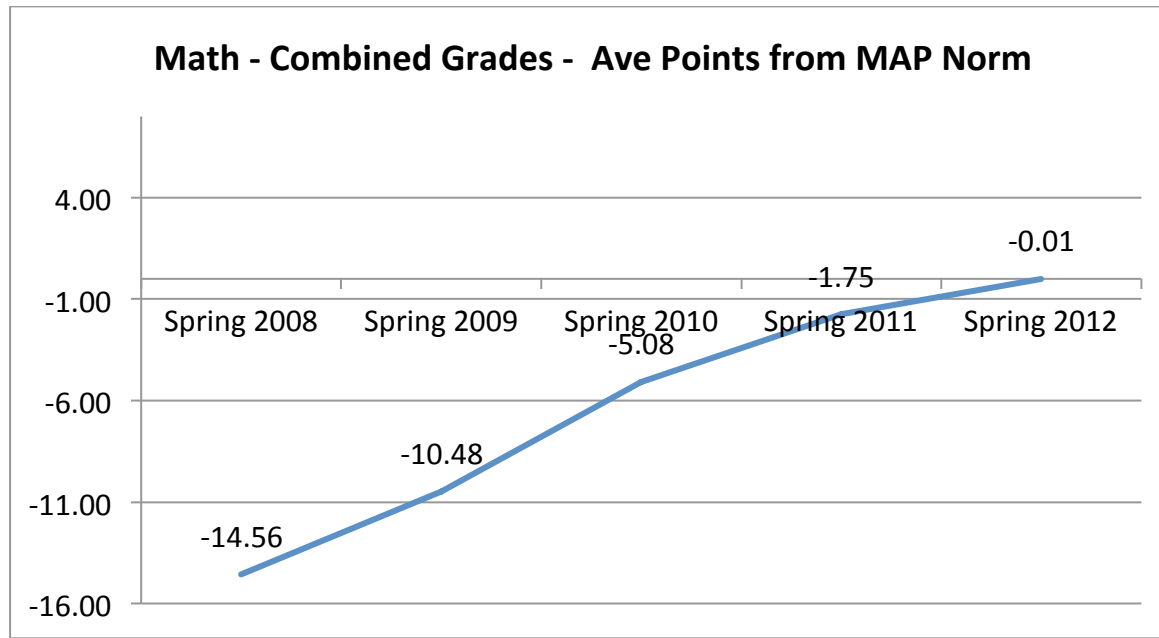
NWEA MAP tests are nationally normed. This graph shows that the average MCPS student (grades K-8) in Spring of 2008 scored more than 16 points below the MAP national norm in Reading. This number has improved steadily from one year to the next with the average YLA student (Grades K-8) in the Spring of 2012 scoring slightly more than one point above the national MAP norm in Reading.

Figure 18.



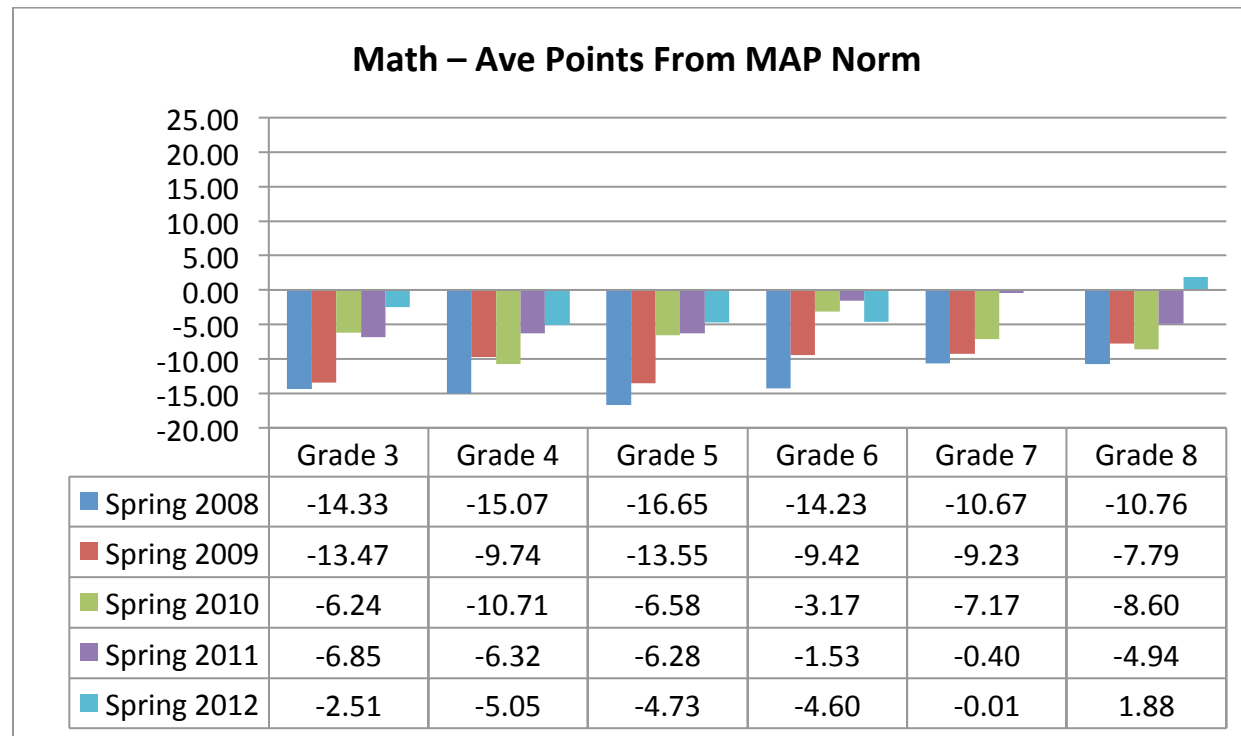
When looking at the average points above/below the national norm by grade level there is more variability in the results. However, in the Spring of 2008, the average student in all grades (Grade 3-8) scored well below the national MAP Reading norm. By the Spring of 2012, the average student in all grades (Grade 3-6 and 8) had made progress with grade 8 scoring above the national MAP Reading norm.

Figure 19.



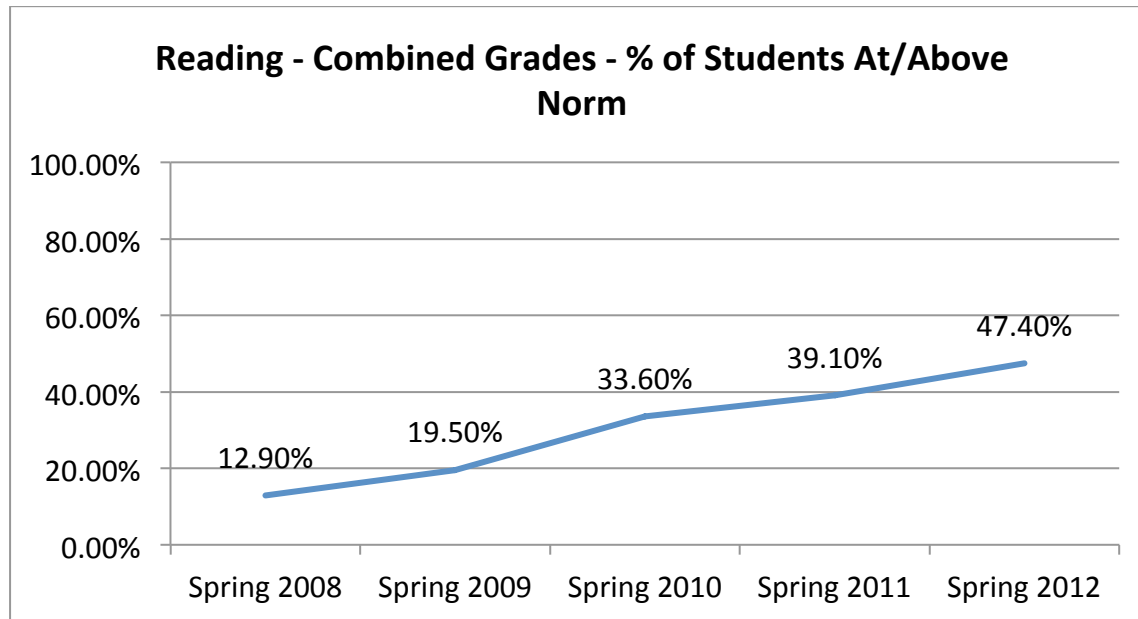
This graph shows that the average YLA student (grades K-8) in Spring of 2008 scored more than 14 points below the MAP national norm in Math. This number has improved steadily from one year to the next with the average MCPS student (Grades K-8) in the Spring of 2012 scoring at the national MAP norm in Math.

Figure 20.



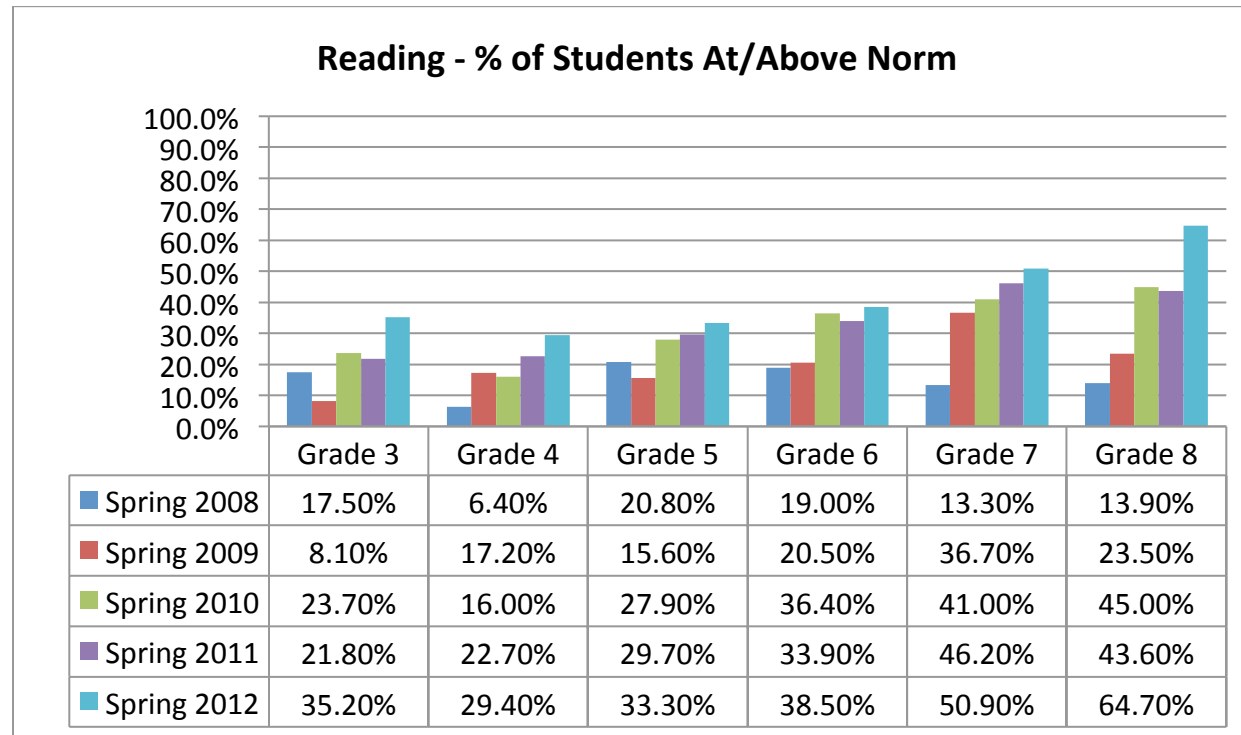
When looking at the average points above/below the national norm by grade level YLA student in the Spring of 2012 scored closer to the national NWEA MAP math norm than the average YLA student in the Spring of 2008.

Figure 21.



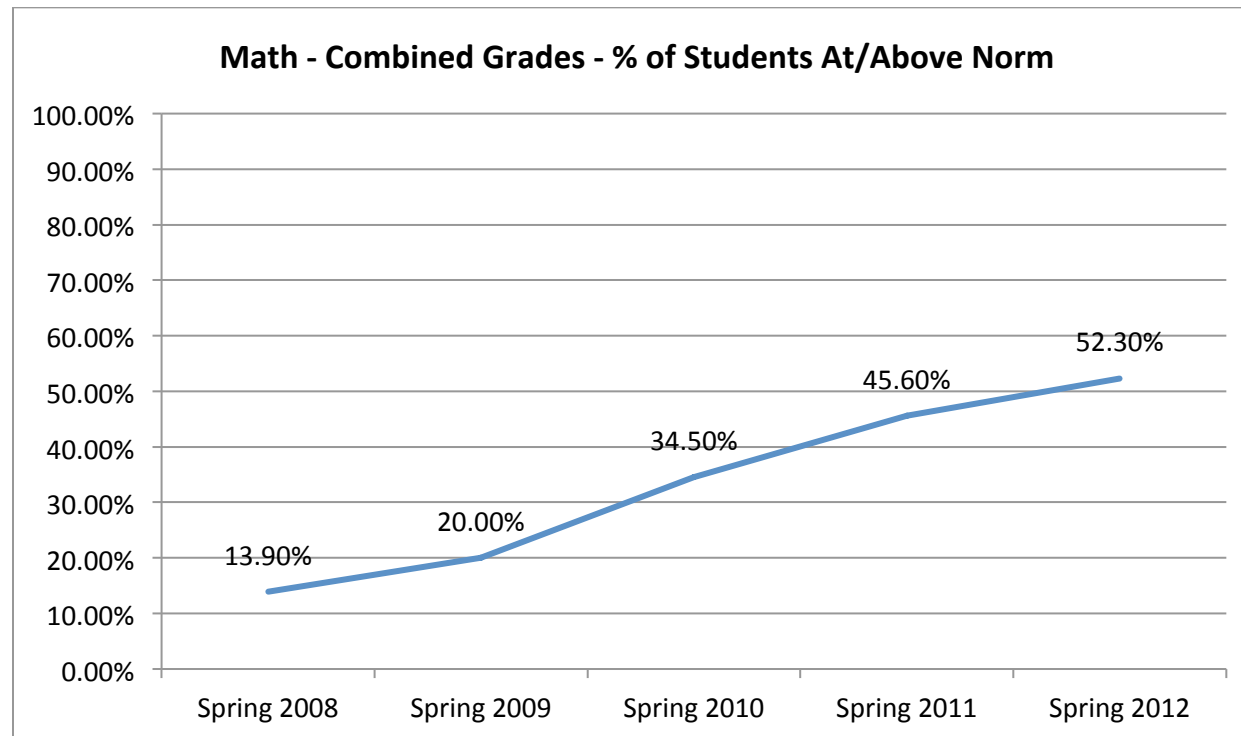
Because NWEA MAP assessments have national norms for each grade level and subject area, it is possible to determine the percent of students that score above the average. This graph shows that the percent of students (Grade K-8) scoring above average in Reading at YLA has been steadily increasing for the past 5 years, with over 47% of students scoring above average in Reading in the Spring of 2012.

Figure 22.



Looking at the percent of students scoring at or above the national NWEA MAP norm in Reading by grade level, the results show a general increase across all grade levels in the percent of students scoring at or above the national norm in Reading over the past 5 years – especially in grades 7 and 8.

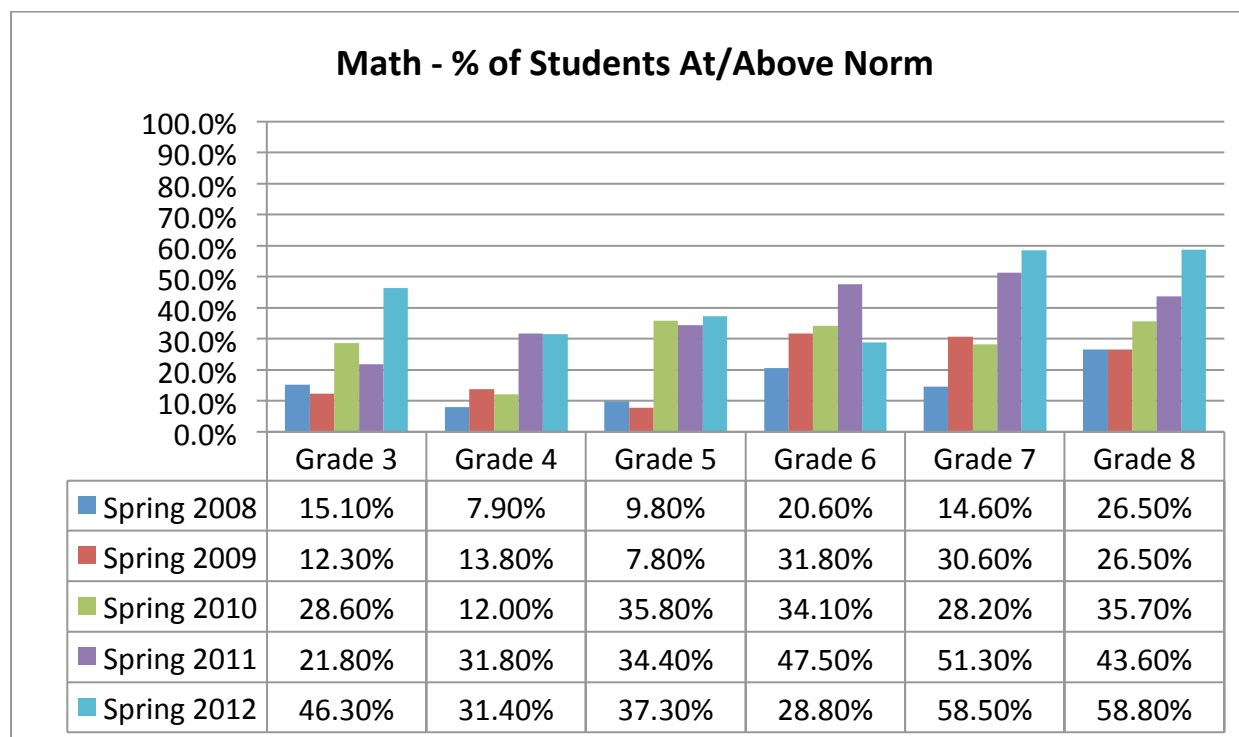
Figure 23.



This graph shows that the percent of students (Grade K-8) scoring at or above the national NWEA MAP average in Math at YLA steadily increased from Spring 2008 to Spring 2012, with over 52% of YLA students that scoring at or above the national average.

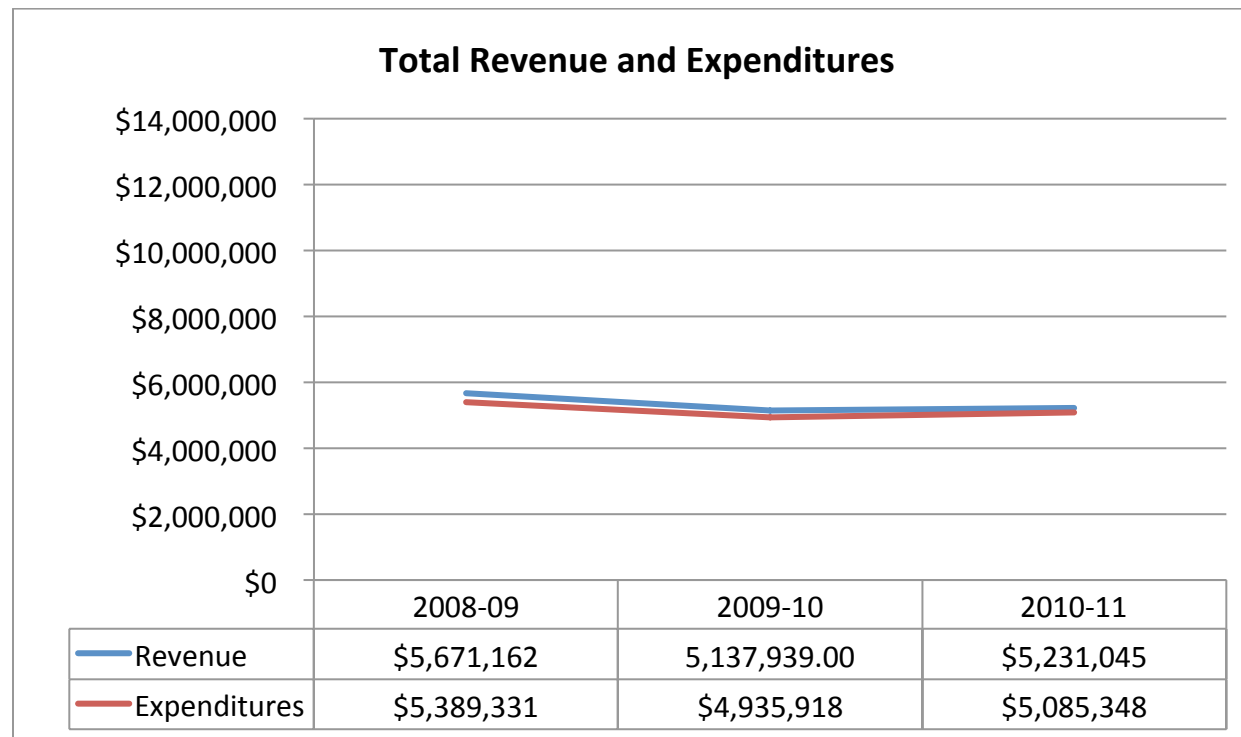


Figure 24.



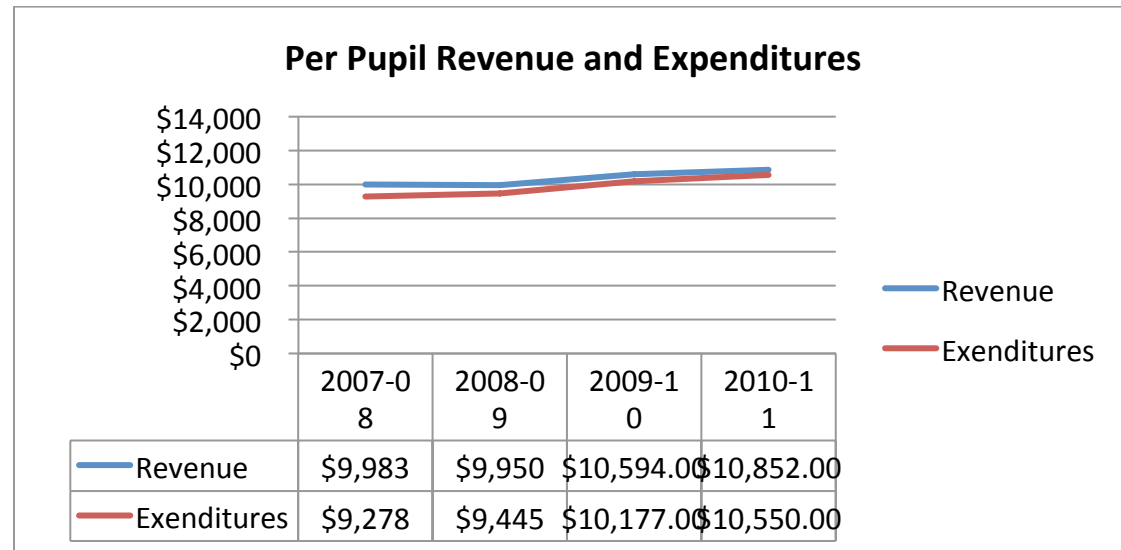
With the exceptions of grades 4 and 7, this graph shows that the percent of students scoring at or above the national NWEA MAP norm has steadily increased from 2008 to 2012. Grade 4 results increased from 2008 to 2011 and then remained steady. Grade 6 results increased from 2008 to 2011 and then declined in 2012.

Figure 25.



This graph shows that overall revenues slightly exceed overall expenditures and per pupil revenues and expenditures throughout the five period.

Figure 26.



Similarly, per pupil revenues have slightly exceeded per pupil expenditures during

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