

Progress in student academic achievement

Evaluation of New City Charter School in 2008-09

This report describes New City Charter School student achievement in the 2008-09 school year, the school's sixth operating year. The number of students enrolled in the school was 125, an increase from 60 students enrolled the first year of the school.

During the 2008-09 school year, the kindergarten through fourth-grade students made up 67 percent of student enrollment. Fewer students (34%) were in fifth through eighth grades. In terms of ethnicity, the largest group of students was White/Caucasian (62%), followed by Black/African American (22%), Asian (6%), Hispanic (6%), and American Indian (5%). There was about an equal number of girls and boys (50% each). The majority of students (54%) were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Thirteen percent of the students received Special Education services. Student characteristics changed slightly since the school's opening in fall 2003. There were more White/Caucasian students and fewer Black/African American students in 2008-09, as compared to 2003-04.

Student academic achievement is measured using the Woodcock-Johnson III Tests of Achievement (grades 1 and 2) and the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) (grades 3 and above). Key findings in overall reading, language, and math (Broad Reading and Broad Math for Woodcock-Johnson; Total Reading, Total Language, and Total Math for ITBS) are presented below. Student assessments in 2008-09 were conducted in December 2008. Assessments in 2007-08 were conducted in December 2007 and January 2008.

Reading results

- Average reading scores for first-grade students in 2008-09 were slightly below the average compared to same-grade peers nationally (i.e., scoring below the mean of 100 in Woodcock-Johnson standard scores). Average scores for second-grade students were at the national average.
- Average reading scores for third- through eighth-grade students were above the national average (above the mean of 50 in ITBS Normal Curve Equivalent scores).
- Second-grade students' progress in reading was assessed over a one-year period from the 2007-08 to the 2008-09 school year. Students' scores in 2008-09 were compared to their scores in 2007-08. Students' scores were also compared to other students in the normative sample. The scores are grade-standardized. This means that no change in standard scores from 2007-08 to 2008-09 indicates normative progress, positive change indicates accelerated progress, and negative change indicates slower progress in comparison to same-grade peers. The results show that, on average, students made accelerated progress in reading, as compared to their peers nationally.
- Compared to students in the normative sample, students in fourth, fifth, and eighth grades made accelerated progress over one year, while students in sixth and seventh grades made slower progress.
- Reading results for 2008-09 differed by some student characteristics. Results indicate that White/Caucasian students performed better than other students. Girls performed better than boys. The students who were not eligible for free lunch or reduced-price lunch scored higher than those who were eligible.

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- In terms of students' progress in reading skills, White/Caucasian students made accelerated progress, while the other group (Black/African American, American Indian, Asian, and Hispanic combined) made slower progress over the one-year period. Boys made a higher average gain than girls in Total Reading. However, their average scores were below the girls in both years. Students who were not eligible for free or reduced-price lunch made a bigger average gain than students who were eligible. Despite these differences, students of all backgrounds scored above the national average on reading in both years (i.e., average scores for each group were higher than 50 in Normal Curve Equivalent points).

Language results

- Language results are available only for third-through eighth-grade students who took the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. Average scores for fourth-, fifth-, and seventh-grade students in 2008-09 were above the national average (i.e., above the mean of 50 in Normal Curve Equivalent points), while average scores for third-, sixth-, and eighth-grade students were below it.
- Compared to same-grade students in the normative sample, fourth-, fifth-, and seventh-grade students made accelerated progress from 2007-08 to 2008-09, but sixth- and eighth-grade students made slower progress.
- Similar to the reading results, White/Caucasian students performed better than other students in language in 2008-09. Girls performed better than boys. The students who were not eligible for free or reduced-price lunch scored higher than those who were eligible.
- In terms of students' progress in language skills, the other students (Black/African American, American Indian, Asian, and Hispanic combined) made a slightly higher average gain than the White students. Average Total Language score for the other students improved from below the national average in 2007-08 to above it in 2008-09.

In spite of their gain, the other students scored below the White/Caucasian students in both years, on average. Girls made a slightly higher average gain than boys. Their average scores were also higher than boys in both years. Students from higher income levels (not eligible for free or reduced-price lunch) made accelerated progress, while students from lower income levels (eligible for free or reduced-price lunch) made slower progress than their same-grade level peers nationally. It should be noted that the average scores of both income groups were higher than the national average in both years.

Math results

- Average math scores for first- and second-grade students in 2008-09 were above the national average (i.e., above the mean of 100 in Woodcock-Johnson standard score points).
- Similarly, average math scores for third-, fourth-, fifth-, and seventh-grade students in 2008-09, as measured by Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, were slightly above the national average (above the mean of 50 in Normal Curve Equivalent points). However, the average math scores for sixth- and eighth-grade students were below it.
- Compared to same-grade students in the normative sample, on average, second-grade students made accelerated progress in math from 2007-08 to 2008-09.
- The fourth- and fifth-grade students also made accelerated progress in math from the 2007-08 to the 2008-09 school year as compared to students in the normative sample. Seventh-grade students made normative progress, while sixth- and eighth-grade students made slower progress than the same-grade peers nationally.
- In relation to students' characteristics, the math results indicate that White/Caucasian students performed better than other students in 2008-09. Girls had a higher average score than boys. The students who were not eligible for free or reduced-price lunch scored higher than those who were eligible.

- Results over one year indicates that the other students (Black/African American, American Indian, Asian, and Hispanic combined) made accelerated progress in math, while the White/Caucasian students made slower progress. In spite of their gain, the other students scored below the White/Caucasian students and the national average (i.e., scoring below the mean of 50 in Normal Curve Equivalent points). Girls made accelerated progress while boys made slower progress. Boys and girls scored at or above the national average in both years. Also, students who were not eligible for free or reduced-price lunch made accelerated progress, while those who were eligible made slower progress over one year.

It should be noted that caution should be applied when interpreting results between demographic groups and individual grade levels because the number of students in each group is small.

Issues to consider

In conclusion, results indicate generally positive performance for students at the New City Charter School. The findings also suggest that there is still room for improvement. The following issues for consideration can be used to inform the school's future planning efforts.

- More attention should be given to some students who score below average on the tests (i.e., below 100 in Woodcock-Johnson standard score points or below 50 in ITBS Normal Curve Equivalent points). In particular, the ITBS reading, language, and math scores vary widely among students.
- There are indications that non-White students (Black/African American, American Indian, Asian, and Hispanic) made higher improvements in language and math than the White/Caucasian students over the one-year period. These results are promising. The school should continue its efforts to close the achievement gap among ethnic groups and income levels.
- More attention should also be given to improve reading, language, and math skills for boys.
- The New City Charter School is rooted in Responsive Classroom that promotes the integration between social and academic learning. Another recommendation for evaluation is to examine the relationships between students' social skills and academic achievements.

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For more information

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