



The Education Trust

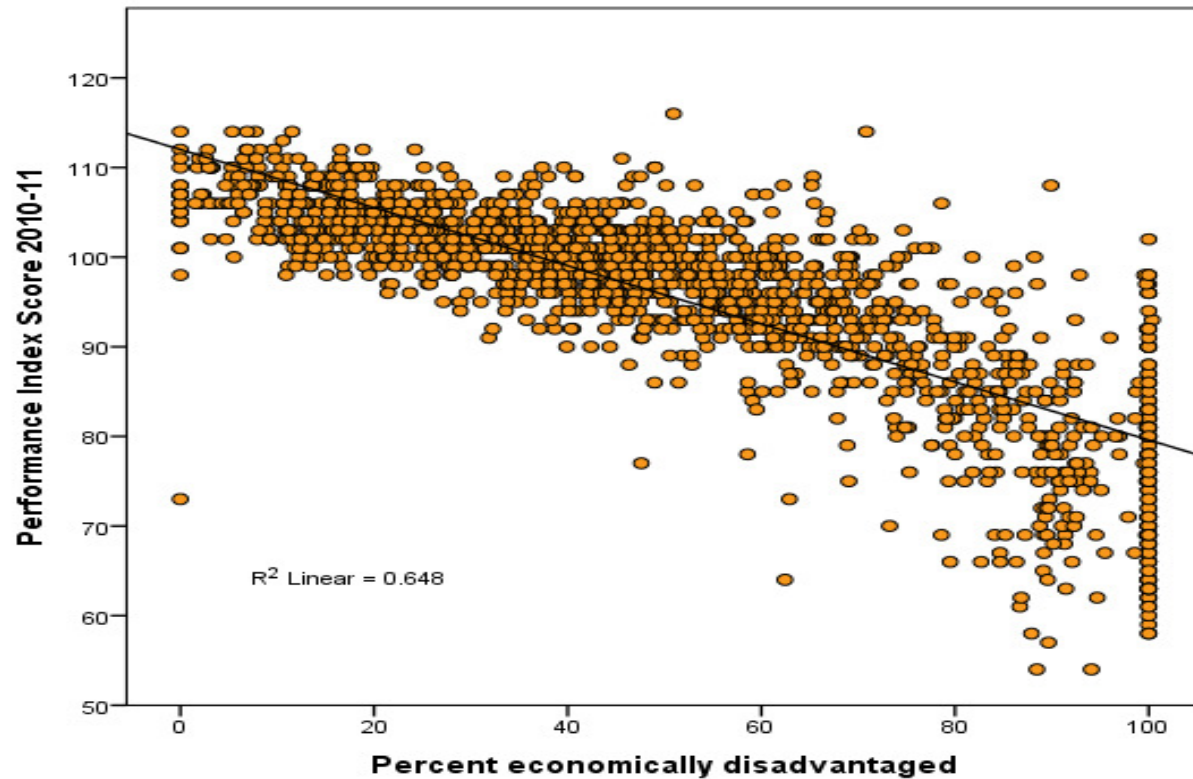
Getting it Done: Leading Academic Success in Unexpected Schools

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College of William and Mary
June 24, 2014

The correlation between poverty
and achievement sometimes
seems so strong as to be
inescapable.

This scatterplot shows the elementary schools in a state arrayed by percentage of students who receive free and reduced-price lunch on the x-axis and achievement on the y-axis. It's a pretty typical pattern.



What are some of the reasons
people give to explain this
strong relationship between
poverty and achievement?

A lot of people locate the problem
within the students...

lack of engagement
lack of effort
lack of readiness

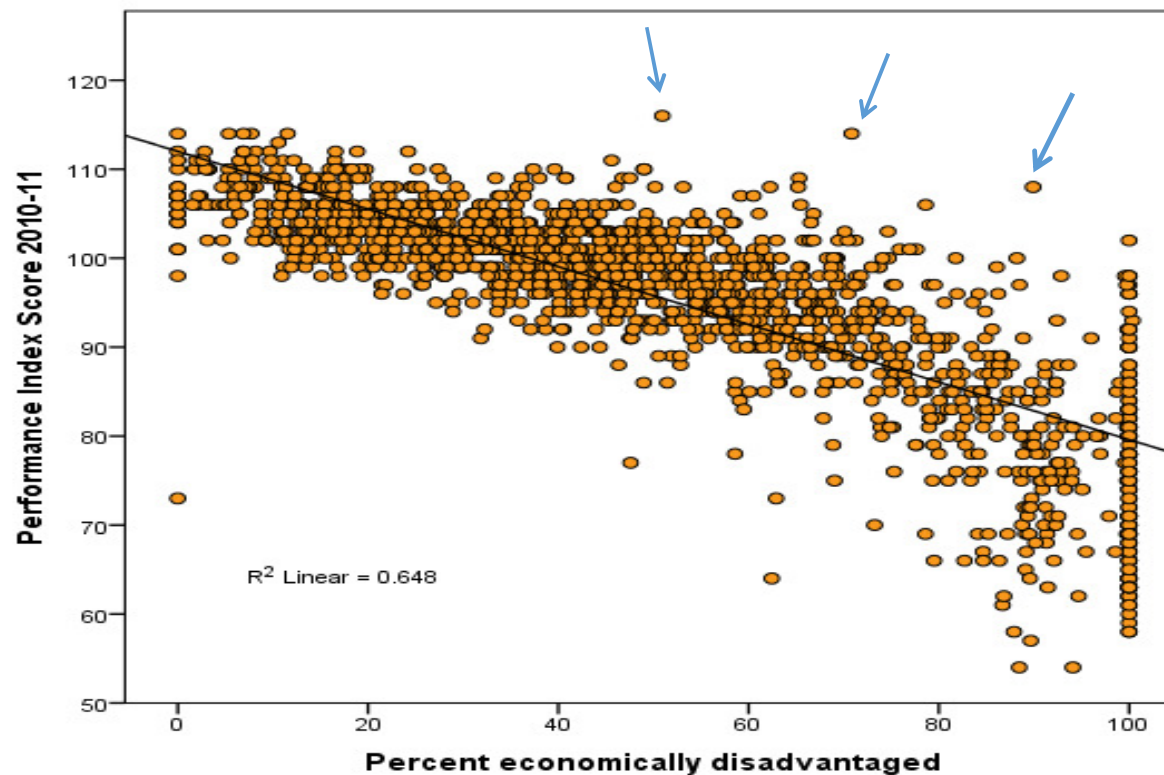
...or focus outside the
school house walls:

lack of parental engagement
single-parent families
drug use
poor pre-natal care
neighborhood crime

These are real issues.

But that line of thinking leads us to believe schools can't do much until everything in society is fixed.

But look at this graph again
—and notice something different—
it shows a few schools clearly performing above
their peers.



**Is there something we can learn
from those schools?**

George Hall Elementary School

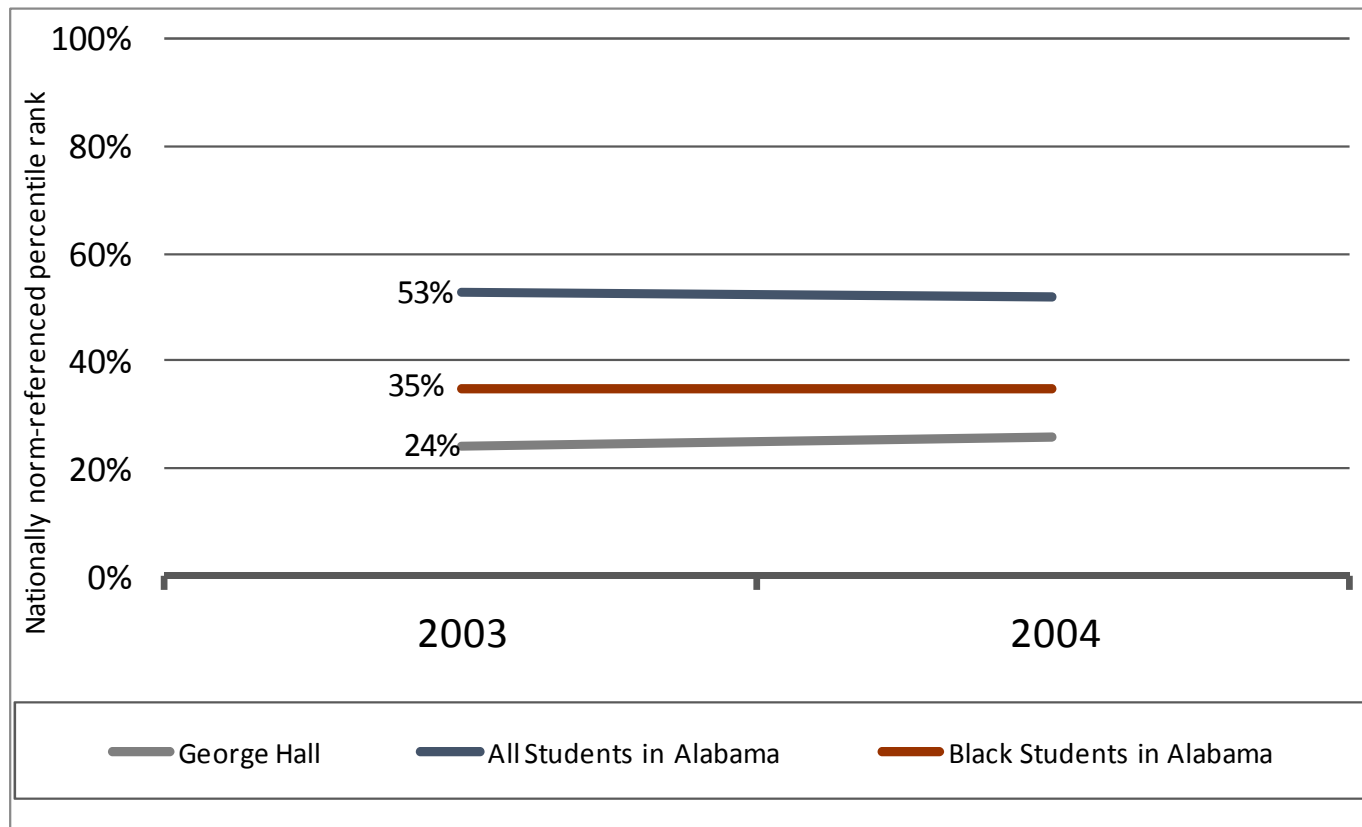
Mobile, Alabama
444 students in grades preK-5

- 99 % African American
- 99% Low-Income



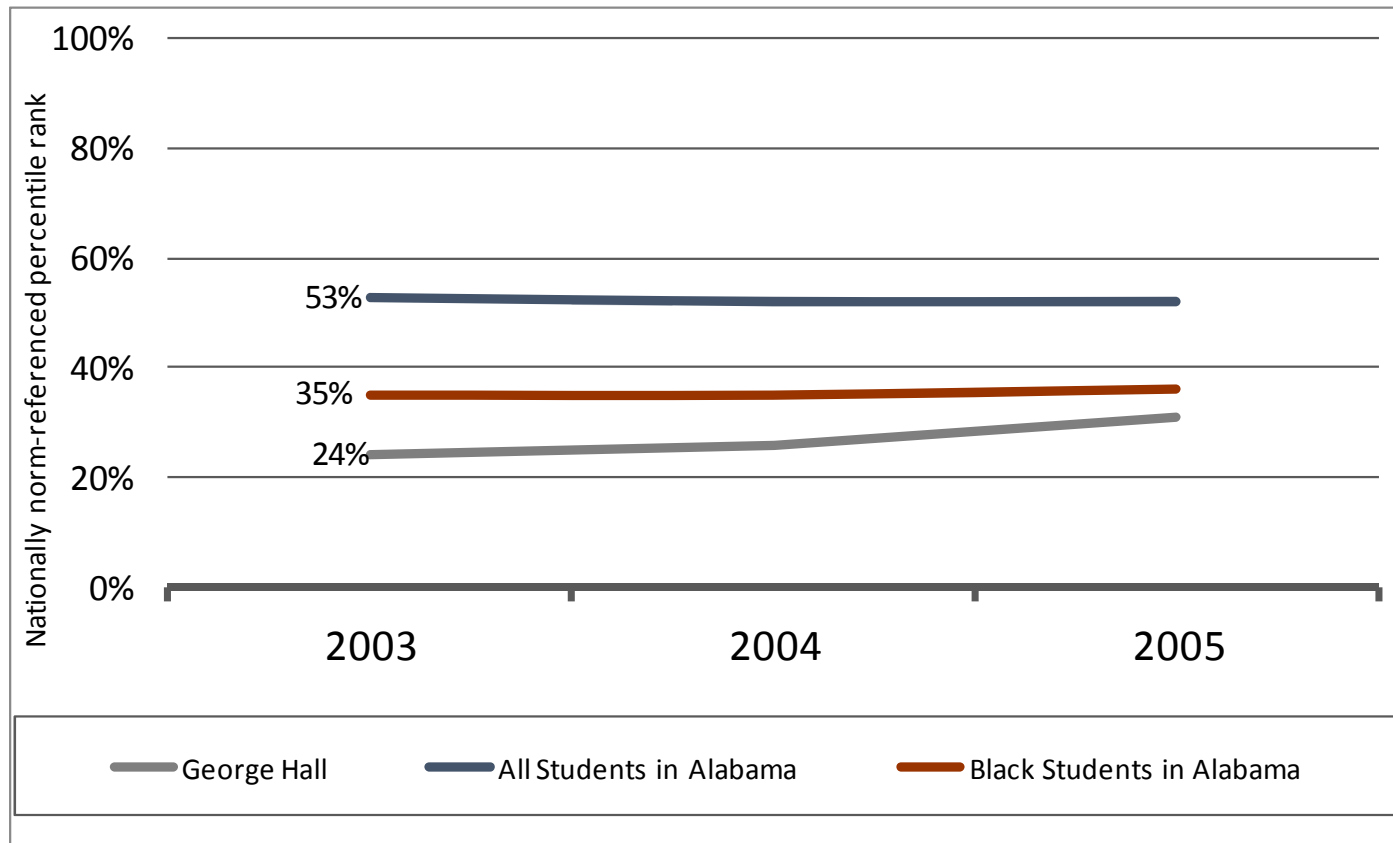
Source: Alabama Department of Education

Grade 5 Reading—SAT 10 results



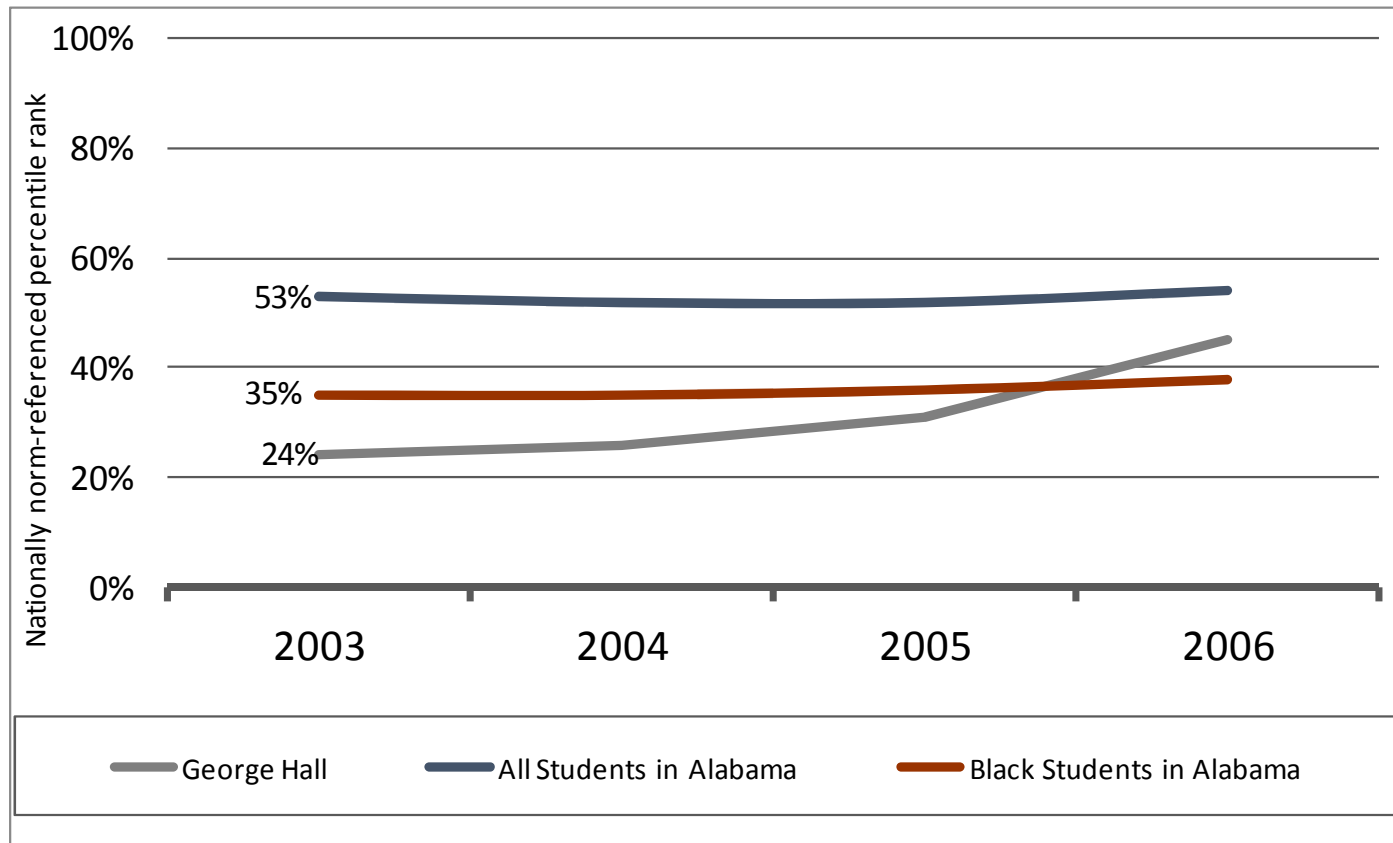
Source: Alabama Department of Education

Grade 5 Reading—SAT 10 results



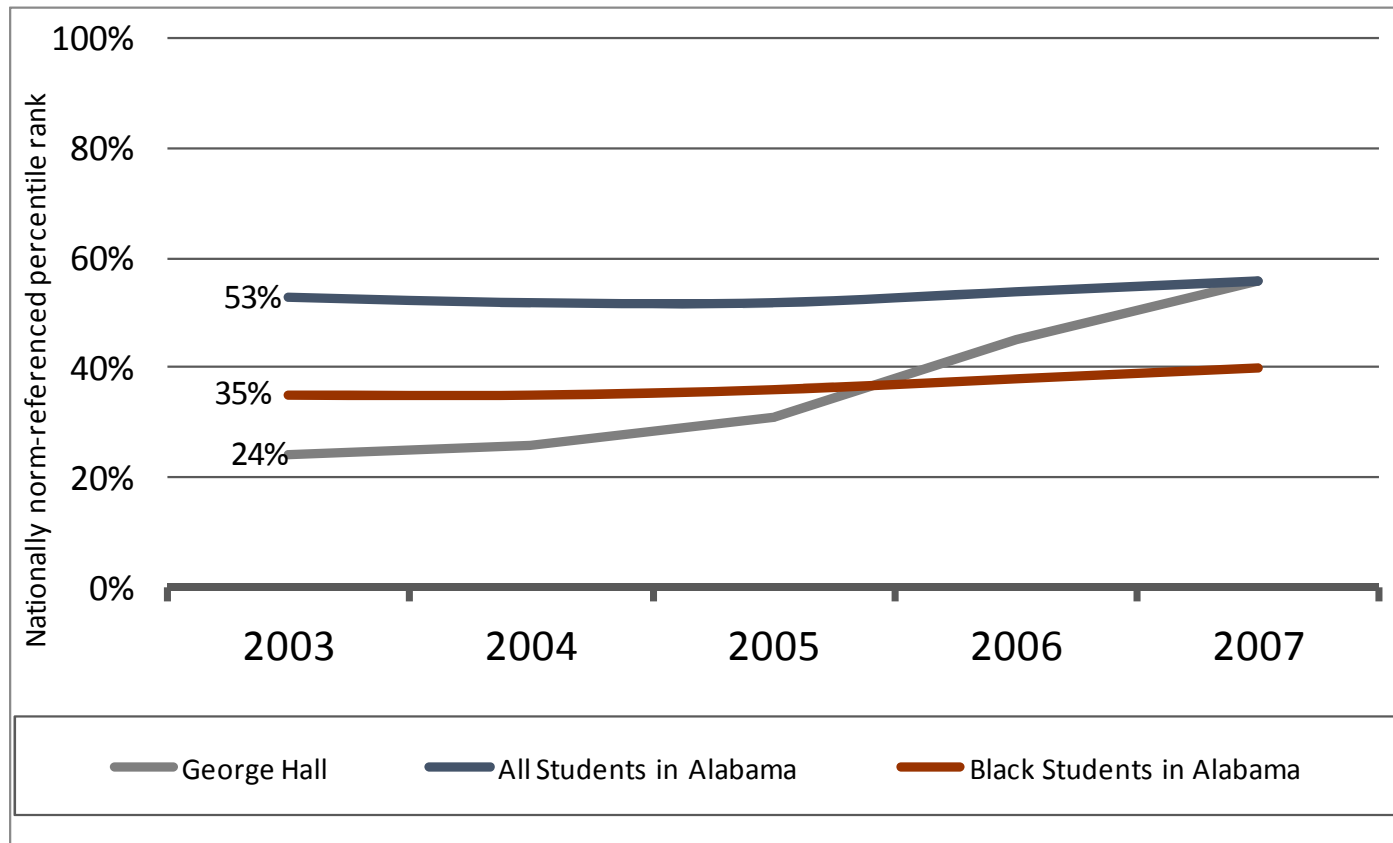
Source: Alabama Department of Education

Grade 5 Reading—SAT 10 results



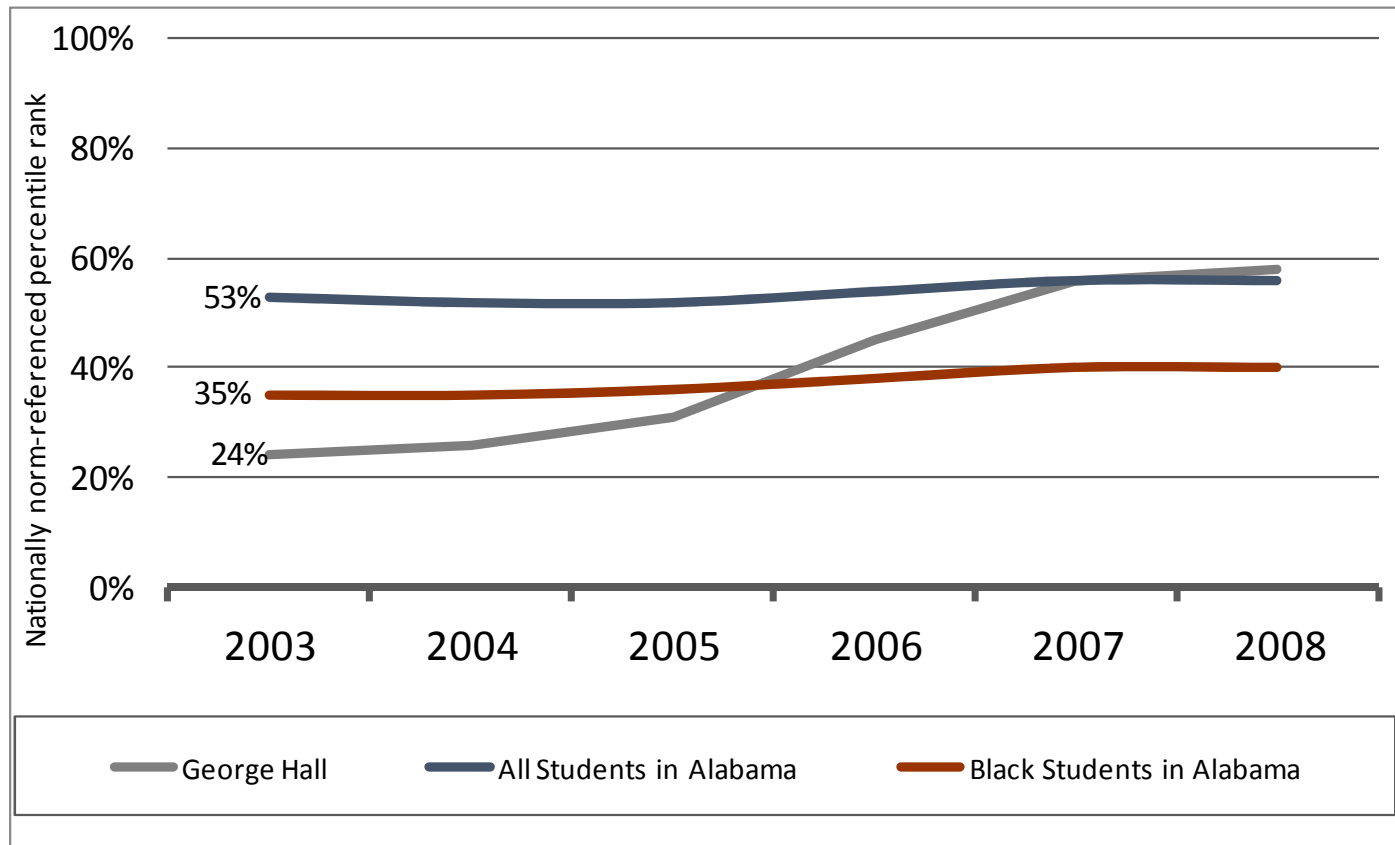
Source: Alabama Department of Education

Grade 5 Reading—SAT 10 results



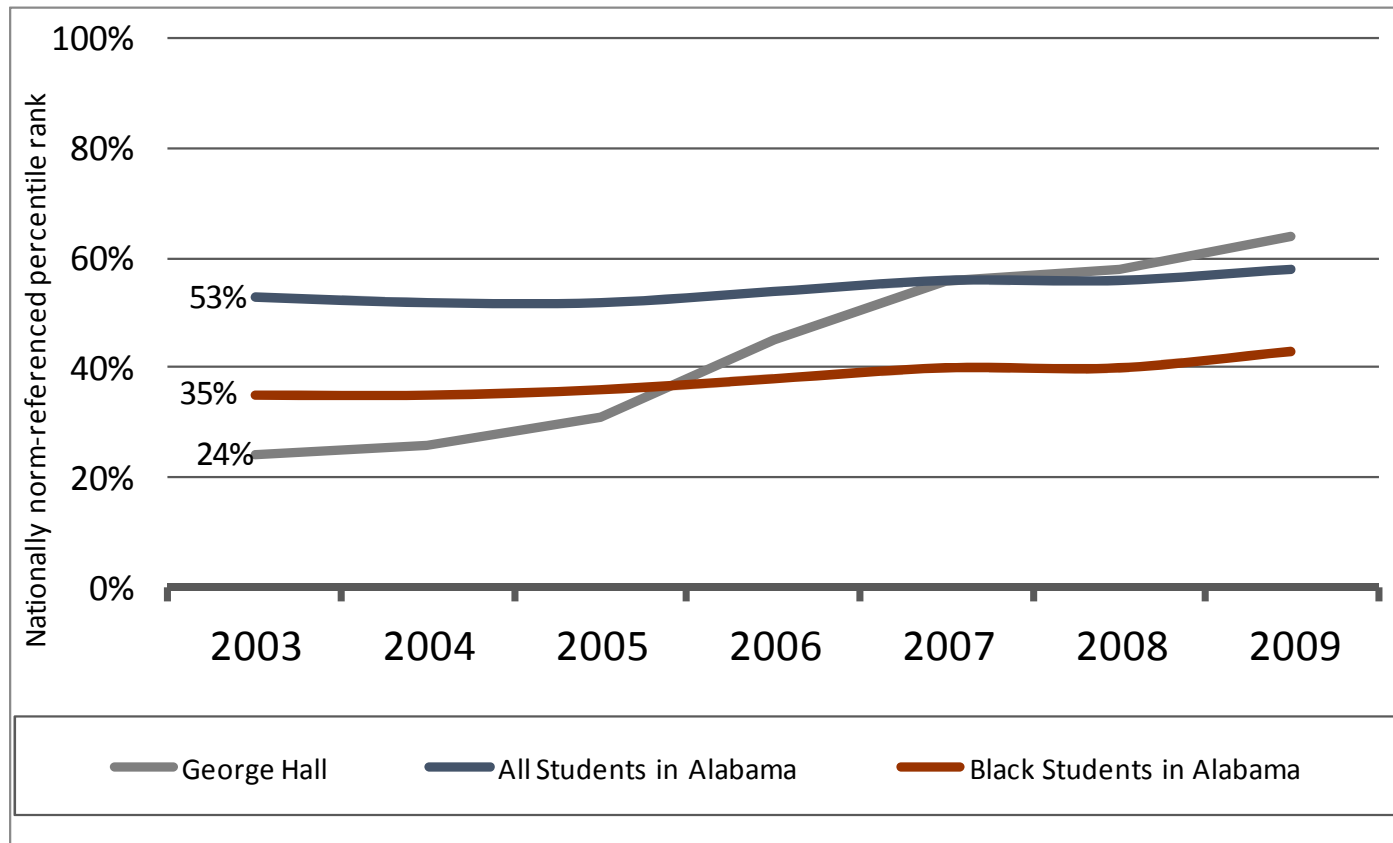
Source: Alabama Department of Education

Grade 5 Reading—SAT 10 results



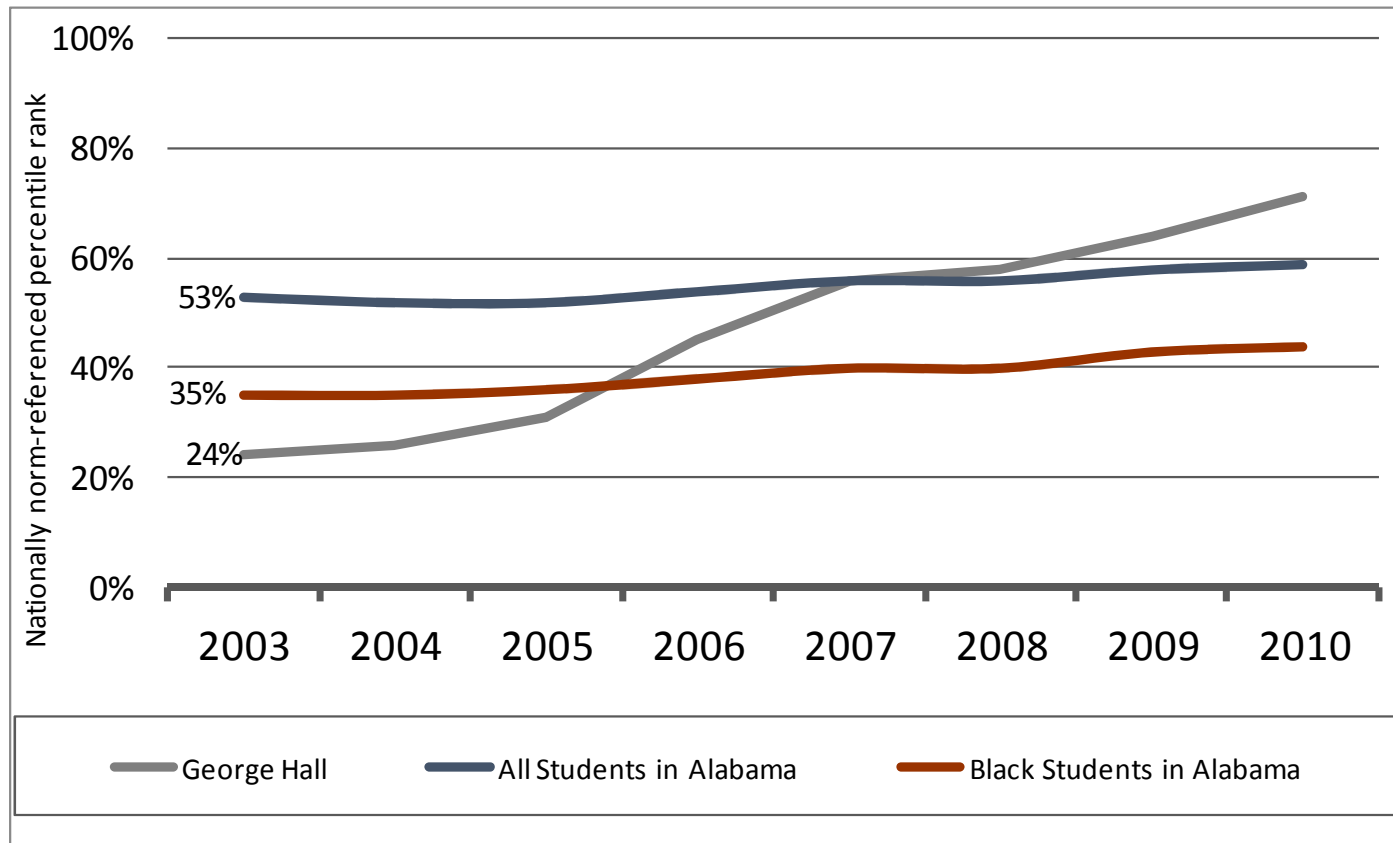
Source: Alabama Department of Education

Grade 5 Reading—SAT 10 results



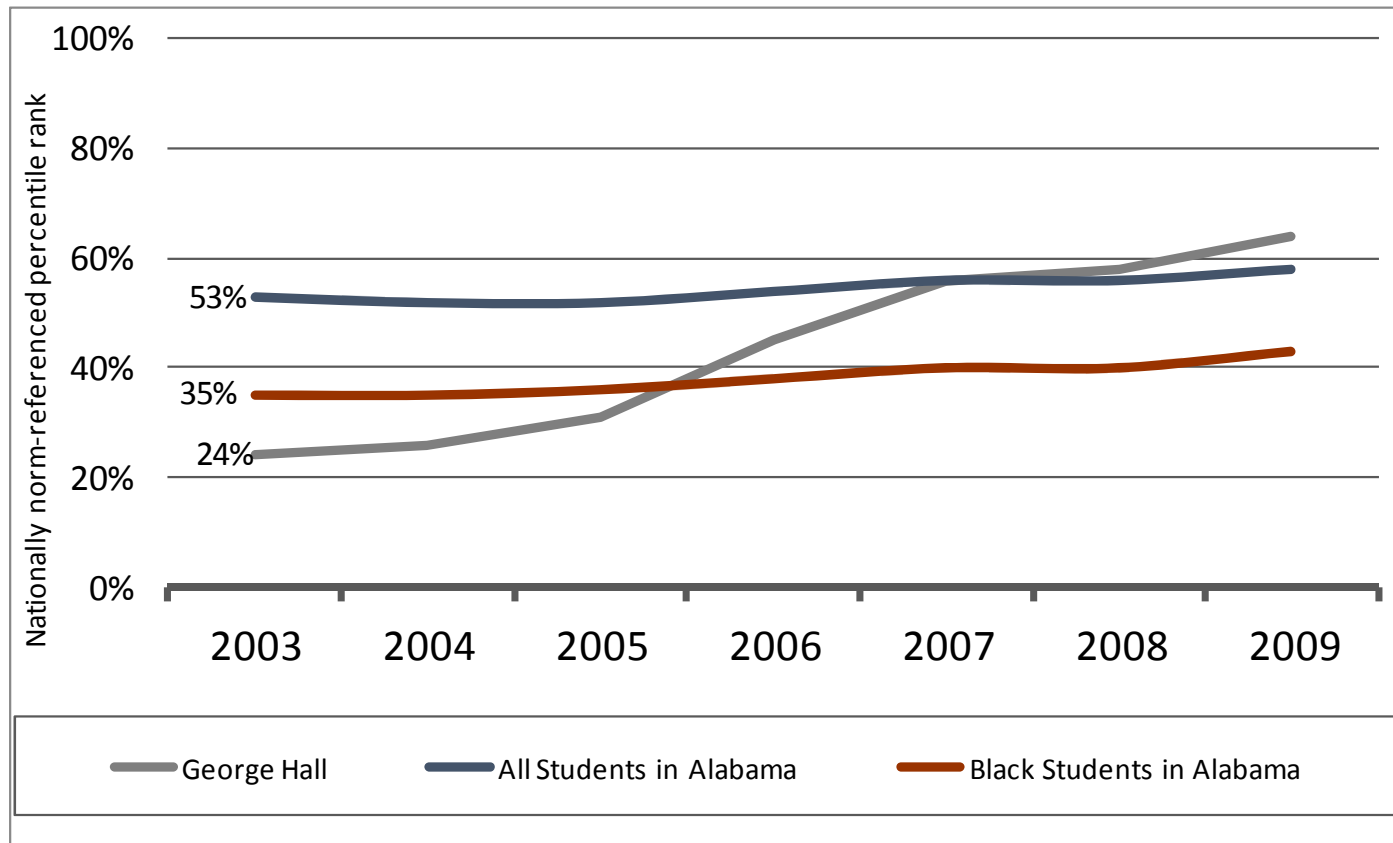
Source: Alabama Department of Education

Grade 5 Reading—SAT 10 results



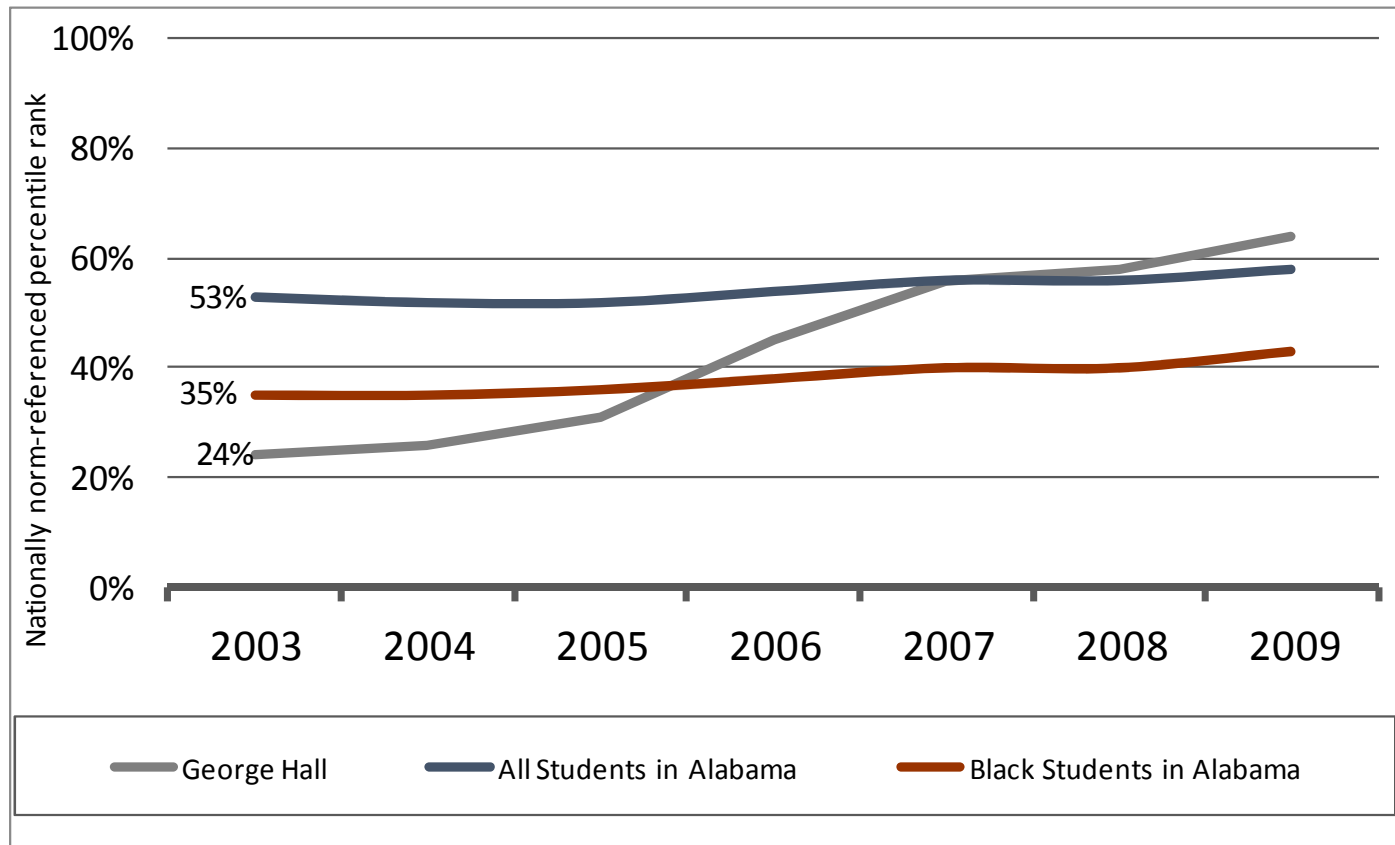
Source: Alabama Department of Education

Grade 5 Reading—SAT 10 results



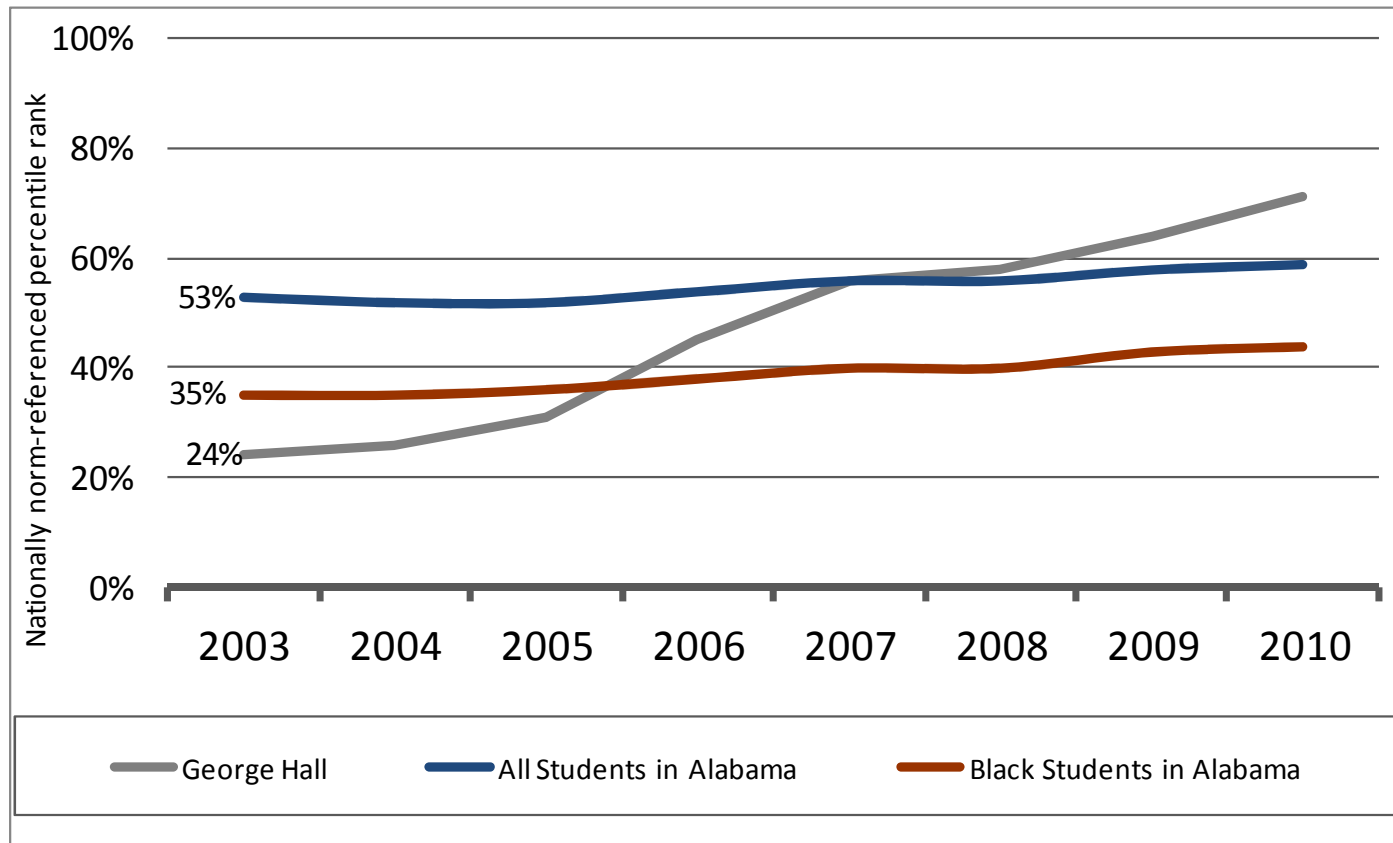
Source: Alabama Department of Education

Grade 5 Reading—SAT 10 results



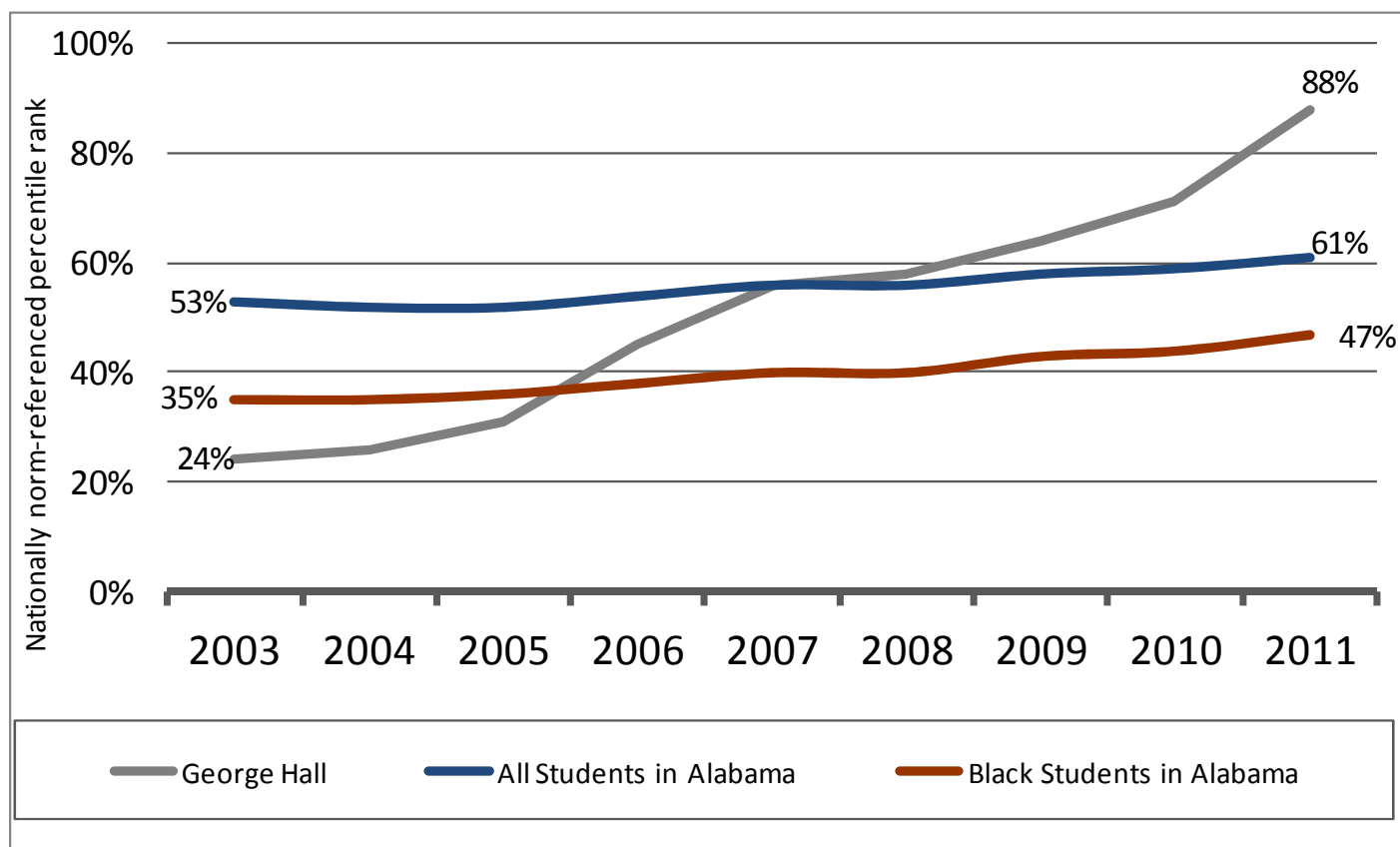
Source: Alabama Department of Education

Grade 5 Reading—SAT 10 results



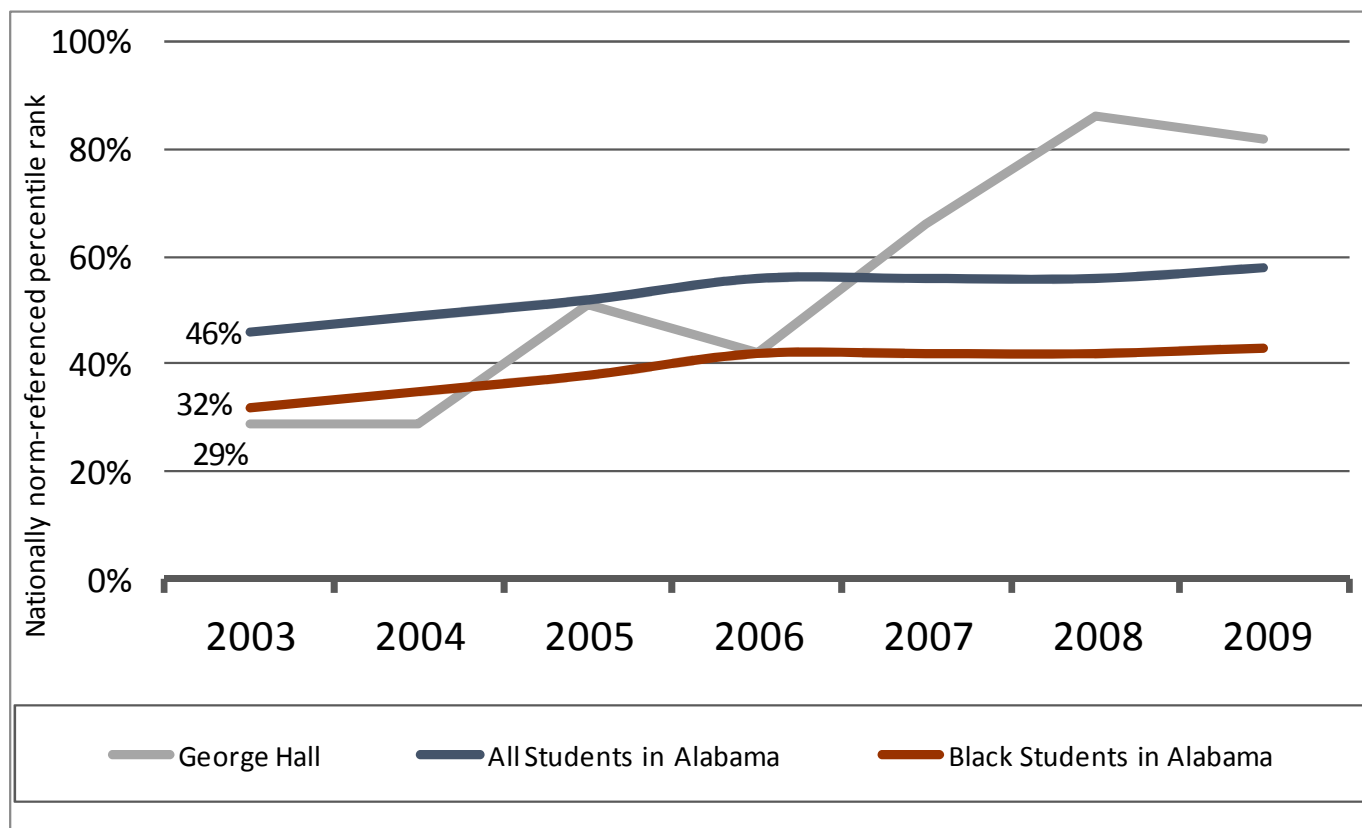
Source: Alabama Department of Education

Grade 5 Reading—SAT 10 results

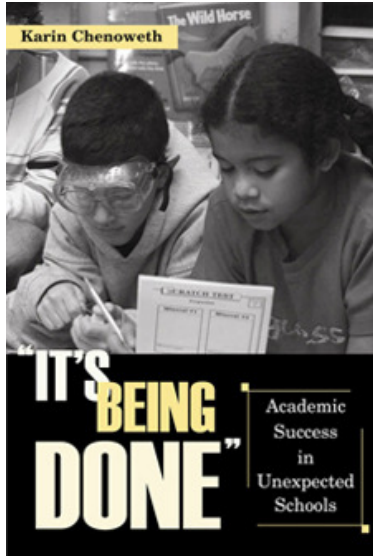


Source: Alabama Department of Education

Grade 5 Math—SAT 10 results



I have spent the last ten years trying to
identify and learn from schools like George
Hall Elementary to find out what makes
those schools—
I call them **It's Being Done schools**—
so special?



What became increasingly clear during that time was that It's Being Done schools had expert leadership.

Some Facts About School Leadership

Leadership is necessary to improve schools.

Conclusion from a 6-year study in 9 states, 45 districts and 180 schools:

“To date, we have not found a single case of a school improving its student achievement record in the absence of talented leadership.”

Source: Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom & Anderson (2010). Learning from leadership: Investigating the links to improved student learning.

There is substantial variation in the effectiveness of principals.

Highly effective principals can help raise the achievement of a typical student in their schools, while ineffective principals don't.

Source: Branch, Rivkin and Hanushek, (2012). Estimating the Effect of Leaders on Public Sector Productivity: The Case of School Principals. CALDER Working Paper No. 66

The effect of leaders is second only to teachers.

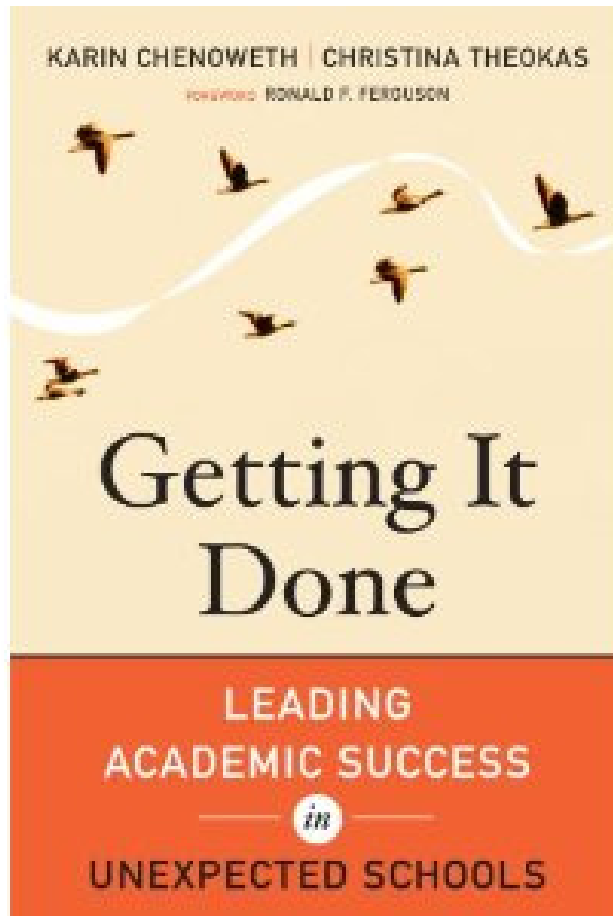
The total (direct and indirect) effects of leadership on student learning account for about a 1/4 of total school effects.

Source: Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom. (2004). How leadership influences student learning. The Wallace Foundation.

Leadership retains teachers.

Although a wide range of working conditions matter to teachers, principal leadership is most important.

Source: Almy and Tooley (2012). Building and Sustaining Talent: Creating Conditions in High-Poverty Schools That Support Effective Teaching and Learning. Washington, DC: The Education Trust.

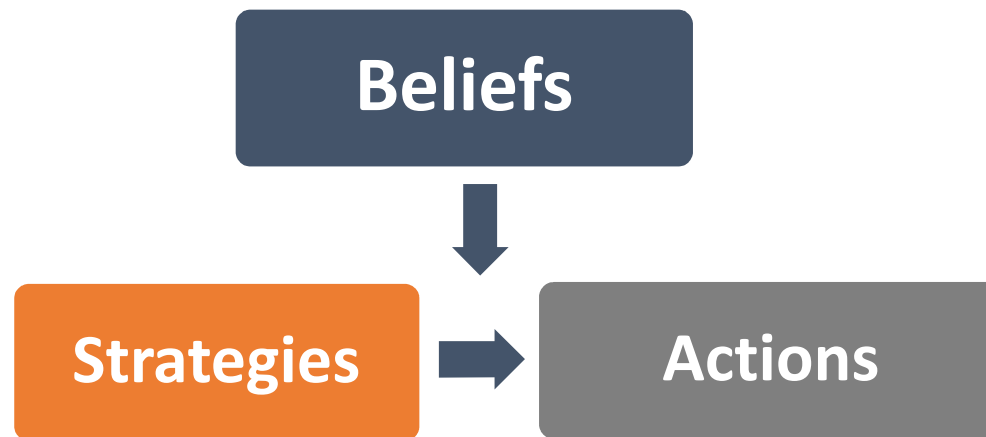


Getting It Done was the first attempt to systematically marshal Ed Trust's unique resource of "It's Being Done" schools to better understand effective leadership.

The results both align with previous research findings and points the field in new directions with insights from proven leaders.

What Did We Find?

I will share five findings, but overall, we found a consistent pattern that they very deliberately matched their strategies and actions to their beliefs, and that played out in a number of ways.



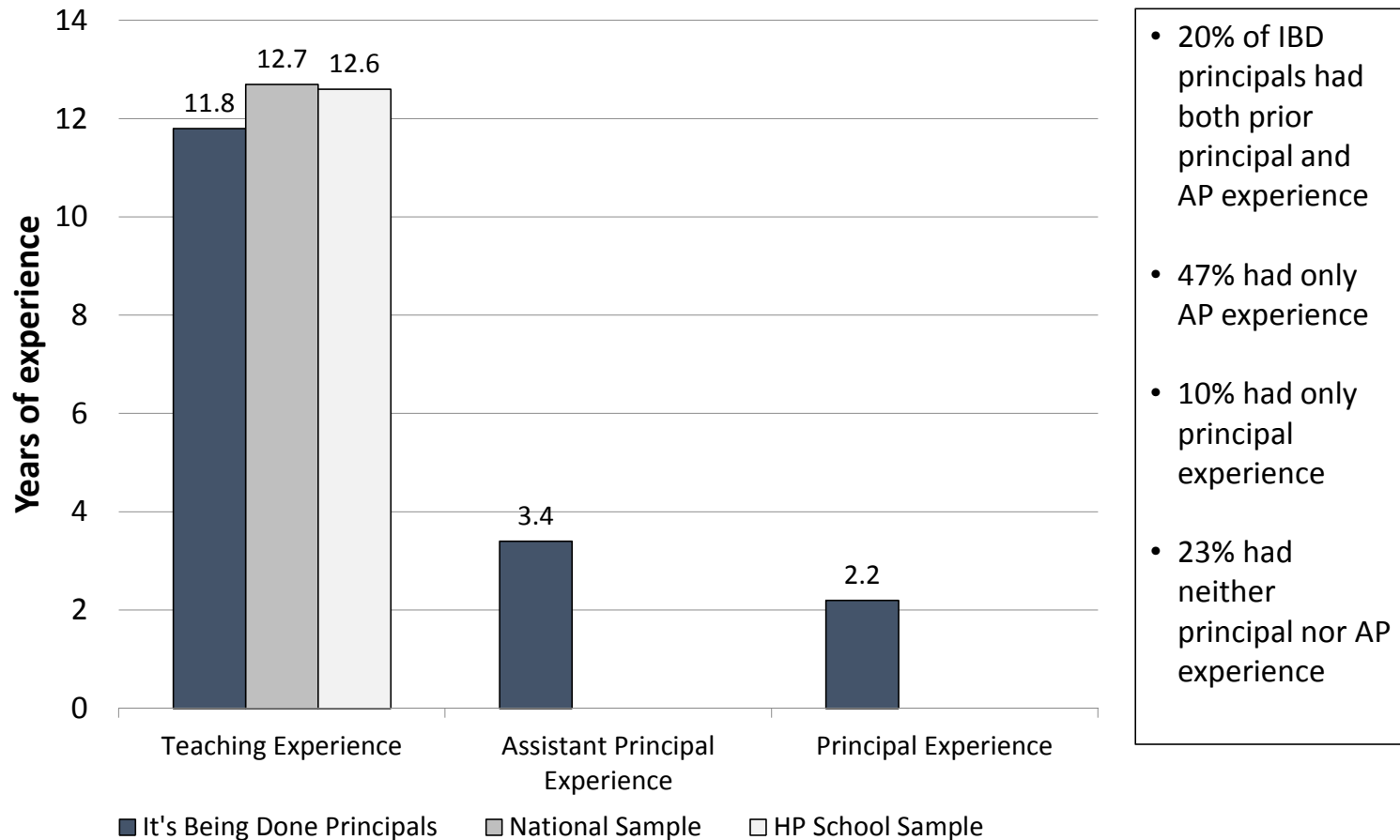
What Did We Find?

#1

These are typical school leaders with varied educational backgrounds and experiences.

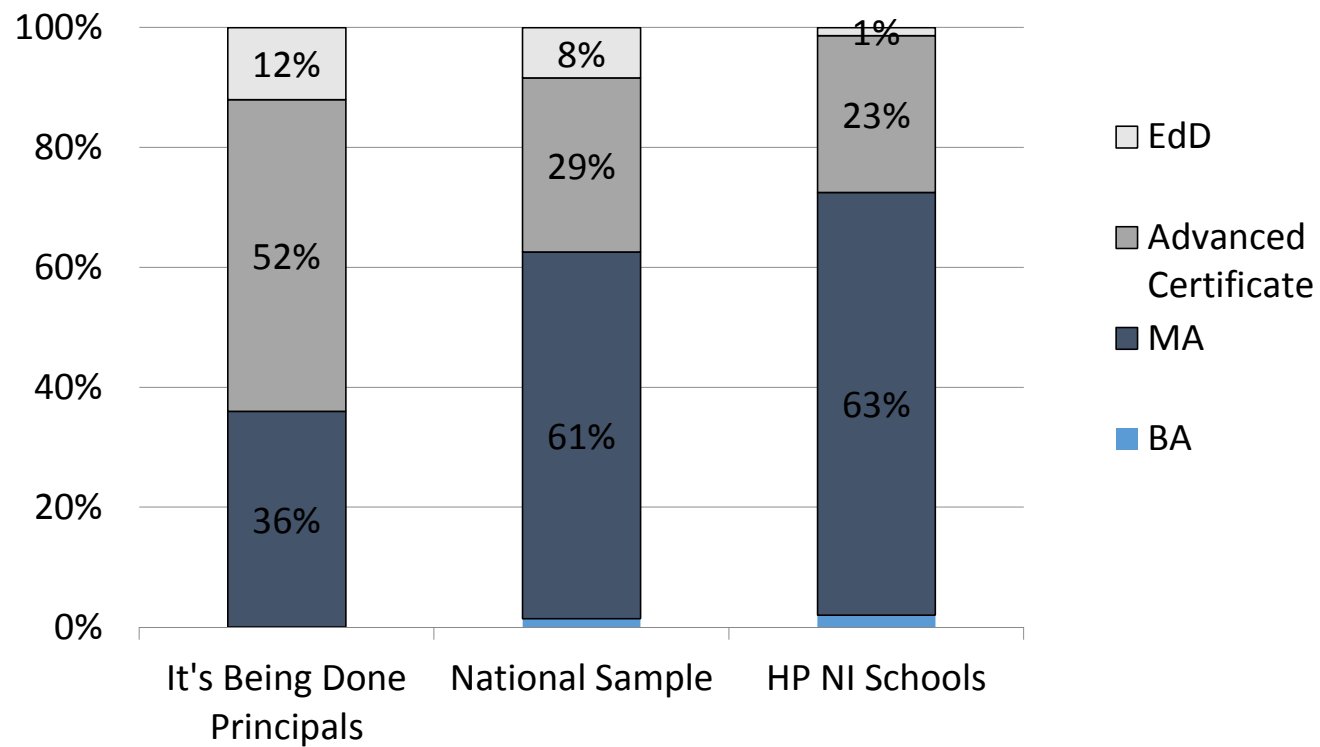
But they do share some attributes—
and a common belief and vision.

They have deep experience in classrooms



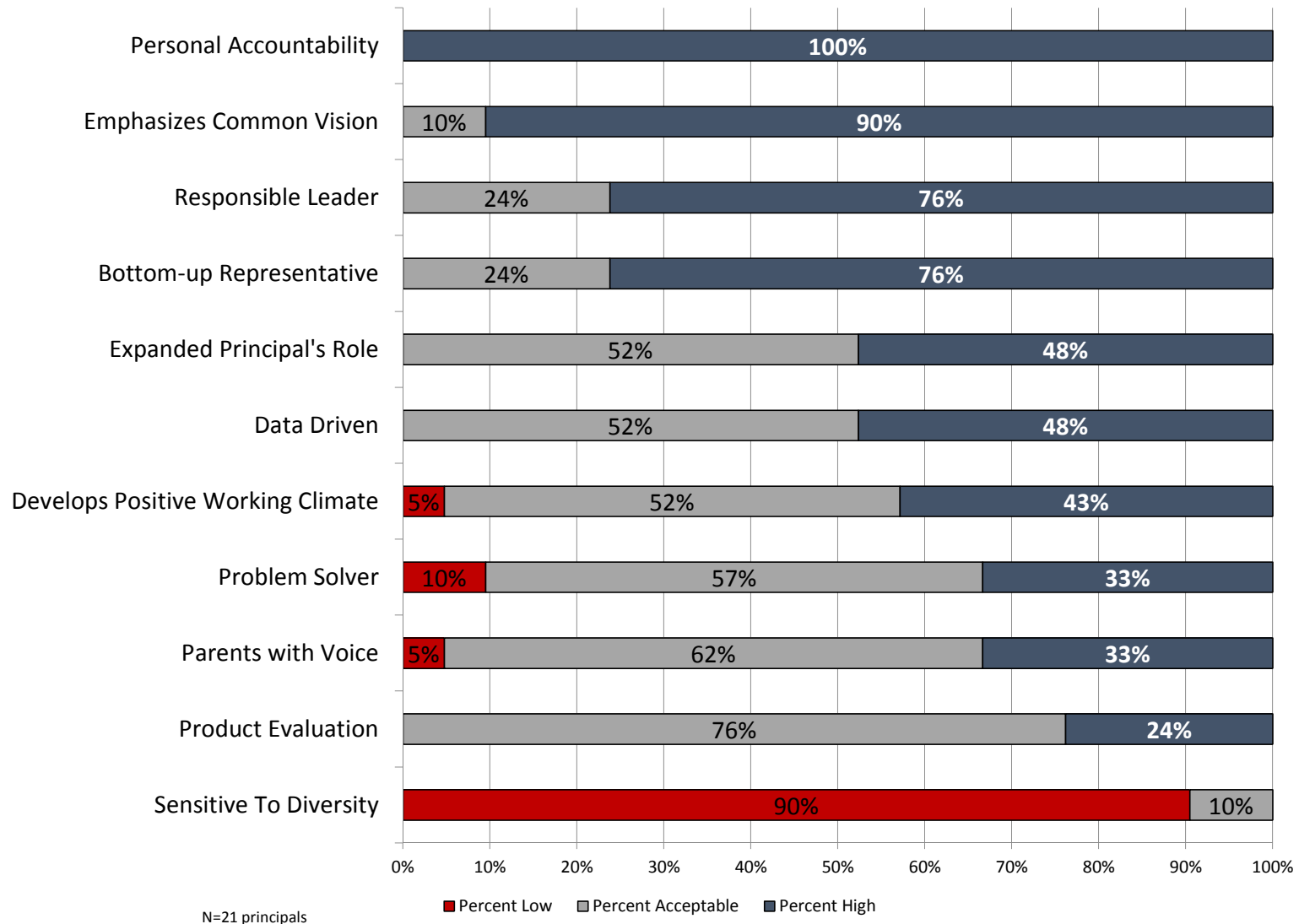
Source: Schools and Staffing Survey 2007–2008, Ed Trust Principal Survey, Pt 1

They pursue additional learning

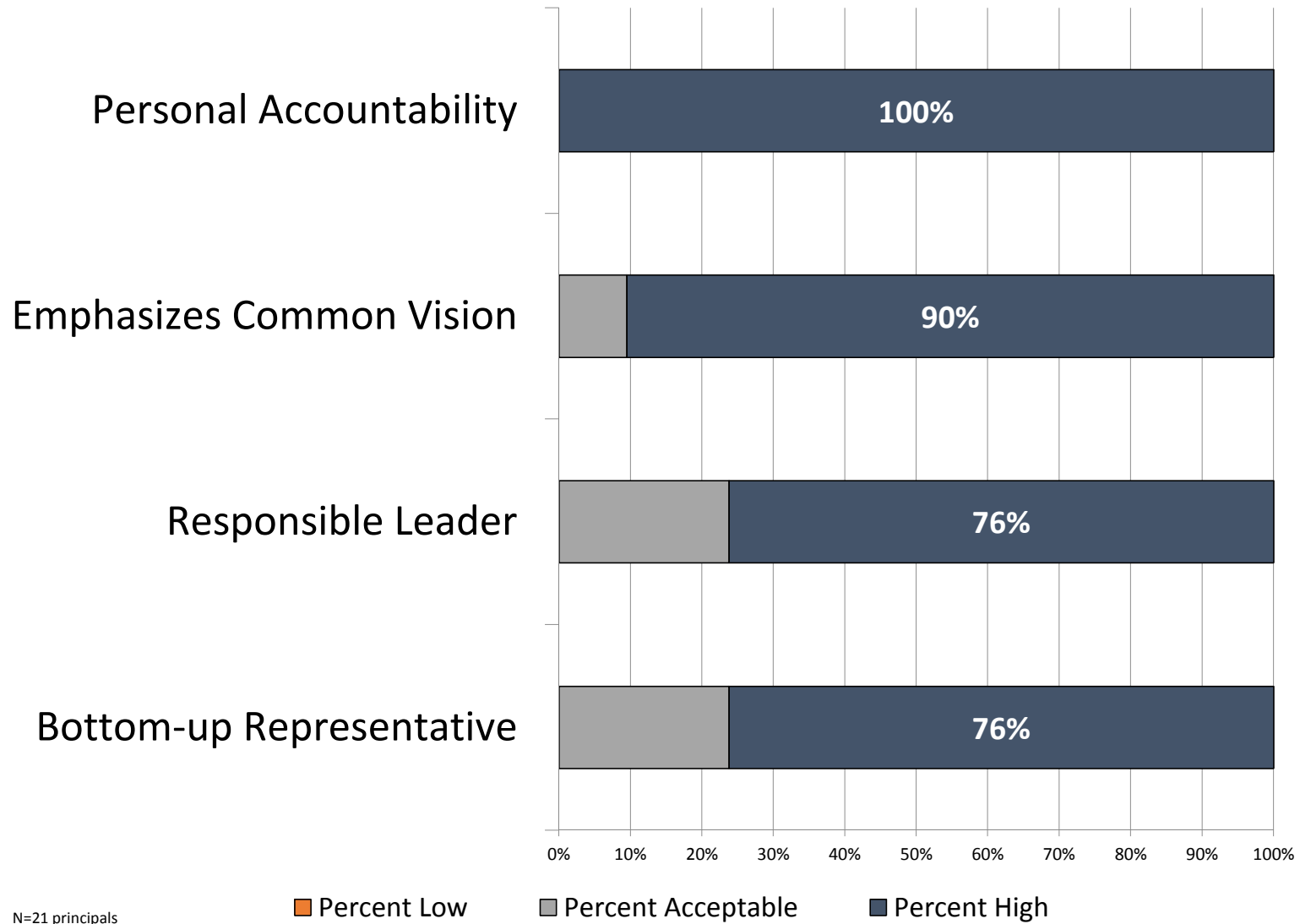


Source: Schools and Staffing Survey 2007-08, , Ed Trust Principal Survey, Pt 1

Haberman Dimensions of Effective Urban School Leadership



Haberman Dimensions of Effective Urban School Leadership



I said they all shared a common belief and a
common vision.

What is their common belief?

They believe that **all** students can learn to high levels if provided with the right instruction...



“Through my teaching experiences, I learned that my students were capable of learning just about anything I was capable of teaching.”

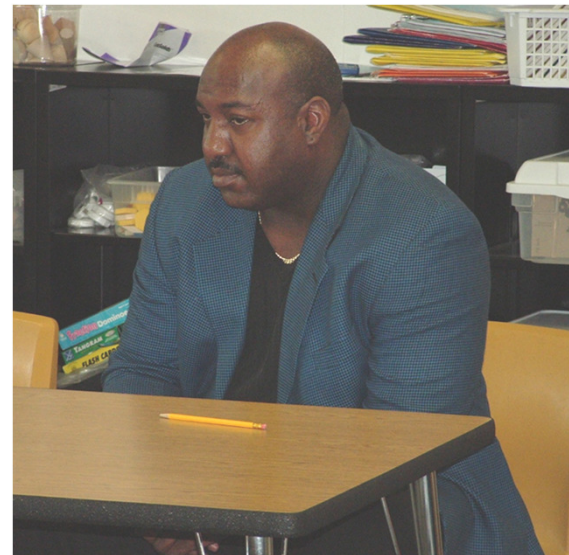
-Molly Bensinger-Lacy, principal
Graham Road Elementary School

What is their common vision?

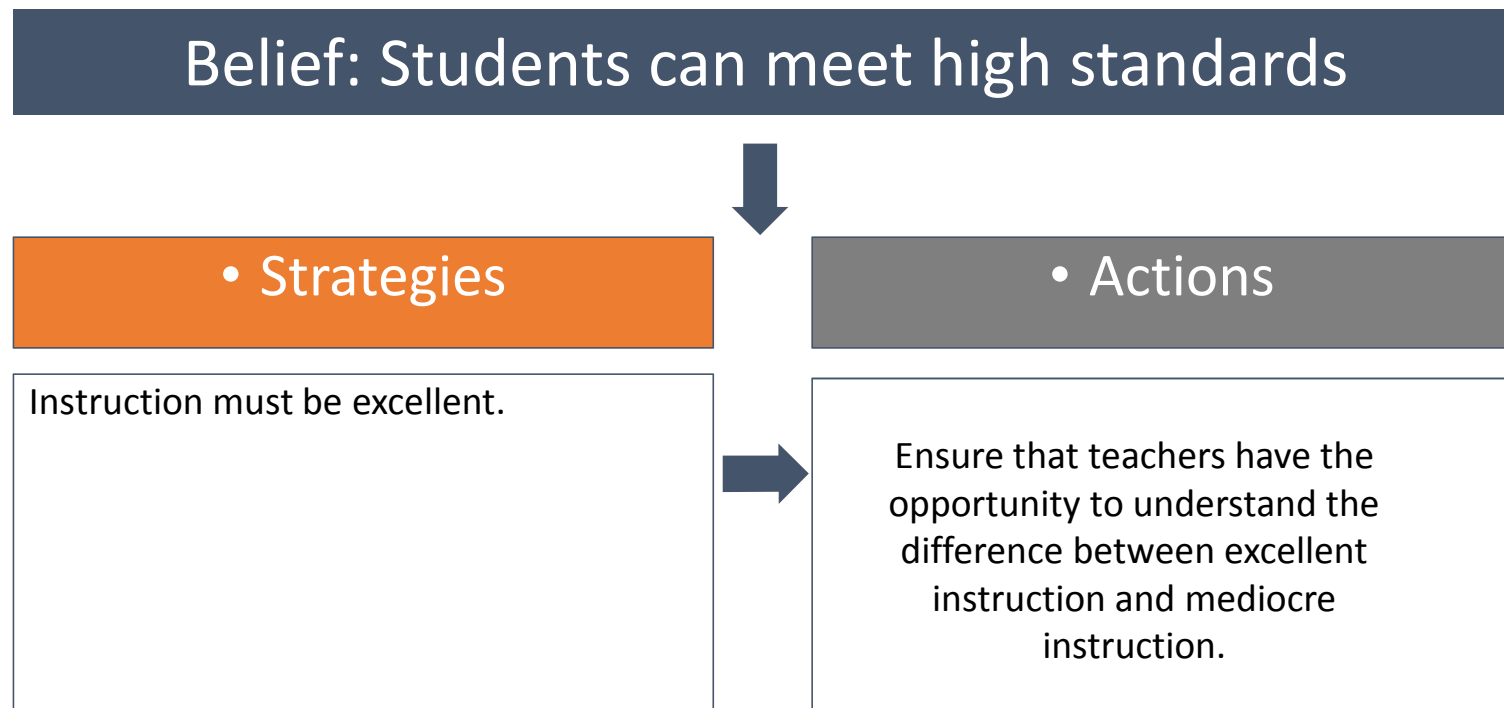
...and that it is up to schools to figure out how to *provide that instruction.*

“It is so important to dispel the myth that these children can’t learn to high standards. There’s a belief system out there that they’re not as smart as white kids. We’re on a mission to conquer every myth and every test.”

--Von Sheppard, principal, Dayton’s Bluff Achievement Plus Elementary School



One of the implications of their belief is that they are able and willing to honestly discriminate between excellence and mediocrity.



Case Example:
Distinguishing
Between Excellence
and Mediocrity



Elmont Memorial High School

Elmont Memorial High School

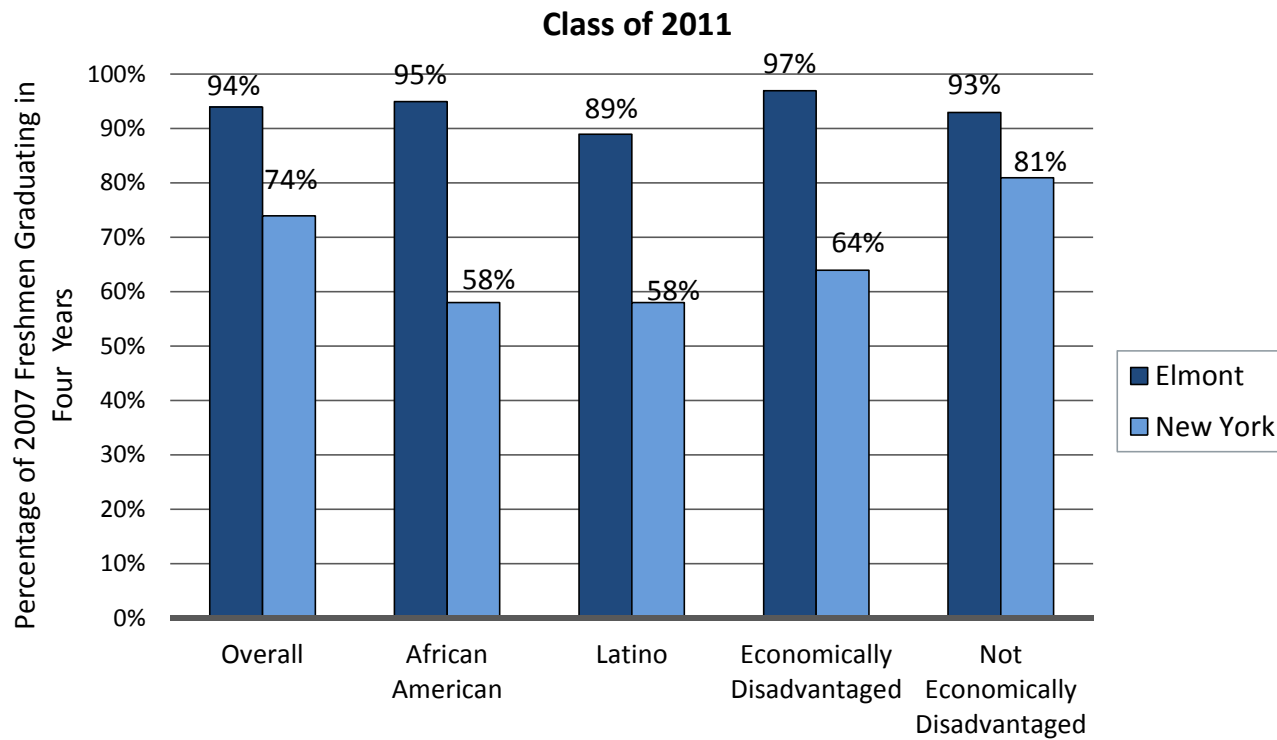
Elmont, New York

- 1,928 students in grades 7-12
 - 78% African American
 - 13% Latino
- 27% Low-Income



Source: New York Department of Education

High Graduation Rates at Elmont Memorial High School



Note: Includes students graduating by June 2011.

Source: New York State Department of Education



“...at one point in the lesson you took a sub-standard response that was not elaborated on....You admitted that, in the interest of time, you took the response and moved forward with the lesson.

As we discussed, setting standards and having students meet those standards includes the proper responses..”

Discussion:

Are students in your school taught to high standards? What evidence do you regularly gather to substantiate your opinion?

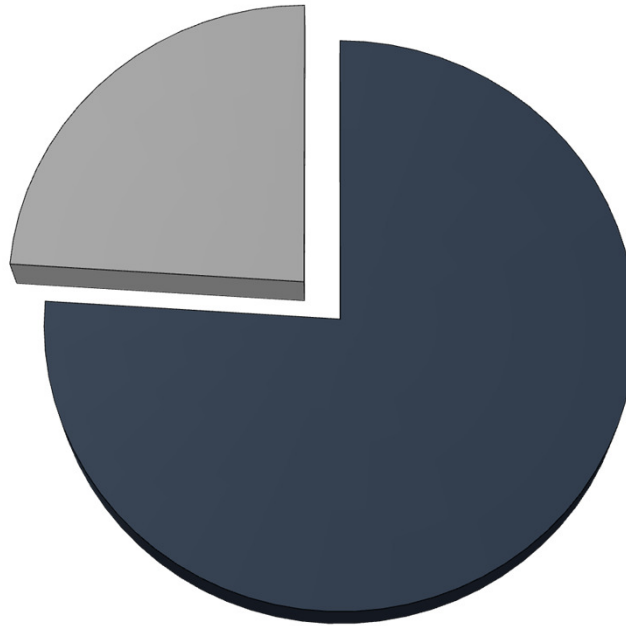
What Did We Find?

#2

They put instruction at the center of their managerial responsibilities.

We asked them:
How do you define your role as principal?


The remaining
24% of
principals
described their
role as setting a
vision that
includes equity
or excellence



76% of principals
described their role
using one of the
following terms:

- Instructional leader
- Principal teacher
- Teacher of teachers
- Lead Learner
- Educational facilitator

Belief: Time is a resource for instruction

Strategies	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School leaders establish a school-wide urgency around the use of time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set school and classroom routines to ensure time is spent on learning not “getting ready” to learn or discipline.• Create master schedule to maximize both instructional time and time for teachers to collaborate
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School leaders share decision making.	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Empower individuals to make decisions relevant to their role• Create teams to pool expertise and get the work done.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School leaders plan and schedule their own time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participate in meetings, trainings and be present in school.

Case Example: Time Use



Graham Road Elementary School

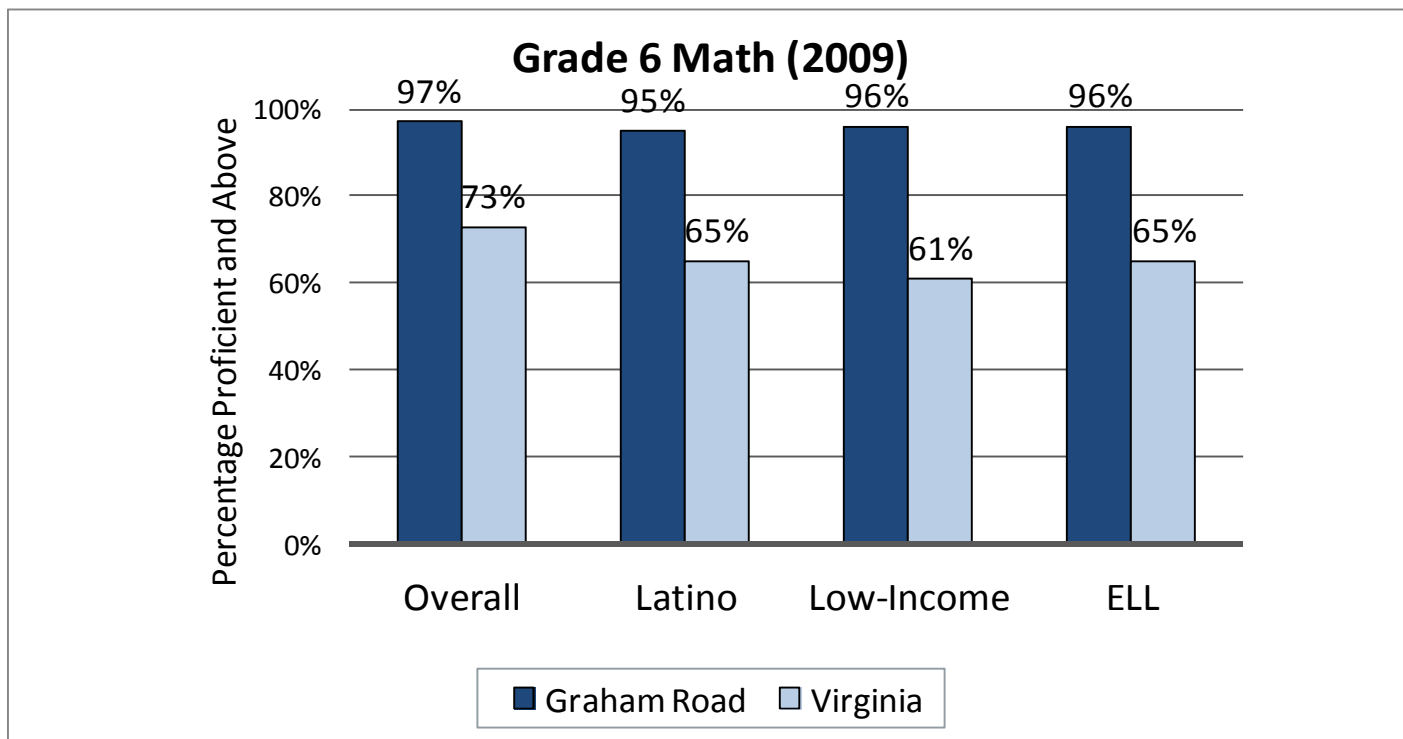
Graham Road Elementary School

Falls Church, Virginia

- 356 students in grades K-6
 - 13% Black
 - 16% Asian
 - 64% Latino
- 81% Low-Income
- 51% ELL



Graham Road Elementary School Meeting or Exceeding Standards



Source: Virginia Department of Education

Once a week, teachers from each grade level met at the beginning of the contractual day (15 minutes before school started) and continued for the first 45 minutes of the school day. Back in their classrooms, teacher aides began the day—supervising breakfast, collecting homework, and starting the students on their day's work.

At the meeting, often one teacher presented findings from significant research that illuminated a problem of practice they had identified and, sometimes, teachers would immediately be able to put that research into action.



Discussion:

- In the next three minutes, list as many ways as possible that you have seen student learning time being wasted.
- With a partner, pick one or two of these time wasters and brainstorm remedies.
- Bonus question: list as many ways as possible that you have seen teacher time being wasted.

What Did We Find?

#3

They focus on building the capacity of all the adults in the building.

Belief: Teachers have great power to change children's lives.

Strategies	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hire carefully to shape the instructional culture of the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their hiring protocols often test candidate's willingness to commit to the school and continue improving.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assign carefully.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strong teachers are assigned to students furthest behind.• Weak teachers are supported by coaches, mentors, etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They encourage practices that yield the best results.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They provide individualized feedback and guidance.



Diane Scricca, former principal, Elmont Memorial High School

Case Example: Building Teacher Efficacy and Capacity



M. Hall Stanton Elementary School

M. Hall Stanton Elementary

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

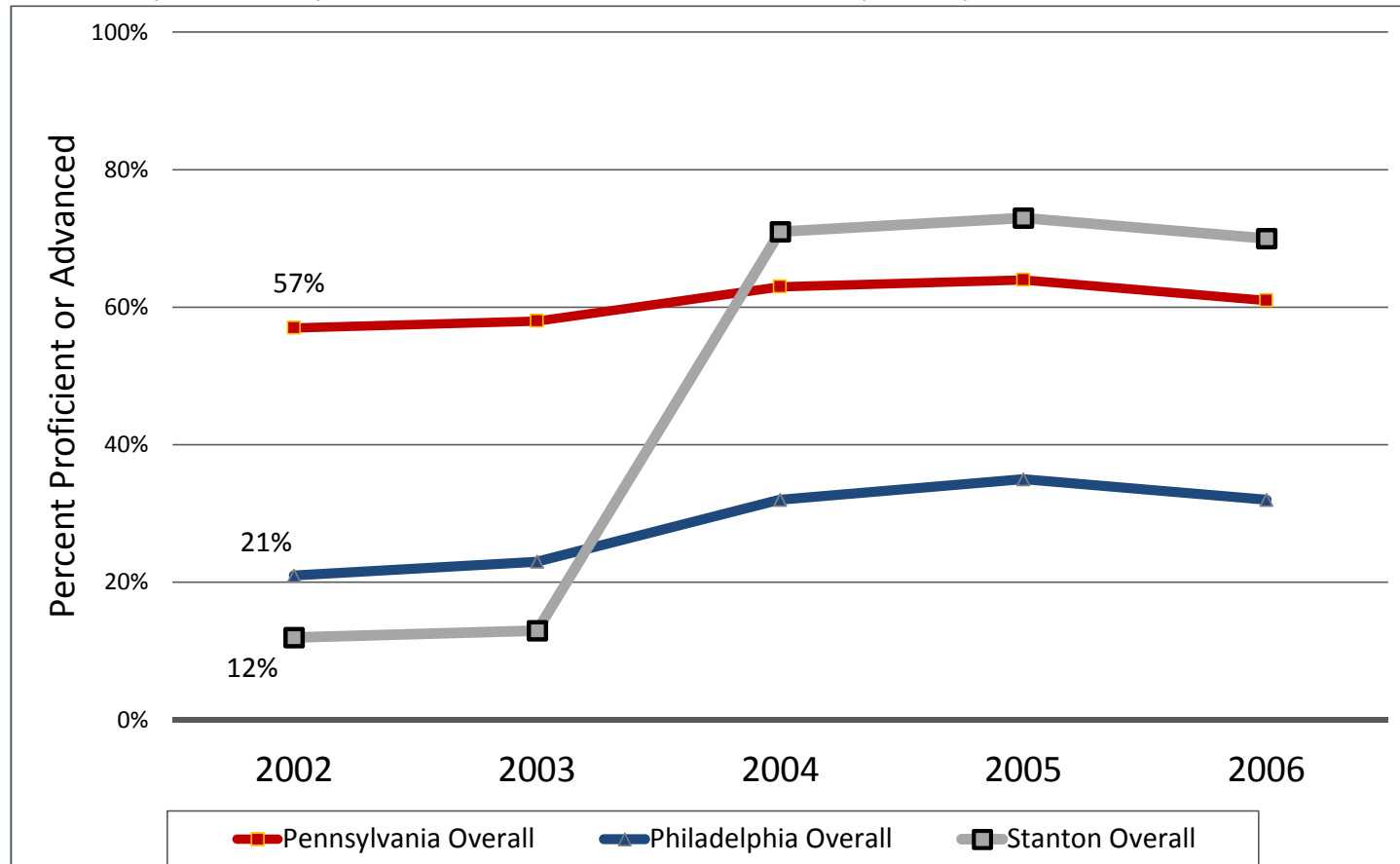
- 487 students, K-6
 - African American: 99%
 - Low Income: 99%



Source: https://sdp-webprod.phila.k12.pa.us/school_profiles/servlet/

M. Hall Stanton Grade 5 Reading

Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA),



Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2002-2009

Professional development at Stanton

- Each grade level met 1x per week with principal and coaches during planning period.
- Each academy met 7:30 -9:30 a.m. every two months in a different teacher's room for breakfast, book study, and sharing of best practices (coverage of classes and stipends were provided).
- Whole school met 1x a week for professional development (early dismissal of students).
- New teachers met every Tuesday 7:30-9 a.m. with principal and coaches to discuss pedagogy and math and literacy content (stipends provided).
- Additional staff development provided Saturday morning (stipends provided).

Initially Barbara Adderley made decisions about professional development needs of the staff based on data. Most professional development was whole-school, taught by Adderley (e.g., how to implement guided reading, how to use math games as part of the math curriculum, etc.)

Fairly quickly, the two instructional coaches became part of a team that helped Adderley determine professional development needs and they often taught specifics of math and reading instruction as well as bringing back district-level training that they received.

As they became more proficient, teacher leaders joined in making professional development decisions and in providing the professional development.

Professional development was less often school-wide and more often tailored to the needs, as determined by the data, of individual teachers or grade-levels.

Data used to determine PD:

Walk-through observations of classrooms
Reading data
Math data
State assessment data
Attendance and discipline data
Student work

“We can’t hire and fire our way out of this.”

--Barbara Adderley, former principal, M. Hall Stanton Elementary





June Eressy, former principal, University Park Campus School,
principal, Chandler Elementary School

Discussion:

How do you support teachers as they work to improve and grow as professionals? How do you know that what you are doing is helping them?

What Did We Find?

#4

They deliberately create a collaborative culture.

Belief: Respect is essential for both teachers and students to thrive.

Strategies	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “High support, high demand” approach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They create norms and expectations for professional conversations.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They establish norms for how adults interact with students.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers adapt methods and interventions until students meet high performance standards.

“ I stroke them all the time, but they know that I expect them to teach all the time.... One teacher said, ‘You’re fun, but you get on us...’”

- Mary Haynes-Smith, principal, Bethune Elementary School



Case Example: Deliberately
Building a Respectful Culture



Ware Elementary School

Ware Elementary School

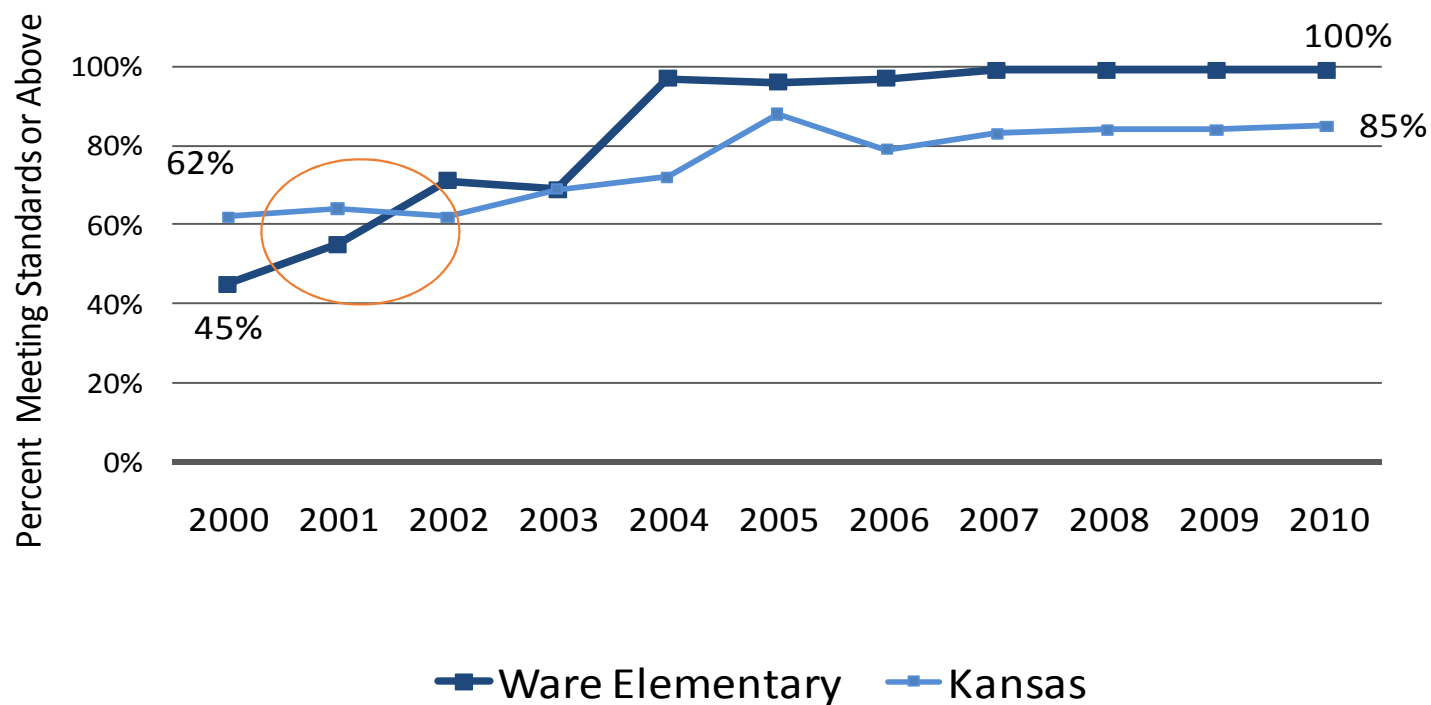
Fort Riley, Kansas

- 693 students in grades K-5
 - 17% African American
 - 21% Latino
 - 55% White
- 76% Low-Income



High Achievement Over Time at Ware Elementary

Students Overall – Grade 5 Reading



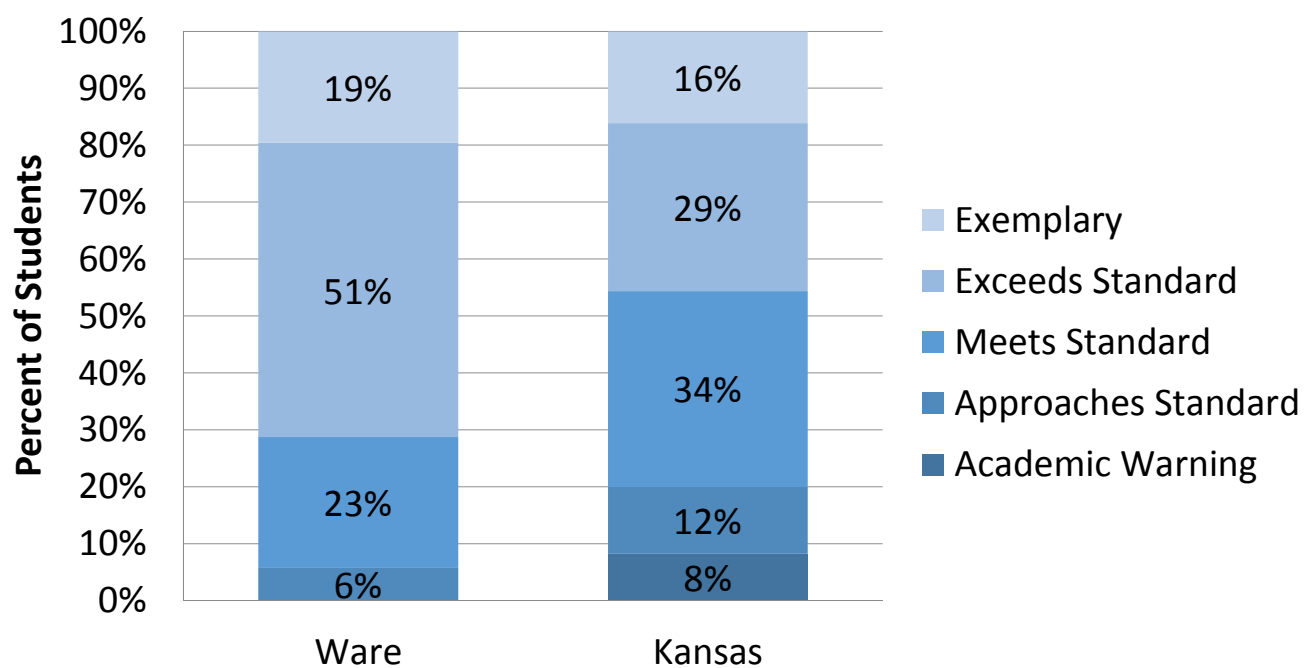
“How kids function
is an absolute
consequence of
how adults
function.”

--Deb Gustafson, principal
Ware Elementary



Outperforming the State at Ware Elementary

Low-Income Students – Grade 4 (2010)



Discussion:

Scenario 1:

You observe a teacher and see that although she is not overtly disrespectful to students, she does not expect much more than simple recall during lessons.

The principal should...

Scenario 2:

A team of four teachers vote on a common policy of handling students' behavior issues. One of the teachers does not agree with the team's decision and does her own thing. The three teachers following a common policy complain to the principal that the fourth teacher is undermining their authority and not functioning as a cooperative team player.


The principal should...

What Did We Find?

#5

They monitor and evaluate
what factors lead to success and
what can be learned from failure.

Belief: Evidence trumps opinions.

Strategies	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Without losing sight of big goals, they build efficacy through interim goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They set concrete, measurable goals based on data and examine outcomes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They make data public and help teachers understand how to use it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They examine work products to assess the rigor of instruction.
	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">They have data meetings, create data walls, do data walks, conduct student academic reviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They are “relentlessly respectful and respectfully relentless”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They follow up.• They ask questions.



Source: Graham Road Elementary



Terri Tomlinson, principal
George Hall Elementary School

Case Example: Continual Improvement



University Park Campus School



Ricci Hall, University Park Campus School

Discussion:

Student achievement in your school improves from the previous year.

As a principal:

- What is the first thing you do?
- What is the second thing you do?

In Conclusion...

What does it take to lead academic success in unexpected schools?



It's Being Done principals are not superheroes but experts.

The expertise they have developed can be learned by other administrators who are:

- willing to honestly discriminate between excellence and mediocrity,
- have the courage to do things differently to improve, and
- the discipline to reflect on what factors lead to success and what can be learned from failure.

But you don't have to take my
word for it.

THE EDUCATION TRUST 2014 NATIONAL CONFERENCE

BECOME THE CHANGE

CLOSING GAPS IN OPPORTUNITY AND ACHIEVEMENT

Nov. 13-14, 2014

Renaissance Baltimore Harborplace Hotel
Baltimore, Md.

Register: www.edtrust.org/2014conference

E-mail etevents@edtrust.org with questions.



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