

**PROJECT FOCUS, A REVIEW OF THE FIRST TWO YEARS  
2003-2005**

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## PROJECT FOCUS, A REVIEW OF THE FIRST TWO YEARS 2003-2005

### Executive Summary

The Eight-Step Instructional Process employs the principles of the “Plan-Do-Check-Act” cycle of continuous improvement to ensure that all students have the opportunity to master learning objectives and receive the instruction and the attention they need to achieve grade-level learning goals. The Eight-Steps (figure 1) are designed to be implemented on a recurring basis to ensure that quality instruction and learning take place in all schools and classrooms.

In Pinellas County, Project Focus is patterned very closely after the Wake County, North Carolina version of the Eight-Step Instructional Process called “Project Achieve”; and was developed to close the achievement gap among the different subgroups (ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged, and students with disabilities). The project is designed to accomplish this goal by teaching specific standards, using frequent assessments to determine student mastery, and remediating students who have not grasped the standards while enriching those students who have. The program consists of daily scheduled fifteen minute lessons, the inclusion of student-to-student talk, maintaining a high level of student engagement, appropriate use of provided materials, and meaningful debriefing of each assessment as part of the ongoing instruction.

Development of the project began during the summer of 2003. Teams of reading and math teachers, trainers, and supervisors developed the instructional pacing calendar, lessons, and assessments to ensure student-engaged instruction on the Sunshine State Standards prior to FCAT testing. Eight low-performing schools participated in the project during the pilot year (2003-04). During the second year, one of the original schools chose not to participate, and eleven new schools joined, for a total of eighteen schools. The district staff required each school site to select a staff member to serve as data materials manager. Teacher trainings and principal meetings were planned to aid in implementation. Teachers would be expected to meet in grade level teams to discuss the assessment results and determine the next steps necessary to provide remediation or enrichment. The principal would be designated as the instructional leader in charge of process monitoring.

During the pilot year, participating teachers received five full days of training while principals met monthly. However, during the second year, teacher training for schools new to the project was limited to five half-day trainings per grade level, and principals only met twice. Teachers in the original pilot schools did not receive support from the district during the second year (2004-2005).

The task of developing daily lessons and assessments took much longer than expected. As a result, materials had to be delivered to the schools as they were completed, rather than at the beginning of the year. This delay made planning and organization at the school level very challenging during the pilot year.

During the pilot year, most schools implemented Project Focus in all available grade levels and even in some alternate programs. As more schools were added, more variations arose: some schools selected a single subject area, other selected certain grade levels, and still others selected certain teachers.

Local, state, and federal resources were redirected to assist in the development and deployment of this project. While the program is still in development and additional schools continue to be added, many of the expenditures, especially the printing costs, are recurring costs in subsequent years of the project. However, the project development expenditures, such as contracts and personnel for lesson development, are expected to decrease over time. On the other hand, the cost of personnel to monitor the program and ensure the implementation fidelity has not been considered.

In August 2004, a satisfaction survey was distributed to the approximately 130 teachers participating in the pilot year of Project Focus. Overall, teachers were satisfied or very satisfied with all of the different components of the program and ninety-one percent said that they would recommend Project Focus to other teachers and schools.

At the end of the 2004-05 school year, an online survey was sent to 326 teachers, principals, data materials managers, and Title I facilitators in the Project Focus schools. The survey asked for feedback on different aspects of the program, its implementation, effectiveness, and impact. The teachers reported understanding the goals and objectives, understanding all Eight-Steps of the program, and implementing the program to a good degree. However, fewer than half of the teachers stated that teachers at each grade level meet regularly to discuss the results of the frequent assessments, share ideas, and develop action plans for the critical remediation and/or enrichment component of the program. Seventy-four percent of teachers believe that Project Focus is effective in accomplishing its goals and sixty-four percent of the teachers reported having evidence that student performance has improved as a result of Project Focus.

Though the intent of this evaluation is to inform the program managers about the extent to which the program activities are being implemented as planned and to provide guidance for modifying the program, it is important to have feedback on student performance as a result of this intervention. Thus, the results of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) were used to investigate the performance of different subgroups. An analysis of fourth and fifth grade FCAT scores over time revealed that the achievement gap is not closing between Black and Non-Black students participating in Project Focus.

The majority of teachers and school-based administrators believe that Project Focus is a quality program that is effective in raising student achievement. This program has only been in operation for two years and has been expanded to fifty-seven schools in its third year, mainly as a result of schools' interest. The district, however, has not been able to support the increasing number of schools in the implementation of this project.

There is no evidence that the Eight-Steps were carried out on a recurring basis, that data was disaggregated at the school, classroom, or student level, or that disaggregated data was used

in identifying the strengths and weaknesses. The calendar and lessons were not based on needs identified by disaggregated data. Instead, the calendar and lessons were solely based on the Sunshine State Standards. While the foundation was established in steps two through four, it is not clear how consistently or completely all Eight-Steps are occurring or recurring, among the participating schools. There was not sufficient time, training and support devoted to this project to ensure complete implementation at the district and school level, a critical matter in the Continuous Improvement Model.

The results of FCAT have shown an achievement gap between the Black and Non-Black students. The gap did not decrease during the year(s) the students were in Project Focus. Although at this stage of program implementation, the results of the performance comparison should not be used for a summative evaluation, or to make any conclusions about the effectiveness of the program, it is important to examine preliminary data on this program's progress toward its goal of closing the gap between the Black and Non-Black students.

The continuation and effectiveness of the program relies on district support and monitoring; elements which have been deficient during the two years of the program.

The following are recommendations for the 2006-2007 school year:

- Set clear expectations of the program, plan complete implementation, and provide support, training, and monitoring.
- Resolve the factors limiting the implementation, as reported by the teachers: time constraints, other initiatives competing with the project, and too many new initiatives,
- Do not expand the program
- Once an affirmative decision has been made to continue the program, and processes are enacted upon, then:
  - Keep records of the planning and implementation processes,
  - Conduct a comprehensive implementation study to fully investigate this program's deployment and implementation,
  - Plan an outcome evaluation to study the effectiveness of this program, once a satisfactory level of implementation is observed.

## INTRODUCTION

Project Focus is based on a Total Quality Management approach created by a classroom teacher in Brazosport Independent School District in Texas. This Eight-Step Instructional Process helped significantly decrease the gap between student groups in Brazosport.

In 1991, Dr. Anderson, Superintendent of the Brazosport Independent School District in Texas, was presented with a challenge by a parent group to close the achievement gap between student subgroups. He decided to pilot the Eight-Step Instructional Process for two years in the school where the teacher who had created the model was teaching. The following year, the process was expanded to selected schools and finally to all schools in 1996. Results over time were overwhelmingly positive, with all subgroups performing in the ninety percent proficiency range on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills test. During the past few years, the Eight-Step Instructional Process has been adopted by some districts across the United States, a few have reported positive results.

The Florida Department of Education, under the leadership of former Chancellor James Worford, has advocated the use of a Continuous Improvement Process, and has encouraged the use of the Eight-Step Instructional Process in efforts to close the achievement gap. In Florida, several school districts are presently using the model. The Florida Department of Education expects that any school in Florida under state or federal sanctions will implement a Continuous Improvement Model.

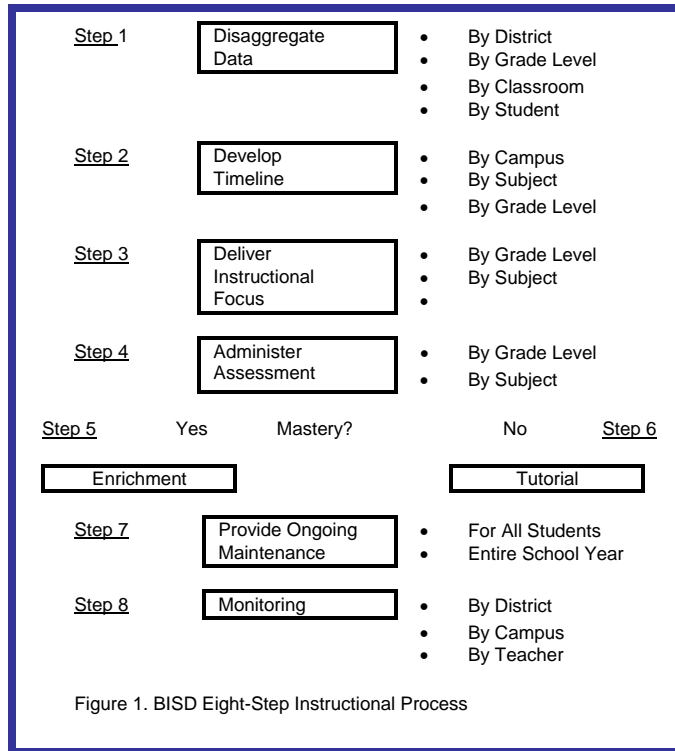
### Program description

The goal of the Eight-Step Instructional Process as it was developed in Brazosport is explained by Anderson (2005): to use the principles of the “Plan-Do-Check-Act” cycle of continuous improvement to ensure that all students have the opportunity to master learning objectives. In order to ensure that this quality instruction and learning takes place in all schools and classrooms, Anderson emphasizes that the Eight-Step Instructional Process that follows must be strictly adhered to:

1. ***Disaggregation of Test Scores.*** Each spring, state test results are disaggregated by student group to identify objectives that require improvement. The district’s goal is to show continuous improvement year to year in state test scores. The data are prepared for each teacher over the summer break and are delivered to teachers by the beginning of the next school year. Providing teachers with the data in a timely and efficient manner is a critical part of the Eight-Step Instructional Process.
2. ***Development of Instructional Timeline.*** Texas identifies essential learning objectives, called the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), for all students. Using this as a base, teachers throughout the district develop a timeline for teaching each of these skill areas. Time allocations are based on the needs of the student groups and the weight of the objective in student assessments. Effective instruction begins with an understanding of what students need to learn, what teachers need to teach, and how long instruction will take.

3. ***Delivery of Instruction Focus.*** Using the timelines as a guide, the district develops and disseminates to all teachers an instructional focus sheet listing the target learning areas, dates of instruction, and assessment dates. By looking at this calendar, anyone in the district can find out which objective(s) teachers are focusing on and when the objective(s) will be taught. The district sets the expectation while the teachers determine how to fulfill it.
4. ***Assessment.*** After each target of the instructional focus has been taught, teachers administer a commercially prepared assessment. Eighty percent of the students must master an objective before teachers move on to another target area. The use of shorter, more frequent assessments allows teachers to detect and correct problems early. If students do poorly on a particular objective, teachers are provided with additional resources, such as an instructional specialist.
5. ***Enrichment.*** Students who have mastered target objectives attend enrichment classes during tutorial time. At the intermediate and high school levels, mastering the basics is a requirement of taking electives. This practice (which parents highly support) has served to motivate students to take their studies seriously and focus on passing the tests.
6. ***Tutorials.*** Students who fail an assessment attend small tutorial groups devoted to the reteaching of non-mastered target areas. Teachers in all grade levels and areas of certification provide tutorial or state test remediation activities both during and after school and on Saturdays. Computer lab time is offered. Additionally, teams of teachers assigned to groups of students by grade or year of graduation and other staff members ensure seamless transitions for students moving between grade levels and schools.
7. ***Maintenance.*** Materials are provided for ongoing maintenance and reteaching of objectives. This ensures that students retain what they have learned. It also helps teachers quickly spot student needs for additional instruction. Economically disadvantaged students who need a lot of structure and reinforcement have especially benefited from this practice. Teachers also develop a yearly maintenance plan that includes dialogues between teachers and students that are evaluative conferences about testing strengths and weaknesses.
8. ***Monitoring.*** Principals visit classes daily during the instructional focus periods to monitor progress and drive home the district's message that learning is the primary purpose of school.

The Eight-Step Instructional Process is designed to help teachers identify and address student needs, ensuring that all students receive the instruction and the attention they need to achieve grade-level learning goals. This process, in turn, is based on the principle of continuous improvement through continuous assessment. This concept, and the plan that governs its implementation at the campus level, is an essential element in successful education reform. The steps of the Eight-Step Instructional Process, as developed by the Brazosport Independent School District, are demonstrated in figure 1. All Eight-Steps must be implemented on a recurring basis for the model to be successful.



In Pinellas County, Project Focus, is patterned very closely after the Wake County, North Carolina version of the Eight-Step Instructional Process called “Project Achieve”; and was developed to close the achievement gap among the different subgroups (ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged, and students with disabilities). The project is designed to accomplish this goal by teaching specific standards, using frequent assessments to determine student mastery, and remediating students who have not grasped the standards while enriching those students who have. The program consists of daily scheduled fifteen minute lessons, the inclusion of student-to-student talk, maintaining a high level of student engagement, appropriate use of provided materials, and meaningful debriefing of each assessment as part of the ongoing instruction.

In the Pinellas County Schools, district staff decided to offer the project to a small number of low-performing Title I schools for the 2003-04 school year. Based on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) results, eleven of the lowest performing Title I schools were invited to participate. Schools were expected to have the commitment of seventy-five percent of the staff for participation in the project. While the district had planned to serve five schools in the pilot year, eight schools chose to join the project and all were accepted.

During the first two years, the program was examined by reviewing the results of a satisfaction survey after the pilot year (2003-04) and an implementation survey at the end of the second year (2004-05). The current study attempts to review the program implementation during the first two years. The results of this formative evaluation will be used by the project coordinators to improve the program and its implementation.

## **METHOD**

### **Sample and Procedures**

In August 2004, a brief survey (ten items) was distributed to all teachers participating in the pilot year of Project Focus. The goal of the survey was to examine the degree of teacher satisfaction with the program. A copy of the survey is presented in Appendix A.

In May 2005, an online survey was sent to all teachers, principals, data materials managers, and Title I facilitators in the Project Focus schools, asking for feedback on different aspects of the program, its implementation, effectiveness, and impact. The questions for this survey are presented along with the results, in Appendix B.

To investigate the fidelity of the Project Focus implementation, a comprehensive review of the plan, procedures, budget and the actual implementation was undertaken. Prior to the current study, the program had not been through any systematic process check, and the records of activities, participation, and expenditures were scarce.

Even though the intent of this evaluation is to inform the program managers about the extent to which the program activities are being implemented as planned and to provide guidance for modifying the program, it is important to have feedback on student performance as a result of this intervention. Thus, the results of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) were used to investigate the performance of different subgroups. For this purpose, students who were in a project school for both years of the study, 2003-2004 and 2004-2005, and had all required test scores, were included in the analysis. A total of 897 student FCAT results were compared over time and comparisons were made between Black and Non-Black students to measure the closing of the gap. The results of this analysis will reveal to what extent the targeted goals of the program are being met at this early stage of program implementation.

The program administrators contributed greatly to this implementation review; they are the sources of information used in this report for the planning and implementation of the project as well as most of the project expenditures. The budget department provided the additional personnel expenditures.

## **RESULTS**

Results of this evaluation are presented in three parts; the first part is the review of the implementation: planning and fidelity. The review of the documents provided by the program administrators and project staff supplied the information for this part of the evaluation. In the second part, the opinion of the teachers about the program was collected by using implementation and satisfaction surveys. The last part of this evaluation investigated the effect of this program on student performance by analyzing the results of FCAT.



## **I. IMPLEMENTATION**

### *Planning*

Development of the project began during the summer of 2003. The program was originally created for students in grades three through five. However, at the request of the teachers from the pilot schools, second grade reading was added in August 2004 and second grade math was added in one pilot school in January 2005.

The district staff agreed that the calendars, focus lessons, and mini-assessments (step two and the framework for steps three, four, and seven) would be developed, in collaboration with teachers at the district level. The district also decided to provide all materials, including teacher handbooks with daily scripted lessons and templates (blacklines) of overheads, practice sheets, and assessments; class sets of practice sheets and assessments; sets of overheads; and math manipulatives. Other items purchased included scanners for grading the assessments, scan sheets, and software for aggregating the assessment results.

The district staff required each school site to select a staff member to serve as data materials manager. The role of this person would be to provide support to the teachers, ensuring that they have all the necessary materials for a given focus lesson and providing the scan sheets and assessments as scheduled. They would also scan the assessment sheets and process the results. Group and individual training would be provided for the data materials managers on an ongoing basis throughout the school year.

Full day teacher training sessions would be scheduled to help the teachers implement the project and work together through the challenges. Additionally, principals planned to meet monthly to network, to visit a classroom where the teacher is using Project Focus lessons, and to discuss what is working well and what is not.

Teachers would be expected to meet in grade level teams to discuss the assessment results and determine the next steps necessary to provide remediation or enrichment (steps five and six). The principal would be designated as the instructional leader in charge of process monitoring (step eight).

### *Pacing Guideline Calendars and Focus Lesson Development*

Teams of reading and math teachers, trainers, and supervisors developed the instructional pacing calendar (step two) to ensure instruction on the Sunshine State Standards prior to FCAT testing. Standards are reviewed throughout the year (step seven) and built upon with a more in-depth level of instruction to emphasize the initial mastery and provide additional exposures for students who need the replicated instruction.

The teams also developed short lessons (step three), fifteen to twenty minutes in length, explicitly focused on the Sunshine State Standards, scripted for high student engagement by using strategies such as teacher modeling, student-to-student talk, and active student participation.

*Timeline of events:*

March 2003	Group visit to Wake County Public School System in Raleigh, North Carolina
May 2003	Joint planning session with Reading and Math supervisors, Title I Director, and Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education
Summer 2003	Joint information session with pilot school leadership teams
June 2003	Teams begin developing Project Focus lessons
August 2003	Math and Reading trainers edit original lessons
August 2003-May 2004	Five full day grade level team planning/training sessions at the Title I Center
August 2003-May 2004	Training for Data Managers in the use of assessment software and scanners, both at the Title 1 Center and at the individual schools
August 2003-May 2004	Lessons assembled monthly and printed for schools in the pilot project
July 2004	Project Focus expanded to eighteen schools, one original school pulled out of the project
August 2004	Survey distributed to the eight pilot schools
September 2004-May 2005	Five half day trainings with grade level teams from newly added schools
February 2005	Reading and Math supervisors, Title I Director, Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education, and Reading and Math Staff Developers assemble to discuss re-formatting of Project Focus materials, as well as enlargement of the project to any interested elementary school
March–June 2005	Re-editing and re-formatting of student materials, teacher handbook, and teacher transparencies
May 2005	Survey distributed to all participating schools

*Locally Developed Mini Assessments*

The teams developed mini-assessments to measure student learning and mastery. Since the original pilot schools were “Reading First” schools, and therefore, were required to use scientifically-based research materials during an uninterrupted reading block, reading assessments were taken from the Harcourt Trophies series. However, the district development team created the math assessments.

On a weekly basis in reading, and bi-monthly in math, student mastery of targeted curriculum objectives is measured using short multiple-choice assessments (step four). A typical reading assessment consists of a reading passage followed by four to six questions on

comprehension, meta-cognition, and/or analysis. A typical math assessment consists of about ten items requiring calculations and/or problem-solving skills. The assessment results are produced on the same day for each class and grade level, as well as for individual students. Schools use these data, along with teacher observations and other measures, to identify student needs for remediation (step five) or enrichment (step six) instruction and activities in reading and mathematics. Teachers at the individual sites primarily design this follow-up instruction.

*The Participating Schools*

Table 1 shows the demographics of the eight pilot schools for 2003-04. Gulfport Elementary School was asked by their Area Superintendent to join the project because of their school improvement status. All other schools had a commitment from at least seventy-five percent of their staff.

Table 1  
Demographics of Pilot Schools (2003-04)

	# of Students	% Disabilities	% LEP	% FRL	% Black	% Proficient Reading (2003)	% Proficient Math (2003)
Bear Creek	569	11	1	62	39	55	48
Blanton	731	22	13	73	34	46	41
Gulfport	362	19	1	76	44	36	27
Lakewood	543	19	15	85	43	42	35
Pinellas Central	653	20	18	61	7	44	37
Pinellas Park	694	21	12	73	11	46	43
Seventy-Fourth St.	650	21	1	70	39	43	38
Skyview	568	18	2	72	16	44	42

Source: FLDOE NCLB School Public Accountability Reports

Table 2 shows the demographics of the eleven schools that joined the project in 2004-05. Pinellas Park Elementary School chose not to continue in 2004-05. Sanderlin and Woodlawn Elementary Schools were asked by their Area Superintendent to join Project Focus because of their low FCAT results. All other schools had at least seventy-five percent of their staff committed to the project. Additionally, two Non-Title I schools (Bauder and Ozona) requested to join the project. Project Focus impacted approximately 5000 students in 2004-2005. Project Focus was expanded to more than fifty schools in 2005-2006 school year,

Table 2  
Demographics of Schools New to Project Focus in 2004-05

	# of Students	% Disabilities	% LEP	% FRL	% Black	% Proficient Reading (2004)	% Proficient Math (2004)
Bauder	806	17	0	19	4	81	79
Clearview	436	16	10	74	28	44	42
Fuguitt	651	19	1	54	9	73	65
High Point	543	9	27	77	15	60	44
Kings Hwy	464	24	16	77	41	54	45
Lealman	520	16	19	78	15	50	49
Madeira Beach	488	16	1	53	8	67	59
Mildred Helms	625	18	0	48	8	74	67
Ozona	726	21	0	21	3	82	73
Sanderlin	542	15	1	69	43	45	37
Woodlawn	541	21	11	81	41	44	33

Source: FLDOE NCLB School Public Accountability Reports

## ***FIDELITY TO IMPLEMENTATION***

### *Staff Development*

During the pilot year, participating teachers received five full day of training while principals met monthly. However, during the second year, personnel reallocations reduced the level of district support for the participating schools. Reading and math staff developers joined the newly established Curriculum Support Team (CST) and thus were required to visit several assigned schools on a monthly basis. As a result, they did not have dedicated time to support the implementation of Project Focus in the schools. Furthermore, teacher training for schools new to the project was limited to five half-day trainings per grade level, and principals only met twice. Teachers in the original pilot schools did not receive support from the district during the second year (2004-2005).

### *School/Classroom Implementation*

The task of developing daily lessons and assessments for grades three through five in reading and mathematics proved to be enormous. As a result, lesson development continued past summer and throughout the school year; therefore, materials had to be delivered to the schools on a monthly basis, rather than at the beginning of the year. This delay made planning and organization at the school level very challenging during the pilot year.

During both 2003-04 and 2004-05, all Title I Project Focus schools used an NCS Pearson scanner and LXR software to scan assessment results. This process required the use of an

IBM platform computer and printer (which many schools did not have) at each school site. During 2004-05, the two non-Title I schools hand scored their assessments.

Staff who worked closely with the project noted wide variations in the technology comfort level of the data managers at the school sites, which affected the turn-around time of the results and whether the reports provided to the teachers and principals were entirely complete.

Table 3 shows the participation by grade level during 2003-04 at each of the eight pilot schools. As can be seen, most schools implemented Project Focus in all available grade levels and even in some alternate programs. Gulfport Elementary School opted not to use the project in the third grade due to the already existing Montessori program in the primary grades. Pinellas Park Elementary School chose not to do Project Focus reading because the school is a Center for Learning, affiliated with Columbia Teachers College.

Table 3  
Participation by Grade Level for the Pilot Schools (2004-04)

	Reading			Math			ESE	Other
	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5		
Bear Creek	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Blanton	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Read 180, ESOL, Alpha
Gulfport		✓	✓		✓	✓		
Lakewood	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	ESOL, STARS
Pinellas Central	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Pinellas Park				✓	✓	✓		
Seventy-Fourth St.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		Read 180
Skyview	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Table 4 shows the participation by grade level during 2004-05 for each of the schools new to Project Focus. As more schools were added, more variations arose: Lealman Avenue and Sanderlin Elementary Schools chose not to participate in Project Focus math because they were using the Everyday Math curriculum, teachers at Fuguitt Elementary School opted to only participate in reading, and only two teachers at Mildred Helms Elementary School participated.

Table 4  
Participation by Grade Level for Schools New to Project Focus in 2004-05

	Reading				Math				ESE	Other
	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5		
Bauder	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	Gr. 4-5 only	
Clearview	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ (pilot)	✓	✓	✓	✓	Read 180, ESOL
Fuguitt		✓	✓	✓						Read 180
High Point	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		ESOL
Kings Hwy	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	ESOL, STARS
Lealman	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	ESOL, STARS
Madeira Beach	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Mildred Helms		1 teacher						1 teacher		
Ozona		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Sanderlin	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	
Woodlawn	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	Read 180, ESOL

*Process Check*

Teachers in the pilot schools were invited to provide feedback on the lessons and revisions that were made throughout the year. The team of developers has also continued to improve the alignment of the lessons and assessments to the state standards.

*Project Expenditures*

Local, state, and federal resources were redirected to assist in the development and deployment of this project. For instance, funding from Title I was allocated for planning and training activities. While the program is still in development and additional schools continue to be added, many of the expenditures, especially the printing costs, are recurring costs in subsequent years of the project. However, the project development expenditures, such as contracts and personnel for lesson development, are expected to decrease over time. On the other hand, the cost of personnel to monitor the program and ensure the implementation fidelity has not been considered.

Table 5 shows the expenditures for the first two years of implementation. Each school received a scanner, software, and scan sheets for grading the mini-assessments. Binders were

purchased to provide all teachers with handbooks. Printing cost comprised of printing of the lessons, assessments, overheads, practice sheets, and handbooks. The vast difference in printing costs between the two years is partly because some of the printing was completed in house (at the Title I Center) during the pilot year and partly because some of the printing costs for the pilot year actually came out of the 2004-05 budget.

Math manipulatives were purchased for all pilot schools. During the second year math lessons were more aligned to the manipulatives already available through the current mathematics adoption and therefore, did not have to be purchased.

Consultants were contracted to help write lessons. The personnel figure represents the portions of the salaries of the eight employees who worked full or part-time developing lessons during the pilot year.

Teacher substitutes were used to accommodate teacher training. During the pilot year, there were five full day of training for all teachers involved in Project Focus. The substitute expenditure for 2003-2004 as listed below, is not accurately covering the approximately 625 teacher substitutes that were required that year; some of the schools paid for the teacher substitute from school budget and those figures are therefore not represented in the total teacher substitute cost. Even though the total cost of this program was not revealed, the available expenditure for the last two years was used to estimate the average annual cost to be \$81 per student.

Table 5  
Expenditures

Item	2003-04	2004-05
Scanners	\$ 26,413	\$ 40,785
Software	\$ 12,850	\$ 20,415
Scan sheets	\$ 4,426	\$ 5,012
Binders	\$ 4,032	
Printing	\$ 5,317	\$ 49,529
Math manipulatives	\$ 14,305	
Consultants	\$ 6,333	
Personnel	\$ 398,787	
Teacher substitute	\$ 780	\$ 8,489
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 473,243</b>	<b>\$ 124,230</b>

## II. TEACHERS OPINION

### *Satisfaction Survey*

In August 2004, a satisfaction survey was distributed to the approximately 130 teachers participating in the pilot year of Project Focus. Fifty-nine surveys were returned (response rate of 45%). The results are presented in Appendix C and are summarized below.

The results of the survey revealed that a high percentage (ninety-five) of teachers reported satisfaction with: students' exposure to standards, printed materials received, services provided by the Title I staff, and reading and math lessons. The satisfaction with the reading lessons was reported by eighty-four percent of respondents, and the issues related to the grading of the assessments were rated satisfactory by seventy-one percent. Also, a high percentage of teachers reported that Project Focus had positively impacted other areas of their teaching and they felt that Project Focus had a positive impact on FCAT success. Ninety-one percent said that they would recommend Project Focus to other teachers and schools.

### *Implementation Survey*

At the end of the 2004-05 school year, an online survey was sent to 326 teachers, principals, data materials managers, and Title I facilitators in the Project Focus schools. The survey asked for feedback on different aspects of the program, its implementation, effectiveness, and impact. The respondents were 117 classroom teachers, nine principals, six data materials managers, and ten others, resulting in a return rate of 36%. The results are presented in Appendix B and are summarized below.

Ninety-nine percent of teachers reported complete or comprehensive understanding of the goals and objectives of Project Focus, with eighty percent reporting an understanding all Eight-Steps/components of the program.

Seventy-four percent of teachers stated that they are implementing Project Focus completely or nearly so. Principals believe the implementation to be lower (fifty-six percent chose completely or nearly so). But less than half of the teachers stated that teachers at each grade level meet regularly to discuss the results of the frequent assessments, share ideas, and develop action plans for the critical remediation and/or enrichment component of the program (steps five-seven, three of the most crucial steps of the improvement cycle). Interestingly, seventy eight percent of principals believe that teachers are meeting regularly.

Seventy-four percent of teachers believe that Project Focus is effective in accomplishing its goals. However less than half agree that Project Focus has had much of an impact on individualized instructional techniques or have noticed the effect on curriculum and instruction tailored to student ability. The impact on grouping students according to performance level, regular use of Project Focus assessment results for the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and regular use of the results for parent conferencing was reported by less than a third of respondents. At the same time, sixty-four percent of the teachers reported having evidence that student performance has improved as a result of Project Focus.

While ninety-two percent of the teachers felt that the principal made Project Focus a priority, sixty-seven percent of the principals said it was a priority to them. Eighty-seven percent of teachers (and one-hundred percent of principals) felt that central administration supported Project Focus.



Respondents were asked to identify factors limiting the implementation of the project; of the twelve limiting factors listed, three were reported to be limiting implementation: time constraints, other initiatives competing with Project Focus, and too many new initiatives. The ratings for all three of these items were evenly distributed from “not at all” up to “to a great degree.”

The respondents were invited to share their written comments. The most frequent comment (nineteen respondents) was that “Project Focus is a wonderful program, which covers all standards at each grade level; all instructional materials were provided and test scores are improving.” The second most frequent comment (twelve respondents) was that “more time is needed to address specific concepts and help lower level students.”

### III. STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Students enrolled in the fourth and fifth grades at the seven pilot schools at the end of the 2004/05 school year were selected for this study. Only those students who attended the same school for the years of this study and who had FCAT scores for all the year(s) were included in the study. The breakout of students by race and grade is presented in Table 6.

The results of the achievement analysis are presented in appendix D and summarized below.

Table 6  
Number of students in the cohort group

Grade at the end of 2004-2005	Black	Non-Black
Fourth Grade	147	363
Fifth Grade	96	291
Total	243	654

The FCAT result for 2004-2005 fourth graders were analyzed and comparisons were made between Black and Non-Black students. When comparing the FCAT reading mean developmental scale score of Black and Non-Black students, the Non-Black students performed at a higher level than the Black students in 2004 and in 2005, with an unchanged gap. Similar results were observed for the FCAT mathematics (figure D-1 and figure D-2).

Student groups were also compared by examining the percentage of students meeting grade level expectations. The percentage of Non-Black students who achieved math grade level expectations was higher by 25 percentage points than that of Black students. The achievement of both Black, and Non-Black students declined during the 2004-2005 school year. The math achievement gap between the Black and Non-Blacks also widened to 33 percentage points in 2005 (figure D-4). The comparison of students meeting reading grade level expectations revealed similar results except that the gap between the two groups achievement was widened by only one percentage point in 2005 (figure D- 3).

The group of fifth grade students was used to examine longitudinal effects of Project Focus. When comparing the FCAT reading mean developmental scale score of Black and Non-Black students, the Non-Black students performed at a higher level than the Black students in all three years. The performance of both groups showed great improvement in 2004, but stayed steady for 2005, with an unchanged gap. The results for the FCAT mathematics showed some increase for the 2004 and 2005 school years, with steady gap between Black and Non-Black students (figure D-5 and figure D-6).

The two groups were also compared by examining the percentage of students meeting grade level expectations each year. The Math achievement gap between the Black and Non-Black students started at 46 percentage points in 2003, a somewhat smaller gap was observed in 2004. This smaller gap was caused by a decline in percentage of Non-Black students meeting the grade level expectation and a small increase in the percentage of Black students meeting the grade level expectation. The gap between the two groups was widened to 50 percentage points by 2005, after using Project Focus for two years (figure D-8).

The comparison of students on reading grade level expectation revealed similar results (figure D-7).

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Conclusion**

The continuous improvement model, as designed and implemented in Brazoport, requires all Eight-Steps to be implemented on a recurring basis. There is no evidence that the steps were carried out on a recurring basis in Pinellas County.

There was also no evidence found to support that data was disaggregated (step one) at the school, classroom, or student level or that disaggregated data was used in identifying the strengths and weaknesses. The Florida Department of Education provided disaggregated data (FCAT results and AYP reports) to the district, but there is no evidence that these reports were used other than recognizing the low achieving schools.

The district's development team completed step two; however the calendar and lessons were not based on needs identified by step one. Instead, the calendar and lessons were solely based on the Sunshine State Standards. The district's development team established a uniform script for steps three and four. Even though step four, "assessment", was implemented as far as giving the assessments, there is no evidence that the results of these assessments were used as the original model has prescribed. The teachers and schools were then to carry out the script from steps three and four and follow-up by developing and implementing steps five through eight. While the foundation was established in steps two to four, it is not clear how consistently or completely all Eight-Steps are occurring or recurring, among the participating schools.

The project coordinators planned to start with a small group of five schools. Instead, they started with eight and rapidly expanded to eighteen in the following year. During the first

year, the personnel involved in the project were overwhelmed with lesson development and were unable to assist in the implementation at the school level. During the second year, rather than helping the pilot schools that still had not fully implemented the project, the district withdrew almost all support from the pilot schools, and provided minimal support to the new schools.

Title I staff, including the evaluator, worked closely with the schools during the first year of implementation. During this time, the evaluator made informal observations while working with the schools; the level of implementation varied from school to school; a few schools adopted the project and implemented it to a good extent, while other schools just did step three (lessons).

There was not sufficient time, training and support devoted to this project to ensure complete implementation at the district and school level, a critical matter in the Continuous Improvement Model.

It is apparent from the survey results that the operation of Project Focus varies among schools, the level of its implementation is viewed differently by the principals and teachers, and that an organized, technologically-oriented data manager is crucial to successful implementation.

The majority of teachers and school-based administrators believe that Project Focus is a quality program that is effective in raising student achievement. This program has only been in operation for two years and has been expanded to fifty-seven schools in its third year, mainly as a result of schools' interest. The district, however, has not been able to support the increasing number of schools in the implementation of this project.

The results of the FCAT have shown an achievement gap between the Black and Non-Black students. The gap did not decrease during the year(s) the students were in Project Focus. Although at this stage of program implementation, the results of the performance comparison should not be used for a summative evaluation, or to make any conclusions about the effectiveness of the program, it is important to examine preliminary data on this program's progress toward its goal of closing the gap between the Black and Non-Black students.

The continuation and effectiveness of the program relies on district support and monitoring; elements which have been deficient during the two years of the program.

## Recommendations

The following are recommendations for the 2006-2007 school year:

- Set clear expectations of the program, plan complete implementation, and provide support, training, and monitoring.
- Resolve the factors limiting the implementation, as reported by the teachers: time constraints, other initiatives competing with the project, and too many new initiatives,
- Do not expand the program
- Once an affirmative decision has been made to continue the program, and processes are enacted upon, then:
  - Keep records of the planning and implementation processes,
  - Conduct a comprehensive implementation study to fully investigate this program's deployment and implementation,
  - Plan an outcome evaluation to study the effectiveness of this program, once a satisfactory level of implementation is observed.

Pinellas County

# Title I Project Focus Schools 2003-04 Teacher Satisfaction Survey

School: _____  Grade Level: _____	<b>Very Satisfied</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>	<b>Unsatisfied</b>	<b>Very Unsatisfied</b>
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<p><i>Please think about your experiences with <u>Project Focus during the 2003-04 pilot year</u> as you respond.</i></p> <p><b>How satisfied were you with: .....</b></p> <p>1. The way Project Focus exposed your students to the Pinellas County Schools' Student Expectations? _____</p> <p>2. The printed materials you received. (i.e. teacher handbooks, transparencies, practice sheets, assessments)? _____</p> <p>3. The services provided by the Title I staff. (i.e. trainers, supervisors, coordinator) to support Project Focus in your school? _____</p> <p>4. With the reading lessons for Project Focus? _____</p> <p>5. With the math lessons for Project Focus? _____</p> <p>6. With the grading of Project Focus assessments. (i.e. scanner, software, and generated results)? _____</p> <p>7. Did your use of Project Focus impact other areas of your teaching?  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes                      <input type="checkbox"/> No                  Please explain: _____                  _____</p> <p>8. Did the services provided by the Data Materials Manager make the implementation of Project Focus easier to manage?  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes                      <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>9. Would you recommend Project Focus to other teachers and schools?  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes                      <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>10. Do you feel Project Focus had a positive impact on your students' success on FCAT?  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes                      <input type="checkbox"/> No                  Please explain: _____                  _____</p>	<p><i>Please check ✓ the appropriate column</i></p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="width: 25%;"></td><td style="width: 25%;"></td><td style="width: 25%;"></td><td style="width: 25%;"></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>																																								

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
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# Project Focus Survey 2004-05 Results

## How do you feel about the following aspects of Project Focus?

Percent of Respondents who Selected "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" →	Teachers	School Administrators	Data Materials Managers	Others	Total
1. I understand the goals and objectives of Project Focus	99	100	100	100	99
2. I understand all of the components of the program (the 8-step continuous improvement model)	80	100	100	80	82
3. The principal has made Project Focus a priority at our school	92	67	67	90	89
4. I believe that central administration has supported the operation of Project Focus at this school	87	100	100	80	88
5. The technical assistance provided by the district has been helpful as we have implemented the program	62	89	100	80	67
6. There is collaboration and cooperation among the administrators and teachers at our school to support Project Focus	83	78	100	90	84
7. Teachers at each grade level meet regularly to discuss the results of the frequent assessments, share ideas, and develop action plans for remediation and/or enrichment	47	78	50	70	51
8. I feel confident about implementing Project Focus in my classroom	90	57	60	43	85

## Has Project Focus positively impacted the following areas in your classroom/school?

Percent of Respondents who noted a large impact →	Teachers	School Administrators	Data Materials Managers	Others	Total
1. Individualized instructional techniques	47	67	100	70	52
2. Appropriate learning materials	56	75	100	90	61
3. Classroom management techniques	36	67	80	70	42
4. Integration of content areas	45	78	100	60	50
5. Curriculum and instruction tailored to student ability	43	78	100	50	48
6. Frequent assessments aligned with curriculum	74	78	100	90	77
7. Grouping of students according to performance level	30	67	100	50	36
8. Individual Educational Plan (IEP)	23	44	60	13	25
9. Using assessment results for parent conferencing	33	67	80	60	39
<b>Total Number of Respondents</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>142</b>

APPENDIX B

Please share your thoughts about the data and the scanners:					
Percent of Respondents who Selected "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" →	Teachers	School Administrators	Data Materials Managers	Others	Total
1. Assessment results were returned in a timely manner	66	56	40	50	63
2. The results were easy to understand and interpret	65	78	100	50	66
3. The results were used in our PLC conversations	47	78	60	80	52
To what degree have the following factors limited the effective use of Project Focus in your School:					
Percent of Respondents who noted large limitations →	Teachers	School Administrators	Data Materials Managers	Others	Total
1. Level of support from the district	19	13	40	40	21
2. Level of my knowledge of Project Focus	16	11	20	30	17
3. Level of interest among teachers	17	22	20	10	17
4. Level of support from my school principal	17	22	20	20	17
5. Time constraints	36	0	40	50	35
6. Resources (materials, etc.)	26	0	40	11	23
7. Training	22	0	20	10	20
8. Software problems	18	11	0	0	15
9. Hardware problems	17	0	0	0	14
10. Lack of full time technician	22	0	20	11	20
11. Other initiatives competing with Project Focus	31	11	0	40	29
12. Too many new initiatives	42	13	0	40	38
Level of Implementation					
Percent of Respondents who Selected "Completely" or nearly so →	Teachers	School Administrators	Data Materials Managers	Others	Total
1. When considering all 8 steps of the model, I have implemented Project Focus to what degree?	74	56	60	75	72
Results					
Percent of Respondents who Selected "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" →	Teachers	School Administrators	Data Materials Managers	Others	Total
1. I have evidence that student performance has improved as a result of using Project Focus	64	89	80	78	67
2. Effective and accomplishing goals	74	88	80	89	76
<b>Total Number of Respondents</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>142</b>





APPENDIX D

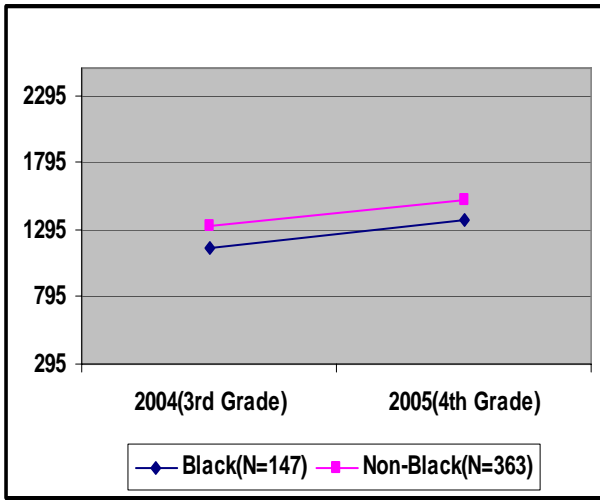


Figure D- 1. Reading FCAT Mean Developmental Scale Score for 2005 - 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Students

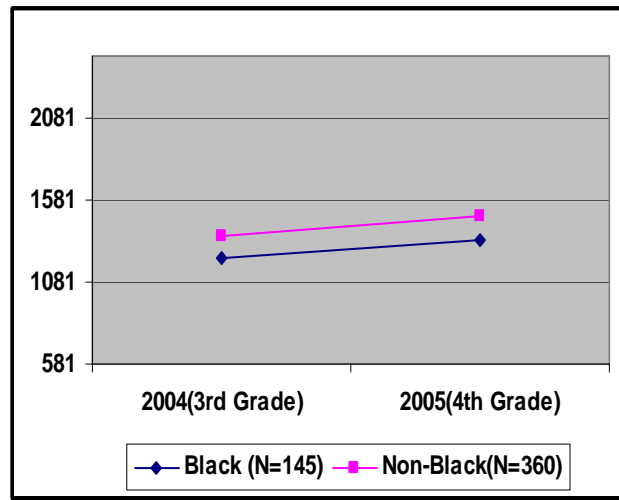


Figure D- 2. Math FCAT Mean Developmental Scale Score for 2005 - 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Students

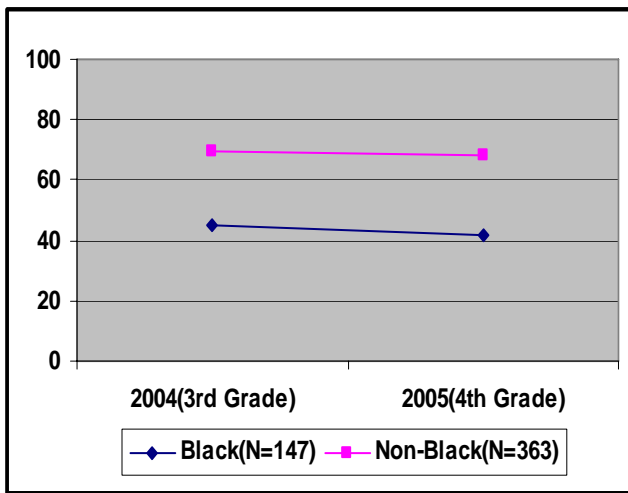


Figure D- 3. Percentage Achieving Grade Level Reading Expectation for 2005 - 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Students

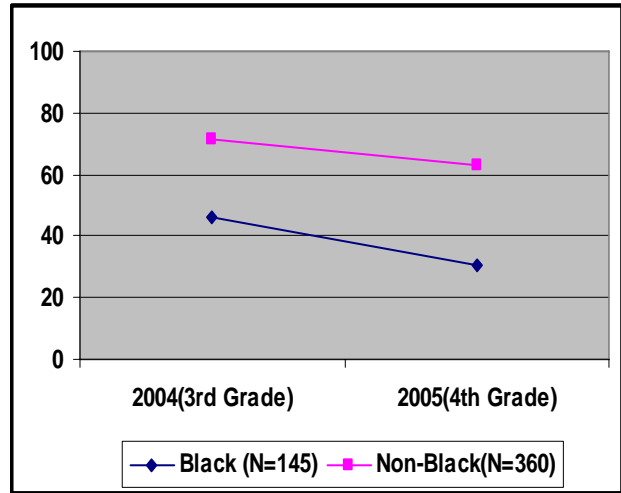


Figure D- 4. Percentage Achieving Grade Level Math Expectation for 2005 - 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Students

APPENDIX D

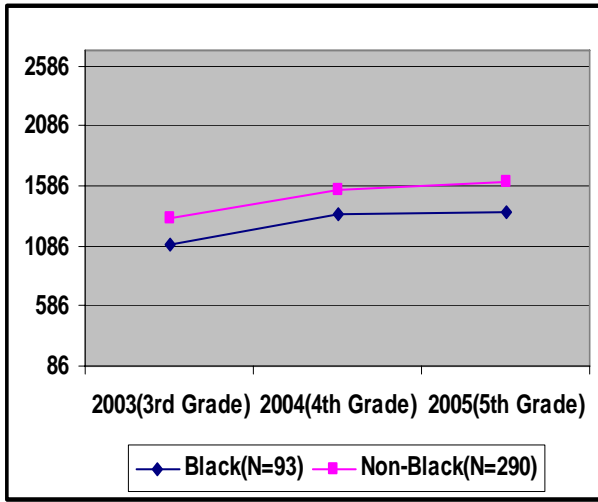


Figure D- 5. Reading FCAT Mean Developmental Scale Score for 2005 – 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Students

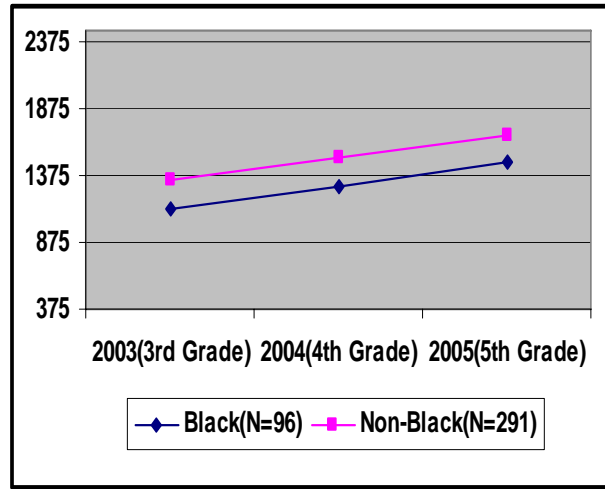


Figure D- 6. Math FCAT Mean Developmental Scale Score for 2005 – 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Students

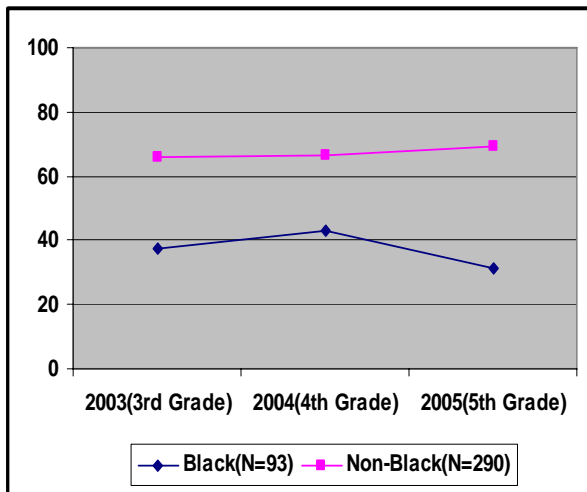


Figure D- 7. Percentage Achieving Grade Level Reading Expectation for 2005 – 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Students

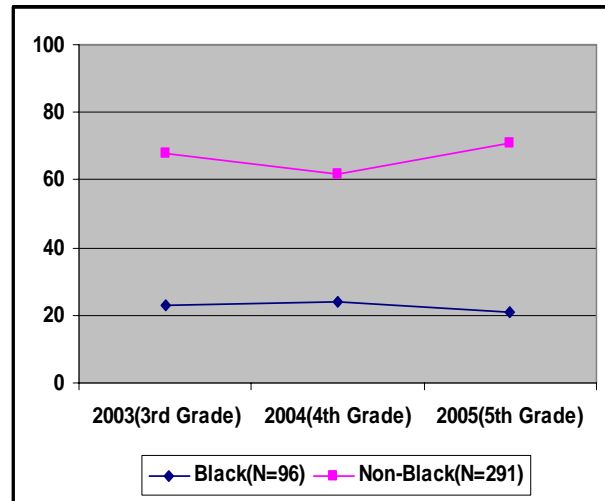


Figure D- 8. Percentage Achieving Grade Level Math Expectation for 2005 – 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Students