From Complacency to Excellence Through School District Reform: A Case
Study of the Wake County Public School System

By Karen E. Banks

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From Complacency to Excellence Through School District Reform:
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Introduction

The role of school districts in educational reform has received increased attention in recent years.[1,2,3,4] Research on this topic, however, poses some challenges. Every diverse and reasonably successful large school district will at any time have a large number of simultaneous initiatives underway that are designed to improve outcomes for students. It can be difficult to identify the independent impact of each of these initiatives because of their concurrent implementation. The challenge is greater because the large number of schools in large districts almost inevitably leads to some variability in implementation of these initiatives across school campuses. Finally, large districts face a particular challenge in making measurable changes; to improve student outcomes on measures such as dropout rates or the percentage of schools making Adequate Yearly Progress may require changes in outcomes for thousands of individual students. Any lesser changes will not produce detectable differences at the district level.

The premise that underlies this case study about the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) is that while successful district-level reform requires the district to implement successful programs and initiatives to improve, these programs and initiatives alone are clearly insufficient. If programs and initiatives were all that were required, achievement in the U.S. would have increased dramatically. Something else is clearly needed to "turn the battleship."

While this paper will mention a few specific programs and initiatives in WCPSS because they are likely to be of some interest to other school districts, a major focus will be on the purposeful nature of those initiatives. This purposeful direction stemmed from four crucial strategic directions:

- A tightly-focused, challenging, and common goal for the entire school district,
- A strong, non-punitive accountability system,
- An emphasis on data-based decision making at all levels of the organization, and
- Continuous improvement models as a way of doing business.

A strong commitment to continuous improvement, accountability, and data-based decision making is not unique to WCPSS. Pinellas County (FL) schools followed a multi-year journey that culminated in applying for a national Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award. Nor is it unique for a school district to set goals. What *is* unusual is for large districts to reach ambitious goals.

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[1] Cawelti, G., & Protheroe, N. (2001). High student achievement: How six school districts changed into high-performance systems. Arlington, VA: Educational Research Service.
[2] Marsh, J. (2000). Connecting districts to the policy dialogue: A review of literature on the relationship of districts with states, schools, and communities. Seattle, WA: Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, University of Washington. (http://depts.washington.edu/ctpmail/PDFs/District_Lit.pdf)
[3] Massell, D. (2000). The district role in building capacity: Four strategies. CPRE Policy Brief (September, 2000.) (http://www.cpre.org/publications/rb32.pdf)
[4] Slavin, R.E. (2003). Converging reforms: Change schools? Change districts? How the two approaches can work together. *Education Week* (March 5, 2003), 64, p. 44-45.

Understanding the progress in WCPSS means understanding not only some of the programs, strategies, and initiatives, but also understanding the culture and the process of change management.

As part of her work on high-performing organizations, Rosabeth Moss Kanter has developed a framework for leaders to use when their organization needs to make fundamental, systemic changes. Partnering with IBM and the Harvard University School of Business, she and her colleagues have worked to apply this framework to school systems through the "Reinventing Education Change Toolkit." [5]

Unlike some approaches to reform that would instruct a school or school district about specific changes that must be made (e.g., raise expectations for all students, use frequent classroom assessments, establish common planning times for teachers, reallocate resources, etc.) the Change Toolkit is predicated on the assumption that educators are aware that these strategies are important. Kanter and her colleagues believe that *successful* reforms must address certain organizational issues. Stated another way, perhaps the reason that educational reforms have not led to dramatic increases in student achievement across the country, despite almost two decades of effort since the publication of *A Nation At Risk*, is not that educators lack adequate knowledge of pedagogy or the research on effective schools, but rather that the reforms did not address the elements needed for successful systemic change in any organization.

The Change Wheel included in the Toolkit looks like this:
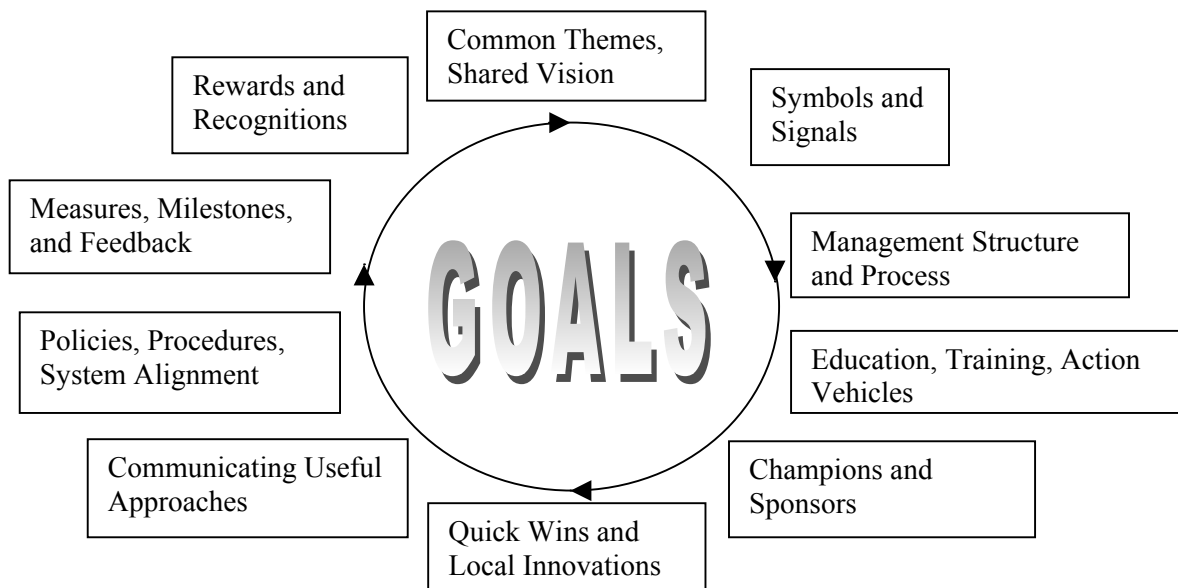
While the leaders of WCPSS were not trained in the use of the Change Wheel during most of their decade-long reform efforts, the school district was fortunate to have experienced leaders who intuitively addressed many of the elements of the Change Wheel. It would be inaccurate to say that addressing these elements happened by accident: these leaders clearly knew that such factors as staff training, measurable goals, and alignment of policies were essential to progress. What the Change Wheel would have added, had the district had such a tool at the time, was a systematic

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[5] http://www.reinventingeducation.org/RE3Web/

process for making certain that each element was addressed, rather than relying on whether good leaders intuitively happened to address each and every one of the factors or elements.

The path WCPSS followed to reach its current levels of success parallels many of the elements in Rosabeth Moss Kantor's framework and research, and while this paper does not point out every instance in which a particular change element was addressed, the reader will no doubt notice many of those instances.

How Do We Know That WCPSS Improved To a Degree That Merits A Further Look?

Before sharing the results that indicate strong improvements in WCPSS students' achievement, it is important to show that the improvements are not due to demographic changes that would lead to higher achievement without educational intervention.

Poverty Rates

Could improvements in achievement be due to a decrease in the percentage of students living in poverty?   This is unlikely, given that the percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch has been steady or increasing.

**Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Participation
1993-2003**
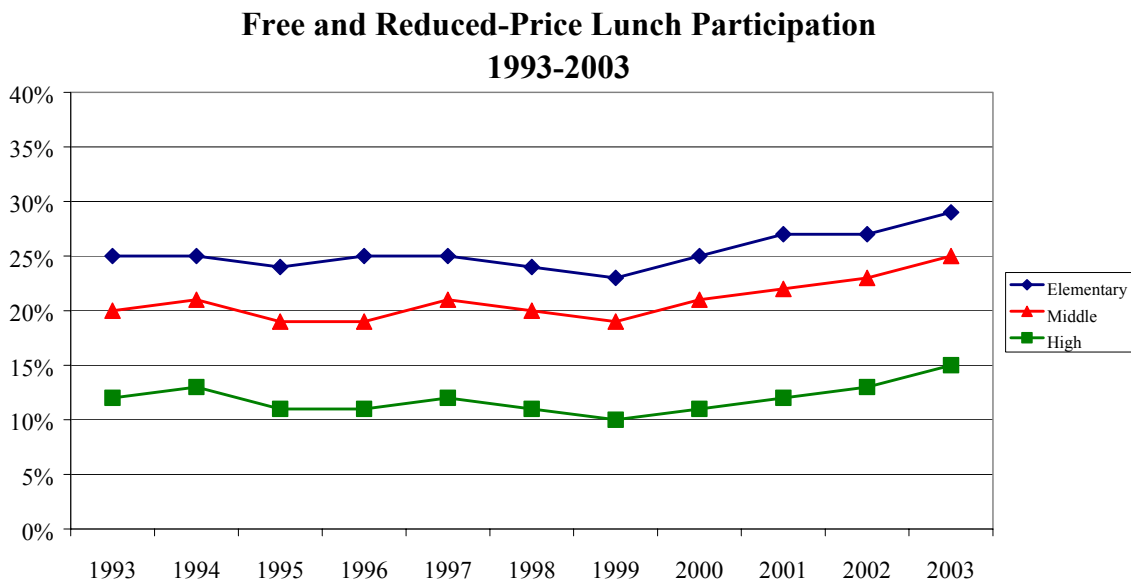
Racial Demographics

Nor are the changes in student achievement likely to be due to changes in the racial makeup of the student population in the district. In fact, the percentage of minority students has been increasing, along with the percentage of students who have limited English proficiency (LEP).

WCPSS Minority Population Percentage
1993-2003
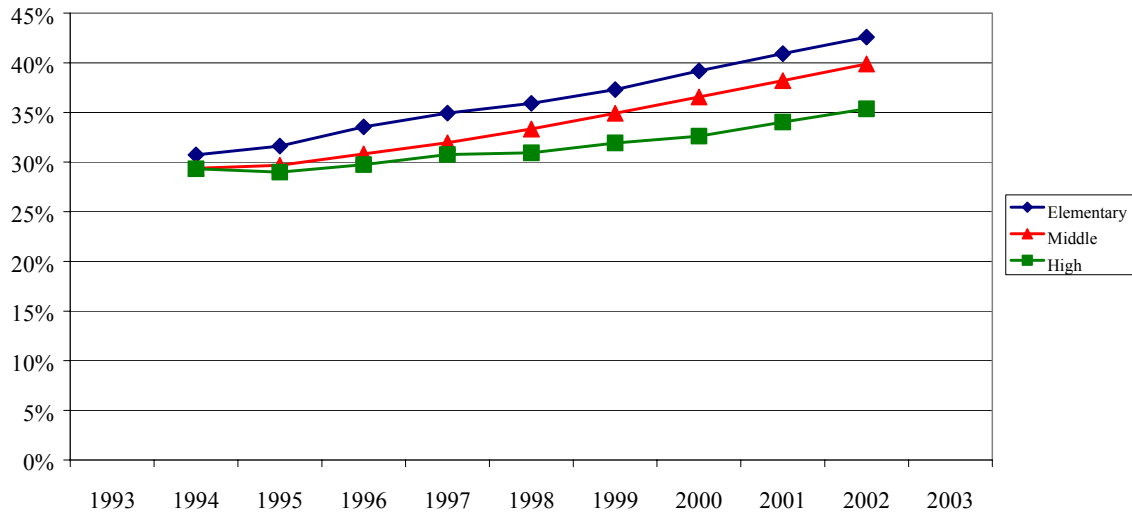
Expenditures

Did the school district expend large amounts of money to improve student achievement? As shown in the next figure, Per Pupil Expenditure (PPE) in WCPSS has consistently been lower than in most districts of comparable size. Of the 18 similar districts in 1999-2000, only four—all in Florida— had higher PPEs than WCPSS. Thus, the high levels of achievement presented in the next section do not seem to be due to higher expenditures.

Per Pupil Expenditure in Districts with
90, 000 to 150,000 Students: 1999-2000
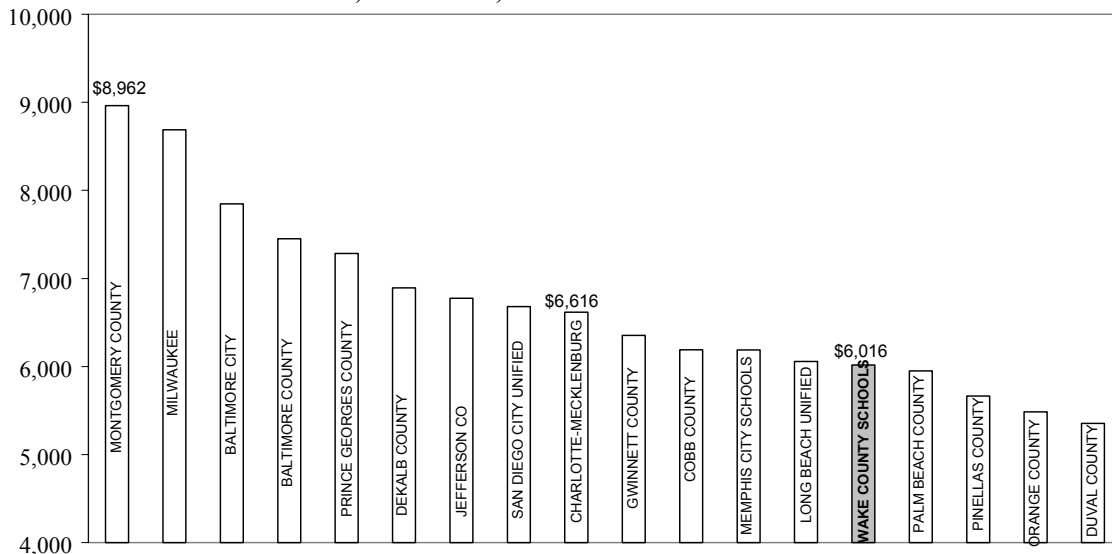
Student Performance Data

Average SAT Scores And Participation Rates Across 14 Years
School district researchers are usually outspoken about the inadequacies of SAT scores as a measure of effectiveness. The public, however, continues to judge schools in part on the basis of these scores. Furthermore, by reporting scores in the context of changes in participation rates, it is possible to determine whether there are changes over time and whether changes in participation rates may be partly responsible for the changes. SAT participation rates in WCPSS have held steady or increased over time, lending support for the notion that SAT score improvements are not due to changes in participation rate.

Mean SAT Scores 1990-2003

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
WCPSS	999	1007	1025	1031	1030	1039	1042	1047	1052	1059	1061	1054	1067	1067
USA	1001	999	1001	1003	1003	1010	1013	1016	1017	1016	1019	1020	1020	1026
North Carolina	948	952	961	964	964	970	976	978	982	986	988	992	998	1001
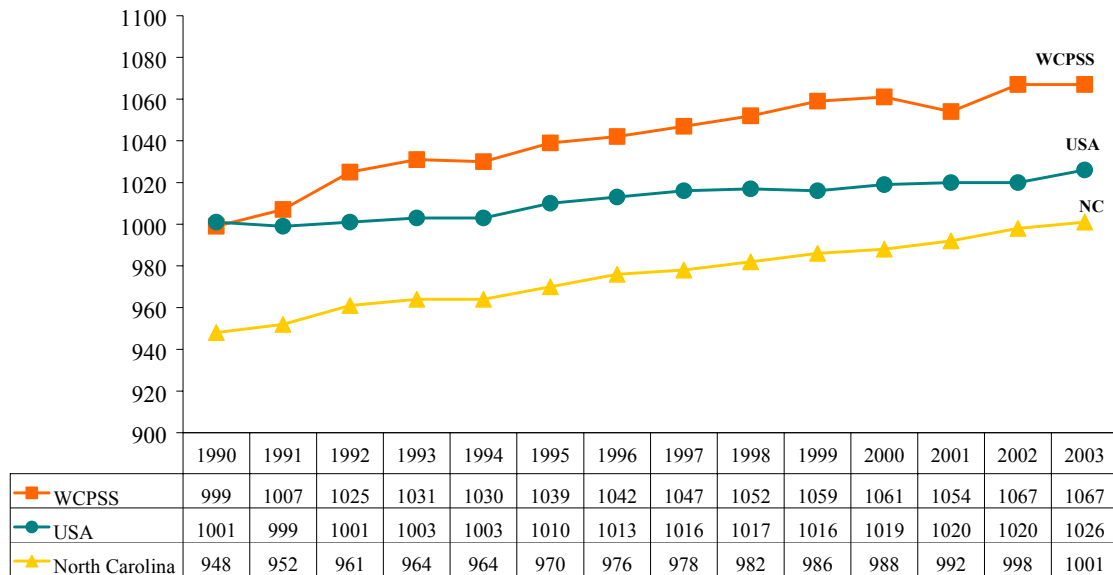
SAT Participation Rates: 1990-2003

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
WCPSS	73	75	74	76	75	76	73.3	73.6	75.6	76.3	79.3	78.6	79.1	80
North Carolina	55	57	57	60	60	60	59	59	62	61	64	65	67	68
USA	40	42	42	43	42	41	41	42	43	43	44	45	46	48
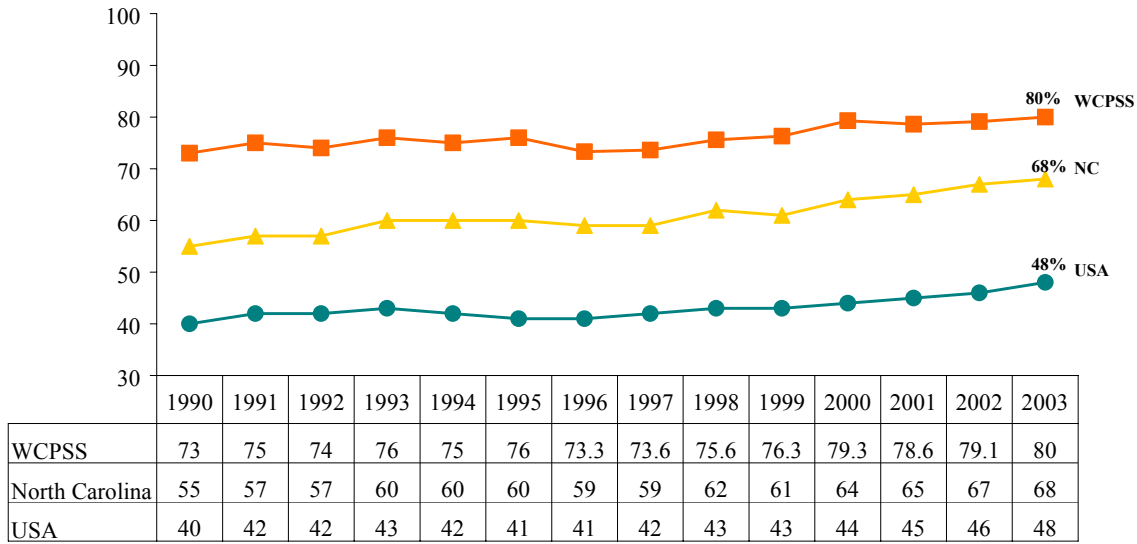
Dropout Rates

Other measures for WCPSS also indicate major improvements over time. These measures are generally less controversial among school staff than SAT scores. For example, dropout rates have declined, primarily by partially closing racial differences in the dropout rate.

Seven-Year Dropout Trend
Wake County High Schools

WCPSS Dropout Rates by Race
Grades 9-12 Across Four Years
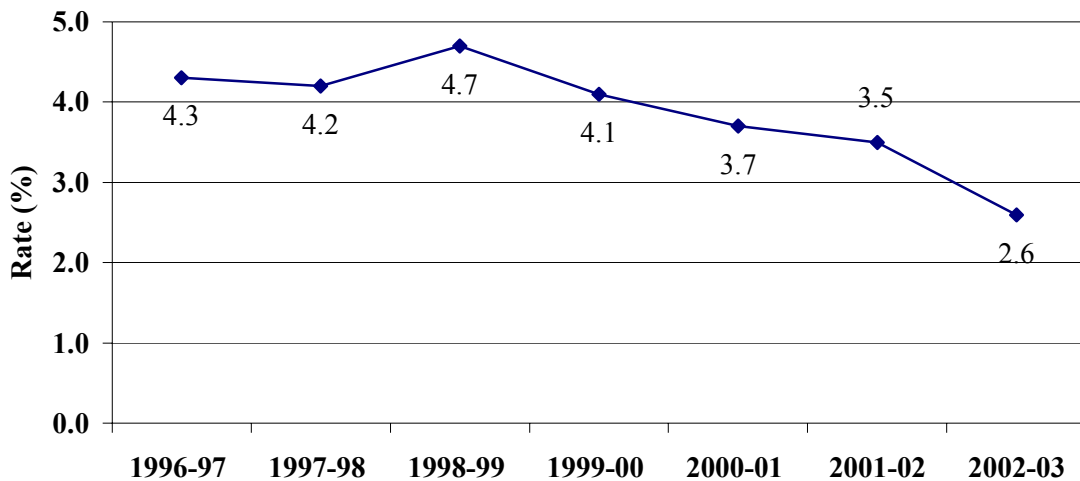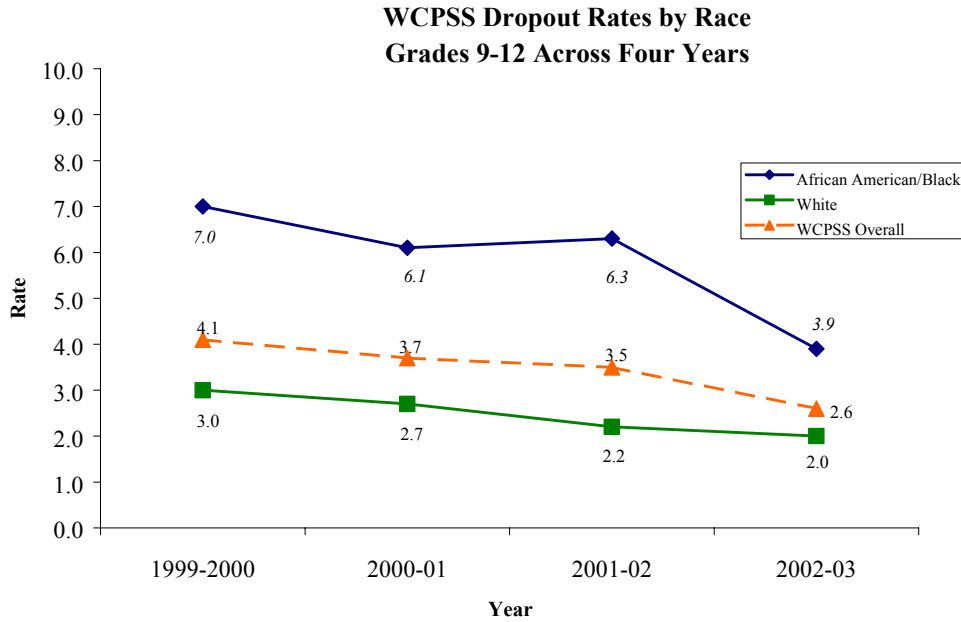
Grades 3-8 Achievement

The area of WCPSS student achievement receiving the most attention in recent years has been achievement in reading and mathematics on state End-of-Grade (EOG) tests at grades 3-8. Specifically, the focus has been on improving the percentage of students meeting North Carolina's grade level standards, which are considered somewhat challenging. As described later in the case study portion of this paper, several initiatives intended to raise achievement in grades 3-8 were implemented since 1998. In the early 1990s, however, the percentage of students scoring as proficient on these tests was much lower than it is today. In fact, during the first year of testing, teachers complained that the state tests were too difficult; annual performance improved only slightly after the second and third year of testing.

Beginning in 1998, however, the percentage of WCPSS students scoring proficient increased fairly dramatically. The following graph shows the percentages from 1994 to 2003. It is important to note that during the most recent year reflected in the chart, approximately 1,000 previously exempted special education students were tested with these N.C. multiple choice EOG tests. In spite of this increase in the number and percentage of special education students tested, the percentage of students scoring as proficient rose to a high of 93.1% by Spring 2003.

**Composite Reading and Math Percentage of EOG Scores
At or ABove Grade Level (Proficient) Standards: 1994-2003**

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
% Proficient	75.8	78.6	79.2	79.5	81.9	83.9	84.9	87.5	89.4	91.3
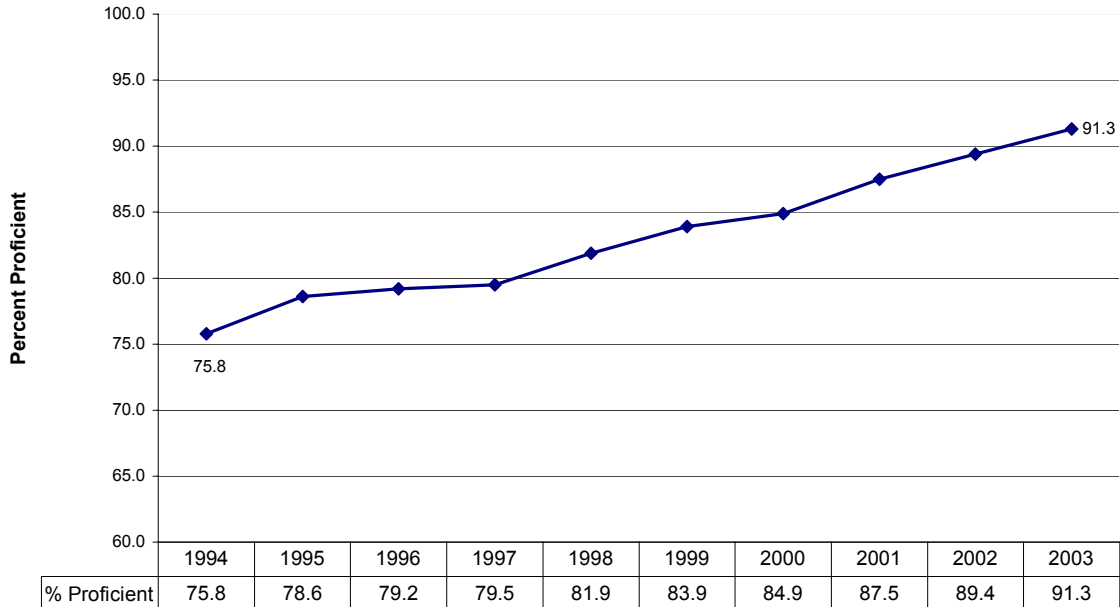
While details about how these improvements were achieved are discussed in the case study, it is important to note that the improvements were not limited to particular grades and subjects. The composite across all grades, disaggregated by race, is shown below. The overall increases shown in the previous graph were accomplished primarily by narrowing racial achievement gaps.

**Percent of All Grade 3-8 Students at/above Grade Level Proficiency
in Reading: 1998-2003**
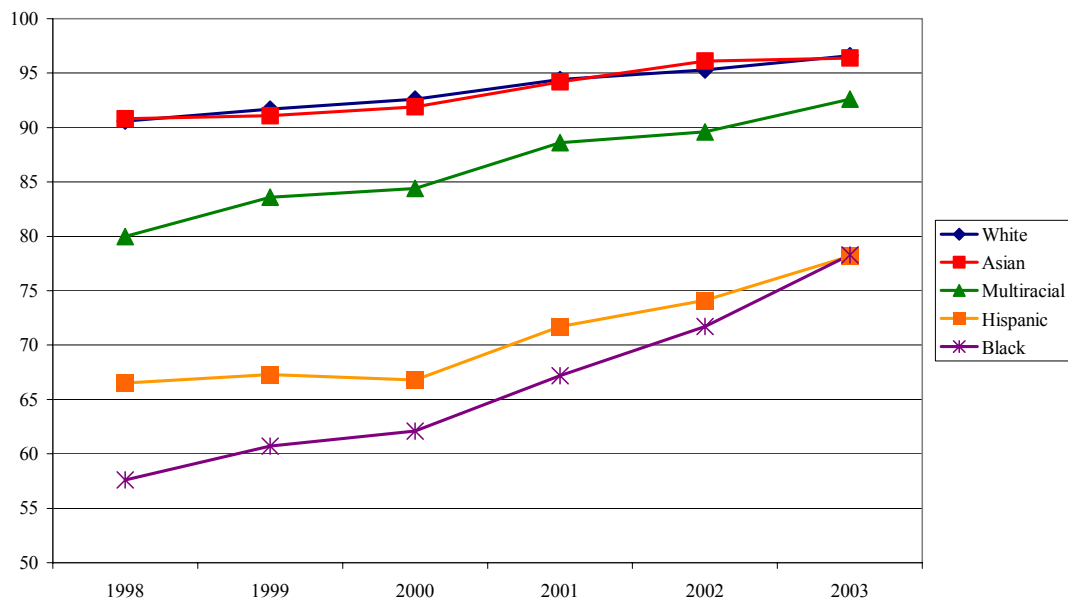
**Percent of All Grade 3-8 Students at/above Grade Level Proficiency
in Math: 1998-2003**
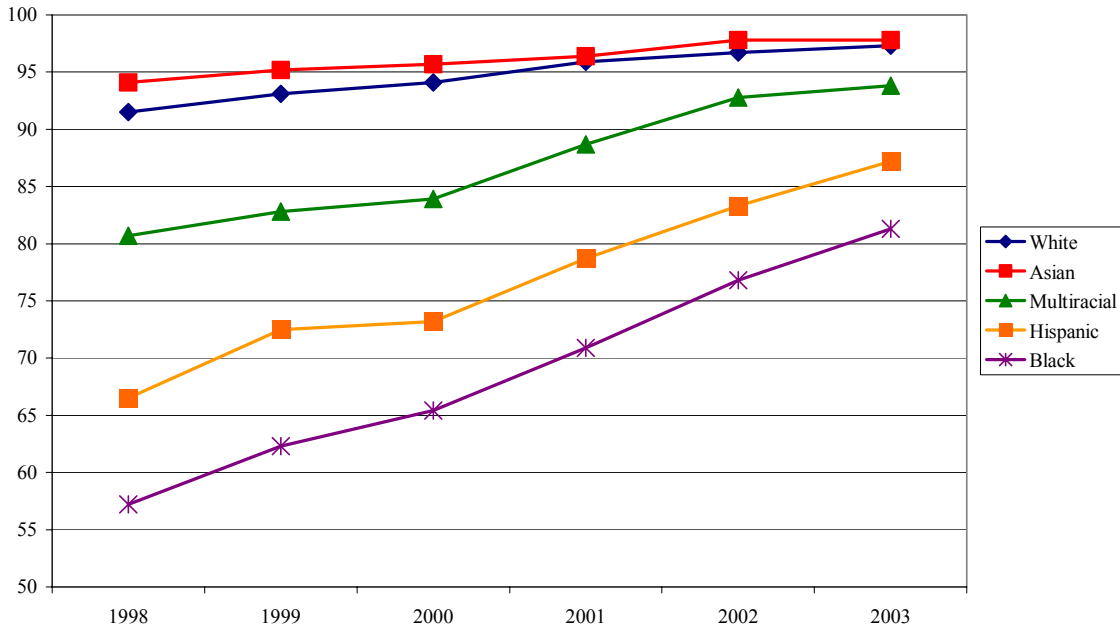
NAEP

Finally, how do we know that N.C. EOG tests are a rigorous enough standard for these improvements to be worthy of note? It is difficult to compare difficulty levels across states, but these state tests were considered a primary method of ratcheting up the standards and expectations in schools across North Carolina. The following chart shows mean scale scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress scores for North Carolina since 1992 (example is from grade 4.). The NAEP scores for North Carolina were below the national average in 1992 and are now well above the national average, lending support for the notion that the tests are, in fact, challenging.

NAEP Grade 4 Math Results: Mean Scale Score
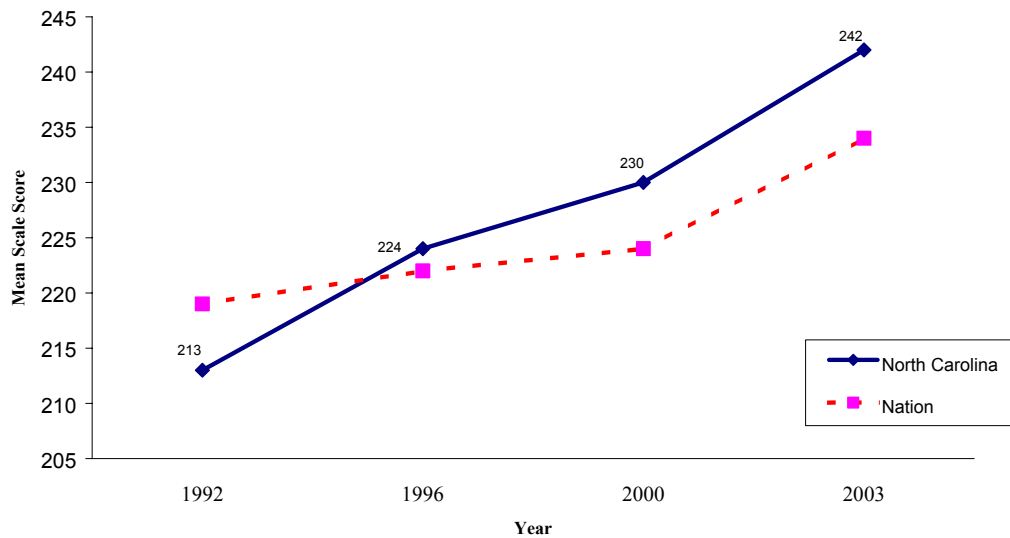
In 1989, the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) was at a fork in the road. Following over a decade of tumultuous change, Dr. Robert Bridges had assumed the helm as superintendent in 1984 and brought a period of calm, steady leadership to the district. As Dr. Bridges prepared to retire, the district had begun to heal from financial scandals under the previous superintendent. The racial tensions that were a legacy of merging an urban city and a county/suburban district into one, countywide district were no longer bubbling over, although racial issues certainly continued to be of concern. In 1989, the district was facing several new challenges:

- Explosive growth in student enrollment and a need to explore options for handling 3,000 to 4,000 more students per year.
- Per pupil funding was low, compared to similar districts. Part of the district's funding came from the state, but the county also provided critical funding for capital and maintenance projects, salaries, and instructional supplies.
- Large achievement gaps between racial and socioeconomic groups; SAT scores were below the national average.
- Limited internal capacity to analyze and use data on student and program performance.

Perhaps the most serious challenge, however, was the climate in the district and the community. Much of the community appeared frustrated with the school system. WCPSS leaders were accused of being too insular and few members of the administration actively participated in community groups or initiatives. Although Raleigh is the state capital, relationships between WCPSS and the State's Department of Public Instruction (DPI) were sometimes tense. The district staff was often critical of DPI, and DPI staff complained privately that the school district was unjustifiably arrogant. Thus, educators at the state level, who lived in the community and should have been in a natural position to support the district, were often silent when there was a need for school bonds, increased funding, volunteers in the classroom, or even as advocates for public education.

Parents were also frustrated. Parents of inner city students complained that the district was not successfully educating their children, as indicated by the racial achievement gaps at the time. Parents of above average students complained that their children were not sufficiently challenged, unless they were lucky enough to get into one of the district's magnet schools with a focus on gifted students.

Particularly troubling was a lack of respect towards the school district by business and community leaders. The financial scandals of the 1980s had eroded that respect, but the district's perceived arrogance and insularity were equally problematic. Even those business leaders whose companies were dependent on WCPSS to help lure prospective employees or new companies to the area often showed little interest in partnering with or advocating for the district. On the contrary, members of the Chamber of Commerce and other leaders often made public, negative comments about WCPSS. Not surprisingly, the district's staff felt somewhat beleaguered and morale was low.

Against this backdrop, a new superintendent came on board in 1989. Robert Wentz had most recently worked as superintendent in Clark County, Nevada, another fast-growing district. Dr.

Wentz had experience in opening multi-track, year-round schools that could handle larger enrollments than traditional calendar schools, and in managing the large construction programs that are necessary when enrollments explode. He was to continue to deal with these challenges in WCPSS. With the support of the Board of Education, he also created a new Evaluation and Research department to improve the use of data in decision-making processes at all levels throughout the district. The E&R department was able to provide schools with more data on student performance than they had previously had, including information on how well their students were statistically predicted to perform versus their actual achievement performance. Addressing the gaps between actual and predicted achievement performance was a long-term process, however.

Bob Wentz brought in mostly new leadership to supervise principals, who were organized into a high school, middle school, and three elementary groups. New Assistant Superintendents for each of these grade-level groups of schools reported to the Associate Superintendent for Instruction, who reported to the Superintendent. The Associate Superintendent for Instruction, and five of the new Assistant Superintendents, were from "outside" the district.

Not surprisingly, there was a negative backlash from some of the changes. In the new structure, the superintendent did not have close communication with the various school communities. Principals sometimes expressed resentment about having two levels of bureaucracy between themselves and the superintendent. Bringing in a team of senior leaders almost exclusively from outside the school district contributed to the backlash. Critics said it illustrated how the district failed to "promote from within" and that these "external" leaders did not understand WCPSS.

Dr. Wentz was somewhat of an introvert, but was perceived by many as an effective manager. Schools were built and opened on time. Year-round magnet programs expanded the district's ability to house growing numbers of students. He developed the capabilities of those individuals who comprised his administrative cabinet and empowered them to do their jobs. Some of his administrative cabinet members were strong leaders who left to become superintendents elsewhere. When the Associate Superintendent for Instruction left to become a superintendent elsewhere, she was replaced by an "insider" to WCPSS, Mr. Bill McNeal. At that time, Mr. McNeal had served more than 20 years in WCPSS, working as a teacher, principal, and later as Associate Superintendent for many of the auxiliary services.

Nevertheless, an introverted superintendent was not always in the best position to repair relationships with parents, business, and community leaders. During the five years Dr. Wentz served as the superintendent, staff morale and community attitudes improved only slightly. The district did begin to use data for improvement. In 1993, all four seats on the nine-member Board of Education that were subject to election turned over. Suddenly, the Board of Education that had originally lured Bob Wentz to WCPSS no longer existed, and the new Board members voiced frustrations of parents, principals, and business leaders.

The year 1993 was significant for another reason: that year, North Carolina implemented new statewide End-of-Grade (EOG) achievement tests that were much tougher than previous tests. The test results showed huge fluctuations across schools and school districts. Unfortunately, the tests were "secure" and therefore did not provide diagnostic information to help schools improve. Progress on improving EOG scores would be slow.

In 1994, the Board of Education announced that Dr. Wentz would be leaving and they anticipated having a new superintendent by July 1, 1995. The Associate Superintendent for Instruction, Bill McNeal, would serve as Interim Superintendent until then.

The Jim Surratt Years
When Jim Surratt arrived in WCPSS from Plano, Texas in 1995, he did a lot of listening in the first few months. While he shared very little about his vision for the district in those early days, a few themes emerged.

- He did not plan to bring in large numbers of "external hires" for his leadership team.
- He believed that instructional technology could be a powerful tool for improving student achievement.
- Schools and districts benefit from a caring, demanding community. That type of community would inevitably lead to higher expectations for the district, and criticism of the schools would help point out areas for improvement.
- For reporting purposes, groups of principals should be formed geographically (e.g., the central Wake County area) rather than by grade levels (e.g. middle schools.) The assistant superintendents in each area could then develop relationships with community leaders, PTA groups, agencies, and families in their assigned geographic areas.
- Principals should have no more than one layer of management between themselves and the superintendent. The newly created, geographic Area Assistant Superintendents would report to him.
- The entire administrative cabinet should actively participate in community organizations. Even the introverts were expected to join the Rotary or volunteer to serve on a non-profit board.
- Appearances matter. He often stated that, if you only have a little bit of money, "Fix the lobby." When parents or the public enter a building with a shabby lobby, he believed that they would not feel very confident about the overall organization, no matter how good the services they received inside the rest of the building.
- "Good is the enemy of best." Dr. Surratt believed that WCPSS was a fairly good school system, and that this might be a disadvantage. A good school district should be striving to be the best in the nation, not complacent about their good status.

Early in Dr. Surratt's tenure, the district faced a school bond election to help build new schools and renovate older schools. The bond election passed, in part because it would not require a tax increase. The seeds were sown, however, for a future problem: the small size of the bonds requested would fund construction needs for only a few years. This situation would require planning another bond election sooner than was probably wise.

Dr. Surratt had some ideas about other challenges facing the district. He proposed a policy for capping enrollment at overcrowded schools. To foster innovation, he pushed for the development of a district-sponsored charter school. As part of his focus on technology, he used funds from the emergency/rainy day fund to get computers for each principal and for central office staff. This expenditure alarmed some staff members who felt that by draining this funding source, the district would be unable to handle costs of an emergency, should one arise. Fortunately, no such emergencies occurred. A search began for a Chief Technology Officer, while 10 teachers were given release time each day to work on instructional technology issues.

Another initiative Dr. Surratt undertook was to identify other large, successful school districts that were demographically similar to WCPSS and began to benchmark various input and performance indicators against those districts. So that all the districts might benefit, he suggested forming a coalition of such districts that was eventually called the Educational Benchmarking Network. In addition to looking for ways to benchmark performance, the districts also shared best practices.[6] For example, the Gwinnett County school district had an excellent approach to professional development, while Virginia Beach had a technology "refresh" program that demonstrated how a school district might deal with the need to keep up-to-date computers in schools.

The use of data was important to Surratt. He was very interested in using data on student achievement to identify effective teachers. The data systems in WCPSS did not facilitate linking teachers to individual students at K-8, so a new data collection system was implemented. Longitudinal data concerning which teachers taught which students was collected beginning in 1998. While, up to this point, no teacher has been publicly singled out for good or bad performance based on this data, the fact that it is collected continued the process that Bob Wentz had begun: shaping a culture of accountability and data-based decision making.

As an extension of the use of data to improve schools and the district, Dr. Surratt encouraged staff members to consider applying for the national Malcolm Baldrige Quality award and for the first North Carolina Quality Award in Education. Although recognized in the North Carolina awards program, the district did not win an award at the national level. The application process, however, was an excellent tool for identifying areas—such as strategic planning and placing a value on human capital—where the district was not functioning at the highest possible level.

Can We Make Things a Little Warmer Around Here?
Dr. Surratt understood the importance of personal relationships, and he sometimes complained to senior staff that WCPSS had a cold, unfeeling culture. While these staff members might have agreed, it was not something an "external" superintendent could change easily. Coming in from the outside, he did not have any established relationships upon which to build. Dr. Surratt's attempts to hire "people people" when filling critical vacancies had limited success: the first Assistant Superintendent he hired for Human Resources left after one year. The second lasted only two years. He had more success in his attempts to recognize and celebrate good teaching and in reaching out to build external relationships. For example, WCPSS Teacher of the Year ceremonial banquets became dress-up affairs, with the winner receiving a brand new, donated laptop computer and free use of a new car for their year in office. Surratt also formed a kind of "Kitchen Cabinet" of business leaders. Utilizing early morning breakfast meetings, he opened communication channels with this group of CEOs, banking executives, developers, and community leaders.

Dr. Surratt also reached out to form stronger partnerships by adding three new participants to his weekly staff Cabinet meetings: the president of the local teachers' association, the president of the county PTA, and the president of a community coalition/partnership that supported public education known as the Wake Education Partnership. Privately, some staff shared concerns about how they could possibly have an honest, open dialogue in the presence of these "outsiders." Over time, those concerns remained but there were some clear benefits to having these additional perspectives

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[6] Matter, K. (Chair) Benefiting from Benchmarking: The Educational Benchmarking Network as a Model for Local Districts (Division H – Interactive Symposium (AERA 2000, New Orleans).

represented at the meetings. How would parents be likely to react to various decisions? What concerns were teachers in the field expressing? There were instances in which Cabinet made better decisions because of the contributions of people who were new at the table.

95%: The Most Important Legacy
During his tenure, Jim Surratt led several major initiatives, but one in particular transformed the work of teachers and galvanized the school system. In 1998, the Wake County Board of Education, along with Jim Surratt and his administrative Cabinet, held a goal-setting retreat. In the early 1990s, the district had tried goal setting, establishing new eight goals. The eight goals quickly grew to eleven goals, however, when some constituencies complained their concerns were insufficiently addressed. For example, a health advisory committee complained that health and physical fitness were ignored. Soon, a health and fitness goal was added. Having eleven goals was remarkably like having no goals—no organization can focus on eleven things simultaneously.

By the time of their 1998 retreat, school board members and the administration were older and wiser. They worked hard to narrow their focus. Various types of data were shared that showed a dropout rate among high school students of 4.4% annually. Achievement test scores at grades 3-8 showed that about 20% of the students were scoring below the state's standard for grade level performance, although this was better performance than in other large NC districts. SAT scores had climbed to 1052, which was 35 points above the national average, but the racial gaps were still quite large on all of these measures.

After much soul-searching, the board and administration decided that any new goal(s) should focus on the earlier grade levels, because if students could reach high school already achieving on grade level, high school achievement and dropout rates should also improve as a direct consequence of students being better prepared. Studying the performance data, the lowest achievement test scores in WCPSS at that time were consistently found at grade 3. That was the first grade level in which students took a standardized test, and also reflected past practices in WCPSS of focusing on developmental—rather than academic skills—at grades K-2.   Research indicated the importance of students being able to read in the primary grades in order to succeed in later grades. The other concern was about scores for 8th grade students, which represented the "exit" grade level for middle school students. If students leaving 8th grade were not prepared, their chances of succeeding in high school were poor.

The board and administration finally decided to set a single, tightly focused goal: By 2003, 95 percent of students tested would score at or above grade level in reading and mathematics. The goal would be benchmarked at grades three and eight, although it was obvious that a K-8 effort was going to be needed. It is likely that no one present in the room that day realized the tremendous galvanizing impact of such a simple, inspiring, and highly challenging goal .

"People Thought We Were Crazy"
When the Board of Education first adopted Goal 2003, there were criticisms that expectations were too high. There were concerns that teachers would not support the goal because it seemed unrealistic and concerns that high achieving students would be shortchanged. A backlash from affluent parents of students who were already successful in school was a real possibility and there were fears that the community would not provide the time and resources that were going to be needed to boost student achievement.

One day, a senior official at the state's Department of Public Instruction buttonholed a WCPSS assistant superintendent and the conversation went as follows: "Karen, why did you let them set that 95% goal? Ya'll aren't going to be able to reach that high of a goal," Richard exclaimed. Karen replied, "Richard, if someone gave us the same per pupil expenditure that they have just down the road in Chapel Hill schools, we could reach that goal." "Yes, but that isn't going to happen," Richard predicted. Karen shrugged, and said, "Yeah, but. . . let's wait and see."

Well, the state official was correct about funding. WCPSS per pupil expenditure continued to lag well behind other large districts. But by 2003, WCPSS had raised the percentage of students in grades 3-8 scoring at or above grade level to 91.3%, even while large numbers of special education students were added to the results for the first time. Racial gaps were narrowing.

Percent of Students Scoring Proficient on EOG Reading Test By Grade Level: 1994-2003

Grade Level	1994	2003
3	71.4	89.0
4	76.9	90.0
5	76.9	93.5
6	73.5	87.7
7	76.2	90.3
8	78.7	92.2
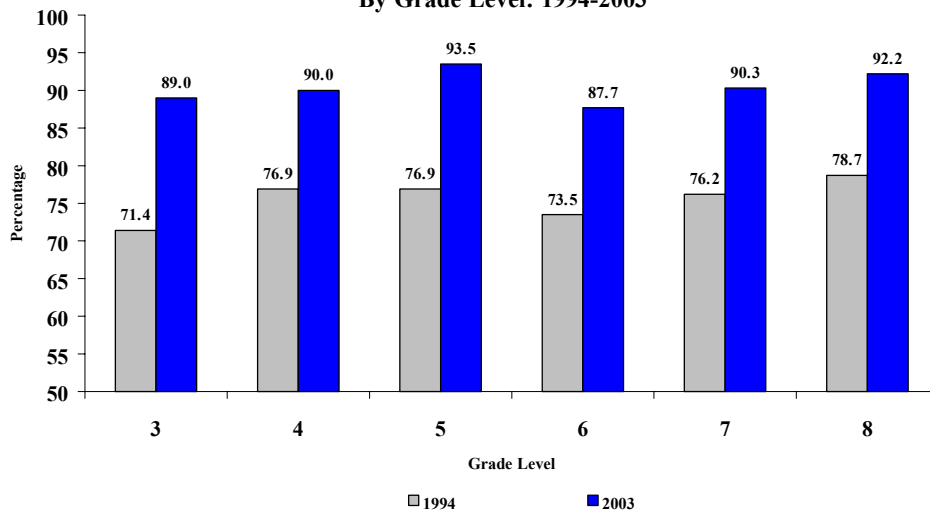
Percent of Students Scoring Proficient on EOG Mathematics Test By Grade Level: 1994 and 2003

Grade Level	1994	2003
3	71.8	93.5
4	77.9	96.3
5	76.5	95.6
6	77.8	91.7
7	77.8	87.9
8	74.3	88.6
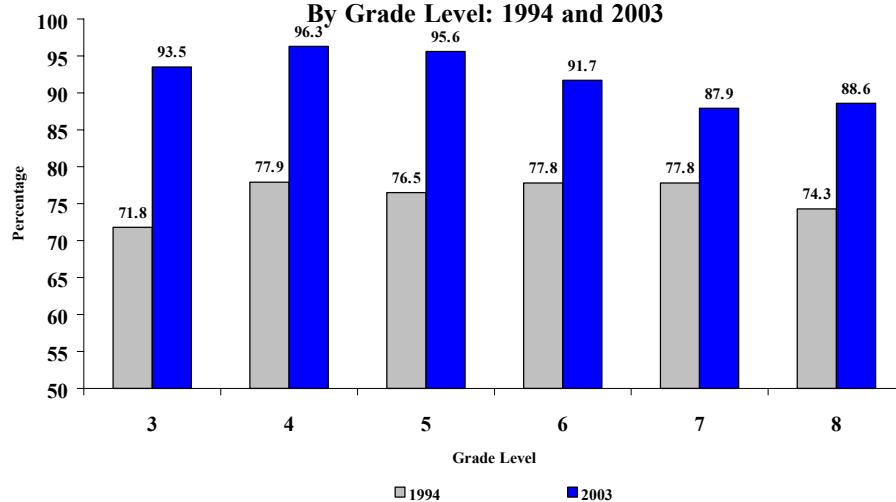
How It Happened

How did WCPSS accomplish this?   Obviously, it took a great deal of hard work, beginning with the teachers, students, and principals. But there were many other factors, as well. Officials in WCPSS did not know about the Change Wheel, but intuitively addressed many of the same factors.

1. The 95% goal, was a stretch goal but *not impossible*. The distinction turned out to be important. Why not choose 100%? District testing staff pointed out that a target of 100% is never realistic when you are working with large groups of students. Had WCPSS chosen a goal of 100%[7] instead of 95%, most people would have shrugged it off. "Oh, yeah, there are hundreds of districts with *that* goal." Folks in the trenches know that sometimes students have a bad day when taking a test, or that Special Education students may take a few years longer to master skills and content than other students, and that a 100% passing rate would have been impossible for those reasons alone. The 95% goal took those concerns into account.

2. WCPSS had a *single* goal. Having a single goal made it clear to everyone and eventually galvanized the school system, as well as much of the community. Virtually every decision at the administrative level and many decisions at the individual school and Board of Education level were filtered through the goal. "How should we approach this decision if we want to ensure support of the 95% goal?"   "Band uniforms can wait, we need after-school tutors."

3. *Resources were realigned and reallocated.* This reallocation took time and could not be accomplished in the first year, so a corollary was that WCPSS took *a long-term view*. A five-year timeline gave enough lead-time for things to really change. For example, although central staffing in science and social studies was weak, when the state provided another central office position or a vacancy occurred in another area, these "found" positions were assigned to areas such as middle school mathematics or literacy at grades K-2.

4. Schools were allowed to adapt programs to *fit the needs of their particular schools*. For example, some of the schools found that "Saturday school" worked well for providing additional instruction, but others found this to be infeasible in their communities.

5. Any funding increases that did occur went *straight to the school level*, with a requirement that they be spent on direct service to students. As a consequence, five years later, the roofs in WCPSS still leaked, the grass often needed mowing, and schools still had thousands of students in classroom trailers. The difference was that thousands more students could read on grade level.

6. WCPSS enlisted *support from the community*. Asking people to help not only led to increased volunteerism, it helped avoid conflicts between constituencies over resources, because almost everyone was "on the team." (Seeking community support may not seem like a big issue in other districts, but WCPSS did not have a good track record in this area.)

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[7] No one who has recently worked in a public school classroom perceives the No Child Left Behind goal of 100% proficient as reasonable.

An End and A Beginning

Against this backdrop, the school district's enrollment continued to grow, as did the construction program to fund it. Overall school funding in WCPSS continued to be lower than in comparable districts in North Carolina.[8] Funding for technology in school classrooms was particularly inadequate, and the idea of asking for bond funding for some technology needs was considered as one strategy to address this important need. Surely in an area with so many technology-based businesses, this need would be apparent to voters? In 1999, the WCPSS asked the county for additional funding for building new schools, with the inclusion of funding for school-based technology. This request was to be funded by school bonds. Several anti-tax groups organized to defeat the bonds. Funding technology that would quickly be out of date using long-term bonded indebtedness was considered "really dumb," even by some education supporters. The bonds were soundly defeated and many building projects that were already on the drawing board or had already begun were stopped or postponed.

Like all superintendents, Jim Surratt received frequent calls from "headhunters" hired by boards of education that were looking for a new superintendent. While he was very committed to the 95% goal, he was frustrated by the lack of funding in WCPSS and by the challenge of changing what he perceived as the impersonal climate. After the 1999 failure of the WCPSS school bonds, he began to listen more carefully to job offers from Texas, where he had worked before coming to WCPSS. When an offer came from Klein Independent School District in the spring of 2000, he took the offer.

In searching for previous superintendents, the WCPSS Board of Education typically hired an outside firm to conduct a national search, at a cost of $50,000 or more. This time, they turned to an insider—someone who had already led the district's instructional efforts for the previous eight years. Associate Superintendent Bill McNeal had strong support on the board for the position of superintendent. "Why should we conduct a national search when the best person in the country for this job is already here?" Someone coming in from the outside also might want to set their own goal(s), and the Board of Education had no interest in diverting attention from the 95% goal set in 1998.

Bill McNeal: New Superintendent

Under Bill McNeal's leadership, the community quickly passed new school bonds, with almost 70% approval. Morale improved, as Mr. McNeal quickly assembled a Teacher Advisory Committee, improved relationships with county officials, and reached out to community groups through non-stop meetings and presentations to various audiences. The district hired a new Communications Director and reinstated an employee newsletter that had been discontinued due to budget cuts.

One of Mr. McNeal's initiatives included using central staff leaders to establish a Speaker's Bureau of knowledgeable individuals who could address school faculty meetings or community groups on important topics. In the 1999 bond campaign, the votes of school district employees had been taken for granted. Now, employees would have access to information about such issues.

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[8] For 1998-99, the per pupil expenditure (excluding child nutrition and capital/construction costs) was $5,634. The County Commissioners, however, also spent $1,419 in capital costs to address the increasing enrollments and aging of other facilities.

Mr. McNeal encouraged his Cabinet to plan long-term and to think strategically. He also decided that continuous improvement initiatives would be expanded even further throughout the district. In addition to using data, the district would look at processes using a Plan-Do-Study-Act model, and provide training for school staff as well as those in central office.

Building upon Jim Surratt's attempts to improve relationships, Bill McNeal had the advantage of 25 years of work in the community, where he had almost never turned down an invitation to speak or listen about issues related to education. As an African-American, he had earned credibility in the black community as someone who cared about all children, and he spoke of leaving no child behind long before the federal legislation using that phrase was passed. Yet, he did not focus solely on struggling students. The achievement growth of gifted students, magnet programs to attract affluent students, and improving high schools' academic performance were all of concern to him. He was widely regarded as a "people person" who also had high expectations and tough standards. Because of these qualities and his tremendous integrity, he engendered incredible loyalty among his subordinates.

Goals, Goals, Goals
In striving towards the goal of having 95% of students achieving at or above grade level, the district implemented several initiatives. While overall funding was still fairly low compared to other similar districts, several new initiatives were funded by realignment of resources and some increase in the funding provided by the County Commissioners.[9] Some of these include:

- Project Achieve, modeled on the Brazosport, TX approach of using short, scripted lessons that were developed to align closely with the curriculum. Frequent assessments followed the lessons and teachers at each grade level had common planning periods. Based on the results of the assessments, students were re-grouped for either remediation or enrichment on specific skills. In Brazosport, this approach had helped close achievement gaps. WCPSS schools found the approach effective in those schools that participated (generally schools that had not shown sufficient improvement in prior years).

- An approach to school assignment that attempts to limit the concentration of low-income students in each school. This approach was developed based on research that indicated lower achievement for all students in high-poverty schools.

- Intensive, long-term staff development on topics such as "Understanding Poverty," diversity, and reading instruction for special education students.

- "Student Accountability Standards" to ensure that students shared in the responsibility of mastering grade level standards before promotion to the next grade.[10]

Early on, while implementing initiatives aimed at reaching Goal 2003, district and community leaders became convinced that having a goal was much better than not having had one. As "quick wins" or even slight improvements were noted in student achievement, the resulting increase in *esprit de corps* throughout the school district was almost tangible. Some schools made rapid progress through "local innovations" that inspired and challenged other schools. Five years can pass quickly in a busy school district, however, and having experienced the benefits of a common

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[9] By 2001-02, per pupil expenditure (excluding child nutrition and capital/construction costs) was $6,582.
[10] Test scores are just one factor considered in promotion decisions.

vision and goal, district and community leaders wanted to avoid any loss of momentum-- a real possibility if a new goal was not set by the end of 2003.

To help determine what the next goal should be, a community non-profit organization called the Wake Education Partnership worked with the school district to begin a community input process called "Voices and Choices." Hundreds of meetings were held around the county, facilitated by trained volunteers. The input from these sessions was compiled and studied. Data on student performance was analyzed, scrutinized, and discussed. Areas of comparative weakness were identified and prioritized. Learning from past controversies, the Board of Education kept County Commissioners informed about the process. (For Goal 2003, the County Commissioners felt they were asked to increase funding to support that goal without having input into setting it.)

When results for Goal 2003 were announced, two grade levels had exceeded the 95% level in math, but overall the results fell slightly short of the 95% goal. This fact—that "only" 91.3% of students were achieving at or above grade level (rather than 95%)—resulted in two actions by the Superintendent. First, McNeal made sure to recognize how far the district had come and how much hard work on the part of teachers, students, and the community had contributed to the large gains. The superintendent also asked for the community to recognize the school staff and students. Businesses posted signs congratulating staff and students on their success. As the work of Rosabeth Moss Kanter would have predicted, rewards and recognitions of staff and students kept morale high, in spite of some press coverage about the district reaching "only" 91.3% proficient.

Second, McNeal made sure that the 95% goal became incorporated into the next goal: Goal 2008. In addition to the remaining 3.7% needed to reach the 95% target, data on WCPSS performance showed two other areas of concern: with the exception of SAT scores and dropout rates, high schools had not made the same achievement progress as the elementary and middle schools that were the focus of the previous goal. In addition, students in grades 3-8 who were *already* scoring at the highest level, Level IV, were not showing the high achievement growth the community expected.

After much discussion, input, and "wordsmithing," the Board of Education adopted the Goal 2008 (see box). The goal included high schools, where progress was needed, and also focused on challenging *all* students. It reflected community input and the need to focus on the graduation rate included in the federal No Child Left Behind legislation.

WCPSS is committed to academic excellence. By 2008, 95 percent of students in grades 3 through 12 will be at or above grade level as measured by the State of North Carolina End-of-Grade or Course tests, and all student groups will demonstrate high growth.

In pursuit of this goal, we will:

- Increase challenging educational opportunities for all students.
- Increase student participation and success in advanced classes at the high school level.
- Increase the percentage of 9th grade students graduating from high school within four years.
- Recruit, develop, support and retain a highly qualified workforce to ensure student success.
- Identify and seek resources necessary to support student success.
- Build a consensus of support through community collaboration

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Recognition

In November 2003, the North Carolina Association of School Administrators named Bill McNeal their State Superintendent of the Year and forwarded his name to AASA for the national competition. McNeal's recognition followed a successful October bond referendum for a $550 million school construction program, creation of a new academic goal for the school system, and a dramatic increase in student academic success capping the five-year Goal 2003.   Later that month, the North Carolina School Boards Association honored Bill McNeal as their state Superintendent of the Year. No one could remember a time when the two state organizations had both selected the same superintendent in the same year for such an honor.   McNeal, in turn, credited any successes he might have had to the staff, students, and community that had supported the Wake County Public School System.

On February 20, 2004, Bill McNeal was selected as the AASA 2004 National Superintendent of the Year. Again, he credited his own success to other people who have worked to improve WCPSS. But it is likely that the success of the district also can be attributed in part to having leaders like Bill McNeal who incorporated the ten elements of the Change Wheel, even before they learned of its existence.

Rewards and Recognitions	Common Themes, Shared Vision	Symbols and Signals

Measures, Milestones, and Feedback

Management Structure and Process

GOALS

Policies, Procedures, System Alignment

Education, Training, Action Vehicles

Communicating Useful Approaches

Champions and Sponsors

Quick Wins and Local Innovations
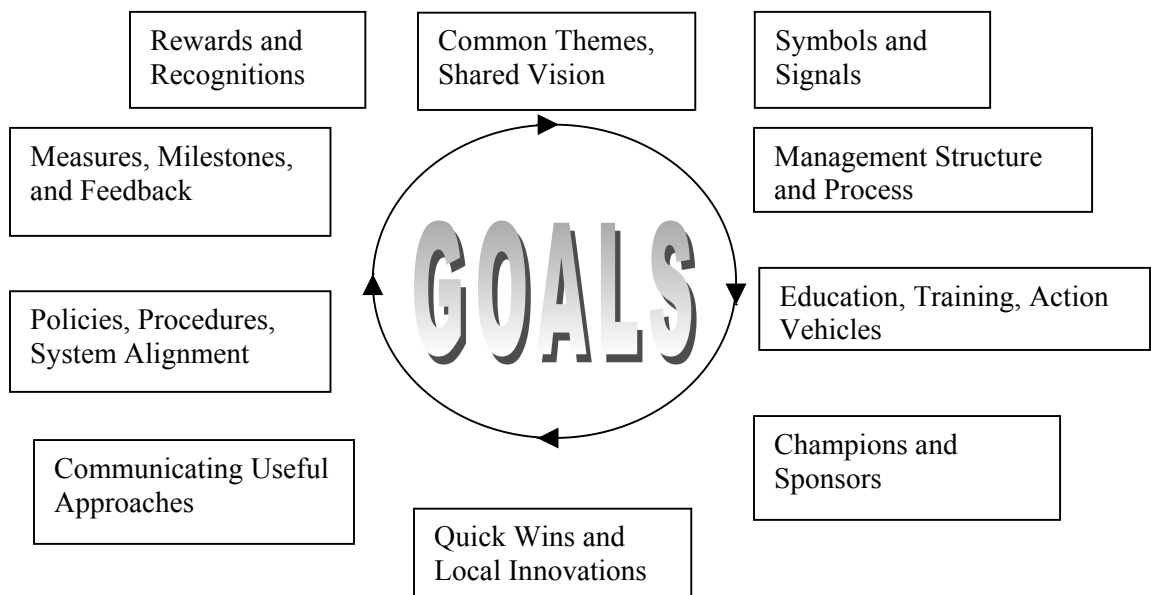
Appendix A: Short Summaries of Various WCPSS Projects, Programs, and Initiatives

Organization of Reading and Literacy Staff
Population Served: All students
Beginning with the 2003-04 school year, a new organizational structure was implemented under which a Literacy Team will coordinate all literacy initiatives in the district. Staff members with reading and literacy responsibilities have been transferred onto the team from Special Education, Title I, and Curriculum and Instruction. Rather than reporting relationships based on funding source (e.g., Title I, Special Education, C&I), the staff is grouped by function.

A Framework for Understanding Poverty
WCPSS initiated this training for school and central office staff in 2000. A Framework for Understanding Poverty provides an in-depth study of information and issues that will increase the participants' knowledge and understanding of "the poverty culture." Topics include: how economic class affects behaviors and mindsets, why students from generational poverty often fear being educated, the "hidden rules" within economic class, discipline interventions that improve behavior, and the eight resources that make a difference in success.

Special Education Reading Initiative
Population Served: Special education students performing below grade level in reading.
The special education reading initiative is intended to help teachers acquire the necessary skills to ensure that students will reach their maximum potential in reading and will understand the reading process. Through varied and intense staff development, teachers gain the skills to assess, diagnose, prescribe, and implement appropriate strategies to remediate reading difficulties. Materials and ongoing support are provided to reach this goal. Special Education Services is currently providing specific program staff development in Reading Mastery, Corrective Reading (SRA/ Mc Graw-Hill), Wilson Language Overview, and Great Leaps. Special Education Services is currently in their third year of implementation of the N.C. State Improvement Project – Best Practices Center for Reading and Writing.

Accelerated Learning Program/Title-I Literacy Program, Grades K-2
Population Served: Struggling readers in the primary grades
WCPSS initiated this supplement program during the 2001-02 school year. The program is targeted at students scoring below the district's literacy benchmarks in grades K-2. The program utilizes non-fiction materials from Benchmark Publishing to promote student skills in seven components of literacy. Lessons are quick-paced (30-45 minutes) and take place four days a week. Funding for Literacy teachers in 40+ of the schools comes from Title I funds, and the remaining elementary schools receive local funding to support the program.

Accelerated Learning Program Grades 3-8
Population Served: Students in grades 3-8 performing below grade level in reading or math.
WCPSS began this program in 1999-2000. ALP focuses on students in grades 3-8 who have scored below grade level on state End of Grade (EOG) tests. Schools are allocated money for tutorials for targeted students. The tutorials are typically scheduled during the day, after school, on Saturdays, or during inter-sessions in year round schools. Schools with a high percentage of low-income students

are allocated additional "Challenged School" funds to support students scoring below grade level or others with special needs for support. Achievement outcome data from ALP has been positive.

Community ALP
Population served: Students in grades 3-12 experiencing academic difficulty
This program is designed to provide tutorial support to students in the targeted grades who are experiencing difficulty successfully scoring at proficient levels on the End of Grade and End of Course tests. Programs are located at community sites including the Boys and Girls Club, Heritage Park, Chavis Heights, Salvation Army, and the Garner Road.

Fast ForWord
Population Served: Elementary/middle school students needing help in phonemic awareness or auditory discrimination (29 schools.)
This program uses computer-based activities to help students learn to discriminate among sounds. The activities resemble computer games and reward students for correctly recognizing sounds or following directions. The activities become more difficult as the students' listening skills improve. This is a commercial product by Scientific Learning Corporation.

NovaNet
Population Served: Students in all high schools who need online coursework.
This computer-based learning system provides students in all high schools with access to online self-paced instruction. Courses include both core courses aligned with the North Carolina standard course of study, as well as remediation for math and reading and SAT preparation. NovaNET is used to recover course credit, supplement course work to prevent course failure, and remediation for all students, including students with limited English proficiency. WCPSS has provided a trained NovaNET teacher in every high school to oversee the program. The size and success of NovaNET has varied by school.

Transition Counselors
Population Served: Long-term suspended secondary students.
Transition counselors work as case managers for long-term suspended students. Counselors help students and their families receive all the services they need. They help students enroll at alternative educational programs and re-enroll to the regular school, assist with probation officers and court hearings as needed, provide counseling as appropriate, and put families in touch with community resources. They also help the students connect with support programs and services once they re-enroll.

Partnership for Educational Success (PES)
Population Served: The families of low achieving, multiple risk students at 45 schools.
PES is a collaboration between WCPSS and Wake County Human Services to address family issues that create barriers to student success. PES team members include social workers, counselors, and other staff from both agencies; one team member becomes a liaison with each identified family. The liaison builds a relationship with the family to increase participation in and communication with their children's schools. In addition, the liaison educates the family about community resources and how to "negotiate the system." The goal of PES is to address family issues and build a relationship between school and family to increase the academic success of the student.

Communities in Schools (CIS)
Population served: Students in grades K-12 who are at-risk for academic failure and/or have other social or emotional issues
CIS connects community resources with students and families through the school site. CIS also works to prevent school failure through providing mentoring and tutoring. Some of these efforts take place in school settings while others are in community sites. CIS has also assisted in training ALP volunteer tutors for schools.

Parent Involvement and Outreach
Population served: Students and families with high needs in 45 schools.
Parent Liaisons strive to build the capacity of families, schools, and communities, working together, to improve children's learning. Because families, schools, and communities vary however, the roles and responsibilities of each Parent Liaison may differ. Parent Liaisons help parents form a strong network of support to stay involved in their child's school success.

Helping Hands Project
Population served: Black/African-American male students.
This mentoring program pairs adult role models with Black/African-American students in grades three through twelve, who have potential for success in school, but who are not reaching their potential and are at risk of school failure. The focus is to improve students' metacognitive skills, interpersonal skills, self-esteem, and leadership skills through work with small groups and individually.

Project Achieve
Population Served: All students in 15 elementary and middle schools.
Project Achieve is adapted from a model used in Brazosport, Texas, which improved students' achievement and closed achievement gaps. Project Achieve provides a structure for best teaching practices, with instruction tied to the state-mandated Standard Course of Study and frequent assessment of students to drive further instruction. All participating schools follow the same instructional calendar or pacing guide. Teachers deliver short "focus lessons" at the beginning of every block of instruction for reading and for math, which typically cover one to three objectives and serve as the anticipatory set for the lesson to follow. Approximately every five to fifteen days, teachers administer standard brief assessments to check for mastery. Based on the assessments and classroom work, those students who show mastery of the objectives receive enrichment while those who do not receive additional remedial instruction. Eleven elementary schools and four middle schools are now involved in the project. Achievement and attitudinal results have been positive.

Emergency Response and Crisis Management
The WCPSS Security/Investigations Office works in conjunction with administrative staff, school principals, thirteen local law enforcement agencies, Wake County Human Services, Wake County Fire Department, Wake Emergency Management, and non-public schools to implement a comprehensive system of security measures designed to make WCPSS campuses safe places to learn. The *"Wake County Critical Incident Programs"* will ensure the safety of the more than 109,000 students and more than 13,000 staff in schools and administrative offices across the county.

The *Wake County Critical Incident Program's* goal is to improve and strengthen the emergency response and crisis management plans. This goal is achieved through the following four strategies:

- Improve the infrastructure of the county's Crisis Management Task Force efforts;
- Improve school facilities to foster a safer learning environment;
- Improve and disseminate crisis prevention programs and plans;
- Build parent and community capacity by raising their level of awareness about the importance of school safety.

Physical Education Initiative
The Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) developed the "Wake Up to Healthy Kids" Program, a recent district-wide physical education initiative to improve the fitness of over 109,000 grade K-12 students. Our primary goal is "to increase the proportion of students who spend at least 50 percent of physical education time being physically active by revamping our K-12 programs to address the lifelong fitness concepts and State standards for physical education." The revised K-12 curriculum will focus on the development of the whole person, rather than on the competitive nature of physical education.

The goals and strategies are to: 1) Provide model physical education instruction and assessment strategies to help students understand, improve and/or maintain their physical well-being; 2) improve teachers' capabilities to implement a physical education curriculum that is aligned with the National and State Physical Education Standards; 3) provide instruction in healthy eating habits and good nutrition for students, and 4) provide opportunities for students to develop positive social skills through physical activity.

Grant Funded Projects

21st Century Grants
Population served: Elementary students in targeted areas of the county.
The goal of Great Expectations is to increase student achievement in eastern Wake County by identifying community and school needs, establishing linkages and partnerships to help address those needs, and aligning and securing material and human resources. Services are provided in an after-school setting.

Project SOAR
Project SOAR is an afternoon enrichment program operating in Wake County schools, designed to increase students' resiliency using the four factors of academic competence, a sense of belonging, a sense of usefulness, and personal potency.

Magnet School Assistance Program
Population Served: All students in five schools.
WCPSS has a 2001-04 Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The goals of the program are to improve the minority/non-minority balance of the student populations as well as to improve achievement through innovative curriculum. Each of the participating magnet schools incorporates a unique theme to facilitate student learning. Brooks Elementary and Moore Square Middle School have a museum theme, Joyner Elementary

focuses on language exploration, Millbrook Elementary has the International Baccalaureate Program, and Powell Elementary has a visual and performing arts theme.

Class-Size Reduction Program
Population: Students in 32 elementary schools.
Federal funds provide 54 extra elementary teachers to 32 schools with challenging populations (based on the percentage of low-income students as well as the number and percent of students scoring below grade level). The goal is to improve student achievement by reducing class sizes. Teachers can be used at grades K-5, and schools either create an additional class or have the additional teacher rotate across all classrooms at a grade level to reduce class sizes at key instructional times. The state has also provided additional teacher positions to reduce class sizes at K-2.

Smaller Learning Communities
Population: Most high school students in WCPSS.
Two federal grants are supporting efforts to create smaller learning communities at 10 WCPSS high schools, and the Gates Foundation is funding an additional site. The federally funded programs focus on offering students increased "opportunities for success" through block schedules, teacher advisors, and transitional programs for ninth graders. Increased personalization, closing of achievement gaps, and increased academic rigor are expected *results. The Gates grant is funding a new Health Sciences Academy at East Wake High School* as a school-within-a-school. Goals are to better prepare students for college, technical school, or work after high school as well as productive citizenship.

Early Reading First
Population: 24 child care teachers and over 200 high-needs four-year-olds.
Provides training to teachers in child-care settings on ways to promote children's language and literacy skills. The goal is to create more optimal childcare environments and subsequently greater student learning in school.

Magnet Schools

Purpose: To provide a variety of choice options for students and families, as well as to attract students to schools that would be otherwise be under-enrolled.

Context: Merging an inner city and suburban/rural district did not necessarily mean that schools became more racially or economically balanced automatically. Housing patterns were still racially identifiable throughout most of the county. During the early 1980s many WCPSS inner city schools were at risk of closure due to under-enrollment. Test scores were also fairly low in these schools, where a large percentage of the students were minorities from low-income backgrounds. Magnet programs were introduced to offer parents a choice of instructional programs such as Gifted and Talented, or International Studies magnet options. Current programs include Global Communications, International Baccalaureate, Language Exploration, Leadership, Montessori, Museums, University Connections, Accelerated Studies, and Year-Round. Attendance was voluntary, by application, although each school also had a base population of students from the surrounding neighborhoods. Recently, some students have been assigned to the formerly all-voluntary year round schools.

Results: Magnet schools have proven very popular with parents and students. As the enrollment in WCPSS has increased and brand new suburban schools have been opened, some parents find the newer schools more attractive. Nevertheless, most magnet schools have many more applicants than they can accommodate.

Evaluations of the WCPSS magnet programs have indicated that achievement in these schools is comparable to achievement in other schools in the district—i.e., high in comparison to state standards—although students in magnet schools spend more time exploring the arts, other cultures, communications, and foreign language.

One area in which magnet programs have been less successful in recent years is in the federally-targeted goals of the Magnet Schools Assistance Program. Those funds are intended to reduce minority-group isolation, but as the district has moved away from using race as a criterion for selecting magnet students, more minority students have been able to apply to and be accepted at magnet schools.

Standards-Based Grading

Purpose: To adjust the grading system used in all elementary schools in the district so that the grade a student receives is based on how well that student has mastered the standards for that grade level, rather than other factors.

Context: Grades have typically reflected a combination of effort, behavior, compliance with class requirements such as homework, and actual learning. The portion of the grade that reflected how much a student learned might be adjusted—if a student was showing good progress but was instructed on a level that was below grade level, for example. Often parents did not realize that their children were not meeting state standards for their grade level. In WCPSS, under the old elementary school system, grades of A, B, C, D and U were given in third, fourth and fifth grades. Grades of C (commendable progress), S (satisfactory progress), N (needs more practice) and NA (does not apply) were given in K-2. Under the new system, a grade of Level 4 shows that a student exceeds grade level standards, while a Level 3 shows a student is meeting those standards. Grades of Level 1 and Level 2 indicate that the student is not mastering grade level standards, although the student may be making progress on below grade level material. (Level 2 indicates the student is inconsistent and needs support to meet targeted standards. Level 1 means the student shows insufficient performance of targeted grade-level standards even with extra support.)

Results: After a pilot year in five schools, the new grading system was expanded to about half of the elementary schools in the district in 2003 and it continues to be expanded. All elementary schools will be included by August 2004. The pilot phase was critical. For example, it became apparent that communication with parents ahead of time did not completely alleviate their concerns about the grading system. However, the second report cards parents receive under the new system seems to be a turning point, after which they generally seem to prefer the new approach. Realizing that the first two grading periods are a time when phone calls and concerns will be more frequent helped schools plan their implementation accordingly.

The piloting of the new approach also led to adjustments in the approach. For example, a Level 3* grade was added after receiving complaints from parents in the five pilot schools that too many children were getting Level 3 grades, and that since it was such a large number of students, it was not giving enough detail about how well a particular student was doing on the continuum. Level 3* indicates the student demonstrates proficiency of targeted grade-level standards with evidence of being able to apply the knowledge.

eMarc
(Electronically Managing Assessments, Resources, and Curriculum)

Purpose: To provide teachers with an instructional management system that "talks" to other products already in use—such as the state's student information database—that would enable them to manage classroom assessments, track students' continuous progress on each curricular objective, access resources such as curriculum and sample lessons written by district specialists, generate reports, re-group students for remediation and enrichment, and access test item banks linked to the curriculum.

Context: Three groups had identified problems for teachers managing the required paper and pencil assessments that are used in our district to track elementary students' progress on an ongoing basis.   These groups were the K-5 Assessment Task Force, the Superintendent's Teacher Advisory Committee, and a state-mandated Paperwork Reduction Committee. Commercially available products were either too expensive or could not interface with our Oracle student database.   These products often relied on technology that was not compatible, as well, such as the PALM OS.   In all of the products that were considered, much of the content related to K-5 assessments and sample lesson plans would have to be added.

Results/Outcomes: The district decided to develop its own instructional management system and to include a component in which K-5 teachers can record information in handheld PDAs (i.e., iPAQs.)   Development will be ongoing, but the system already produces reports for teachers by individual student and objective, produces reports for parents and central staff, reduces teacher time spent on data collection, and talks to the NCWISE Oracle student database.   It is not yet deployed in all schools, because experience had shown that it might be preferable to perfect a new initiative in a pilot group of schools and then deploy it to other schools.   Half of all elementary schools are expected to be using it by August, and content for middle schools is being added (sample lessons, short assessments, item banks.)   Eventually, high schools will be using it as well, because item banks already exist for several high school courses.   Many of the teachers in the 10 pilot schools are using handheld PDAs this spring to record student information as they observe it.

Leaders for a New Millennium: Master's Degree Program in School Administration

Purpose: To develop and maintain a leadership pipeline of school level leaders by offering a cutting edge Master of School Administration Degree Program that will attract top candidates from Wake County's teacher corp. The Master's in School Administration (MSA) initiative is one strategy WCPSS is using to "grow our own" school leaders and ensure they have the skills needed to succeed in our district. This degree program operates through a partnership between WCPSS and North Carolina State University. All graduate students in the program are WCPSS professional employees selected through a competitive application process, based on their likely potential to become effective school principals.

Context: WCPSS has 127 schools and will open 7 more in the summer of 2004. In addition to new "principalships" created by the opening of new schools, WCPSS needs new principals to fill vacancies that will occur in the next few years due to retirement.   Current estimates are that over a third of current WCPSS principals could retire immediately, if they chose to do so. Local universities have not produced the school leaders WCPSS needs in the quantities needed. Furthermore, university-based programs must be generic enough to meet the needs of the school districts throughout the region, where the needs are quite different from one school district to the next.

For example, WCPSS principals need to understand school finance, but they are ahead of the game if they also understand school finance in the context of the specific state and school district in which they work. While all principals need to understand and use data to make decisions, a WCPSS principal has a great deal more data readily available than most principals in other districts in the region. Thus, they benefit if they know what is available and how to interpret it.

WCPSS is fortunate to have many senior administrators who also have doctorates and college teaching experience. Approximately one half of the courses the MSA students take are taught by WCPSS leaders. University faculty, school superintendents, and our State Superintendent of Public Instruction have also taught courses in the program.

Results: The 18 members of the first MSA cohort are applying for their first assistant principal positions or equivalent internships this spring. Their positive view of the MSA program resulted in a doubling of the number of applicants in the second year, and re-doubling again for the third cohort. (Our third cohort of MSA students has recently gone through the application process.)   While it is too soon to tell how these newly trained school leaders will perform, the "faculty" has had an opportunity to observe them very closely, which should lead to better placement decisions about these individuals.

Wake Leadership Academy

Purpose:
- To develop a comprehensive offering of seminars and training that is linked to the state and national standards for school leaders.
- To recruit, develop, and retain quality employees for administrative positions whose vision, potential, and abilities support leaving no child behind.
- To retain new school leaders by developing systems of support and learning for them.
- To build partnerships with business, funding agencies and the local community in order to leverage financial and intellectual resources for the academy.
- To provide training or expertise to educational or business entities outside of Wake County when space is available.
- To provide research based training for administrators on how to support staff as they implement cutting edge instructional practices.
- To provide training in the analysis and presentation of test data to inform instructional practice in schools.
- To provide training and consultation to district leaders to enable them to implement the concepts of continuous improvement.

Context: The Wake Leadership Academy is in its fourth full year of operation. It is a joint venture between the Wake County Public Schools and Wake Education Partnership that was created to address the serious need to recruit and retain high quality school level leaders and to retool existing leaders for the new demands of high stakes accountability and continuous improvement. The leadership of the school system and the partnership decided to collaborate on this initiative because of its critical importance to the continued success of the public schools and in order to ensure its survival in times of budget shortfalls. Facing large numbers of administrator retirements over the next ten years and the rapid growth of the system combined to necessitate the district taking a very proactive stance is developing its own. District and community leadership decided they could no longer rely on chance and the universities to provide them with outstanding candidates – trained for the challenges of the 21st century Principalship. The district has hired between 50-60 new school administrators each of the last four years. Dr. Joe Peel was hired as Director of the academy in July 2000.

Impact: The Wake Leadership Academy has:
- Established a very selective, leadership based, cost effective, cohort Master of School Administration Degree Program for Wake County employees in cooperation with NCSU. The third cohort will commence in August.
- Developed year-long induction programs for principals and assistant principals to ensure their success and to support them with mentors.
- Developed and are offering at least 25 different seminars or programs to school leaders that are correlated to ISLLC Standards for School Administrators.
- Provided senior leadership of the district with 6 days of training and an intense summer experience at Harvard University in Change and Change Management.
- Developed a cadre of trainers in several program areas in order to build organizational capacity to sustain training initiatives.
- Birthed the idea of a districtwide continuous improvement conference of national scope and have led its development and implementation that has provided learning for about 4,000 staff

each of the last two years. This year's conference will be five and a half days long and will provide learning opportunities that are aligned with district goals and initiatives for approximately 6,000 professional staff.

- Coordinated the deployment of the Baldrige (Quality) initiative throughout the district.
- Developed or sponsored the development of instructional training for school leaders in literacy, hands-on-science and problem based mathematics.
- Provided more than 6500 training/learning opportunities to WCPSS employees each of the last three years.
- Developed an evaluation system that can be used to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of all adult learning throughout the district
- Provided consulting services to various schools and central office departments.
- Assisted in developing a common strategic planning process within the district.
- Made the importance of leadership development and support a districtwide concern.
- Sought and received grant funding to support program development and operations.
- Developed a standards based approach to leadership training development.
- Established guidelines and a pool of schools to ensure that administrative interns are placed appropriately and are afforded a broad, comprehensive learning experience.
- Produced a book for new principals to assist them through their first summer on the job, which was distributed to all principals because of its quality.
- Assisted the district in developing succession planning at the teacher, administrator and central office levels.
- Implemented the National Association of Secondary School Principals Assessment to better develop the district's assistant principals for the principalship. 36 assessors have been trained and will be assessing administrators three times per year.
- Developed a framework for administrators that clearly links all training offered by the academy to the district's evaluation process for administrators.
- Developed a yearlong Developing Teacher Leader Program that serves 12 school teams of teachers each year.

The North Carolina Growth Based Accountability System (ABCs model)

Purpose: The intent of North Carolina's accountability system is to promote student achievement by holding schools accountable for the academic performance of their students in grades 3 to 12. The system, which was passed into law in 1995, provides financial rewards to teachers and teacher assistants in schools where students show overall expected or high growth in state tested subjects (reading and math in grades 3 to 8; Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Physical Science, English 1, U.S. History, and Civics and Economics in High School.) Prediction formulas based on past student performance are used to set expected and high growth standards for each school. The model emphasizes local control of improvement efforts and is perceived as a fair model since the reports give a measure of progress made by the students that were tested. Student results are compared to their own past performance instead of a previous group.

Context: The ABCs system was necessary in order to hold all schools accountable for the delivery of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. Each school receives detailed goal summary results by school and teacher that can be used to plan improved instruction. Disaggregated data by race, gender, and other NCLB categories is available from the North Carolina State Education website. In addition, in WCPSS, schools receive graphical displays of expected and high growth performance by disaggregated subgroups. The monetary rewards are incentive for teachers and schools to take serious looks at their reports, instruction, and students.

Results: There has been dramatic improvement in the performance of WCPSS' students since the implementation of the ABCs model. In 1996-97, 44% of WCPSS' schools made expected growth and 30% made high growth for a total of 74%. In 2002-03, 25% of WCPSS' schools made expected growth, and 72% made high growth for a total of 97%. Student performance has improved in all areas and in all subgroups. In 1998, the percentage of students scoring at grade level in 3rd to 8th grade reading was 81.7%. In 2003, the percentage of students scoring at grade level was 90.4%. The math passing percentage went from 83.4% in 1998 to 92.2% in 2003. In addition, the Black-White reading achievement gap went from 33 percentage points in 1998 down to 18 percentage points in 2003; while the math achievement gap dropped from 34 percentage points to 16 points.

Students are also performing better in high school classes. The overall passing rate on End-of-Course exams has risen from 72.8% in 1998 to 81% in 2003. Here also the Black-White achievement gap is decreasing. On Algebra 1 exams, the gap has fallen from 24.7 percentage points in 1998 to 19.1 points in 2003. On English 1 exams, the gap has gone from 37.1 points to 20.3 percentage points.

Student Accountability Standards: A WCPSS Policy Regarding Promotion and Intervention

Purpose: To ensure that all students master basic skills before advancing to the next grade level. The policy requires students to demonstrate proficiency in grade-level competencies in English/language arts and mathematics to be promoted. The 2001-02 school year was the second year of implementation of the Wake County Board of Education's Promotion and Intervention Policy at grades K-8. It was also a baseline year for the State Board of Education (SBE) Student Accountability Standards policy requiring students in grades 3, 5, and 8 to demonstrate grade level proficiency on the state End-of-Grade (EOG) tests in reading and mathematics.

Context: Due to concerns that students were not mastering basic skills before advancing to the next grade level the board adopted Wake County Board of Education's Promotion and Intervention Policy at grades K-8. As with the SBE policy, a key component of the implementation of the WCPSS Promotion and Intervention Policy is the use of standardized assessments as *one* of the ways to determine grade-level competency. Since multiple-choice tests are not used in grades K-2, student progress in grades K-2 is regularly assessed based on guidelines developed by WCPSS instructional services staff. In grades 3-5, the EOG reading and math, in combination with course grades, are used to assess grade-level competency in English/language arts and mathematics. In grades 6-8, in addition to EOG scores, students are required to earn a passing course grade in English/language arts, mathematics, either social studies or science, and a minimum of 50% of remaining courses taken.
Further information on the other key components of the WCPSS Promotion and Intervention Policy can be found in our report *Promotion/Retention of Students in Grades K-8 2000-01* (Report No. 02.08). The WCPSS policy recognizes the statutory authority of the principal to make all final promotion decisions. Additional details regarding the Promotion and Intervention policy can be found on the WCPSS web site (http://www.wcpss.net/promotion-intervention) and in Board Policy 5530.

Results: Ninety-one percent of students in grades K-8 were promoted, 4% were retained, and 6% withdrew from WCPSS at the end of the 2001-02 school year. The rate of retention was highest among students in grades K-2 (6%) when retention decisions were not linked to End-of-Grade (EOG). The K-2 students were likely retained more often because of the generally held belief that it is more effective to retain students at early grades than later grades where physical and social differences can be more significant. Kindergarten (8%) and grade 1 (7%) have higher retention rates while grade 2 (4%) was similar to the retention rates at grades 3-8. In grades 3-8, students who did not achieve a Level III or IV on EOG tests were considered for retention, but as shown in Figure 1, this did not lead to higher rates of retention.

Figure 1
Promotion/Retention Status for Students in Grades K-8 by Grade

	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
□ Promotion	92%	93%	96%	97%	98%	99%	96%	97%	97%
■ Retention	8%	7%	4%	3%	2%	1%	4%	3%	3%
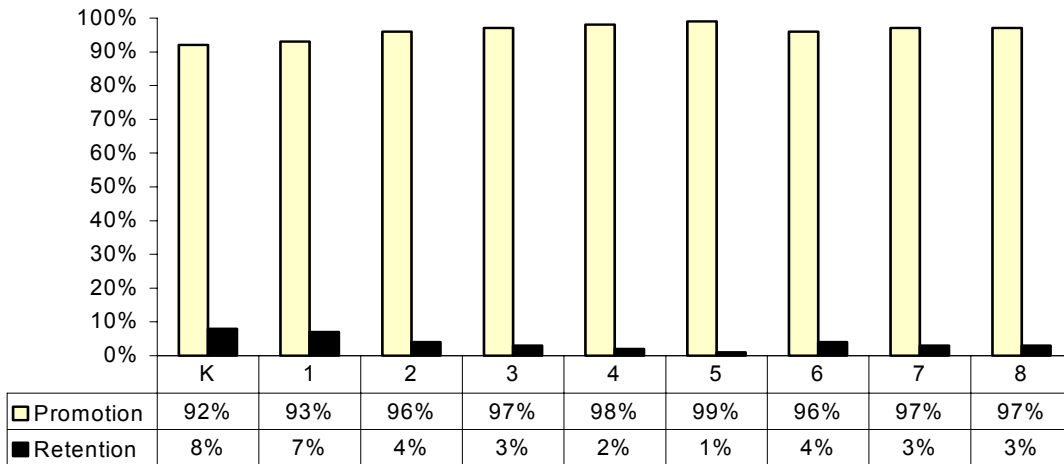
Among grades 3-8 tested students, female students' rate of promotion (98%) was only slightly higher than male students' rate (97%). Across all ethnic groups female students had a higher rate of promotion than male students. The difference between female and male students was largest for the ethnic groups with the lowest rates of promotion (i.e., African American/Black, Alaskan/American Indian, and Hispanic/Latino).

Figure 2
Promotion/Retention Status for EOG Tested Students in Grades 3-8
by Ethnic and Gender Group
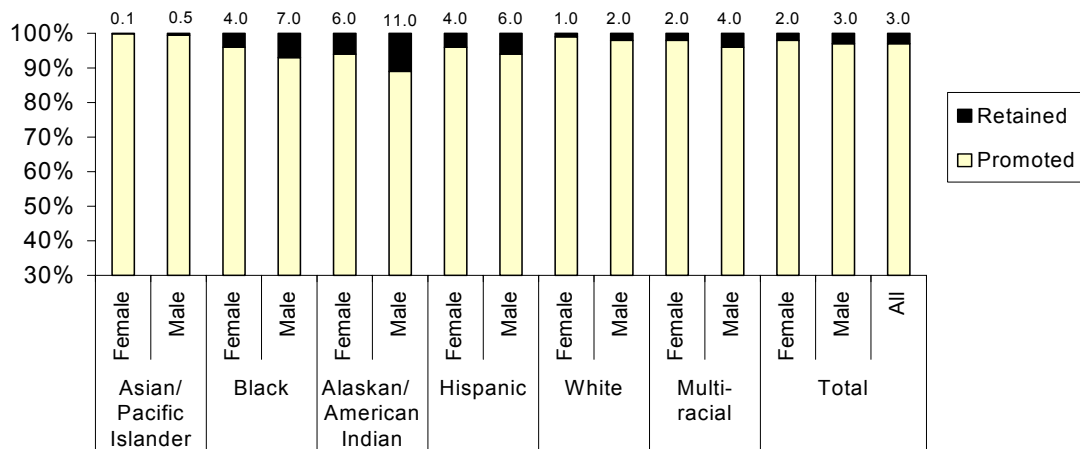
Among grades 3-8 tested students, students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch had a lower promotion rate than students *not* eligible for lunch assistance (94% vs. 99%); special education students' rate of promotion was lower than the rate for non-special education students (96% vs. 98%); and students with LEP status had a lower promotion rate than students *not* eligible for LEP (93% vs. 98%).

Figure 3
Promotion/Retention Status for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch,
Special Education, and Limited English Proficiency Students

	FRL	Not FRL	Special Ed	Not Special Ed	LEP	Not LEP
☐ Promotion	94%	99%	96%	98%	93%	98%
■ Retention	6%	1%	4%	2%	7%	2%
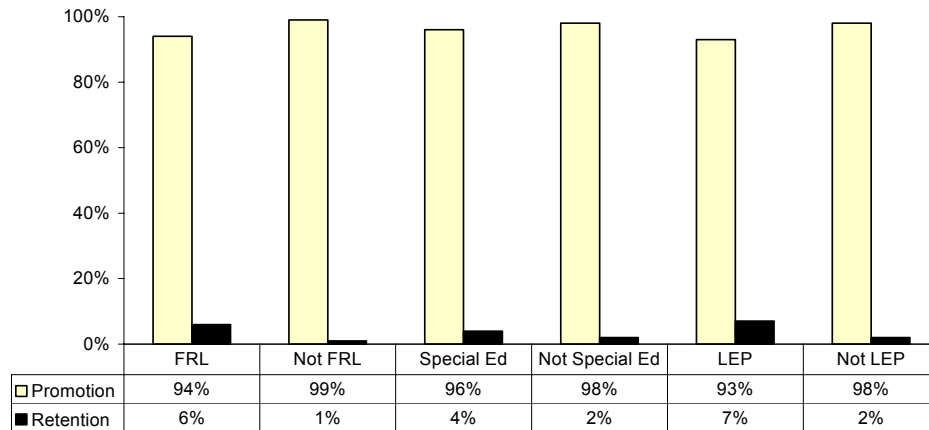
Implications: EOG-tested students with disabilities receiving resource services had a slightly lower rate of promotion than students with disabilities served wholly in a regular classroom, or those in a self-contained classroom – students who generally are more severely disabled. Although this difference is small, the same pattern occurred in 2001, and thus may need continued monitoring. While the promotion rate for students with disabilities receiving resource services was slightly lower, they had a much higher rate of meeting the Achievement Level III standard (53.6%) than students in a self-contained classroom (22.4%), a finding consistent with their lower level of need for services.

While there is improvement in the rate of promotion as grade levels rise within elementary and middle schools, this improvement is not consistent across the entire K-8 span. This is most evident in the fact that 5th-grade students had the highest rate of promotion and 6th-grade students the lowest. This pattern was also found in 2000-01. The school system is trying to address the issue of the drop in performance from 5th grade to 6th grade, based on the EOG and ABCs results. These promotion results underscore the importance of that effort.

The rate of retention was highest among students in grades K-2 (6.0%). This reflects a generally held belief that it is more effective to retain students at early grades than later grades, where physical and social differences can be more significant.

As schools focus on standards-based achievement and link promotion decisions to student performance on standardized tests (such as the EOG) we must consider the effect of these policies on retention rates. Research has shown that students retained are more likely to drop out of school and that those students retained twice are at much greater risk. This research has found that the link between retention and dropping out of school exists regardless of the grade students are retained (Roderick, 1995). Therefore, there is reason to question the belief that students should be held back at early grades. Given these findings, WCPSS's future research on promotion and retention should consider the impact of retention on student achievement.

Site-Based Management: The Pendulum Swings

Purpose: In the early 1990s, WCPSS expanded options for site-based management to increase flexibility for schools. The intent was twofold: First to make instructional decisions at the organizational level closest to the students being served. Second, to improve morale by empowering teachers and principals with the authority to make decisions, while holding them accountable for results.

Context: State regulation of education in the state of North Carolina has historically been somewhat heavy-handed. For example, the state specifies the number of minutes of P.E. elementary schools much provide, mandates make-up policies related to inclement weather, regulates grading practices for high school courses, and establishes a restrictive process for using teacher assistant positions. With the advent of "school improvement" initiatives in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the state established a process for requesting waivers of state policies. WCPSS established a parallel policy that allowed schools to also request waivers of local policies.

Results: Over time, many decisions about staff development, hiring, instructional technology, use of time and resources, and textbooks (within some constraints) were delegated to the schools. Many schools adopted different annual calendars. Schools also converted staff positions into other functions (e.g., electives teachers converted to technology coordinators.) By the late 1990s, WCPSS schools were using a wide variety of instructional programs and materials. The variety was so broad that central office staff could not provide training and support for so many different programs. In a few cases, teachers within the *same grade and school* were not using the same textbook series. If a school ran short of textbooks, there was no easy way to determine which other schools might have extras of the same book available. Schools were offering electives that did not align with the State's curriculum.

In 1999, an outside audit firm (hired to review the district's practices, effectiveness, and funding) was critical of the lack of standardization, but changing the culture was going to take time. When central staff collected and reviewed schools' staff development plans and school improvement plans in 2002-03, comparison of these plans to research-based practices and actual school performance indicated that many schools had weak plans, defined as not using research-based approaches or focusing on training that had no link to achievement deficiencies at the school. These weaknesses occurred even though there was a strong state and local accountability system. District leaders began to question one of the assumptions of site-based management: if you tell people what you expect them to do and hold them accountable, they have the professional judgment and expertise to develop solutions. Accountability-driven reforms apparently had some limitations.

Finally, principals began asking for greater standardization and more top-down guidance in major areas such as grading practices, instructional technology, textbooks, and high-school scheduling. Project Achieve, which is described elsewhere in this document, was one of the more standardized approaches, and was adopted in some schools that had made insufficient achievement gains using their self-developed reforms and initiatives.

Conclusion: An extremely site-based approach to school management, as implemented in WCPSS, had several problems:

- Inefficiency related to materials and resources;
- Lack of central office ability to offer training and support for such a wide range of programs, strategies, and textbooks;
- School staff sometimes lacked either the time, expertise, or inclination to identify research-based strategies that addressed their most serious needs.

Nevertheless, increasing some flexibility for schools was probably the right thing to do and WCPSS has no plans to become a top-down bureaucracy. The challenge will be to find the right balance as the pendulum swings back.

Special Education Reading Initiative

Purpose: The purpose of the special education reading initiative is to improve the reading achievement of students with disabilities (SWD). In addition, the initiative focuses on increasing the quality of instruction to struggling readers. To this end, professional development is provided for special education teachers in reading instruction, including basic reading skills and training in standardized reading curricula.

Context: In 2001-02, 13,900 students in WCPSS were receiving special education services. Only 69.3% of these students scored at or above grade level on the reading EOG. The National Reading Panel indicated that systematic phonics instruction was necessary for the remediation of disabled readers. In 1997-98, a teacher task force was created to begin looking at reading instruction. They found that very few special education teachers had completed coursework in reading instruction, and very few were using research-based reading curricula. In 1998-99, training in basic reading instruction skill for special education teachers began. In 1999-2000, teachers began to receive training in the *Reading Mastery* and *Corrective Reading* curricula. *Reading Mastery* is targeted toward students who are first learning to read, usually in grades 1-3. *Corrective Reading* is targeted toward students who are two or more grade levels behind in reading achievement and are trying to catch up, usually those repeating 3rd grade or above.

Results: To date, 480 special education teachers have participated in Reading Clusters workshops, which provide 20 hours of general reading instruction training. In addition, 374 teachers have been trained in the *Reading Mastery* curriculum, and 823 teachers have been trained in the *Corrective Reading* Curriculum. In the 2003-04 school year, 2,269 elementary school students and 1,456 middle school students are receiving instruction using a standardized reading curriculum.

A study of the effectiveness of the *Corrective Reading* program in middle school was done between February and May of 2001. Statistically significant increases from pre to post test were found on curriculum based measures and the Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery-Revised Letter Work Identification and Passage Comprehension subtests. These results were promising both because students participating were long term struggling students, and because students made significant gains on measures that are not often sensitive to small amounts of growth.[11]

In 2002-03, Martin Middle School offered *Corrective Reading* as an elective for special education students, which created a natural comparison group. *Corrective Reading* students at Martin had an average reading end-of-grade scale score gain of 9.8, while the other special education students at Martin had an average gain of 2 scale score points.

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[11] Weiss, M.P. (2001). Corrective reading in the middle school: Final report to Wake County. Chapel Hill, NC: Author.

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Appendix C: WCPSS Alternative Schools, Programs, and Services 2003-2004

School/Program Title	Description	Population Served	No. Currently Served/Max	Funding Source Code
Schools				

Longview School	Longview School is a separate public special education school for students in grades 6-12 who have been identified as Behavioral/Emotionally Disabled (BED). The program is designed to serve as an intervention/placement designated. by the student's I13P for students whose behavioral and/or emotional problems cannot be addressed in a regular school setting. This includes students who are in need of assessment, returning from or returning to a More restrictive setting (such as training school, hospitalization), and students who are in need of intensive, and sometimes intrusive, educational and behavioral interventions. (318 N. King Charles Rd.)	6-12 Special Education, BED, IF" Placement
		
		(Note: In June 2003, 4 students graduated:
		    2 moved to employment,
		    1 to Wake Tech, and
		    1 to Appalachian State U.)
			96, 6 waiting / no cap	Federal funds
				
				PRC 068
				State funds
				
				Local funds

Richard Milburn High School	The Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) contracts with Richard Milburn School, a private school, to serve long-term suspended students. To be eligible for enrollment in Richard Milburn School, a student must be a Wake County resident, long-term suspended from a WCPSS middle or high school, and assigned to Richard Milburn School by the WCPSS Discipline Review Committee. Richard Milburn School customizes educational programs to meet the individual education needs of each student with a focus on completing courses to be promoted to the next grade or to graduate with a high school diploma. In 2002-03, 79.6% of students passed their EOCs. (501 Washington St.)	6-12 Wake County residents, long-term suspended from a WCPSS middle or high school (Does not serve Special Education low incidence suspensions or students suspended for major weapons . and/or distribution of drugs and/or alcohol)	1st semester 111/130 2nd semester 162/160 (MS 66, HS 96) (contracted yearly average $\leq$ 145)	PRC 069 State funds
Mt. Vernon School	Mt. Vernon School serves students in grades K-8 who demonstrate difficulty succeeding in traditional school settings. The focus of the middle years programs is to improve academic performance and to facilitate behavioral. changes that will enable students to return to their traditional base schools. The K-5 program, Bridges, is a school-based assessment/intervention program for students who are experiencing academic, emotional, and/or behavioral difficulties in their current school. Bridges may also serve as a step-down for some students from residential programs, such as hospitals and the Wright School. (5418 Chapel Hill Rd.)	K-8 students, difficulty succeeding in traditional school settings, referred by base school	Middle—59/90 Bridges—34/40	Federal funds PRC 068 State funds Local funds
Mary E. Phillips High School	Mary E. Phillips High School is a small public high school with a flexible schedule (7:20 a.m. - 6:19 p.m.), small class size, and a curriculum focusing on essential skills in a supportive, student-centered environment. Students learn to be self-sufficient and responsible citizens. Students apply to, Mary E. Phillips High School through base school referral, transition counselor. referral, parent self-referral, or agency referral. Phillips offers a unique child-care program. Student parents are required to sign up for a child development	9-12 students who have the potential to graduate by age 21	217/250 (150 day, 100 evening)	Federal funds PRC 068 State funds Local

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	class one period each day and volunteer in the nursery at lunch to have their infant in the program Students are accepted until program spaces fill (150 day, 100 evening). To be accepted, students must have the potential to graduate by age 21. Dropouts are potential candidates only if they have been out of school less than one year. (1923 Milburnie Rd.)			
East Wake High School Night School	The guidance department/NC Wise technician generates a list of "potential" night school students, students who have had academic problems—those with numerous failing grades—or students who will be one credit short of graduating. Also, night school registration is announced to the entire student body. Once the student contacts guidance to start the process, times are set up for parent / student / guidance / Night School Administrator conferences. These are held in the evenings during the first week of each semester of Day School. Night School begins the Monday after the beginning of Day School. Finally, each student and parent meets with the Night School Administrator to discuss the program and sign the enrollment contract.	9-12 mostly East Wake High School students, many of whom are co-enrolled, such as seniors who need one more class to graduate	Fall, 17 students (16 completed 40 classes) Spring, 32 students Classes of 10 are created based on need	PRC 068—(At Risk Alternative)
Life-Course Academy	This program is designed for special education students who have received long-term suspensions, but for whom no manifestation was found. Currently 13 students are enrolled, with a maximum of 24. This program is offered through a contract with J. Todd Edwards, Administrator of Carolina Correctional Services, Inc.	6-12 special education students, long-term suspended, no manifestation found .	13/24	Special Education
Alternative Middle School: Proposed	Middle school age students' often act on impulse and need guidance and support to help them learn to make good decisions. Suspension, both in-school and out-of-school,. results when a student has made a decision that conflicts with the system code of conduct. The mission of the proposed Wake County Public School System Alternative Middle School Suspension Pilot Program is three-fold: 1. To provide an option to long-term suspension for middle school students. This does not include offenses related to drugs- and weapons. 2. Continue basic educational services to middle-level students who have been assigned to the school. 3. Provide behavioral interventions that will help the students learn to function within the school rules so they can successfully return to their base schools. Students must first have been served in ISS at their school. The. maximum time spent in the alternative setting is 14 weeks in a school year.	4-8 students	126 students max	Local

Programs				
Accelerated Learning Program Grades 3-8	WCPSS began this program in 1999-2000. Elementary and middle schools are allocated Months of Employment to provide supplemental instruction to Level I and II students. Services are typically scheduled during the day, after school, and/or on Saturdays. Achievement outcome data from ALP has been positive.	3-8 students who have scored below grade level on End of Grade (EOG) tests	ALP was based on 8,917 Level I and II students	PRC 072 Student Accountability State—Fund 1 Local—Fund 2
ALP/T-I Literacy Program Grades K-2	WCPSS initiated this program during the 2001-02 school year. The program utilizes non-fiction materials from Benchmark Publishing to promote student skills in seven components of literacy. Lessons are quick-paced (30-45 minutes) and take place four days a week.	K-2, targets students scoring below the district's literacy benchmarks		Title I 40+ schools Local all others
Challenged Schools Program	Schools with high percentages of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch face significant challenges meeting NCLP and North Carolina ABC standards. Challenged Schools funds are allotted to provide additional resources (ALP personnel) to help these schools increase student achievement.	K-8 students who qualify for free and reduced (F&R) lunch, schools with 30% or more F&R enrollment	Challenged Schools was based on 16,247 F&R students in 63 schools.	PRC 072 Student Accountability Local—Fund 2
Community ALP	This program is designed to provide tutorial support for children who are experiencing difficulty successfully scoring at proficiency levels on the EOG tests. The WCPSS hires certified staff to provide academic support in reading and math. The teachers work with students who attend after-school programs in community sites. Currently, Community ALP has 11 teachers in 8 sites. The participating community sites are Chavis Heights Learning Center, Boys Club on Raleigh Boulevard, Girls Club on Raleigh Boulevard, Boys & Girls Club at Washington Elementary, Harvest of Hope in Fuquay-Varina, Garner Road YMCA, Salvation Army, and Walnut Terrace.	3-12, Level I and Level II scores on EOG	148	PRC 072 State funds
Communities in Schools (CIS) of Wake County	CIS of Wake County connects community resources with students to provide special enrichment and academic opportunities for students. CIS works to prevent school failure through mentoring and tutoring. The primary, but not exclusive, vehicle for delivering services to students is through providing a competent, trained volunteer tutor-mentor who will spend a minimum of one hour per week with the assigned student. Currently, 13 Wake County schools have CIS programs. The participating schools are Brentwood Elementary, Hunter Elementary, Millbrook Elementary, Poe Elementary, Wilburn Elementary, Daniels Middle, East Millbrook Middle, East Wake Middle, Mt. Vernon Middle, Zebulon Middle, Cary High, Garner High, and Millbrook High Schools. In addition, CIS of Wake County provides academic and enrichment programs at 5 Learning Centers located in public housing communities. The 5 centers are located in the Chavis Heights, Heritage Park, Kentwood, Mayview, and Walnut Terrace communities.	K-12 students	CIS school-based programs—526 Learning Centers—304	PRC 069 State funds PRC 516 Local funds

English as a Second Language (ESL)	This program provides additional support to students with limited proficiency in English at many campuses across the system. Its primary focus is to help students make the transition to English-while supporting them in their academic work.	K-12 voluntary services for students with limited English proficiency, qualify through testing	± 5,700	Federal funds State funds Local funds
Fast For Word	This program is for elementary and middle school students needing help in phonemic awareness or auditory discrimination. A commercial product by Scientific Learning Corporation, it uses computer-based activities to help students learn to discriminate among sounds. The activities resemble computer games and reward students for correctly recognizing sounds or following directions. The activities become more difficult as the students' listening skills improve.	2-8 with auditory processing, phonemic awareness, and oral language deficits	22 Schools (2,000 Total Students)	PRC 069 State Funds
Helping Hands Project	This mentoring program pairs adult role models with Black/African-American students in grades three through eight w h o have potential for success in school but w h o are not reaching their potential and are at risk of school failure. The focus is to improve the students' metacognitive skills, interpersonal skills, self-esteem, and leadership skills. Mentors work with students in small groups and individually. After grade 8, students may be mentored by members of the triangle chapter of 100 Black Men of America.	3-8 students, African-American males	297	PRC 801 State funds
High School ALP	Each high school is allotted a 10-month position for High School Intervention Coordinator. The Intervention Coordinator provides support to students w h o have not met the NC Competency requirements.	9th and 10th grade student focus. May provide other support services to other students.	Varies by School	PRC 072 Student Accountability Local – Fund 2
Hispanic/Latino Outreach	The program coordinator will assess the needs of the WCPSS with regard to the Hispanic/Latino community; will serve as a liaison for Hispanic/Latino families in the community and at local, regional, state, and national workshops, institutes, and. conferences; and will assist the district in the ' development of curriculum and the improvement of instruction and services to meet the needs of Hispanic/Latino students. The coordinator will design, develop, and deliver staff development on how to better-educate and connect with the Hispanic/Latino community and Will respond to problems and inquiries from administrators, parents, and educators regarding concerns in implementing programs that meet the needs of Hispanic/Latino students.	K-12 Hispanic/Latino students	Approximately 8,079	PRC 069
Home/Hospital Services	Home/Hospital Services provide instruction for Special Education students when. Home/Hospital is determined to be the least restrictive environment by the IEP team. Home/Hospital services can only be accessed by following the IEP process and determining that the student is not a b l e to attend school 'due to his or her disability or as a result of a long-term suspension. At all levels a school-based special education teacher is responsible for insuring services to the student and that the IEP remains in compliance. Student contact hours range from 3 to 6 hours per week. The following are the available service delivery models:	K-12 Special Education students	170 students (Numbers vary weekly due to students reentering their base school.)	State, local, and federal funds have been used to pay teachers, provide contracted services (Nexus), and contract with teachers to serve students.

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	Nexus Learning : Computer assisted instruction typically used at the secondary level for students performing at or near grade level. **School-Based Personnel** : If the IEP committee determines that the computer assisted instruction is inappropriate, school-based certified teachers provide instruction in the content areas after school hours at a mutually agreed upon location. **Central Office Based Home /Hospital teachers:** Students who need Home/Hospital services as a result of a medical condition and will be out of school four weeks or longer, may be assigned to one of these teachers with approval from the Home/Hospital Senior Administrator.			
Homebound Services	Homebound instructional services are provided to students who are confined to home or hospital for four weeks or longer for temporary medical reasons. At the elementary level teachers from the student's school provide up to three hours of instruction per week. Homebound services at the secondary level are provided via online computer-assisted instruction. Middle-school students may receive up to four hours of instruction and high-school students up to six hours of instruction per week. A transition committee at the student's school develops the plan for homebound services while the student is unable to attend school, and assists in planning for a smooth re-entry when the student is medically able to return.	K-12 students who are temporarily unable to attend school due to medical reasons	Currently 16 are being served on homebound; as many as 116 have received homebound during this school year.	PRC 032 State funds
In-School Suspension (ISS)	Each middle school has an in-school suspension program, designed as an alternative to out-of-school suspension. Students may be assigned to ISS for a period of time ranging from one class period to several days. Each program has a teacher in charge who works with the students to make sure they complete their class work and can transition smoothly back to class.	6-8	Varies by school	PRC 069
Migrant Education Program	The program assists migrant students to overcome cultural, language, and social barriers that might inhibit their success in school. Migrant Education provides a 5 day per week, 4-week academic summer program for elementary students who are performing below grade level expectations. Also, support and information services are provided to schools, families, and students during the school year.	Ages 3-21 migrant students whose parents are temporary agricultural laborers Students remain eligible for 3 years.	572 eligible migrant students Summer School serves up to 150.	PRC 051 Title I Migrant Fund 3
Minimum Competency Teachers	Teacher positions are allocated, based on student need, to high schools to provide additional support for students in English and mathematics to pass the North Carolina Competency Test, required for graduation.	9-12 students who did not score Level III or IV on the 8th grade EOG in reading and/or math; some out-of-state transfers	Reading—1,557 administrations Math—1,390 administrations	PRC 069

NovaNet	This computer-based learning system provides students in all of our high schools with online access to self-paced instruction in more than 150 subjects. Subject offerings include math, social studies, science, biology, chemistry, and alcohol and drug education. Most NovaNet instructors have completed thirty to forty hours of specialized training. WCPSS provides a NovaNet teacher in every high school to oversee the program. The numbers of students served and student success have varied by school.	9-12 students. Provides students in all of our high schools with online access to. self-paced instruction in more than 150 subjects.	201 students can be currently online system wide	PRC 069 All other grant support ends 2003-04.
Parent Involvement and Outreach	A Parent Liaison is a strategic link between the schools and the families to help build the capacity of families, schools, and communities to work together to improve children's learning. However, since families, schools, and communities vary, the roles and responsibilities of each Parent Liaison may differ. Parent Liaisons support families in numerous ways so that they can become involved in their child's education. Currently, there are 17 Parent Liaisons serving 45 schools.	K-12, families of school-aged and preschool children who need support within the structure of schooling and the community.		PRC 069 State funds Parent Liaisons funded in the PES budget
Partnership for Educational Success (PES)	PES is a collaborative program between the WCPSS and Wake County Human Services that provides academic and family support services. Using family-centered practices and empowerment principles to increase family involvement, PES provides a family advocate to work with the family to develop a family action plan, to assist the family in accessing an array of student and family support services developed through community partnerships, and to align school and home efforts to improve the student's educational success. At each school, the PES process is directed by a multi-disciplinary team that may include the school nurse, social worker, counselor, teacher(s), administrator, Mental Health Outreach Worker, Family Support Worker, and 4-H representative. .	K-12 failing (Level I and Level II)	175 students/ 80 families.	PRC 069 State funds
Project Achieve	Project Achieve is adapted from a model used in Brazosport, Texas, which improved students' achievement and closed achievement gaps. Project Achieve provides a structure for best teaching practices; with instruction tied to the state-mandated Standard Course of Study and frequent assessment of students to drive further instruction. All participating schools follow the same instructional calendar or pacing guide. Teachers deliver short "focus lessons" at the beginning of every block of instruction for reading and for math, which typically cover one to three objectives and serve as the anticipatory set for the lesson to follow. Approximately every five to fifteen days, teachers administer standard brief assessments to check for mastery. Based on the assessments and classroom work, those students who show mastery of the objectives receive enrichment while those who do not receive additional remedial instructions. Seventeen elementary schools and four middle schools are now involved in the project: Achievement and attitudinal results have been positive.	3-8, all students	17 elementary schools, 4 middle schools	PRC 069 State funds Local funds

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Services for Homeless Students	In compliance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, special outreach services are provided to students from homeless families who attend the WCPSS. The program for meeting the needs of homeless students attending the WCPSS addresses their academic challenges and family issues affecting their success in school. A school social worker serves in the role of homeless liaison advocate, and an instructional resource teacher provides tutorial services to homeless students. Consultative services are provided to parents and to staff at homeless shelters regarding ways to support students' study skills and homework completion.	K-12 students whose families are homeless	1,000/no cap	PRC 026 State funds PRC 069 State funds
Student Support Team (SST) Coordination	The staff members in Counseling and Student Services provide coordination of the school system's SST model. Each school has an SST composed of school staff and students' parents who meet to gather resources and develop strategies to help children succeed in the regular education classroom.	K-12 students exhibiting difficulty in school or students whose parents are concerned about school performance	3,331/no cap	PRC 069 State funds
Title I	Federally funded Title I provides funds for school systems to assist schools that have high poverty concentrations. Within these schools, students with the lowest achievement and greatest needs, identified an multiple criteria, are provided literacy and/or reading interventions. There are also 7 pre-school Title I classrooms that provide early intervention: Brentwood, Smith, Creech Road, Zebulon, Carver, Vance, Lynn Road (collaborative Special Education, More at Four, Title I).	K-5 students performing below grade level in reading	5,500 in 41 Title I schools 128 in 8 preschool classrooms	Title I Federal funds
Transition Counselors	Transition Counselors provide direct case-management services to long-term suspended students and their families from all WCPSS middle and high schools. The number of students being lag-term suspended has been increasing year-to-year. Evaluation results indicate a high degree of effectiveness of this program in significantly increasing the number of suspended students who return to school successfully the next year.	6-12 students. Transition Counselors provide direct case-management services to long-term suspended students and their families.	672 from last year to transition back into school 475 suspended to date this year Case load per counselor > 100 students 2000-01, 502 2001-02, 556 2002-03, 672	Effective Alternative Strategies Grant funding ends 2003-04 PRC 069—At Risk will pick up

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Grants				
Project Enlightenment Services	Project Enlightenment provides comprehensive, multi-disciplinary prevention and intervention services. It promotes positive early development, readiness for school, and intervention for children who have been referred as at-risk for school failure due to emotional; behavior, learning, language, or other developmental issues. While some services are provided directly to children such as a model pre-kindergarten classroom, IDEA screening, home programs, and intervention groups, much of the focus is on helping parents and teachers understand the issues and develop strategies to provide interventions on a daily basis. These include school consultations, staff development, parent counseling and education, Parents as Teachers, TALKline, Spanish language support, transition into kindergarten services, and promotion of early literacy (including annual On the Road to Reading Book Drive). A comprehensive Parent-Teacher Resource Center is available for the early childhood community. .	Birth-K, with special emphasis on children at risk for school failure; their parents, teachers, and other professionals who serve them.		Local, self support funds (fees for training and contributions), federal grant, contracts with Wake County Human Services, ECAC, and SmartStart
Project Enlightenment's The Learning Connection (TLC)	Funded by a three million dollar Early Reading First Grant, TLC will create five programs of excellence for pre-kindergarten literacy skills in a variety of programs including pre-k special education, Title I; Head Start, developmental day, and More at Four. These research-based programs will enrich children's cognitive arid literacy-based experience, prevent later reading difficulties, and serve as models for other pre-kindergarten programs across the district and state.	Pre-k and child care teachers and four-year-olds in five designated programs. Approximately 93% are low income, 23% have special needs; and 14% are limited English proficient.	24 teachers and assistants, 200 four-year-olds	Federal Early Reading First Grant
Project SOAR	Project SOAR is an after-school enrichment program operating in seven Wake County schools. The program activities are designed to increase participating students' resiliency using the four factors of academic competence, a sense of belonging, a sense of usefulness, and personal potency. The seven participating schools are Lead Mine Elementary, Leesville Middle, and Athens Drive, Fuquay-Varina, Sanderson; Southeast Raleigh, and Wake Forest High Schools.	3-12 students.	540	PRC 307 Federal funds Funding ends May 31, 2004
Support Our Students (SOS)	SOS is a statewide effort to establish high-quality after-school programs to promote academic, social, and character-building experiences for students. In Wake County, 4=H Youth Development has coordinated the program for the last 12 years at two community-based. sites and five middle schools. The participating schools are Carnage, Daniels, East Wake, Fuquay-Varina, and Ligon Middle Schools.	6-8 students.	200	PRC 582 State funding provided by Wake County Human Services Cooperative Extension

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21st Century Grants	Great Expectations is a 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant funded by the US Department of Education. The program provides after-school and summer programs in five elementary schools in Eastern Wake County. The goals of Great Expectations are to increase student academic achievement, to provide students with enrichment activities and activities that focus on violence and substance abuse prevention, and to increase parental involvement in the child's education. The five participating schools are Carver Elementary, Hodge Road Elementary, Knightdale Elementary, Lockhart Elementary, and Zebulon Elementary.	2-5 students	1,097	PRC 343 PRC 110 Federal funds
Staff Development				
A Framework for Understanding Poverty	This two-day training, based on Dr. Ruby Payne's book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty,* was initiated in the WCPSS in 2000. The training explores the role economic diversity plays in student success. By applying Dr. Payne's conceptual framework, participants learn how to use and infuse key strategies in their schools and classrooms to increase student academic performance. Topics covered include: how economic class affects behaviors and mindsets, why students from generational poverty often fear being educated, the "hidden rules" within economic class, discipline interventions that improve behavior, and the eight resources that make a difference in school success.	K-12 Administrators can request that the training be provided in their schools. The training is also offered during the Continuous Improvement Conference.	Approximately 2,600 teachers, administrators, and staff	PRC 069 - At Risk Local and State Staff Development
Behavior Initiative	The behavior specialists in Special Education Services (SES) provide training and on-going support to Behavior Support Teachers in the middle schools. Training has included full day sessions with a nationally known expert and a series of modules provided by the SES behavior specialists. The behavior specialists have worked closely with individual teachers and the administrative teams to offer school-based staff development.	6-8. This initiative has allowed students at the middle school level who were previously served in self-contained classrooms to access Standard Course of Study with targeted support.	Over 100 teachers have been trained since July, 2003	State and local Special Ed.

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