

**GREENWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
MONITORING REPORT
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: WRITING (E-003)
APRIL 2007**

I hereby present my monitoring report on the District Ends Policy “Student Achievement.” I certify compliance and that the information contained in this report is accurate.

Signed: _____
(Betty J. Sternberg, Superintendent of Schools)

Date: _____

BROADEST POLICY PROVISION

The District shall establish an assessment system that is aligned with the District’s Mission and Vision and provides a comprehensive, consistent and integrated system of student learner objectives / outcomes, assessment, analysis and reporting.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In order to ensure that all students master the objectives of the Greenwich curriculum and achieve to their highest potential, student achievement in writing is assessed against four broad groups of indicators: 1) aggregate performance of standardized tests such as the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT), 2) preparation for post secondary options including average scores on the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT 1) and Advanced Placement Tests (AP), 3) annual growth in achievement on CMT, and 4) performance disaggregated by student subgroup on CMT and CAPT.

Accomplishments include compliance with the policy, an increase in the percentage of students scoring at the advanced, goal and proficiency levels on the CMT, and cohort growth in student achievement on the CMT at the highest performance levels. While there were no major exceptions to any policy provision, there are a number of governance and management issues which require further attention. Governance issues include instructional time as it relates to the implementation of the revised language arts curriculum at the elementary level. The additional time required to implement the balanced literacy framework, including writers’ workshop, in kindergarten through second grade may require the District to adjust curriculum expectations for social studies and science. Management issues focus on closing gaps in achievement among student subgroups, improving staff training, monitoring changes in classroom instructional practice, “fine tuning” curriculum alignment, using formative assessment to guide instruction, reporting student progress to parents and implementing standards based writing portfolio in grades six through ten.

Note: Descriptions of the measures discussed in the next three sections and data tables describing student achievement over the last five years are attached at the end of this report.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS / HIGHLIGHTS

1. From 2001-2002 to 2005-2006, writing achievement on the CMT improved at all three performance levels. Relative to students in similar districts, Greenwich students score the same at the proficient level and higher at the goal and advanced levels (Table 1).
2. The percentage of students performing at the proficient, goal and advanced levels on the CMT writing reached a five year high at Hamilton Avenue School and Western Middle School. Dundee students achieved five year highs at the advanced and proficient levels, and New Lebanon students achieved five year highs at the advanced and goal levels. At least 50% of the students at Dundee and Parkway scored at the advanced level, and at least 90% of the students in Dundee, Old Greenwich and Riverside scored at the goal level (Tables 2 and 3).
3. Over the last five years, the achievement gap on CMT writing narrowed between the District average and some disaggregated subgroups: Hispanic students (proficient and goal levels), students receiving special education services (goal and proficient levels), students receiving free and reduced lunch (proficient and goal levels) and English Language Learners (all three levels) (Table 1).
4. The CMT writing achievement of the cohort of Greenwich students who were tested in both the spring of 2006 *and* the fall of 2003 or 2004 improved significantly: 29% of the students tested scored at a higher level, 53% at the same level and 18% at a lower level. The improvement in achievement was most notable at the advanced level (Table 6).
5. Over the last five years, student achievement on the writing section of the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) was flat at the advanced level and increased at the goal and proficient levels. Relative to students in similar districts, Greenwich students score higher at the advanced level and lower at the goal and proficient levels (Table 4).
6. The mean writing score on the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT1) for the graduating class of 2006 was 560. Relative to students in similar districts, Greenwich students have the third highest mean score on SAT1 writing (Table 5). Trend data is not available because the writing portion of the SAT1 was first administered to last year's graduating class.

GOVERNANCE ISSUES

1. The revised K-5 literacy program balances the acquisition of decoding/encoding, reading comprehension and writing. As the District implements the revised program, instructional time is emerging as a major challenge at the elementary level. What impact will implementing the revised balanced literacy program have on other areas of the District curriculum?

MANAGEMENT ISSUES

1. There are significant gaps in the performance of student subgroups across measures of core writing skills (CMT and CAPT). While there is some evidence that gaps in achievement are beginning to close, many students who lack core writing skills demonstrate less than expected annual growth and are falling further behind their peers. District strategies to close gaps in achievement among student subgroups include fostering a continuing community and professional dialogue around closing the achievement gap, improving curriculum and professional learning, systematically providing extended day and extended school year programs, monitoring intervention plans for students performing below grade level, and exploring options for extending preschool programs to at-risk students. Based on trends in student achievement data, the extended school day program in operation at Hamilton Avenue, Julian Curtiss and New Lebanon was also implemented this year at Cos Cob, Glenville and Western Middle School. The implementation of individual student intervention plans (ISIP) continues to present challenges. The District is working to simplify the process, improve the technology for managing the plans and extend planning to students in ninth and tenth grade at Greenwich High School. In kindergarten through eighth grade the focus is on improving the quality of the intervention plans and monitoring student progress.
2. In addition to the gaps in achievement tracked by monitoring NCLB student subgroups, the gap in writing achievement between male and female students has increased over the last five years at the advanced and goal levels. In 2005-2006, 50% of female students scored at the advanced level on the CMT as compared to 31% of male students, and 89% of female students scored at goal as compared to 74% of male students. The results for CAPT are similar. In 2005-2006, 42% of female students scored at the advanced level on the CAPT as compared to 28% of male students, and 79% of female students scored at goal as compared to 60% of male students. Through department meetings, the staff will examine student work to determine the discrepancies between the achievement of male and female writers. There will also be professional development opportunities for action research that will include interviews with students, examination of instructional practices and review of the research. We will also offer a study group, using the professional text *Boy Writers: Reclaiming Their Voices*, by Ralph Fletcher. Focus walks specific to writing instruction will be scheduled in each of the middle schools for the 2007-2008 school year. Comparing achievement by gender will be part of the protocol.
3. A substantial professional development investment in the readers' workshop component of the balanced literacy framework was the focus for the intermediate staff in 2005-2006 and the primary staff in 2006-2007. Although professional opportunities in reading will continue in the 2007-2008 school year, there will be new offerings with a specific focus on writing standards and instructional techniques. An array of differentiated courses including the guiding principles of writers' workshop, action research on gender achievement gap, study groups and advanced courses that focus on refining writing skills will be offered. A concerted effort is also in place to encourage more special education and English as Second Language teachers to participate in reading and writing professional development opportunities. The primary focus for writing at the middle school level has been the writing

portfolio initiative. Eastern and Western Middle Schools are piloting the program this year and Central Middle School is in their second year of implementation. The purpose of the Greenwich Middle School Writing Portfolio is to develop student proficiency in writing. Specifically, students set goals related to editing and the writing process over their three years in the Language Arts classroom. This highly individualized approach, coupled with the portfolio process of goal-setting, reflection, and conferencing, creates a stronger community of motivated writers who develop meaningful knowledge about writing. This also becomes an important communication tool for sharing the depth and breadth of the middle school writing program.

4. Training needs to be reinforced by monitoring changes in classroom practice. Focus walks and instructional walk throughs are means of supporting the improvement of classroom practice. These observation protocols are designed to guide the improvement of instruction. The purpose of these protocols is to create a safe, non-threatening environment for systematic reflection and dialogue about classroom practice. The program coordinator for language arts and building principals are currently engaged in conducting focus walks in their buildings around the implementation of balanced literacy in kindergarten through second grade. Last year, focus walks were conducted in grades three through five around the organization of the classroom and the implementation of guided reading groups. During the 2007-2008 school year, focus walks will focus on the implementation of writers' workshop beginning at the middle school level. The focus walks will follow an established protocol with specific standards of practice for writing instruction. The revision of the District Teacher Evaluation Plan will support these efforts by setting clearer standards for planning instruction and using formative assessment to differentiate instruction.
5. The program coordinator for language arts is working with the high school English program administrator and the teaching staff to ensure alignment between the writing program and the state curriculum framework assessed by the CMT/CAPT.
6. While summative assessments (CMT, CAPT, SAT1) are in place to measure student progress and program effectiveness, formative assessments guide daily instruction. Conferencing notes, student goal setting and student self reflections along with rubrics for scoring writing pieces in a variety of genres are used to inform daily writing instruction. The District is in the process of piloting a standards-based report card that assesses a student's progress against grade level curriculum objectives. Aligning the language arts formative assessments and curriculum objectives to the new report card will continue to be a part of this work.
7. While the percentage of students achieving proficiency in writing remained consistent on CAPT (91% - 92%), the decline in students achieving goal (from 75% - 69%) and advanced (45% - 35%) reflect a downward turn in these statistics after significant gains in prior years. This drop coincides with a change implemented in the advanced ninth grade (113) and honors tenth grade (213) English and Social Studies programs. In prior years both English and Social Studies teachers had met during the seminar/skills block to work with students on a variety of skills including writing; this model allowed for targeted and differentiated writing instruction and a lower student-to-teacher ratio as students worked on writing. In

2005-2006 either the English or Social Studies teacher was assigned to the 113 and 213 seminar/skills each semester, one from August through January and the other from January through June. We must review the results of the March 2007 CAPT administration to determine if the change in goal and advanced achievement is a trend that has implications for 113 and 213 curricula and instruction.

8. The District has made a substantial investment in reviewing and implementing a revised balanced literacy framework. The changes in curriculum, materials and instructional practice are extensive and will take time to implement. We need to be mindful that both organizations and individuals have learning curves as we assess the impact of the changes.

EXCEPTIONS

1. None.

DESCRIPTION OF STANDARDIZED MEASURES

The **Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT)** is a state-mandated program that assesses and reports the achievement of students in grade three through grade eight in three areas: Mathematics, Reading, and Writing. Prior to the 2005-2006 school year, the CMT was administered in grades four, six and eight. The CMT assesses core academic competencies and serves as a key indicator of a student's readiness to successfully access the high school curriculum. Student scores are characterized by performance level: 5-Advanced, 4-Goal, 3-Proficient, 2-Basic and 1-Below Basic. Students scoring at the advanced level are performing at the top of all students across the state. Students scoring in the goal category possess the knowledge, ability, and skill necessary to successfully perform the tasks and assignments appropriately expected of a student with minimal teacher assistance. Students who score in the proficient category are able to successfully participate in their regular grade appropriate course work. The proficient standard is used to calculate adequate yearly progress under No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Students scoring below the proficient level require intervention to accelerate their academic progress.

The **Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT)** is a state-mandated program that assesses and reports the achievement of tenth grade students in four areas: Mathematics, Science, Reading Across the Disciplines, and Writing Across the Disciplines. Student scores are characterized by performance level: 5-Advanced, 4-Goal, 3-Proficient, 2-Basic and 1-Below Basic. Students scoring at the advanced level are performing at the top of all students across the state. Students scoring in the goal category possess the knowledge, ability, and skill necessary to successfully perform the tasks and assignments appropriately expected of a student with minimal teacher assistance. Students who score in the proficient category are able to successfully participate in their regular grade appropriate course work. The proficient standard is used to calculate adequate yearly progress under No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Scoring at the proficient level or higher on the mathematics, reading and writing subtests is required for graduation from Greenwich High School. Students scoring below the proficient level require intervention to accelerate their academic progress.

The **Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT I)** is a measure of developed verbal and mathematical skills important for success in college. Scores are reported on a scale from 200 to 800. During the 2005-2006 school year, the verbal assessment was reconfigured into an assessment of reading and an assessment of writing. SAT1 is a college entrance examination and student participation is voluntary. Over the last five years, the percentage of graduating seniors taking SAT1 has been relatively constant in a range from 88% to 93%.

Table 1: Connecticut Mastery Test Writing by Student Subgroup (%)

		01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06
District (all schools and grades)	Advanced		37	37	37	40
	Goal	76	79	79	79	81
	Proficient	92	92	91	92	94
Asian	Advanced		44	40	44	48
	Goal	85	83	81	84	84
	Proficient	98	93	92	92	94
Black	Advanced		2	20	18	12
	Goal	49	42	54	44	49
	Proficient	90	70	71	64	76
Hispanic	Advanced		18	12	17	20
	Goal	54	51	59	59	64
	Proficient	78	78	77	82	86
White	Advanced		40	40	40	43
	Goal	78	83	82	83	85
	Proficient	93	94	94	94	95
Female	Advanced		47	46	46	50
	Goal	82	84	86	86	89
	Proficient	95	95	95	96	97
Male	Advanced		29	29	29	31
	Goal	70	74	72	73	74
	Proficient	90	89	88	88	91
Special Education	Advanced		9	7	7	8
	Goal	35	42	35	28	41
	Proficient	66	67	63	53	70
English Language Learners	Advanced	The number of students in this subgroup is insufficient for reporting purposes.		0	4	12
	Goal			17	36	53
	Proficient			17	62	79
Free or Reduced Lunch	Advanced		6	4	7	9
	Goal	41	38	48	41	53
	Proficient	69	73	74	68	81

Table 2: Connecticut Mastery Test Writing by Elementary School (%)

		01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06
District (all schools and grades)	Advanced		37	37	37	40
	Goal	76	79	79	79	81
	Proficient	92	92	91	92	94
Cos Cob	Advanced		30	31	35	34
	Goal	68	76	78	84	75
	Proficient	87	91	93	92	91
Glenville	Advanced		37	33	20	28
	Goal	78	87	74	72	70
	Proficient	91	93	89	88	88
Hamilton Avenue	Advanced		9	14	16	23
	Goal	72	51	62	49	75
	Proficient	84	74	79	78	96
Dundee	Advanced		45	48	40	55
	Goal	88	88	92	79	91
	Proficient	95	96	97	91	98
Julian Curtiss	Advanced		22	37	23	34
	Goal	59	64	73	77	76
	Proficient	88	91	86	91	89
New Lebanon	Advanced		9	15	14	16
	Goal	58	53	42	49	60
	Proficient	81	77	67	78	80
North Mianus	Advanced		48	53	48	46
	Goal	90	98	96	95	89
	Proficient	97	100	99	97	99
North Street	Advanced		51	45	32	47
	Goal	87	96	91	84	87
	Proficient	100	100	96	97	98
Old Greenwich	Advanced		43	48	45	44
	Goal	59	89	87	87	90
	Proficient	87	99	95	94	94
Parkway	Advanced		56	53	63	52
	Goal	83	90	88	88	89
	Proficient	95	94	96	98	99
Riverside	Advanced		49	33	39	47
	Goal	91	91	81	84	91
	Proficient	99	100	94	99	98

Table 3: Connecticut Mastery Test Writing by Middle School (%)

		01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06
District (all schools and grades)	Advanced		37	37	37	40
	Goal	76	79	79	79	81
	Proficient	92	92	91	92	94
Central	Advanced		39	35	43	41
	Goal	85	85	80	84	82
	Proficient	94	92	90	91	89
Eastern	Advanced		48	45	46	46
	Goal	92	92	86	88	89
	Proficient	94	95	91	94	95
Western	Advanced		27	22	25	28
	Goal	71	71	69	70	75
	Proficient	82	80	82	79	84

Table 4: Connecticut Academic Performance Test Writing (%)

		01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06
GHS (all students)	Advanced		33	41	45	35
	Goal	66	71	71	75	69
	Proficient	90	93	92	91	92
Asian	Advanced		34	48	48	45
	Goal	63	77	83	85	81
	Proficient	83	91	95	98	98
Black	Advanced	The number of students in this subgroup is insufficient for reporting purposes.				
	Goal					
	Proficient					
Hispanic	Advanced		11	14	13	7
	Goal	28	49	34	47	35
	Proficient	69	74	69	72	78
White	Advanced		37	44	46	40
	Goal	73	76	76	81	77
	Proficient	94	96	95	94	94
Female	Advanced		40	54	49	42
	Goal	74	78	80	84	79
	Proficient	94	96	93	96	96
Male	Advanced		27	29	34	28
	Goal	58	65	62	67	60
	Proficient	86	89	91	86	88
Special Education	Advanced		11	13	13	10
	Goal	35	41	30	30	18
	Proficient	69	85	69	70	58
English Language Learners	Advanced	The number of students in this subgroup is insufficient for reporting purposes.				
	Goal					
	Proficient					
Free or Reduced Lunch	Advanced		4	4	11	3
	Goal	25	23	29	39	25
	Proficient	72	65	67	65	73

Table 5: Scholastic Assessment Test 1 Writing

	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06
% of Graduates Tested					90%
Mean Score					560

Table 6: Change in CMT Writing Level Grades 5 – 8

	Fall 2003 or Fall 2004					
Spring 2006	Advanced	Goal	Proficient	Basic	Below Basic	Total
Advanced	562	325	36	1	1	925
Goal	213	465	141	36	6	861
Proficient	15	100	72	42	15	244
Basic	1	19	36	19	15	90
Below Basic	1		2	4	16	23
Total	792	909	287	102	53	2143

Up One or More Levels	29%
Same Level	53%
Down One or More Levels	18%

Percentage of Students Tested in Spring 2006 and in Fall 2003 / Fall 2004	90.5%
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	03 / 04	06
Advanced	37.0%	43.2%
Goal	42.4%	40.2%
Proficient	13.4%	11.4%
Basic	4.8%	4.1%
Below Basic	2.5%	1.1%