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Weighted Student Formula Yearbook
Minneapolis

by Katie Furtick & Lisa Snell

Minneapolis Public School District

Program Name: Site-Based Management
Implementation: 1993–1994 School Year
Program Type: District-Wide Program
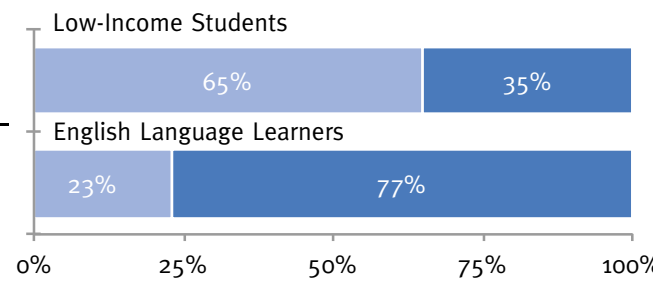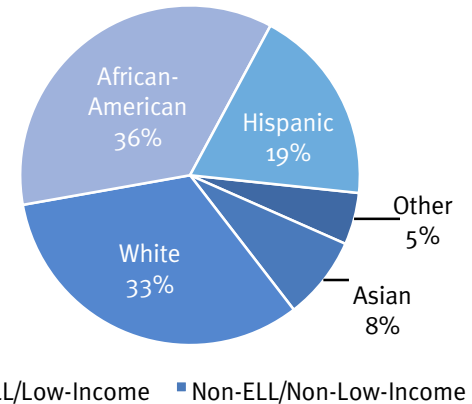**Legal Authorization:** School Board

Overall Grade: B

Category	Grade	Rank*
Overall Grade **	B	6
Principal Autonomy	A	1
School Empowerment Benchmarks	A	6
2011 Proficiency Rates	B-	7
Proficiency Rate Improvement	D	12
Expected Proficiency vs. Actual	C+	9
Expected Proficiency Improvement	B	6
2011 Graduation Rates	F	14
2011 Achievement Gaps	F	15
Achievement Gap Improvement	C+	8
Achievement Gap Closures:		
■ *Internal District*	B	5
■ *Internal District vs. Internal State*	B-	6
■ *External Achievement Gaps*	B-	5

* Tied with San Francisco Unified School District for "Internal District vs. Internal State" achievement gap closure. Tied with Milwaukee Public Schools for "External Achievement Gaps". Tied with Baltimore, Boston, Denver, Hartford, Houston, and Newark for "School Empowerment Benchmarks".

** Overall grades and ranks may not equal the average of individual grades and ranks because categories are weighted differently to reflect their importance.

Demographics

African-American 36%
Hispanic 19%
Other 5%
Asian 8%
White 33%

■ ELL/Low-Income   ■ Non-ELL/Non-Low-Income

Low-Income Students
65% | 35%

English Language Learners
23% | 77%

Source: MPS Racial/Ethnic Statistics, MPS 2012–2013 District Budget

2012–2013 Principal Autonomy

55.9% Money Directly to Schools
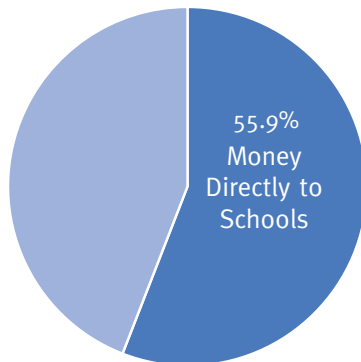
Source: MPS 2012–2013 Operating Budget

School Empowerment Benchmarks

School budgets based on students not staffing	Yes
Charge schools actual versus average salaries	No
School choice and open enrollment policies	Yes
Principal autonomy over budgets	Yes
Principal autonomy over hiring	Yes
Principal training and school capacity building	Yes
Published transparent school-level budgets	Yes
Published transparent school-level outcomes	Yes
Explicit accountability goals	Yes
Collective bargaining relief, flat contracts, etc.	Yes

MPS Met 9 out of 10 School Empowerment Benchmarks

1. Overview of Minneapolis's Weighted Student Formula Program

Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) has 32,263 students. The district demographics include 33 percent White, 36 percent African-American, 19 percent Hispanic, 8 percent Asian and 5 percent American Indian.[1] Twenty-three percent of students are English language learners and 65 percent qualify for the free and reduced lunch program.[2]

In February 1992, the Minneapolis school board adopted the district's current site-based management policy.[3] By 1994, all Minneapolis schools were restructured to become site-based management schools. Within the guidelines of the law, negotiated contracts and district policies, site-based management allowed schools to select and evaluate personnel and theoretically allowed these schools to exercise complete discretion over the use of salary and non-salary allocations. However, it wasn't until the 2009–2010 adopted budget that the district started reporting out school-level allocations based on individual student characteristics.

Site-based management did not necessarily offer schools strong autonomy because the central office has continued to define a "minimum program" for schools. The minimum program mandates many positions and grants the central office top-down budgeting requirements for schools. To address the lack of real autonomy schools have, in 2013 Superintendent Bernadeia Johnson has moved to pilot full autonomy. The pilot program will give 20–30 percent of schools control over staffing, budgets, instructional programs and schedules in exchange for explicit performance-based contracts.

2. How Does Minneapolis's Student-Based Budgeting Process Work?

The school district defines core expectations for each grade configuration and provides each school with a budget allocation. The principal and site leadership team determine how to use the budget, based on core expectations and specific student needs and program priorities at the individual schools.

Basic per-pupil allocations are based on a weighted formula by grade level. Also, small class-size referendum funds are distributed on a per-pupil basis weighted by grade level. Allocations and weights for the 2012–2013 school year are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Minneapolis Public Schools' 2012–2013 Student Funding Formula

		Kindergarten	$1^{st} - 8^{th}$	$9^{th} - 12^{th}$
	Base Allocation	$1,725.21	$2,464.58	$2,711.04
		0.7	1.0	1.10
	Class-size Referendum Funds	Kindergarten	$1^{st} - 8^{th}$	$9^{th} - 12^{th}$
		$926.91	$1,324.16	$1,456.58
		0.7	1.0	1.10
$	Compensatory Education	Lump-sum allocation to each site determined by the state formula, which is based on students eligible for free/reduced price lunch as of October 1, 2011. The state money follows the child to the classroom in Minneapolis.		

The district also mandates certain school-level spending that is paid for out of a combination of the school-level allocations and the central district allocations:

- **High School Career and Technical Education (CTE)** allocations are taken out of the basic per-student allocation for high school.

- **English Language Learner (ELL)** allocations supply 73 percent of the funding needed for the English as a Second Language teachers at each school, based on a ratio established by the Multilingual department. Schools must use compensatory revenue (see Table 1, above) or their basic allocation to fund the remaining 27 percent.

- **Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT)** allocations supply 50 percent of the funding needed for the SERTs at each school, based on the contract ratio of 1:23 as determined by the Special Education Department. Schools must use compensatory revenue or their basic allocation to fund the remaining 50 percent.

The district also defines a minimum program for each grade configuration based on the amount needed to meet class size targets, ELL and SERT requirements. The funds available to each school are determined by adding the allocations for referendum class size, basic per student, compensatory education, ELL and SERTs. If the funds available minus funds needed result in a negative number, two steps are taken:

1) Schools are given a minimal program adjustment to bring the difference to zero.
2) Schools are given an additional per pupil adjustment to provide a limited amount of discretionary funds.

Additional funds are allocated for specific programs and services controlled on a school-by-school basis for programs such as Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) and International Baccalaureate (IB).

3. How Much Autonomy Do Minneapolis Public Schools Enjoy?

There are two ways to view school-level autonomy. First, autonomy at the school level can be evaluated by budget discretion—what proportion of funds is sent to the schools versus retained at the district level? Second, one can evaluate by planning discretion—how much control over staffing and programmatic offerings do principals have?

The letter grade given to school districts in the *Weighted Student Formula Yearbook* indicating the level of autonomy over school budgets is based on the percentage of yearly operating funds that are allocated to the school level. The higher the percentage of operating funds allocated to the school level, the greater budget autonomy the principal enjoys.[4]

MPS district schools received 55.9 percent of funds through student-based budgeting allocations in the 2012–2013 school year. MPS's student-based budgeting allocation makes up the largest percentage of schools' budgets relative to other school districts highlighted in the *Weighted Student Formula Yearbook*, giving MPS an "A" in principal autonomy, according to this report's methodology. This is somewhat misleading because despite the district's relatively large percentage of operating funds allocated directly to the school level, the budget autonomy realized by principals has been constrained by the district setting core expectations and class-size mandates for each school.

The second measure of school-level autonomy is evaluated by the extent of planning discretion district schools have. Minneapolis Public Schools has been able to negotiate ongoing flexibility and control over staffing by school principals. Principals have control over staffing through mutual consent and do not have to accept forced placement of teachers.

In the 2013–2014 school year, school-level autonomy is likely to increase. In May 2013 Minneapolis Superintendent Bernadeia Johnson announced plans to shift toward more autonomous schools. A new partnership zone will be created where school teams will exchange autonomy for accountability, governed by performance contracts with clear standards of effective school performance.[5] MPS will establish the partnership zone in which 20–30 percent of schools, including struggling schools, will have the opportunity to shift into a new relationship with the school district based on partnership, achievement, autonomy and accountability. In the partnership zone, schools will have ownership over critical decisions, such as hiring the people that best match the needs of students and ensuring that students and staff members have the time they need in the school day and school year to support improved academic outcomes for students. There also will be clear and transparent accountability for these choices and consequences. Eventually, all schools could be transitioned to fully autonomous schools with clear performance contracts.

4. How Does MPS Support Principals?

Principals work with their site-based teams to develop budgets and receive direct support from their associate superintendents who offer feedback and support during the budget development process. Principals also receive support from the finance office during the budget development process.

MPS has also designed an innovative, standards-based aspiring principal academy that prepares future principals to transform under-performing schools in Minneapolis. Small cohorts of prospective principals advance their skills in change management and instructional leadership through intensive experiential and problem-based learning over 13 months.

5. The Site-Based Management of Minneapolis Public Schools

Since 1994, Minneapolis Public Schools has operated under site-based decision-making to move decision-making closest to the students. The goal of site-based management is to improve student achievement.

Site-based decision-making at each school may vary, but schools typically have a team of representatives from all areas to serve as a "site council," "education council" or "shared leadership team." This will include principals, parents, students, teachers, specialist teachers, clerical, other building staff, business partners and the community/neighborhood.

The councils meet monthly to make decisions and discuss long-range program goals for the school. Parents who are not on the council may attend, and if they would like to have a subject discussed, they may submit agenda items and talk to a member. Under the district's site-based decision-making philosophy, these councils are to examine everything that might be standing in the way of student achievement—whether it be grade levels, student groupings, materials, or school policies and practices—and recommend keeping what is working and changing what is not.

6. The School Choice Component of Minneapolis's Weighted Student Formula Program

Minneapolis allows students to enroll online in the school of their choice. Every student can request a school of choice through an online "request card" in which the student requests his or her top two schools.[6] The placement process gives some preference to residential assignment and siblings attending the same school. Students who attend school out of their residential area must have their own transportation before high school. Eighth-grade students have the choice of attending a high school within their attendance zone or

a citywide program with transportation. Each high school has specific academic focus areas that may appeal to a student's particular interests. The online school choice process also provides a description of every school and the school's unique programming, and a link to each school's progress report that has up-to-date information on school demographics, social climate and academic trends.

7. Initiatives to Increase School-Level Accountability in Minneapolis

MPS monitors the performance of each school and the district through a comprehensive accountability system that includes:

The MPS Online Scorecard: The MPS scorecard is a collection of 29 measures of progress, called metrics, toward the district's nine strategic goals. These goals are primarily focused on student academic achievement, but the scorecard also looks at everything from standardized test scores to student attendance to MPS's credit rating. The scorecard aims to show how MPS as a whole is progressing toward its targets and how performance varies within the school district.

Annual Report on Academic Progress: The Annual Report on Academic Progress is produced each year to share with the Board and general public how the district is performing on the scorecard measures. It also includes a summary of how individual schools performed based upon the district's school performance framework and what interventions are being used to support the lowest performing schools.

School Progress Report: School Progress Reports show the progress each school has made on the 29 measures of progress, indicates how individual schools are performing, and shares the strategies schools are using to improve their outcomes and/or continue their high performance.

School Quality Review: The School Quality Review is designed to be an objective, third-party summary of what each school does well and where the school should focus its improvement efforts. The report, along with data, is used by schools to identify strengths and areas of improvement in their annual School Improvement Plan (SIP).

School Improvement Plan: The School Improvement Plan (SIP) serves as a tool that is used to assist school staff in their continuous school improvement efforts. It also fulfills district, state and federal requirements, including requirements for school-wide Title I, Targeted Assistance and AYP/Needs Improvement Plans.

Report to the Community: Community reports give a summary of each school's mission and vision, program highlights, demographic information, test scores and more.

School Information Reports: The School Information Reports (SIR) provide annual assessment summary data for each school that includes demographic information, student, staff, and parent/guardian survey results, and the following student performance measures:

- Beginning and End of Kindergarten Assessments (BKA/EKA);

- Grade One Assessment (GOA) benchmarks;

- MCA-II/III: Reading, Math and Science proficiency;

- NWEA MAP Fall & Spring: Reading and Math growth and performance;

- EXPLORE-PLAN-ACT composite scores and college benchmarks.

8. Performance Outcomes in Minneapolis Public Schools

While compiling this *Weighted Student Formula Yearbook,* Reason Foundation conducted an analysis to determine how the school districts that have adopted a weighted student formula are performing relative to other districts in their state, and relative to each other.

Reason's analysis grades 10 performance metrics. Scores are determined by comparing the school district in question—in this case Minneapolis—with other school districts in the same state (Minnesota, in this instance), and sorting them into a decile ranking. Based on the school district's decile rank within its own state, the analysis then compares it with the other districts studied in this *Weighted Student Formula Yearbook*. Finally, the analysis assigns the studied school districts a grade based on how they measure up against one another. This analysis also grades and ranks studied school districts on two other measures: the number of school empowerment benchmarks the district has reached, and the degree of autonomy principals have over school budgets. In determining the grades on these two measures, districts are compared only with the other districts covered in this *Yearbook*. A detailed explanation of the methodology used to determine performance metrics and grading can be found in the methodology chapter of the *Yearbook*.

Student proficiency rates—as determined by standardized state tests—and student enrollment data were used to calculate the following:

- 2011 proficiency rates;

- Improvement (average change) in proficiency rates from 2008 to 2011;

- Expected versus actual proficiency rates;

- Improvement in expected proficiency from 2008 to 2011;

- Achievement gap, and

- Each of three achievement gap closure metrics.

Minneapolis Public Schools' proficiency rate data were obtained from the Minnesota Department of Education Assessment and Growth Files.[7] High school student proficiency rates in reading, mathematics and science derive from Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments: Series II (MCA-II) test results. Elementary and middle school student proficiency rates in reading and science also derive from MCA-II test results, but SPPS elementary and middle school student mathematics proficiency is derived from Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment: Series III (MCA-III) test results.

This analysis also discusses student achievement, including 2012 proficiency rates, but does not include 2012 data because in many school districts the data was not yet available at the time of writing. Therefore, 2012 student achievement is mentioned, but not compared to other school districts in Minnesota or to other districts in the *Weighted Student Formula Yearbook*.

Graduation rates were collected from Data.gov based on adjusted cohort graduation rates at the school level for school year 2010–11 (most recent data available).[8] Four-year adjusted cohort graduation rates are calculated by state education agencies in accordance with U.S. Department of Education regulations on ESEA, Title I, published in 2008. Adjusted cohort graduation rates are reported for each school as a whole and for key sub-groups of students.

The grade given for school empowerment benchmarks is based on 10 benchmarks determined to be best practices within existing weighted student formula programs and by recommendations of other studies on student-based budgeting.
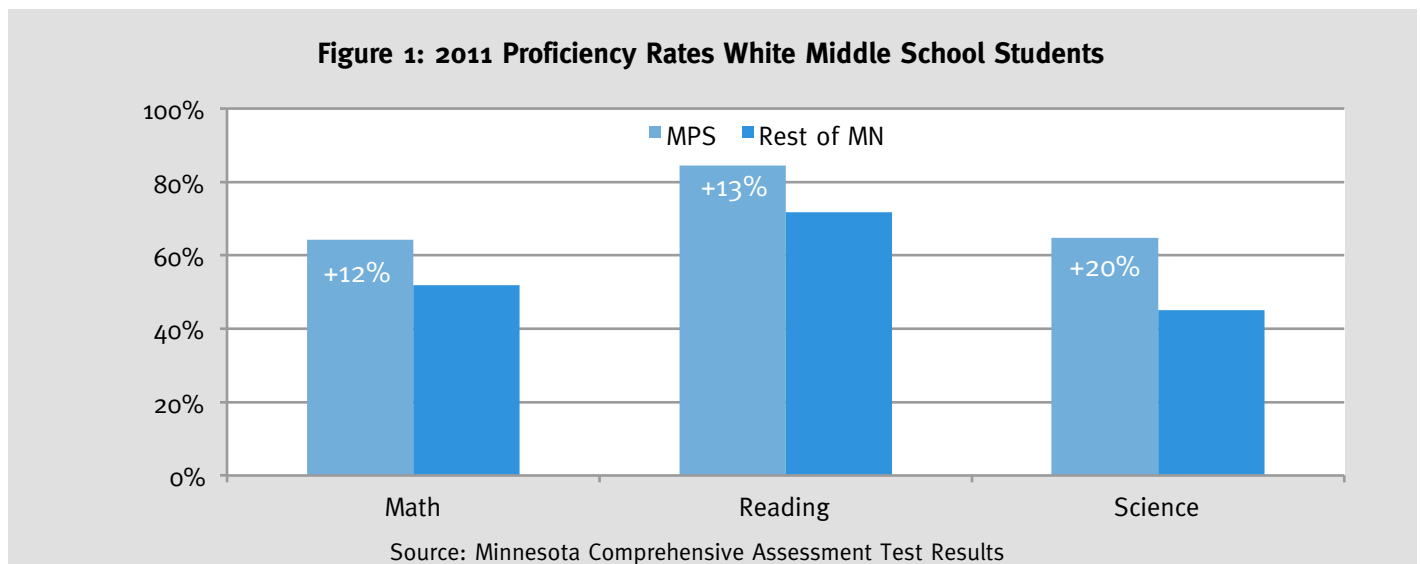
The following sections expand upon each graded category by highlighting areas in which Minneapolis performed exceptionally well relative to other districts in Minnesota, and compared to other districts in the *Weighted Student Formula Yearbook*. This report also discusses areas in which MPS has fallen behind or could use improvement.

Student Achievement

MPS disadvantaged student groups (African-American, Hispanic, and low-income) had lower relative 2011 proficiency rates than advantaged students groups. Minneapolis Public Schools' White and non-low-income students' 2011 proficiency rates

Category	Grade
2011 Proficiency Rates	B-
Proficiency Rate Improvement	D
Expected Proficiency vs. Actual	C+
Expected Proficiency Improvement	B
Graduation Rates	F

were among the top 50 percent or higher of all Minnesota school districts (see Figure 1), whereas African-American, Hispanic, and low-income students' performance fell into the bottom half of Minnesota school districts.

Figure 1: 2011 Proficiency Rates White Middle School Students

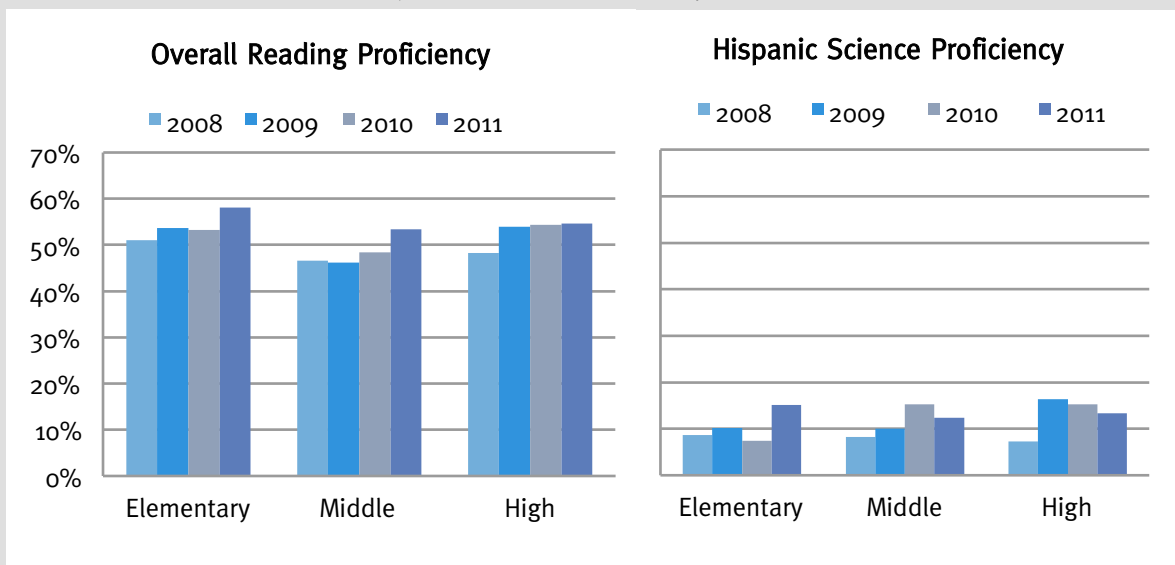Source: Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment Test Results

Of the district's disadvantaged student groups, Hispanic students performed the best with their 2011 mathematics and reading proficiency rates among high school students, which was about average relative to other districts. Low-income students were the worst performing student group, falling into the bottom 10 to 20 percent of all Minnesota school districts in nearly every category of 2011 proficiency rates.

Overall, reading proficiency of elementary, middle and high school students is improving quickly relative to most other Minnesota school districts. Reading proficiency rate improvement at each grade level is among the top 30 percent, 40 percent and 50 percent of fastest improving Minnesota school districts, respectively (see Figure 2).

Disaggregated by student group, the district's African-American high school students are among the top 40 percent of school districts for fastest improving mathematics. Also, Hispanic students at all grade levels are increasingly proficient in science at an average pace relative to other Minnesota school districts (see Figure 2). However, in all other categories for proficiency rate improvement, and particularly among low-income students, Minneapolis students are improving their proficiency, but slower than most school districts. This is concerning because these disadvantaged student groups are already low-performing, and without a significant increase in the rate of improvement these students will continue to fall behind in academic achievement.

Figure 2: Improvement in Proficiency Rates: 2008–2011

Source: Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment Test Results

Predicted or expected proficiency rates are calculated relative to all other school districts in Minnesota, controlling for the percentage of low-income students at each grade level. Generally, a large, low-income student body is an indicator of low performance. Controlling for, or taking into account, the percentage of low-income students in each grade level across school districts allows a determination of how well a given school district should be performing relative to others in their state.

If the predicted proficiency rate is higher than the actual proficiency rate, then a school district is under-performing. In other words, the school district is not reaching its potential achievement level. If a school district's actual proficiency is above its predicted proficiency, the district is over-performing what is expected given the low-income student population.

Minneapolis Public Schools is among the top 30 percent of Minnesota school districts for expected 2011 proficiency rate in high school mathematics proficiency. In nearly all other categories MPS students underperformed in expected proficiency.

Regarding improvement to meet expected proficiency, the district is also among the top 50 percent of districts in several categories;

- Elementary school reading (4) and science (5) and;
- Middle school reading (5) and science (4).

Figure 3: Improvement in Expected vs. Actual Proficiency Rates
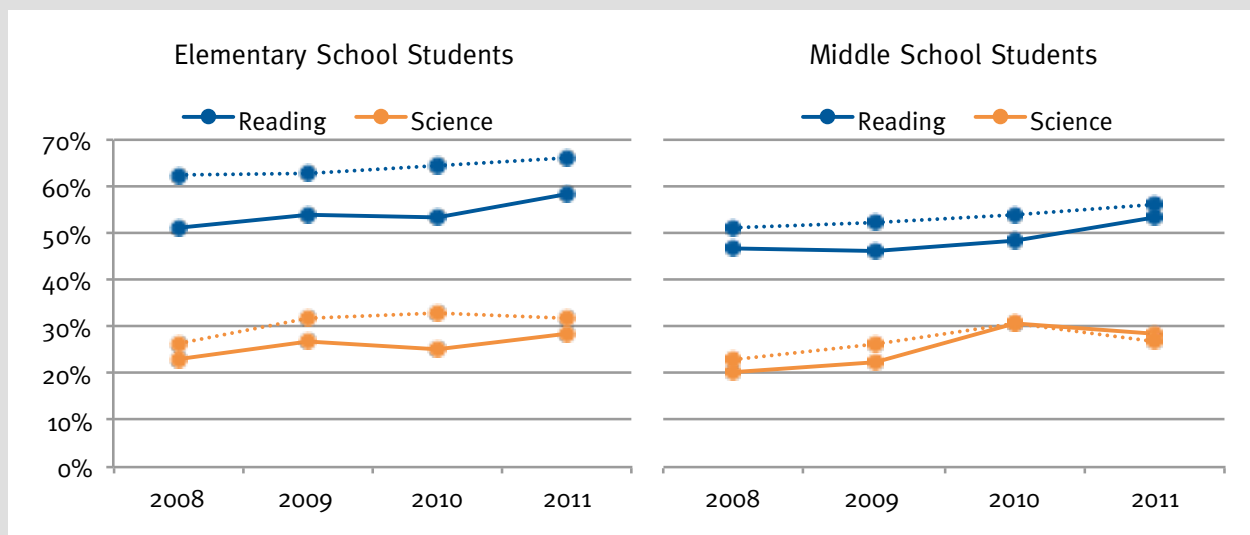
Source: Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment Test Results, Reason Foundation Analysis

Shown in Figure 3, above, the district's actual proficiency rates are quickly increasing to meet their predicted proficiency rates. In other words, Minneapolis Public Schools' students are increasing their proficiency to reach their potential at a faster rate than many other Minnesota school districts.

MPS's overall four-year cohort graduation rate in 2011 was among the bottom 20 percent of Minnesota school districts. The same is true among African-American students, and among Hispanic and low-income students, with 2011 graduation rates among the bottom 10 percent of Minnesota school districts. The first year that Minnesota Public Schools reported four-year cohort graduation rates was 2012 (for the graduating class of 2011); therefore no comparison is possible between this new calculation to graduation rates in previous years. The release of class of 2012 four-year cohort graduation rates will allow a determination of whether or not MPS students have increased their graduation rates.

Achievement Gaps

The following three achievement gaps are measured across all grade levels (elementary, middle and high school) and school subjects (reading, mathematics and science):

Category	Grade
2011 Achievement Gaps	F
Improvement in Achievement Gaps	C+
Achievement Gap Closures:	
Internal District	B
Internal District vs. Internal State	B-
External Achievement Gaps	B-

- African-American versus White student proficiency;
- Hispanic versus White student proficiency and;
- Low-income versus non-low-income student proficiency.

Internal district achievement gaps (IDG) are measured as proficiency gaps between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged student groups within a given district. Internal district achievement gaps are measured for each district in the state, allowing for ranking of relative size of achievement gaps across districts in the state, and determining how quickly those achievement gaps are closing from 2008 to 2011.

An achievement gap is considered to be closing if the disadvantaged student group proficiency rate is increasing faster than the advantaged student group proficiency rate.

Minnepolis Public Schools has the largest relative 2011 achievement gaps in 23 of the 27 achievement gaps measured out of all of the *Yearbook* school districts, giving it the lowest ranking of all the *Yearbook* school districts. As previously mentioned, the district's advantaged student groups are performing at a level among at least the top 50 percent of Minnesota school districts, and the district's disadvantaged student groups are performing at a level among the bottom 50 percent. More importantly though, MPS is closing many of its achievement gaps by disadvantaged students' large gains in reaching proficiency year-to-year.

All achievement gaps in reading and science proficiency are closing—meaning that the percentage of the district's African-American, Hispanic, and low-income students gaining proficiency in these subjects is growing faster than the percentage of White students gaining proficiency. In particular, achievement gaps in reading proficiency between African-American and White high school and elementary school students are among the top 40 and 30 percent of the state's districts for fastest closing gaps (see Figure 4). Likewise, gaps in science proficiency between Hispanic and White high school and elementary school students are among the top 30 and 40 percent of the state's districts for fastest closing gaps.

Figure 4: Achievement Gap Improvement

Elementary School Reading

High School Reading

Source: Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment Test
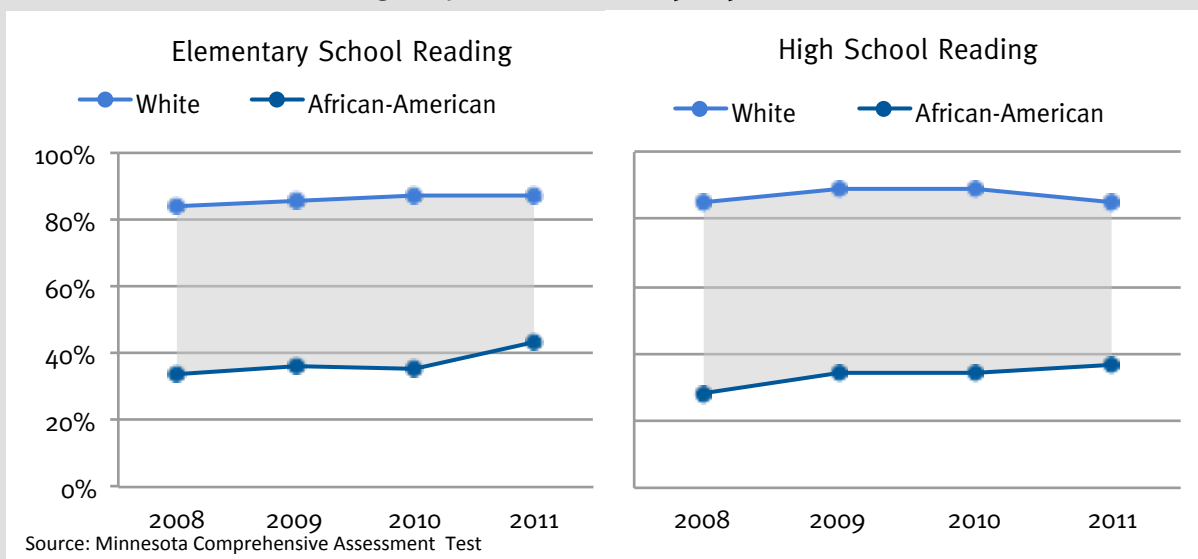
Source: Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment Test Results

In addition to internal district achievement gaps (IDG) discussed above, this analysis also measures internal district versus internal state (ID vs. IS) achievement gaps and external district achievement gaps (EDG).

Internal district achievement gaps (IDG) are measured between student groups within the district. Internal district versus internal state (ID vs. IS) achievement gaps are measured as the district's achievement gap versus the average achievement gap of every other district in Minnesota (excluding Minneapolis). If a given MPS achievement gap is closing faster than that of the rest of the state, the ID vs. IS gap is considered to be closing. Finally, external achievement gaps (EDG) are measured by the difference between the district's disadvantaged student group proficiency rate and the advantaged student group average proficiency rate of all other districts in the state. External achievement gaps are considered to be closing if the district disadvantaged group proficiency rate is increasing faster than the state advantaged group. Table 2 below shows which achievement gaps MPS is closing, and which achievement gaps are not closing, given the available data.

Table 2: All Achievement Gap Closures

Achievement Gap	School Level	Subject	IDG	ID vs. IS	EDG
African-American vs. White	Elementary	Math	X	X	√
Hispanic vs. White	Elementary	Math	X	X	√
Low-income vs. Non-low-income	Elementary	Math	X	X	√
African-American vs. White	Elementary	Reading	√	X	√
Hispanic vs. White	Elementary	Reading	√	X	√
Low-income vs. Non-low-income	Elementary	Reading	√	X	√
African-American vs. White	Elementary	Science	√	√	X
Hispanic vs. White	Elementary	Science	√	√	X
Low-income vs. Non-low-income	Elementary	Science	√	X	X
African-American vs. White	Middle School	Math	X	X	X
Hispanic vs. White	Middle School	Math	X	X	X
Low-income vs. Non-low-income	Middle School	Math	X	X	√
African-American vs. White	Middle School	Reading	√	X	X
Hispanic vs. White	Middle School	Reading	√	X	X
Low-income vs. Non-low-income	Middle School	Reading	√	X	√
African-American vs. White	Middle School	Science	√	X	√
Hispanic vs. White	Middle School	Science	√	X	√
Low-income vs. Non-low-income	Middle School	Science	√	X	X
African-American vs. White	High School	Math	√	X	√
Hispanic vs. White	High School	Math	X	X	√
Low-income vs. Non-low-income	High School	Math	X	X	X
African-American vs. White	High School	Reading	√	√	√
Hispanic vs. White	High School	Reading	√	√	√
Low-income vs. Non-low-income	High School	Reading	√	X	√
African-American vs. White	High School	Science	√	√	X
Hispanic vs. White	High School	Science	√	√	X
Low-income vs. Non-low-income	High School	Science	√	X	√
Total Gaps Closing out of Total Available:			19/27	6/27	16/27

MPS is closing all internal district achievement gaps in reading and science, but is struggling to raise disadvantaged students' mathematics proficiency to the level of the district's advantaged students. Also, looking at the internal district versus internal state gap closure, MPS is only closing six achievement gaps. This means that, on average, the rest of the state is closing achievement gaps faster than Minneapolis Public Schools.

Areas for Improvement

Minneapolis Public Schools' low-income student 2011 proficiency rates were among the lowest district proficiency rates in Minnesota. Non-low-income students on the other hand had relatively high 2011 proficiency rates, showing wide achievement gaps between these student groups.

MPS disadvantaged student groups are struggling to improve proficiency rates with either low or negative gains in proficiency from 2008 to 2011. In particular Hispanic, African-American and low-income elementary and middle school students' mathematics proficiency rates are actually lower in 2011 than they were in 2008, shown in Figure 5, below.

Figure 5: Improvement in Mathematics Proficiency Rates: 2008 to 2011

Source: Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment Test Results
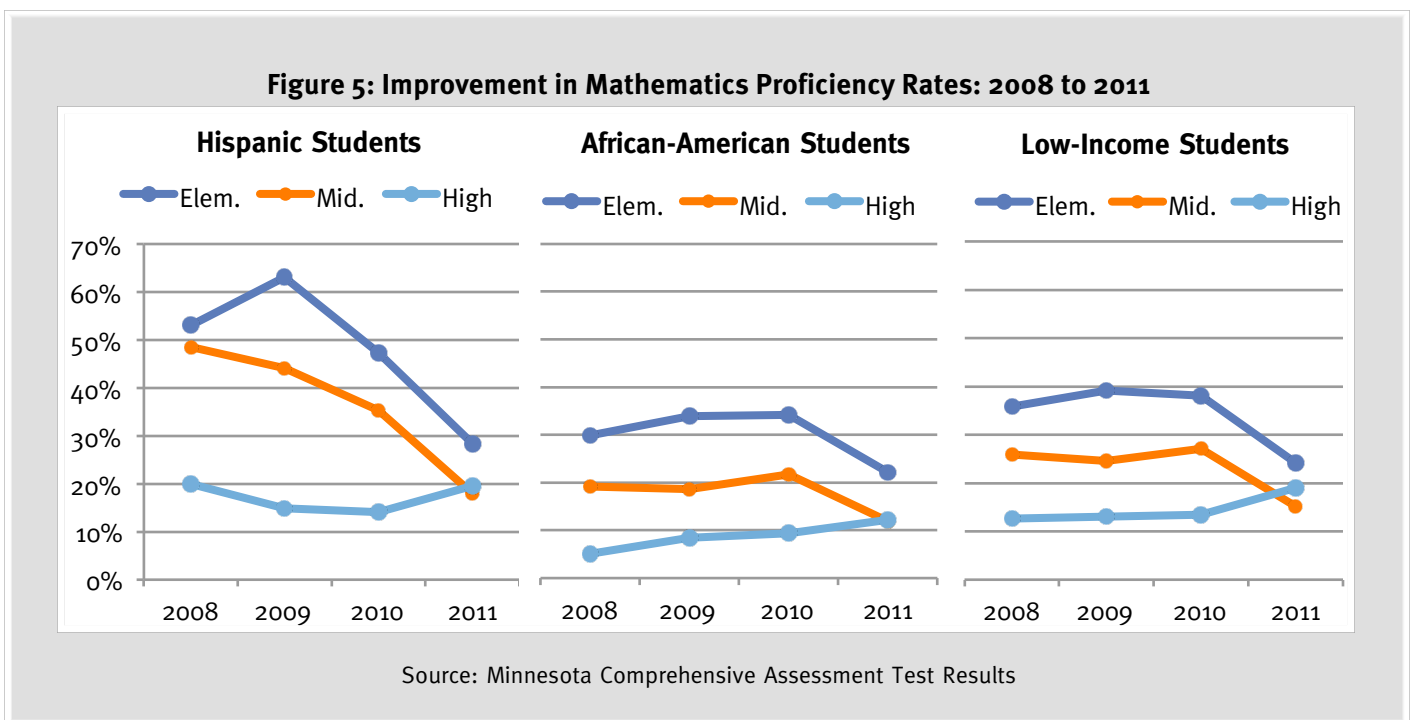
High school students are doing a better job at improving proficiency rates, but only among African-American high school students were mathematics proficiency rates increasing faster than most Minnesota school districts. Reading and science proficiency rates have increased from 2008 to 2011 at every grade level among Hispanic, African-American and low-income students, but not at a notable rate.

MPS 2011 proficiency rates are lower than expected in all categories other than middle school science and high school mathematics. More importantly, in many of those categories actual proficiency rates are not improving enough to catch up to those predicted (elementary and middle school mathematics and high school reading and science). This means that, controlling for the percentage of low-income students in Minneapolis, the district is not performing as well as it should relative to other Minnesota school districts.

**Figure 6: 2011 Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates**
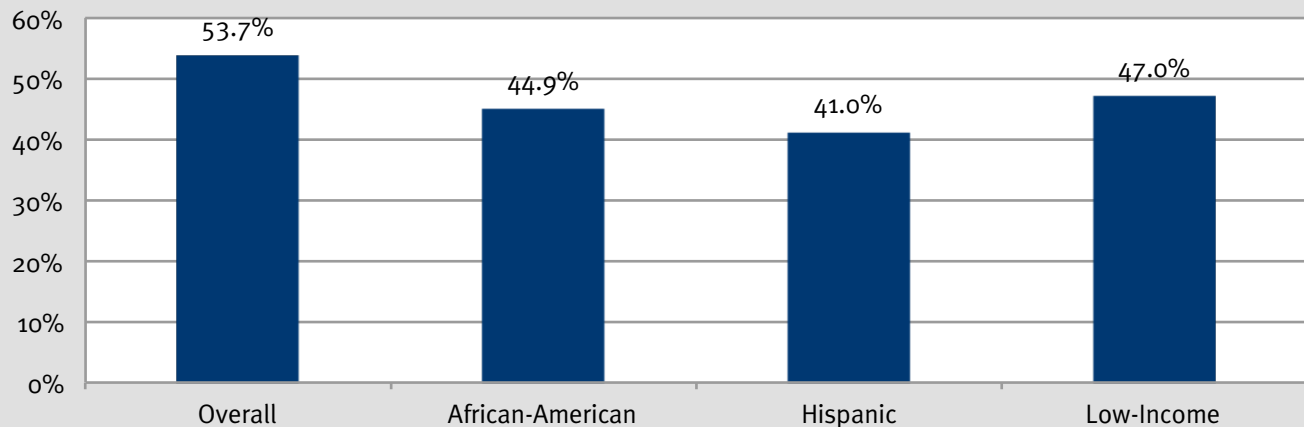
Source: Data.gov

Minneapolis has very low 2011 graduation rates compared to the rest of Minnesota. However, having low graduation rates in one year tells little about district performance; it is more important to look at a trend over time indicating whether or not the district is improving or becoming worse. As previously mentioned, MPS has released only one year of the new four-year cohort calculation of the district's graduation rates. Therefore this report cannot compare the new graduation rate calculations with previous year's graduation rates to determine whether or not they have improved.

MPS has some of the largest relative 2011 achievement gaps of all the districts measured in the *Yearbook***.** Many of those achievement gaps are closing, but the district is struggling to close mathematics achievement gaps, particularly among elementary and middle school students. African-American students are seriously underperforming compared to their White peers and showing little to no improvement in mathematics at every grade level. Hispanic students are also underperforming White students, but what is worse is that the achievement gap between these student groups has grown each year due to drastic declines in proficiency rates among Hispanic students.

Figure 7: Achievement Gaps in Mathematics Proficiency

Elementary School Students — HI, AA, WH

Middle School Students — HI, AA, WH

High School Students — HI, AA, WH
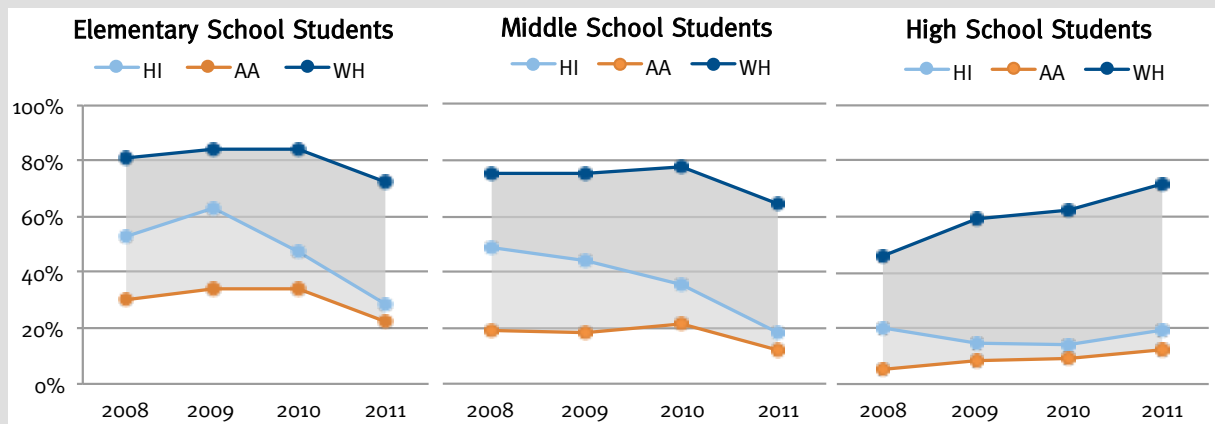
School Empowerment Benchmarks

Minneapolis Public Schools has reached nine out of 10 school empowerment benchmarks. The only school empowerment benchmark that the district failed to meet is charging schools actual versus average salaries. If MPS charged schools actual salaries, funding would be more equitable among schools within the district.

Category	Grade
School Empowerment Benchmarks	A
School budgets based on students not staffing	Yes
Charge schools actual versus average salaries	No
School choice and open enrollment policies	Yes
Principal autonomy over budgets	Yes
Principal autonomy over hiring	Yes
Principal training and school capacity building	Yes
Published transparent school-level budgets	Yes
Published transparent school-level outcomes	Yes
Explicit accountability goals	Yes
Collective bargaining relief, flat contracts, etc.	Yes

9. Lessons Learned in Minneapolis

1. Minneapolis teaches a lesson about the need for full school-level autonomy. Schools do not have real autonomy, even if the schools receive per-pupil allocations, if the district is too prescriptive about which positions each school must "buy" with their school-level budgets. Minneapolis is piloting a stronger autonomy program in which principals are given authority and real control over dollars in exchange for performance-based contracts.

2. Minneapolis demonstrates the value of a menu of strong accountability tools that give parents easy access to school-level performance and show academic growth and progress in each school over time as well as individual school strengths and areas for improvement.

3. Minneapolis also demonstrates the value of a user-friendly online school choice process, where parents can easily request any school in the district.

Resources

- "Minneapolis Public Schools, Autonomy, Accountability and Partnership: A Systemic Strategy to Close the Achievement Gap," March 12, 2013, http://newschools.mpls.k12.mn.us/uploads/final_ons_board_present_march_12_2013-6-without_notes.pdf.

- Minneapolis Public Schools, Minneapolis Budget Book 2013, http://financeandbudget.mpls.k12.mn.us/uploads/budget_book_fiscal_2013_final_2.pdf.

- Minneapolis Public Schools, School Allocations FY 2013, http://financeandbudget.mpls.k12.mn.us/uploads/copy_of_allocation_model_spreadsheet_12-13_for_web.xlsx.

Contact Information

Robert Doty
Finance Director
Minneapolis Public Schools
1250 West Broadway
Minneapolis, MN 55411
612-668-0395
Robert.Doty@mpls.k12.mn.us

Endnotes

1   Minnesota Public School District, "Summary Statistics Racial/Ethnic Breakdown from 1982–2012," November 15,2012. http://studentaccounting.mpls.k12.mn.us/uploads/historyical_statistics.pdf.

2   Minneapolis Public Schools Finance Department and Office of Communications, "The Budget for the 2012–2013 fiscal and school year," Minneapolis Public Schools, June 11,2012.

3   Lynn Stinnette, "Decentralization: Why, How, and Toward What Ends?" North Central Educational Laboratory, 1994. http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/go/go0dcent.htm.

4   The methodology used for determining principal autonomy is explained in detail in section 2 of the methodology chapter of this *Weighted Student Formula Yearbook*.

5   Minneapolis Public Schools, "Superintendent announces priorities to shift the educational experience at MPS," Press Release, May 13, 2013. http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us/shift.html.

6   For more on the school choice process, see: https://schoolrequest.mpls.k12.mn.us/.

7   http://w20.education.state.mn.us/MDEAnalytics/Data.jsp.

8   U.S. Department of Education, EDFacts, *Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates at the School Level: School Year 2010–11*, https://explore.data.gov/Education/School-graduation-rates/5vtz-kvrk, April 17, 2013.