

APPENDIX A—DETAILED METHODOLOGY

PILOT STUDY

Site Selection

Researchers applied several criteria to select low-performing schools that experienced major increases in student achievement. The criteria included: at least 40 percent of the students scoring below proficiency on the state test; a dramatic increase in the number of students achieving proficiency the following year; an increase in the number of students achieving proficiency over the three years beyond the baseline year; the number of high-poverty students served; and the achievement of adequate yearly progress (AYP) for at least the last two years prior to the pilot study.

Researchers used multiple sources to identify potential schools for site visits. Data from the Academic Development Institute (ADI) database, supplemented by data from approximately 40 state education agency Web sites, were the primary sources. Furthermore, the researchers collected school data from the National Association of Secondary School Principals' list of "breakthrough schools," a list of principals recognized by the National Association of Elementary School Principals, and a list of award-winning principals. The U.S. Department of Education recommended additional candidates. By reviewing these sources against our criteria, the researchers selected nine sites. There was no requirement to select schools that received Comprehensive School Reform grants. Only two of the selected schools received the grants.

Although the original plan was to have a total of three schools at each level (elementary, middle, and high school), only two high schools met the criteria for inclusion. Consequently, the list of nine schools included two high schools, three middle schools, three elementary schools, and one school that serve kindergarten through eighth grade.

Interview protocols

WestEd developed a set of interview protocols to guide the onsite data collection. The instruments drew on existing research on CSR, LACIO findings and data collection experience, AIR's data collection for the Study of State Implementation and Accountability and Teacher Quality under *NCLB* (SSI-NCLB), as well as the *Turnaround Evidence Review* authored by the Center for Innovation and Improvement. The pilot protocols were highly structured and lengthy. The instruments contained numerous specific questions and follow-up questions that left no opportunities to probe any responses. For example, the original principal interview protocol contained 23 primary questions and typically two to nine additional questions. Only one topic contained no additional questions.

Data Collection

A two-person WestEd and AIR team visited each site. The team spent most of each visit interviewing people individually. Interviewees at each site included a district contact, a new

teacher, an experienced teacher, a parent, a community partner, and a principal. Each interview took 40 to 60 minutes. The principals were interviewed twice for a total of 90 minutes.

Results

The researchers produced a site report for each of the nine schools visited. The Technical Work Group (TWG) then reviewed the process and the results and provided feedback to the researchers, making important suggestions to improve the process. The TWG recommended shortening the interview protocols to permit more open-ended responses. The group also recommended interviewing more teachers in groups (and offering to meet individually if requested) and recommended focus groups with parents and each school's leadership team.

PRIMARY STUDY

Sampling Frame

For the primary study after the pilot, researchers selected initially low-performing schools that received a CSR grant and experienced achievement improvements. They used three data sources to create the sampling frame: the CSR universe file, the National Longitudinal School-Level State Assessment Score Database (NLSLSASD) data set, and the Common Core of Data (CCD) file. The NLSLSASD data set included school-level achievement data, which served as the primary basis for site selection. The CCD file was used to identify schools' grade spans.

Researchers edited and merged data from these sources to create an initial site selection database. They cleaned the CSR universe data file to remove duplicate records, consortia, Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, schools in Puerto Rico, and schools with missing National Center for Education Statistics codes. Next, researchers merged the NLSLSASD data set with the CCD data to add a grade span variable to the test score data set in order to distinguish between elementary, middle, and high schools. Researchers then edited the resulting data set to remove all states that were missing the 1999–2000 baseline achievement data. A total of 10 states were deleted for this reason. These steps produced a file with 6,446 schools that encompassed all grade levels. Researchers then merged the two modified data sets and deleted non-operational schools, resulting in a data set of 5,035 CSR schools that had achievement data.

The next step was to identify low-performing schools based on 1999–2000 baseline school year achievement data. Because the majority of states were testing only one elementary grade and one middle grade, researchers based their site selection on achievement data for a single grade level. They examined the distributions of z-scores for reading and math and identified schools whose baseline reading and math achievement were in the bottom 50 percent of the initial schools. This process identified 1,037 initially low-performing elementary schools that had received a CSR grant and 506 middle schools.

To complete the sampling frame, the researchers needed to identify improved schools. While the emphasis was on schools that made quick, dramatic, and sustained gains, schools that made slow-and-steady progress were of interest also. Researchers identified rapid-improvement

schools on the basis of annual gains in standardized achievement scores from 1999–2000 to 2004–05. Researchers identified each school’s achievement score gain for each of the five years in this period in reading and separately in math, resulting in a total of 10 gain scores for each school. The researchers selected the top 50 percent of schools with gains in both subjects for each year in the study period. They analyzed all subsequent years following each gain period to ensure that no declines greater than 0.1 standard deviation occurred. They repeated the selection of the top 50 percent for each subject area and each school level for each year, creating a composite list that included all schools with annual gains and no single decreases greater than 0.1 standard deviation. The process produced a pool of 47 elementary schools for possible selection. However, these criteria did not yield any dramatically improving middle schools. Therefore the criteria for initially low-performing middle schools was expanded to include schools in the bottom 75 percent in reading and math. This added 403 schools for a total of 909 initially low-performing middle schools 81 showed dramatic improvements in reading, math, or reading and math (39 based on reading only, 34 based math only, and 8 in both reading and math).

The researchers next defined slow-and-steady schools as those initially low-performing schools not previously identified as demonstrating dramatic improvement but exhibiting an overall gain in either reading or math achievement from 1999–2000 to 2004–05 and with no single-year decline greater than 0.25 standard deviation. Researchers conducted separate analyses for each subject area and school level. This process generated a slow-and-steady school list of 53 elementary schools and 36 middle schools. Of the elementary schools 31 were identified based on reading, 19 based on math, and 3 based on both subjects. Among the middle schools, 15 were identified based on reading, 20 based on math, and 1 based on both subjects.

Site Selection

To produce the final list of sites, researchers applied additional restrictions to the identified schools. Researchers eliminated sites that had dramatic demographic shifts greater than 15 percentage points in federal lunch program participants or minority students. The researchers also used achievement data from state files to help select schools with the highest achievement levels in 2005 and 2006. Additionally, they had state officials confirm that gains were not artifacts of proficiency calculation changes. Also, schools that did not make AYP by 2006 were eliminated. Beyond these restrictions, researchers selected high-poverty schools with broad representation across states and locale types. All processes culminated in a list of 10 preferred sites (nine elementary schools and one middle school) as well as a list of eight alternate sites (six elementary schools, one middle, and one PK-12 school) to replace unavailable preferred sites.

Researchers then selected comparison schools that were initially low-performing and received a CSR award but made little or no improvement on standardized achievement measures from 1999–2000 to 2004–05. The researchers limited the pool of comparison schools to schools that received CSR awards within two years of the sample school. Researchers also examined all potential comparison schools to determine if they implemented the same CSR model as the sample school. The process yielded at least one comparison site for eight of the 10 preferred sites and four of the eight alternate sites. The researchers selected five of these sites for potential participation. All potential comparison sites were elementary schools since no comparison middle schools were identified.

After the initial identification of candidate schools for study, we examined updated achievement patterns from the selected schools using data through 2006–07 for all tested grades obtained from individual state education agency Websites. This effort informed the study’s qualitative process and also determined the accuracy of our original classification of schools. We also examined patterns in district and state achievement relative to those at the selected schools to determine how school-level achievement compared to achievement at the district and state levels. Using the percentages of students reaching proficiency in reading or English language arts and math on state assessments through spring 2007, along with the average district and state performance in the tested grades and subjects, we revised the description of schools’ achievement patterns in some sites to more accurately represent their standing through the latest year of the study. We also examined demographic data (e.g., school enrollment levels), along with the case study information, to assess whether factors other than school practices and strategies might have been strongly related to achievement patterns. Exhibit 3 lists the schools included in this study, their selected characteristics, and 2002–07 achievement patterns.

In the course of undertaking these more thorough examinations of school achievement patterns using more recent data, we found that the original distinction between comparison and sample schools did not hold. In particular, two schools initially selected as comparison sites were actually making substantial achievement gains during the time period that we were studying (2002–07). We therefore added these two schools to our case study sample, one as a rapid-improvement site and the other as a slow-and-steady site.

Site Recruitment and Preparation

To gain access to the identified schools, the researchers submitted formal applications to the respective school districts. Each packet included a detailed proposal with information about the purpose of the study, the selection process, the site visit process, and estimated time burden on the school. An appendix contained a copy of the informed consent form, all interview and focus group protocols, as well as Independent Review Board (IRB) documentation.

Gaining access to the schools was the next step. District officials disapproved two schools, one due to doubts about the improvement. Another school changed its grade configuration. Yet another requested a visit that could not be accommodated in the study time frame. A fifth school was eliminated due to its failure to provide necessary information. Researchers identified alternates for all schools. Of the resulting recruitment list of 10 sample schools and five comparison schools, researchers were able to ultimately recruit nine sample schools and two comparison schools. However, as noted earlier, subsequent data were reviewed that two schools initially recruited as comparison schools actually exhibited noteworthy improvements. They were thus retained as study sites resulting in a final list of 11 schools with no comparison sites.²⁴ Eight of these were rapid-improvement, while three were slow-and-steady.

After receiving confirmation from the school principals, researchers sent a packet of materials to each school to help prepare for the visit. One document defined the participants for the various interviews and focus groups. Worksheets enabled the principals to list the people for each

²⁴ While comparison sites would have strengthened the study, time constraints precluded additional recruitment efforts.

session and to schedule the sessions. A final list showed all documents that the site visitors would need.

Instrumentation

Based on the TWG's recommendations following the pilot study, the researchers shortened the pilot protocols and made them less structured to permit more open-ended responses. Researchers also developed interview and focus group protocols for school leaders, teachers, support staff, parents, community partners, and school district officials (see Appendix B).

Research staff from WestEd and AIR volunteered to serve as the site visitors. The study staff created additional documents to help site visitors organize their data and to provide a uniform structure for reporting. An analytic table provided a structure to capture the key features of CSR components and the turnaround framework and to assist site visitors in organizing and synthesizing data collected onsite. Also, the table provided a uniform format to assist with the cross-site analysis. In addition to generating a general description of the site, site visitors had to identify the site's distinguishing features and catalysts.

Researchers developed a report outline to enable site visitors to provide consistent reports. The report outline included an introduction, school characteristics, findings, a school improvement chronology, and descriptions of the individual topics in the analytic table. Furthermore, the outline required site visitors to analyze the relationships between actions and processes as well as to draw conclusions.

A one-day training for site visitors introduced them to the study framework, the protocols, and the project timeline. Researchers created the analytic table and report outline after the training.

Data Collection

The researchers formed two-person site visit teams with no more than one junior researcher per team. Each team, with one exception, included one researcher from WestEd and one from AIR.

A total of 13 site visitors completed at least one site visit. At least one visitor to each of the two comparison schools also visited the corresponding sample school. Site visits typically lasted for two to three school days. All initial visits were conducted from mid-November 2007 through Feb. 1, 2008. Almost all subsequent follow-up activities were conducted via telephone and e-mail.

In appreciation for their participation, each school received \$200 following the initial site visit. Because many staff, but not all, participated in the process, the study team decided a school gratuity was more appropriate than individual gratuities.

Data Analysis

Case Study Reports

Site visitors collected an enormous amount of information from each site. They analyzed their notes and documents to produce an account of the school improvement chronology and related factors. All information in the narrative report was expected to be verifiable through information in the analytic table. Site teams completed their draft reports between late December 2007 and early March 2008. At least one researcher from each organization reviewed each report. Typically, three to four people reviewed each report, and at least two provided comments to the site visitors. The site visitors and report reviewers participated in telephone conference calls to discuss each draft report. The initial call focused on one report, then subsequent calls focused on two reports in order for site visitors to become aware of practices and challenges in other schools. More importantly, the calls provided site visitors with general and specific recommendations to improve their reports. Site visit teams completed final case study reports after addressing all issues from the review process.

Cross-Site Report

A seven-person writing team developed the cross-site report. Participants had reviewed the majority of the case study reports, and two of the members had conducted site visits. The writing team held conference calls to discuss issues and to ensure progress of the report development.

To begin the collective discussion of the individual case studies, all site visitors met with the writing team. In preparation for that meeting, the writing team asked site visitors to consider whether the school was a low-performing school that improved and whether the achievement changes were different from the rest of the state. The team also asked site visitors to consider staff changes, student changes, and resource infusions before focusing on reported reforms. In response, site visitors generated brief summaries that served as the basis for discussion with the writing team, helping identify specific areas that required additional follow-up activity at each site and helping generate an initial list of cross-site themes. (See Appendix C for cross-site summaries).

Writing team members also met with the TWG to gain additional perspectives on the main stories for each site and on the cross-site report. In preparation for this meeting, the writing team constructed site abstracts from the available draft reports and the brief summaries prepared for the cross-site meeting. Writing team members consulted with site visitors as needed to provide additional details. Abstracts provided contextual information, a description of the achievement trends, and a description of school activities.

Consistent with the original plans for this study, site visitors developed vignettes to illustrate the cross-site themes. Each site visit team determined which themes were most important to their school's achievement growth. Some of the vignettes required additional follow up with the school.

APPENDIX B—DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

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Exhibit B.1 Informed Consent Form

LACIO—TURNAROUND CASE STUDIES

This study of “turnaround” schools is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, and is being conducted by WestEd and American Institutes for Research (AIR).

1. **Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to learn about how schools have successfully “turned around” from low performance to high performance in a short time.
2. **Procedures to be followed:** We will review documents and interview key informants who will be invited to participate in the study. All audio tape recordings and notes will be coded without reference to school or informant name. As a key informant, we will ask you questions about the school’s vision and goals, its successes and challenges, including specific questions regarding noticeable changes in the school during the interview or focus group. These interviews will be audiotaped to ensure that all information is accurately captured with your verbal consent.
3. **Benefits:** Your participation in the study will help us understand the accomplishments and challenges in school restructuring. This understanding will support future research, policy, and education planning. There are no direct benefits to you as an individual of participating in this study.
4. **Risks and Discomforts:** Research reports will not identify schools by name, nor will research participants be identified by name. However, roles of participants within school communities will be presented. Because there are a limited number of schools involved in this study, we may not be able to protect the confidentiality of your comments if you have a unique role in your school (such as principal, superintendent, PTA president). Participation in a focus group will affect the confidentiality of your responses, in that, other participants in the focus group will hear your responses. If you are uncomfortable with the focus group at any time, you may select not to participate or you may request a one-on-one interview with the site visitors. There are no other anticipated risks in participating in this study.
5. **Time required:** Interviews will last between 45–90 minutes.
6. **Confidentiality:** All of the information we gather during the interviews, focus groups, and document reviews will be held confidential. We are required to share our findings (not the data) with the study’s sponsor (the U.S. Department of Education) in a report.
 - a. **We will not use your name** or any other identifiable information in any written reports resulting from the study. We will replace your name with a pseudonym during the data collection and analysis process to ensure that the information you give us remains confidential. As the school name will

also be reported with a pseudonym, you will not be identifiable in reporting. Regardless, you have the right to stop all interviews and recordings at anytime during the interview and speak off the record.

- b. **Only AIR and WestEd staff will have access to your interview responses.** All information gathered from interviews, including audiotapes, will be stored in a locked file cabinet or restricted (password protected) computer file.
 - c. **These data will not be used in any other study.** All data and materials, including audio tapes and written statements, will be securely disposed of three years after completion of this study.
7. **Right to Ask Questions:** For more information about this study, you may contact Lauren Davis Sosenko at (562)799-5476 or ldavis@wested.org. For questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact Independent Review Consulting at 1-800-472-3241 or subjects@irb-irc.com.
8. **Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in the study is voluntary; you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. You do not have to answer any question that you do not want to answer. You will face no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled if you refuse to participate in this study. If you refuse to participate or drop out, your relationship with your school system will not be harmed.

By signing this form, you are indicating that you have read and understood the information provided to you about your participation in this study and you agree to participate in the study, including being audiotaped.

Print Participant's Name:

Participant's Signature: _____ Date:

Note: participant must be given a blank copy of this form to keep.

**Exhibit B.2
Community Member Focus Group Protocol**

1. Tell me a little about how you came to be involved in the school.

[Probes: Who encouraged your involvement? Did the encouragement come from the school or district? A community organization?]

2. In what capacity are you involved with the school?

[Probes: Are you involved in supporting school actions at board meetings and other public events, providing services to students within the school, providing materials and equipment. For how long?]

3. With whom at the school do you interact? How often? On what topics? Has this changed over the period during which you have worked with the school? If so, when did the change take place?

[Probe to identify parties with whom they communicate: Principal? Teachers? Parents? Students? Community liaisons? Has the school given you data about student achievement?]

[Probe to identify topics: Student achievement? Data? Student behavior? Parental involvement? School facilities?]

4. What would I have seen had I come to this school five years ago? How are things different now? Who or what prompted changes at the school? (N/A if the respondent has been working with the school for fewer than five years).

5. In general, how do you feel about the school? Has your impression changed over time? If so, what caused the change? What is the school's reputation in the district? Compared to other schools?

6. How are community members made aware of the school's vision, plans, and goals? Are you aware of any school accomplishments? Problems? How are the problems and accomplishments communicated? By whom?

7. What role do community members play in the implementation of school activities?

[Probes: In what way do they support instructional improvement? Are community members involved in planning, implementing, or evaluation school activities? If so, how?]

8. Is there anything else I should know to tell the story of the school's improvement efforts?

Exhibit B.3
Current Principal/Assistant Principal Interview Protocol

1. Tell me little about yourself.

[Probe: When did you come to the school? What is your educational background? How many years have you been a principal? At this school? Do you have prior experience or training working with low-performing schools or students?]

2. Are you aware of any major school improvement efforts that occurred before you came to this school? If yes, are you aware if these reforms were comprehensive? Why they were selected?

[Probes for turnaround schools: Were you aware of the turnaround that occurred in student achievement? Who or what do you think was responsible for the turnaround?]

[Probe for comparison sites: Which of the school improvement efforts had the most significant effects on student achievement?]

[Probe at all schools for the existence of a research base and source of information about that base, as well as parental involvement in decision making and coordination of resources.]

3. What was the school like when you arrived?

[Probes: What were the school's strengths? Weaknesses? What was the student achievement profile? What were the teachers like? What was the general climate of the school? What was the relationship between the school and the district? Were reform efforts underway? If so, what were they? How were they working? Have they changed? If so, what influenced the change(s)?]

4. Have any changes been made in the overall approach to reform since you arrived? If so, on what basis were they made? To what extent did school-based data influence these changes? What has been the reaction of staff? Of parents? Of the central office? How frequently have changes been made?

5. Are the actions to improve student achievement monitored? If so, how?

6. **What would happen to the school, principal, and teachers if the school did not meet its achievement targets?**

7. **Describe the formative and summative assessment system for student achievement at your school. How do you use data from these assessments? To what extent do measurable goals exist?**

[Probes: How/where did you learn to use these data? Have there been any changes in the assessment system in the past 5 years? How does the school review these data in relation to implementation?]

8. **Do you have authority to hire replacement teachers or are they assigned from the central office? From what sources do you find new staff?**

9. **How do you support staff?**

[Probe for use of external assisters, staff development opportunities, schedule changes to facilitate grade-level and content sharing.]

10. **When new teachers come to the school, are there practices (e.g., formal or informal mentorships, special orientation, professional development) to introduce them to the key curriculum, instructional, and organizational activities? Please describe.**

11. **What programs or policies currently exist designed to ensure sustained achievement?**

[Probe: When were these introduced? Do they have a research base? Are they comprehensive? How are parents involved in planning? What resources are used to support programs and policies? How are they coordinated?]

12. **Is there anything else I should know to tell the story of your school improvement efforts?**

Exhibit B.4
Curriculum/Instructional Specialist Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about your background.

[Probes: When did you come to the school? What is your educational background? How many years have you been as the specialist? At this school? Did you have prior experience or training working with low-performing schools or students?]

2. What are the major school improvement efforts your school has engaged in over the last five years? Are they comprehensive (e.g., do they integrate instruction, assessment, and professional development)? Why were these selected?

[Probes for turnaround schools: Who or what do you think was responsible for the turnaround? Which of the efforts was most important for accomplishing the turnaround?]

[Probe for comparison sites: Which of the school improvement efforts had the most significant effects on student achievement?]

[Probe at all schools for the existence of a research base and source of information about that base.]

3. What actions were taken to start school improvement efforts at the school? Who was involved in those actions? Describe any major barriers to the actions. *Important to get detailed chronology of actions.*

[Probes: To what extent did teachers and staff support those actions? How did they show support (e.g., formal votes)? Role of other leaders—and who were they? Teachers? Formal leadership team? Parents? Community? District office? External organizations? Who made final decisions for the actions? Who set improvement goals for the school? Was there a specific timeline for achievement goals?]

4. What was the school like when you arrived? Was there a current formal needs assessment?

[Probes: What were the school's strengths? Weaknesses? What was the general climate of the school? What was the student achievement profile? What were the teachers like? What was the relationship between the school and the district? Were reform efforts underway when you arrived? If so, what were they? Were they comprehensive? How were they working? Have they changed? If so, what influenced the change(s)?]

5. Were the actions to improve student achievement monitored? If so, how?

[Probes: What data were used? Would you describe the actions as an intervention and/or instructional change?]

6. What programs, practices, policies were introduced to improve student achievement? When? Why were these selected? If multiple strategies are in use, what were early actions? What came later?

[Probes: On what basis were these selected? To what extent did the research base influence the selection of strategies? To what extent did school-based data influence the selection?]

7. What resources were used to support the actions taken to improve student achievement? Were additional resources needed? Where did they come from? Were they coordinated?

[Probes: Federal, state, district, philanthropic, or other sources? Use of both fiscal and human resources? Resources reallocated? School autonomy in budgeting?]

8. How did staff react to the plans for improvement? To what extent were they involved in the decisions?

[Probes: Did staff support or resist the plans for improvement? How? How was staff resistance overcome? Were there any staff changes or turnover? If yes, what were the reasons for these staff changes? What is the process for replacing (hiring new) teachers? How did the staff turnover affect the process?]

9. What support did teachers receive to help them successfully implement school improvement efforts? When? How were the teachers motivated to participate in the reform?

[Probes: Help from people outside the school (e.g., model developers, consultants)? Professional development? Opportunities to meet as grade-level or content teams? Teacher incentives?]

10. When new teachers come to the school, are there practices (e.g., formal or informal mentorships, special orientation, professional development) to introduce them to the key curriculum, instructional, and organizational activities? If so, when were these practices introduced?

11. Describe the formative and summative assessment system for student achievement at your school. How do you use data from these assessments? To what extent do measurable goals exist?

[Probes: How/where did you learn to use these data? Have there been any changes in the assessment system in the past 5 years? How does the school review these data in relation to implementation of the reform effort?]

12. How did the district office react to the changes in the school?

[Probes: How did it support or inhibit reform actions? Did you encounter any resistance from the district office or school board in implementing the actions? If so, what actions were taken to overcome the resistance?]

**Exhibit B.5
District Curriculum Specialist Protocol**

- 1. We are examining efforts to improve student achievement over the past five years. Are you aware of any improvements in student achievement in the last five years? What do you think accounts for this improvement?**

[Probes for turnaround school: Did the district intentionally seek to turn the school around? If so, what steps did the district take to make changes in practices at the school? Were they comprehensive? Was there a change in leadership or staff? Did the district provide staff development for teachers, change curriculum, engage external assistance? When? Did the district set specific expectations? Timeframe for improvement? Existence of a research base?]

[Probes for comparison school: Did the district intentionally target this school for improvement efforts? If so, what steps did the district take to make changes in practices at the school? Were they comprehensive? Was there a change in leadership or staff? Did the district provide staff development for teachers, change curriculum, engage external assistance? When? Did the district set specific expectations? Timeframe for improvement? Existence of a research base?]

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- 2. Please tell me a little about yourself and your relationship with the school.**

[Probes: How long have you been with the district? How long have you been at the central office? What previous positions did you hold in this district or in other districts?]

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- 3. How well did the actions fit with district policies? Did any conflict with district policies and practices? If so, how did the principal act in the conflict? The central office? Were any waivers to district policies granted? To the union contract?**

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- 4. Did the district monitor progress toward meeting student achievement goals differently for this school from how it monitors other schools? If so, please describe the differences.**

[Probes: Is more intense attention paid to this school? If so, how is that intensity shown? Does it still monitor progress differently?]

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- 5. What support did the district provide to the school to encourage change in student achievement? What supports are in place to ensure continuous improvement? Do these differ from supports provided to other schools in the district? If so, what is the rationale for the difference? How are these resources coordinated?**

[Probes: Support such as extra staff, targeted financial resources, additional fiscal resources, policy changes, assistance from external agencies? Rationale such as to stimulate change? To reward positive outcomes?]

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- 6. Have the school's goals or plan to achieve the goals changed over the last five**
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years? If so, how? What was the rationale for the change(s)? To what extent do measurable goals exist?

[Probes: Challenges in implementing the original plan, changes in state or district policies, focus on new priorities because of the successes in the first area(s) of focus.]

[Probe for turnaround schools: Have the goals or plans changed in light of improvements in achievement over time?]

7. What programs, practices, policies were introduced at the school to improve student achievement? When? Are they comprehensive (e.g., do they integrate instruction, assessment, and professional development)? Why were these selected? If multiple strategies are in use, what were early actions? What came later?

[Probes: On what basis were these selected? To what extent did the research base influence the selection of strategies? To what extent did school-based data influence the selection?]

8. What professional development is available to teachers to support improvement? Who provides this professional development

[Probes: External assistance providers? District? School-site staff?]

9. Describe the formative and summative assessment system for student achievement in the district. How do you use data from these assessments?

[Probes: How/where did you learn to use these data? Have there been any changes in the assessment system in the past 5 years?]

10. How did the district office react to the changes in the school?

[Probes: How did it support or inhibit reform actions? Did you encounter any resistance from the district office or school board in implementing the actions? If so, what actions were taken to overcome the resistance?]

11. Is there anything else I should know to tell the story of your school improvement efforts?

**Exhibit B.6
District Official Interview Protocol**

1. Please tell me a little about yourself and your relationship with the school.

[Probes: How long have you been with the district? How long have you been at the central office? What previous positions did you hold in this district or in other districts?]

2. We are examining efforts to improve student achievement over the past five years. Are you aware of any improvements in student achievement in the last five years? What do you think accounts for this improvement?

[Probes for turnaround school: Did the district intentionally seek to turn the school around? If so, what steps did the district take to make changes in practices at the school? Were these efforts comprehensive changes? Was there a change in leadership or staff? Did the district provide staff development for teachers, change curriculum, engage external assistance? When? Did the district set specific expectations? Timeframe for improvement? Existence of a research base and source of information about that base?]

[Probes for comparison school: Did the district intentionally target this school for improvement efforts? Were these efforts comprehensive changes? If so, what steps did the district take to make changes in practices at the school? Was there a change in leadership or staff? Did the district provide staff development for teachers, change curriculum, engage external assistance? When? Did the district set specific expectations? Timeframe for improvement? Existence of a research base and source of information about that base?]

3. What actions has the principal taken to improve the school? When were these actions taken? To what extent did the central office drive these actions? Teachers? Parents? Community members?

[Probes: To what extent did teachers and staff support those actions? How did they show support (e.g., formal vote)? Does the principal have autonomy in hiring, budgeting, and curriculum decisions? Same or different from other schools in the district? If yes, has the level of autonomy changed over time?]

4. How well did the actions fit with district policies? Did any conflict with district policies and practices? If so, how did the principal act in the conflict? The central office? Were any waivers to district policies granted? To the union contract?

5. Did the district monitor progress toward meeting student achievement goals differently for this school from how it monitors other schools? If so, please describe the differences.

[Probes: Is more intense attention paid to this school? If so, how is that intensity shown? Does it still monitor progress differently?]

6. **What support did the district provide to the school to encourage change in student achievement? What supports are in place to ensure continuous improvement? Do these differ from supports provided to other schools in the district? If so, what is the rationale for the difference?**

[Probes: Support such as extra staff, targeted financial resources, additional fiscal resources, policy changes, assistance from external agencies, and professional development? Rationale such as to stimulate change? To reward positive outcomes?]

7. **What resources were used to support the actions taken to improve student achievement? Were additional resources needed? Where did they come from? Were they coordinated?**

[Probes: Federal, state, district, philanthropic, or other sources? Use of both fiscal and human resources? Resources reallocated? School autonomy in budgeting?]

8. **Have successes, challenges, or failures in the efforts to stimulate high student achievement been documented? If so, how is the documentation used? What data are used to document the successes, challenges, and failures? Are these data reviewed in relation to implementation?**

[Probes: Are successes celebrated? If so, how? Are failures used to change policies and practices?]

9. **Have there been any changes to school leadership in the last five years? If so, what led to the personnel change? What were the qualities seen in the current principal that made you (or others in the central office) think he/she was an appropriate person for the job?**
-

10. **Have the school's goals or plan to achieve the goals changed over the last five years? If so, how? What was the rationale for the change(s)? To what extent do measurable goals exist?**

[Probes: Challenges in implementing the original plan, changes in state or district policies, focus on new priorities because of the successes in the first area(s) of focus, use of evaluation of implementation or impact of reform]

[Probe for turnaround schools: Have the goals or plans change in light of improvements in achievement over time?]

11. **How much staff turnover has there been in the school? Why have staff members left?**
-

12. **Is there anything else I should know to tell the story of the school's improvement efforts?**
-

**Exhibit B.7
Document Review Checklist**

School code: _____

| |
|---|
| <p>1. Resumes of key staff during the period of turnaround (Note: public school employees frequently do not have current resumes. If the resumes are not available, use information from the interview questions about the principal's and other school leaders' backgrounds.)</p> |
| <p>2. The school improvement plan (SIP) or similar document</p> |
| <p>3. Curriculum guides (or a summary)</p> |
| <p>4. Pacing schedules</p> |
| <p>5. Descriptions of assessments and the schedule on which they are administered</p> |
| <p>6. School schedule (include instructional minutes)</p> |
| <p>7. Contracts with outside assisters such as model developers or consultants, OR a list of the outside assistance received including topics and frequency of assistance</p> |
| <p>8. District policy and procedures manual, particularly as relates to hiring and budgeting</p> |
| <p>9. Any evaluations conducted for special projects that relate to the school</p> |
| <p>10. Examples of internal school data reports, particularly those that show longitudinal trends in student achievement.</p> |

NOTES:

Exhibit B.8
ELA/Mathematics Department Chair Interview Protocol

School code: _____ Interviewer: _____

1. **How long have you been a coach or department chair? How long did you teach? What grade levels/subjects? At this school? What brought you to this school?**
-

2. **What are the major school improvement efforts your school has engaged in over the last five years? Are they comprehensive (e.g., do they integrate instruction, assessment, and professional development)?**

[Probes for turnaround schools: Who or what do you think was responsible for the turnaround in student achievement? Which of the efforts was most important for accomplishing the turnaround?]

[Probe for comparison schools: Which of the school improvement efforts had the most significant effects on student achievement?]

[Probe all schools for the existence of a research base and source of information about the base.]

3. **Please describe your role at the school.**

[Probe: With whom do you interact? How often? What services do you provide?]

4. **What programs, practices, policies were introduced to improve student achievement? When? Why were these selected? If multiple strategies are in use, what were early actions? What came later?**

[Probes: On what basis were these selected? To what extent did the research base influence the selection of strategies? To what extent did school-based data influence the selection? How are they linked to goals for school improvement?]

5. **How did staff react to the plans for improvement? To what extent were they involved in the decisions?**

[Probes: Did staff support or resist the plans for improvement? How? How was staff resistance overcome? Were there any staff changes or turnover? If yes, what were the reasons for these staff changes? What is the process for replacing (hiring new) teachers? How did the staff turnover affect the process?]

6. **How did you support staff as they sought to implement the change?**

[Probes: Use of external assisters, staff development opportunities, schedule changes to facilitate grade-level and content sharing?]

7. **When new teachers come to the school, are there practices (e.g., formal or informal mentorships, special orientation, professional development) to introduce them to the key curriculum, instructional, and organizational activities? If so, when were these practices introduced?**

8. **Describe the formative and summative assessment system for student achievement at your school. How do you use data from these assessments? To what extent do measurable goals exist?**

[Probes: How/where did you learn to use these data? Have there been any changes in the assessment system in the past 5 years? How does the school review these data in relation to implementation?]

9. **What programs or policies currently exist designed to ensure sustained achievement?**

[Probes: When were these introduced? Do they have a research base? Are they comprehensive?]

10. **Is there anything else I should know to tell the story of your school improvement efforts?**

**Exhibit B.9
Experienced Principal Interview Protocol**

School
code: _____

Interviewer: _____

1. Tell me about your background.

[Probes: When did you come to the school? What is your educational background? How many years have you been a principal? At this school? Did you have prior experience or training working with low-performing schools or students?]

2. What major school improvement efforts has your school engaged in over the last five years? Are they comprehensive (e.g., do they integrate instruction, assessment, and professional development)? Why were these selected?

[Probes for turnaround schools: Who or what do you think was responsible for the turnaround? Which of the efforts was most important for accomplishing the turnaround?]

[Probe for comparison sites: Which of the school improvement efforts had the most significant effects on student achievement? Who or what was responsible for this effort?]

[Probe at all schools for the existence of a research base and source of information about that base.]

3. What actions were taken to *initiate* school improvement efforts at the school? Who was involved in those actions? Describe any major barriers to the actions. *Important to get detailed chronology of actions.*

[Probes: To what extent did teachers and staff support those actions? How did they show support (e.g., formal votes)? Who were the leaders and what was their role (e.g., principal, teachers, formal leadership team, parents, community, district office, external organizations)? Who made final decisions for the actions? Who set improvement goals for the school? Was there a specific timeline for achievement goals?]

4. What was the school like when you arrived? Was there a current formal needs assessment?

[Probes: What were the school's strengths? Weaknesses? What was the general climate of the school? What was the student achievement profile? What were the teachers like? What was the relationship between the school and the district? Were reform efforts underway when you assumed the principalship? If so, what were they? Were they comprehensive? How were they working? Have they changed? If so, what influenced the change(s)?]

5. Were the actions to improve student achievement monitored?

[Probes: What data were used? Would you describe the actions as an intervention and/or instructional change?]

6. **What programs, practices, policies were introduced to improve student achievement? When? Why were these selected? If multiple strategies are in use, what were early actions? What came later?**

[Probes: On what basis were these selected? To what extent did the research base influence the selection of strategies? To what extent did school-based data influence the selection?]

7. **What resources were used to support the actions taken to improve student achievement? Were additional resources needed? Where did they come from? Were they coordinated?**

[Probes: Federal, state, district, philanthropic, or other sources? Use of both fiscal and human resources? Resources reallocated? School autonomy in budgeting?]

8. **How did staff react to the plans for improvement? To what extent were they involved in the decisions?**

[Probes: Did staff support or resist the plans for improvement? How? How was staff resistance overcome? Were there any staff changes or turnover? If yes, what were the reasons for these staff changes? What is the process for replacing (hiring new) teachers? How did the staff turnover affect the process?]

9. **How did you support staff as they sought to implement the change?**

[Probes: Use of external assisters, staff development opportunities, schedule changes to facilitate grade-level and content sharing?]

10. **When new teachers come to the school, are there practices (e.g., formal or informal mentorships, special orientation, professional development) to introduce them to the key curriculum, instructional, and organizational activities? If so, when were these practices introduced?**

11. **Describe the formative and summative assessment system for student achievement at your school. How do you use data from these assessments? To what extent do measurable goals exist?**

[Probes: How/where did you learn to use these data? Have there been any changes in the assessment system in the past 5 years? How does the school review these data in relation to implementation of the reform effort?]

12. **How did the district office react to the changes in the school?**

[Probes: How did it support or inhibit reform actions? Did you encounter any resistance from the district office or school board in implementing the actions? If so, what actions were taken to overcome the resistance?]

13. How were parents involved in planning and implementing the changes? How did they react to them?

[Probes: How did they learn about the changes? From whom? How did they support or inhibit reform actions? Did you encounter any resistance from them? If so, what actions were taken to overcome the resistance?]

14. What programs or policies currently exist designed to ensure sustained achievement?

[Probes: When were these introduced? Do they have a research base? Are they comprehensive?]

15. Is there anything else I should know to tell the story of your school improvement efforts?

**Exhibit B.10
Experienced Teacher Focus Group Protocol**

School code: _____ Interviewer: _____

1. **What grade (subject, for middle and high school) do you teach? How long have you taught? At this school? What brought you to this school?**
-

2. **What major school improvement efforts has your school engaged in over the last five years? Are they comprehensive (e.g., do they integrate instruction, assessment, and professional development)? Why were these selected?**

[Probes for turnaround schools: Who or what do you think was responsible for the turnaround in student achievement? Which of the efforts was most important for accomplishing the turnaround?]

[Probe for comparison schools: Which of the school improvement efforts had the most significant effects on student achievement? Who or what was responsible for this effort?]

[Probe at all schools for the existence of a research base and source of information about that base.]

4. **Now, please tell me a little about what I would have seen had I come to this school five years ago.**

[Probes: How would you characterize the student body? What was the school “vision?” Were there earlier efforts at reform? Please tell me a little about them and their success or failure.]

4. **Are things different now?**

[Probes: The student body? The school vision?]

6. **During the first year of implementing the major school improvement efforts, how was progress assessed?**

[Probes: By whom? Did the assessment include looking at the extent to which the vision was enacted in practice? How did the principal assess progress? How did teachers? Do similar assessments take place now? How is the school’s progress currently assessed?]

6. **What would have happened to the school, principal, and teachers if the school did not meet its achievement targets in the past? Is it the same now?**
-

7. How did teachers react or respond to the changes in school improvement efforts?

[Probes: Were any teachers particularly supportive? If so, how did they show their support? Did any teachers resist the changes? If so, how was the resistance dealt with?]

8. What support did teachers receive to help them successfully implement school improvement efforts? When? How were the teachers motivated to participate in the reform?

[Probes: Help from people outside the school (e.g., model developers, consultants)? Professional development? Opportunities to meet as grade-level or content teams? Teacher incentives?]

10. Describe the assessments used to measure student progress. To what extent do measurable goals exist?

[Probes: When were they instituted? How often are they administered? Has this changed? Was training provided in analyzing and using data? If so, who provided the training? What happens with the information from the assessments?]

[Probes: Schoolwide, grade-level, or subject area? Were data used for instructional change? To provide individualized support to students? Are they currently used in the same way?]

10. Is there a pacing schedule? When was it initiated or revised? Does it help you with your instruction? Is it monitored? If so, by whom? What happens if you are not on schedule?

11. In the past, was there common planning time? Has the schedule changed in the last 5 years? If so, when?

[Probes: Grade-level planning? Subject area planning? Cross-disciplinary planning? Were data introduced? If yes, what data? Do the results lead to changes in classroom practice? Does the school schedule support collaboration?]

12. What resources were used to support the actions for improvement? If so, how have the resources been used? How were they coordinated?

[Probes: Purchase supplemental classroom materials? Extend professional development? Establish new positions to support the changes? Extend the school day?]

13. When you came to the school, what orientation and support were given? Has this changed for new teachers?

14. Are there factors that help or hinder the ongoing improvement of the school? What are the main distracters you feel that keep you from achieving school goals?

[Probe for specific distracters, which can range from interruptions to parent problems]

15. How were parents involved in planning and implementing the changes? How did they react to them?

[Probes: How did they learn about the changes? From whom? How did they support or inhibit reform actions? Did you encounter any resistance from them? If so, what actions were taken to overcome the resistance?]

16. Is there anything else I should know to tell the story of your school improvement efforts?

Exhibit B.11
Guidance Counselor Interview Protocol

School code: _____ Interviewer: _____

1. Tell me about your background.

[Probes: When did you come to the school? What is your educational background? How many years have you been a counselor? At this school? Did you have prior experience or specific training working with low-performing schools or students?]

2. What is your role in the school? In school improvement efforts?

[Probes: Who do you interact with?]

3. What major school improvement efforts has your school engaged in over the last five years? Are they comprehensive? Why were they selected?

[Probes for turnaround schools: Who or what do you think was responsible for the turnaround? Which of the efforts was most important for accomplishing the turnaround?]

[Probe for comparison sites: Which of the school improvement efforts had the most significant effects on student achievement? Who or what was responsible for this effort?]

[Probe at all schools for the existence of a research base and source of information about the base.]

4. How did staff react to the plans for improvement?

[Probes: Did staff support or resist the plans for improvement? How? How was staff resistance overcome? Were there any staff changes or turnover? If yes, what were the reasons for these staff changes? What is the process for replacing (hiring new) teachers? How did the staff turnover affect the process?]

5. How was the school staff supported to implement the report efforts? Who provided this support?

[Probes: What professional development is available to staff? How are external assistance providers involved? Administrators? District staff?]

6. What was the school climate like when you arrived?

[Probes: What were the school's strengths? Weaknesses? What were the teachers like? What was the relationship between staff like? Between staff and students? What was the relationship between the school and the district?]

7. **Has the school climate changed over the last 5 years? If so, in what ways? Who or what were the catalysts for these changes?**

8. **Please describe the level of parental involvement. What factors contribute to the level of parental involvement you described?**

[Probe for specific examples of parental involvement in reform efforts, curriculum decisions, and presence in the school. Probe for changes in the approach to encouraging parental involvement.]

9. **Describe the formative and summative assessment system for student achievement at your school. How do you and other staff members use data from these assessments? To what extent, do measurable goals exist?**

[Probes: How/where did you learn to use these data? Have there been any changes in the assessment system in the past 5 years?]

10. **Is there anything else I should know to tell the story of your school improvement efforts?**

**Exhibit B.12
New Teacher Focus Group Protocol**

School code: _____ Interviewer: _____

1. **What grade (subject, for middle and high school) do you teach? How long have you taught? At this school? What brought you to this school?**
-

2. **Are you aware of any school improvement efforts that occurred before you came to this school? Are they comprehensive (e.g., do they integrate instruction, assessment, and professional development)? Why were these selected?**

[Probes for turnaround schools: Were you aware of the turnaround in student achievement? Who or what do you think was responsible for the turnaround? Did a research base and sources of information about that base exist?]

[Probe for comparison schools: Which of the school improvement efforts had the most significant effects on student achievement? Did a research base and sources of information about that base exist?]

3. **What are the two or three most important strategies for improving student achievement? How were they introduced? In what venues? By whom? What is their focus?**

[Probes: Curriculum? Instructional practices? Student assignments? To what extent did teachers and staff support those actions? How did they show support (e.g., formal votes)? Do the strategies have a know research base?]

4. **What is the “vision” for the school? How is the vision communicated? Has the vision been modified since you came to the school?**
-

5. **How are teachers evaluated? Are teachers held accountable for results? What happens if a teacher does not produce the desired results? What data are used to determine whether the teacher has produced the desired results?**
-

6. **What support do teachers receive to help them perform?**

[Probes: Help from people outside the school? School leadership?]

7. **Please tell me more about the professional development at your school. What topics are covered? Who chooses the topics?**

[Probes: Is professional development school-, grade- or subject focused? Do individual teachers select from a menu of topics?] How is it delivered? [Probe for workshops,

coaching, etc.] Where is it delivered? When is it delivered?

8. **How are students evaluated? How are students motivated to participate in the learning process? What rewards are available for student accomplishments (beyond report cards—e.g., “student of the month,” other public recognition)? On what basis are students rewarded?**
-

9. **Describe the assessments used to measure student progress. When were they instituted? How often are they administered? Has this changed? Was training provided in analyzing and using data? If so, who provided the training? What happens with the information from the assessments?**

[Probes: Schoolwide, grade-level, or subject area? Were data used for instructional change? To provide individualized support to students? Are they currently used in the same way? To what extent did measurable goals exist?]

10. **Is there a pacing schedule? Does it help you with your instruction? Is it monitored? If so, by whom? What happens if you are not on schedule?**
-

11. **Is there common planning time?**

[Probes: Grade-level planning? Subject area planning? Cross-disciplinary planning? What data were introduced? Did the results lead to changes in classroom practice? Does the school schedule support collaboration?]

12. **When you came to this school, what orientation and support were you given?**
-

13. **How are parents involved in planning and implementing changes at the school?**
-

14. **Is there anything else I should know to tell the story of your school improvement efforts?**
-

**Exhibit B.13
Parent Focus Group Protocol**

School code: _____ Interviewer : _____

No. of participants: _____ Interviewer : _____

1. **For turnaround schools: We are visiting this school because it has demonstrated important gains in academic outcomes. Were you aware of this improvement? Who or what do think was responsible for the change?**

For comparison schools: We are visiting this school because it has engaged in school improvement efforts. Were you aware of such efforts? Who or what do you think was responsible for initiating these efforts?

-
2. **What grades are your children in? Over what period have any of your children attended the school?**

-
3. **In general, how do you feel about the school? Has your impression changed over time? If so, what caused the change?**

-
4. **Since the time when your first child attended the school, have you noticed any changes in the school? If so, please describe them.**

[Probe: How teachers and principals work—or do not work—with parents, student work, teacher quality instruction, physical plant.]

-
5. **To what extent are you involved in school activities? Do you believe you are welcome in the school? Do you believe you have input into school goals?**

[Probe: classroom activities, PTA, school improvement team, other volunteer activities.]

-
6. **Do you think school personnel encourage parents to get involved? If yes, can you give an example of how parents are encouraged?**

-
7. **How do you learn about school accomplishments, challenges, or failures? What information is presented?**

[Probe: Does the principal communicate regularly with parents? If so, how (telephone calls, regular newsletters or letters, e-mail or e-letters)? Do teachers communicate with parents regularly? If so, how (telephone calls, regular newsletters or letters, e-mail or e-letters)?

8. **What is the school's reputation in the district? Does this differ from other schools in the district? If so, how?**

9. **Is there anything else I should know to tell the story of the school's improvement efforts?**

Exhibit B.14
School Improvement Plan (SIP)/Leadership Team Focus Group Protocol

School code: _____ Interviewer: _____

Participant Title(s): _____

1. Tell me about your background.

[Probes: When did you come to the school? What is your educational background? How many years have you served in this role? At this school? Did you have prior experience or training working with low-performing schools or students?]

2. What major school improvement efforts has your school engaged in over the last five years? Are they comprehensive (e.g., do they integrate instruction, assessment, and professional development)? Why were these selected?

[Probes for turnaround schools: Who or what do you think was responsible for the turnaround? Which of the efforts was most important for accomplishing the turnaround?]

[Probe for comparison sites: Which of the school improvement efforts had the most significant effects on student achievement? Who or what was responsible for this effort?]

[Probe at all schools for the existence of a research base and source of information about that base.]

3. How did teachers react or respond to the changes in school improvement efforts?

[Probes: Were any teachers particularly supportive? If so, how did they show their support? Did any teachers resist the changes? If so, how was the resistance dealt with?]

4. Describe how the school improvement team is involved in planning and initiating school improvement plans.

[Probes: Who is involved in planning school improvement plans? What is the team's role in planning efforts? What is the process for planning school reform? For initiating improvement plans?]

5. What information is used to develop school improvement plans?

[Probe for types of data used, how the data is used to develop plans, and specific examples of using data to develop plans or assess impact of strategies. To what extent do measurable goals exist?]

6. **What resources were used to support the actions for improvement? If so, how have the resources been used? Were they coordinated?**

[Probes: Purchase supplemental classroom materials? Extend professional development? Establish new positions to support the changes? Extend the school day?]

7. **What support did you provide teachers to help them successfully implement school improvement efforts? When? How were the teachers motivated to participate in the reform?**

[Probes: Help from people outside the school (e.g., model developers, consultants)? Professional development? Opportunities to meet as grade-level or content teams? Teacher incentives?]

8. **Is there anything else I should know to tell the story of the school's improvement efforts?**
-

APPENDIX C—SITE ABSTRACTS

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Introduction

The following individual school site abstracts are succinct accounts of the information collected in the 11 school visits. They were developed by the study evaluation team around a common framework to produce uniformly structured descriptions of each school's key outcomes and activities. Accountability test results are included in the abstracts. Hence, for some schools Reading tests results are reported whereas for other schools English Language Arts results or both Reading and English Language Arts results are reported. Mathematics results are reported for all schools. As noted earlier, school names are fictitious to protect confidentiality commitments.

Freedom Elementary School

Overview

Freedom Elementary School sits in the middle of a 1960s vintage, federally funded housing development, east of a river. The school has consistently, since at least 2000, served a population of low-income (82–97 percent eligible for the federal school lunch program), African-American (99–100 percent) students in grades K–5. August 2002 saw the arrival of a new principal; a year earlier a new superintendent of schools joined the school district. Freedom staff and students have labored under many of the societal ills that afflict so many urban schools: neighborhood crime, drug use, and poverty.

Achievement Pattern

Freedom School exhibited relatively quick, dramatic, and sustained improvements in student achievement from 2002 through 2007. Over a four-year period, students moved from 29 percent proficient in reading and 42 percent in mathematics to over 95 percent proficiency in both subject areas. (See Exhibits C.1 and C.2.) While the school district overall also showed marked improvements in both reading and mathematics during this period, the districtwide gains were not as dramatic or as quick as those of Freedom. Within three years (by 2005), the district effectively caught up to the state’s average student performance in reading and mathematics. Freedom entered improvement status under the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* in the 2001–02 school year. It made adequate yearly progress (AYP) for the first time in the 2004–05 school year and has continued to make AYP since.

There are no obvious counter-explanations in demographic changes to account for Freedom’s dramatic improvement. While there was a large influx of students from a nearby closing school serving a similar population of students in 2006, this was well after Freedom achieved its dramatic improvement in student performance. Furthermore, while disciplinary incidents rose during the year of the new student influx, student achievement remained at near 100 percent proficient and well above the state mean. The student population has otherwise remained stable over time.

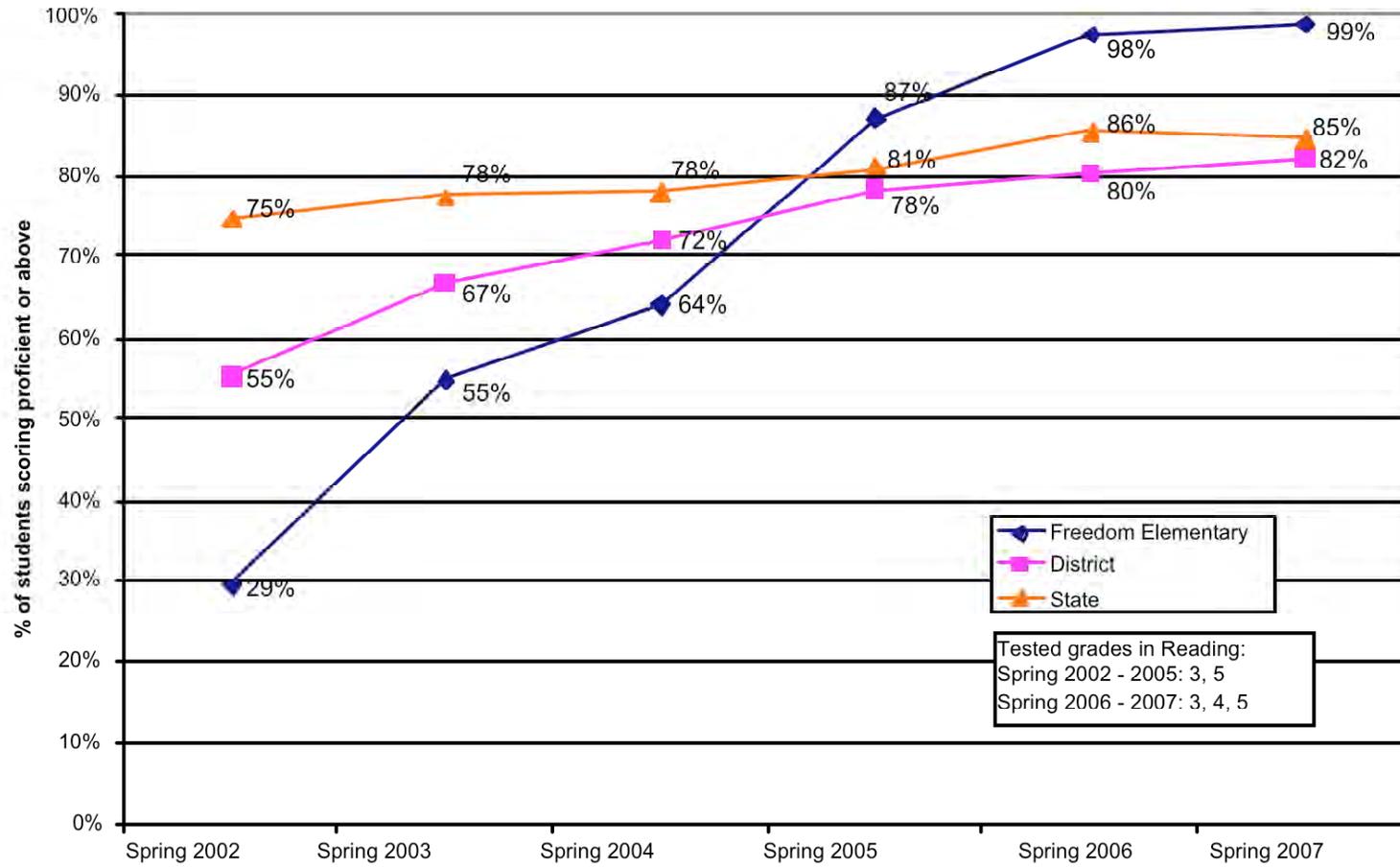
School Activities

Over six years, Freedom received significant new funding resources, including a state partnership grant for successful schools and federal Title I and 21st-Century Community Learning Centers grants. The state grant began in the 2003–04 school year and was funded at \$125 thousand per year. The school received a 21st-Century Community Learning Centers grant that began the year following the end of the state grant (2006–07), continuing through the 2008–09 school year. These funds were used to reduce class size, build community partnerships, move to block scheduling, run an after-school program and a Saturday academy, hire instructional coaches in mathematics and language arts, and add 30 minutes of reading each day. Data gathered as part of the district-mandated weekly benchmark assessments were analyzed by a data

team, led by the principal. These data were publicly shared with the school community. The school also implemented behavioral incentives and housed state health and behavioral authority staff in the gym. These staff provided counseling and other services to as many as 70 children and families. There were some important state and district actions occurring over this period. The state's accountability system identified Freedom as a school in need of improvement and provided resources to do so (the state grant). The district identified the current principal as someone capable of motivating the school community and gave her the tools, resources, and guidance necessary to enact her vision of school improvement. The district aligned school curricula to state standards, sought accreditation for all schools, required weekly assessments for schools in improvement status, and required Voyager reading (a scripted reading program) in all elementary schools in grades K–2. For a chronology of critical events, see Exhibit C.3.

Additional Facts Reform grant expired in 2001–02. There is little evidence that the school's CSR program contributed to its later success. Also, the teachers' union supported improvement by funding professional development activities designed to develop a professional learning community at Freedom. They also sponsored and funded the TAKE 1 program that put teachers on the track to national board certification.

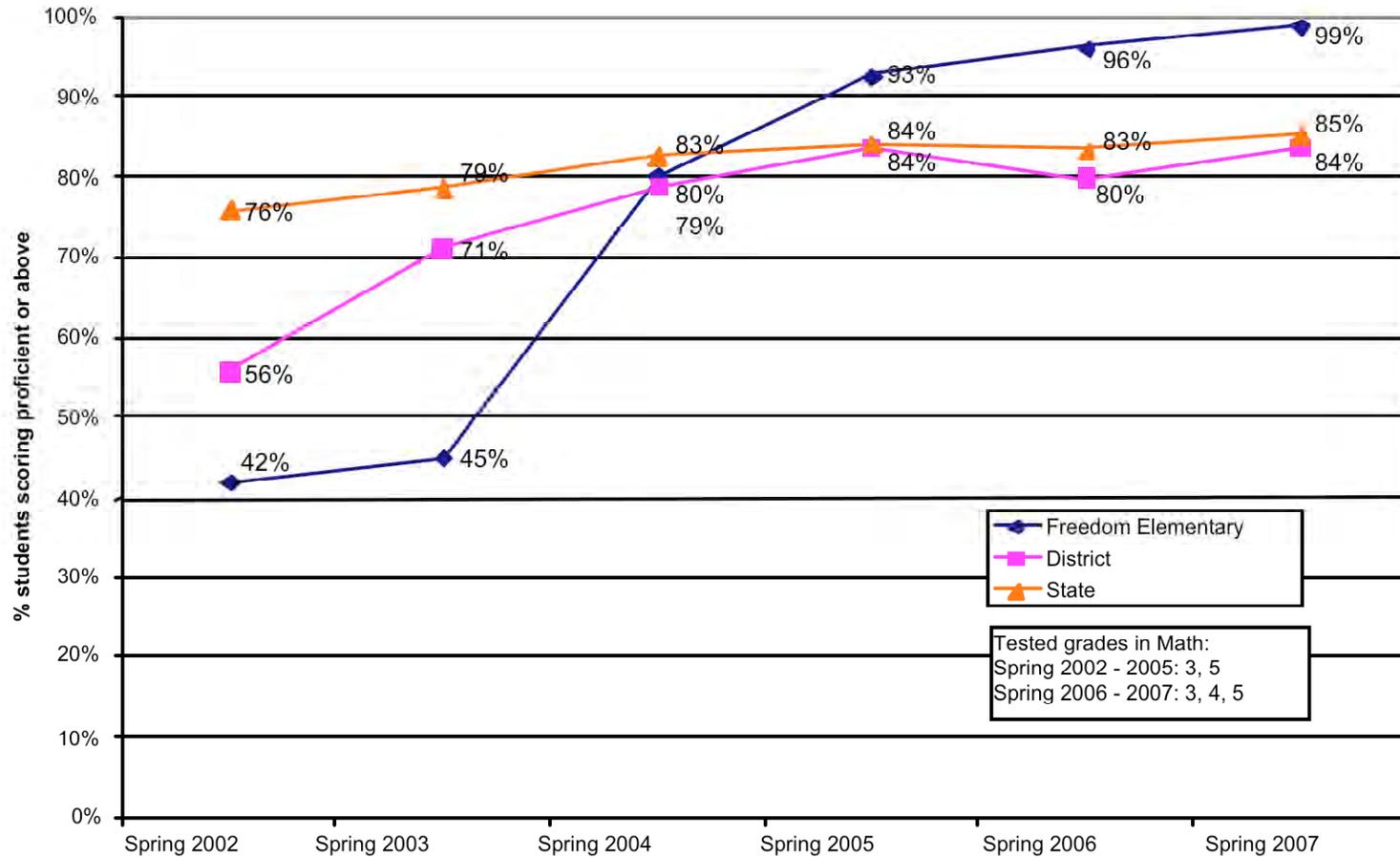
Exhibit C.1
School, District, and State Student Achievement (2002–07), Reading



| | | | | | | |
|------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Enrollment | 388 | 368 | 365 | 346 | 339 | 398 |
| % FRPL (1) | 81 | 82 | 92 | 93 | 93 | 97 |
| % FRPL (2) | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 33 | 34 |

FRPL (1) is school-level; FRPL (2) is statewide.

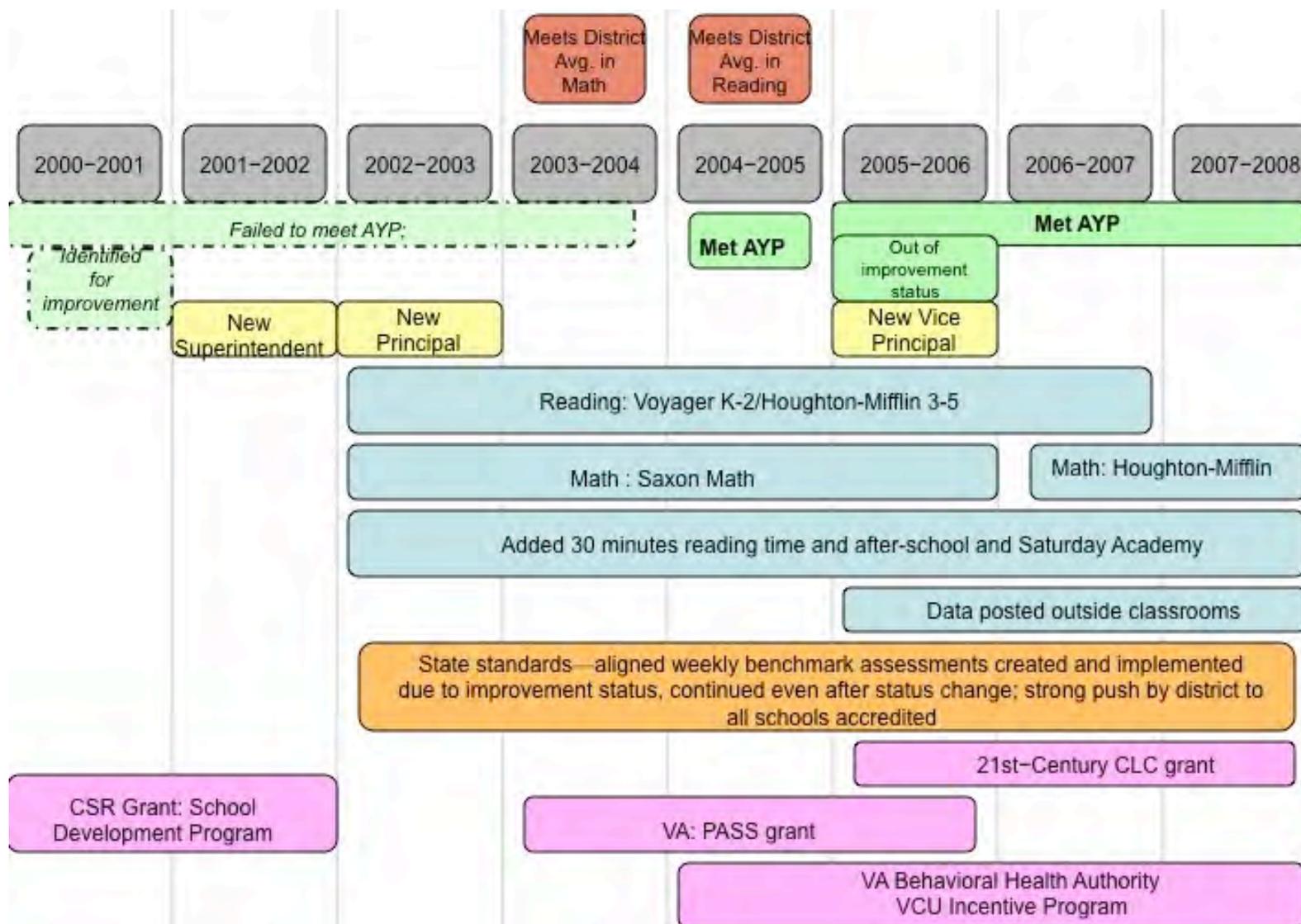
Exhibit C.2
School, District, and State Student Achievement (2002–07), Mathematics



| | | | | | | |
|------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Enrollment | 388 | 368 | 365 | 346 | 339 | 398 |
| % FRPL (1) | 81 | 82 | 92 | 93 | 93 | 97 |
| % FRPL (2) | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 33 | 34 |

FRPL (1) is school level; FRPL (2) is statewide.

Exhibit C.3
Critical Events Chronology (2000–01 to 2007–08), Freedom Elementary School (K–5)



Lincoln Elementary School

Overview

Lincoln is a K–8 school in a southern county. The economic condition of the community is extremely poor. In addition to employment provided by the coal industry and the services it requires, the majority of jobs are in education and social services. The teaching force is very stable with little turnover at this school. The school has approximately 350 students as of the 2007–08 school year. The number of children eligible for the federal school lunch program has hovered slightly under 75 percent for seven years, and attendance has been in the 90 percent range. The vast majority of students are white, with a Hispanic and black population of less than 1 percent. The principal has been with the school for six years as of 2007–08 and is committed to making this the best school in the country. Over the previous ten years, there was inconsistent leadership, which included the eventual abandonment of a comprehensive school reform effort. In addition to the strong principal, the school has a committed staff and substantial community involvement.

Achievement Pattern

From 2002 through 2007, reading and mathematics performance generally improved at the school, as well as districtwide and statewide (see Exhibits C.4 and C.5). At Lincoln over this period, students scoring proficient or better increased by 30 percentage points in reading and 18 percentage points in math. Yet, the pattern of results is different across the two subjects. In reading, while the initial performance of the school was considerably lower than district and state performance, slow-and-steady performance gains (except for 2005–06) reduced these gaps considerably by 2007 (see Exhibit C.4). In contrast, nearly all of the mathematics achievement improvement occurred during one year when the percent scoring at the proficient level rose dramatically from 34 to 61 percent (see Exhibit C.5). This school has met all adequate yearly progress (AYP) standards for each of the past five school years, as of 2007–08.

A factor to note in mapping and interpreting achievement changes for this school is that the averages shown in Exhibits C.4 and C.5 are based on testing for only two out of the school's nine grades and may at least partially reflect a cohort effect. It appears from these data that the cohort of students enrolled in grades 4 and 7 and tested in the spring of 2005 may have been academically stronger than the students in grades 5 and 8 that year. The former cohort had 10 percentage points of growth in reading as compared to the prior year's fourth- and seventh-graders. Then, in the spring of 2006, when this group of students was in the fifth and eighth grades, these students showed a huge gain of 61 percent scoring proficient or better as compared to the prior year's fifth- and eighth-graders, only 34 percent of whom scored proficient or better. Thus, this cohort of students showed considerable gains in reading in the spring of 2005 (as fourth- and seventh-graders) and then in math in the spring of 2006 (as fifth- and eighth-graders). Similarly, the next cohort of students showed a decline in reading in 2006 and then in math in 2007.

This school did not have to contend with changes in the student population. Available data show a fairly stable rate of students eligible for the federal school lunch program. Enrollment has been stable with changes of only 2 to 4 percent. In the last 60 years, there has been little change in the school district's demographics. Many of the teachers as well as their parents went to local schools, and there is little movement out of or into the school community. The state emphasizes local control, with each school having a site council that has considerable authority over school policy and operations. However, the state and district exert considerable influence by leading an effort to align the curriculum with the state standards and academic performance testing and by introducing instructional programs.

School Activities

Upon her arrival at the school in 2001, the principal set a new standard of commitment, dedication, and action, according to respondents interviewed for this study. In the first year, she worked to develop her relationship with the school site council that hired her, the school improvement management team she organized in the school, the school faculty, for which she set high standards, and the parents. She welcomed parents but also made clear that she was now running the school, not them. She also set high standards for student attendance and behavior.

One of her initial tasks was to align the curriculum with state standards and performance testing. In support of this district-led effort, Lincoln teachers began working with other teachers in the district to align the curriculum with state standards and to develop instructional sequencing and pacing guides. These efforts were considered instrumental in making instruction more efficient.

Decisions in this school became more data-driven in that changes were made based on test results, and school staff contributed to the development of solutions. In response to the 2003–04 test results, the principal emphasized professional development and encouraged teachers to use more differentiated instruction. Work groups were established in each content area to reflect on and implement best practices in classrooms. In support of this effort, the principal offered additional release time for professional development beyond that provided by the district. Staff development resources were provided by a regional educational cooperative, the district, a local university, and a private foundation. Foci for staff development included using open-ended questions in assessments and increased use of technology in the classroom.

Many of these policies and practices continued in subsequent years. Important events in 2004–05 included a focus on differentiated instruction and multiple intelligences. Same-sex classes were instituted for math, science, and language arts, with staff indicating that this reduced discipline problems. Challenges were identified and addressed through a distributed leadership model by which groups studied the situation and developed solutions.

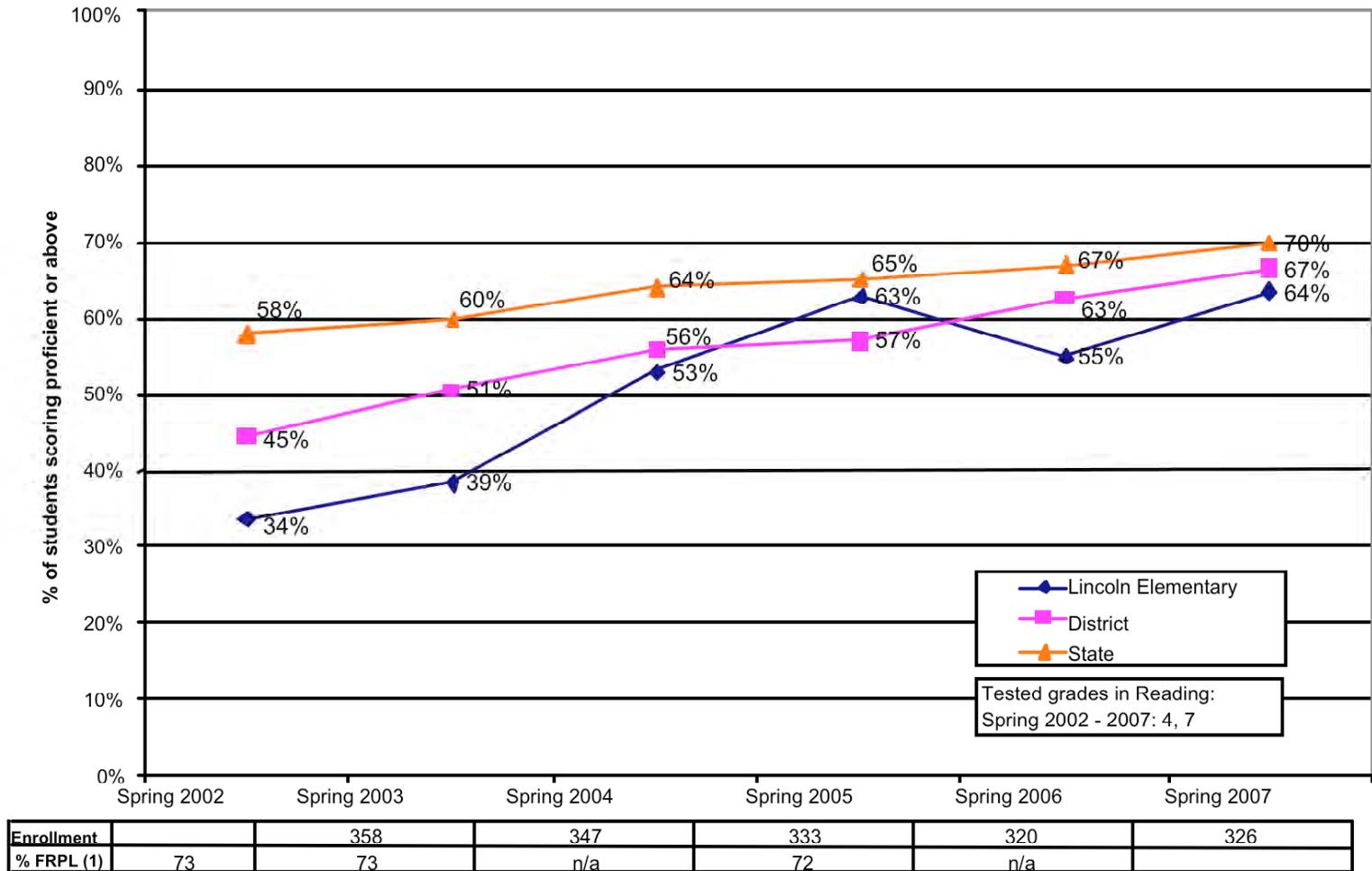
The use of assessments to generate changes in instruction became more prominent in 2005–06 with the districtwide introduction of Achieve 3000, a computer-based reading program that diagnoses a student's reading level. Teachers became more focused on open-ended responses to better prepare students for state tests. The following year, a Response to Intervention process was introduced to provide continuous assessment of student progress and modification of teaching strategies.

Parent and community involvement was a very large part of the school's overall improvement strategy. Parents and community members shared common ideas with school staff about the need for reform and the direction that reform should take. Involvement has been fairly constant at this school over time. Efforts include an active parent-teacher organization (PTO), outreach efforts, and parent communication that includes test score information. For a chronology of critical events see Exhibit C.6.

Additional Fact

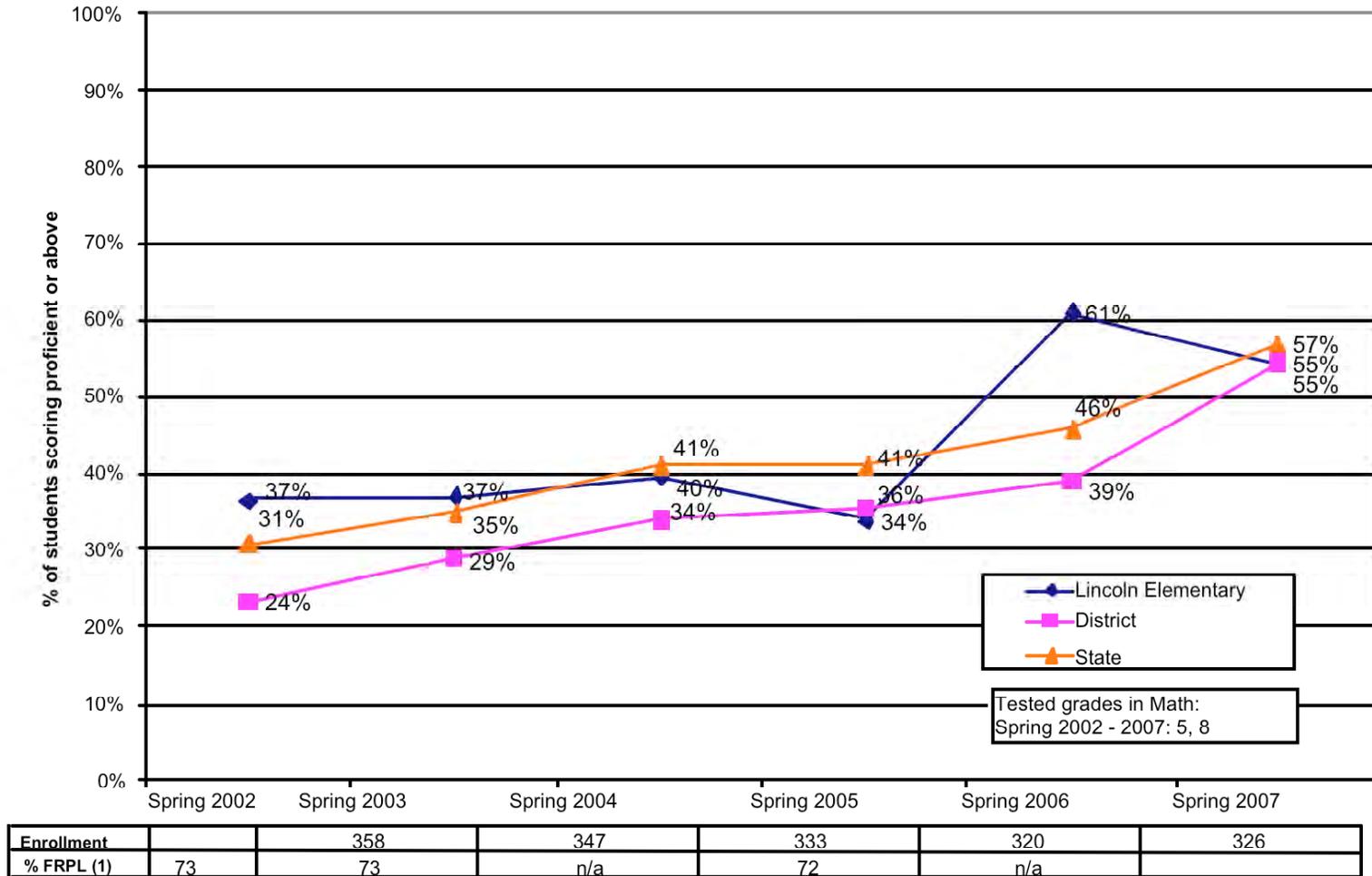
As of the 2007–08 school year, most teachers have less planning time than in the previous year, and a new math curriculum has been implemented.

**Exhibit C.4
School, District, and State Student Achievement (2002–07), Reading**



Percentages calculated using non-weighted averages for elementary and middle grades. N's were not found.
FRPL (1) is school level.

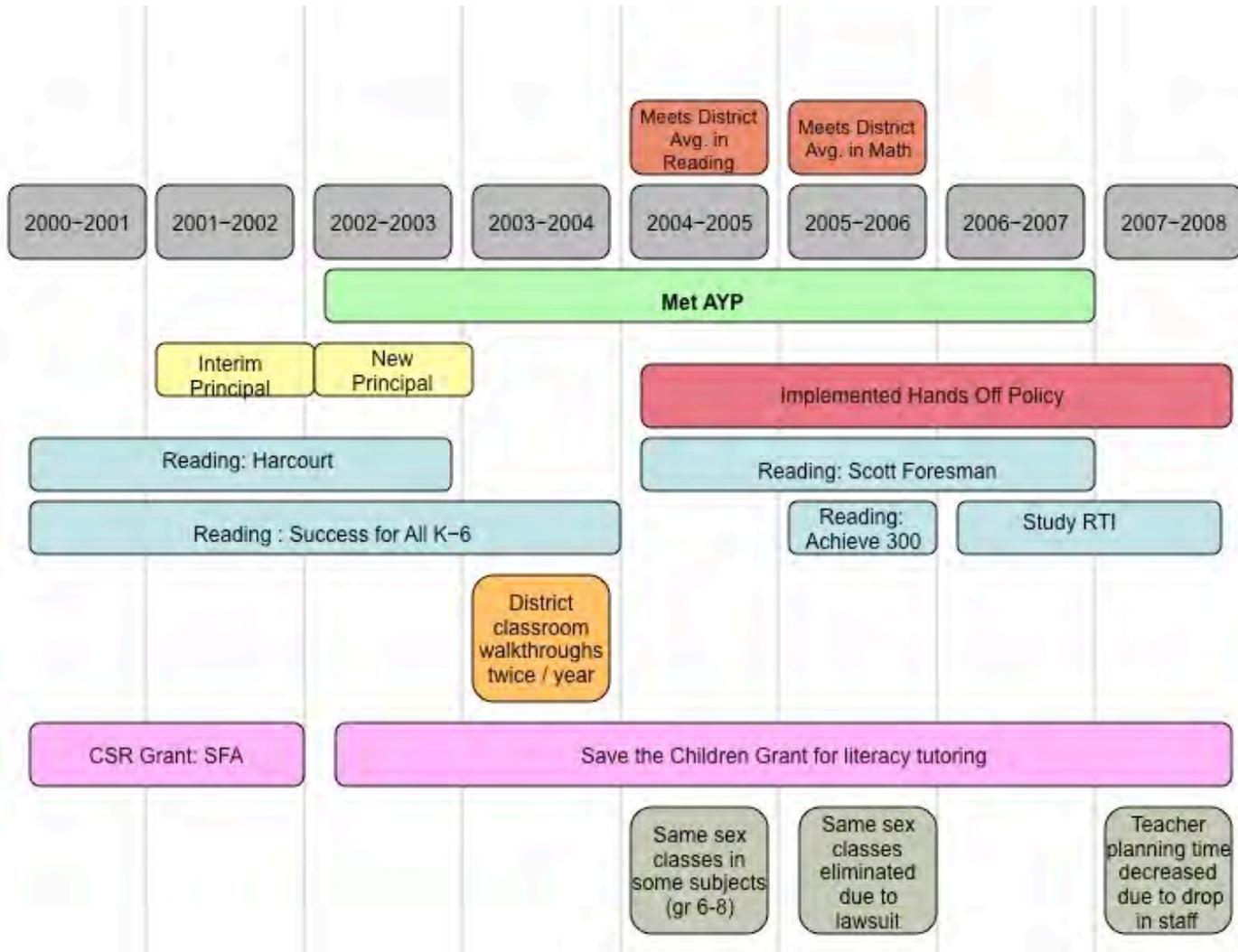
**Exhibit C.5
School, District, and State Student Achievement (2002–07), Mathematics**



Percentages calculated using non-weighted averages for elementary and middle grades. N's were not found.

FRPL (1) is school level.

Exhibit C.6
Critical Events Chronology (2000–01 to 2007–08), Lincoln Elementary School (K–8)



Mill Elementary School

Overview

One of six National School Change Award winners in July 2005, Mill (pre-K–6), with an average of 650 students from 2001 to 2007, boasts a newly renovated facility a few miles from the downtown section of a large city in a township with a small town feel.²⁵ A sports theme—“We Are Champions”—unifies the hallways. Football and basketball graphics anchor a multitude of classroom and grade-level bulletin boards showing data graphs, standards, and examples of student work. These first impressions demonstrate the school’s “no excuses” attitude and its attempts to prevail over a student poverty rate of 77 percent. Teachers often related stories of the student hardship stemming from their students’ home life (e.g., incarcerated parents, drug use, some students being expected to get themselves to school).

Achievement Pattern

Once one of the lowest-performing among the ten elementary schools in the district, Mill experienced a single-year spike (from fall 2001 to fall 2002) that put it above state and district averages.²⁶ Since this initial surge, Mill’s achievement has been generally more than sustained at these new levels of performance. In both English language arts (ELA) and mathematics, the school’s performance continued to grow but then showed some decline in the most recent years. In both subjects, however, Mill has continued to exceed the district average, suggesting that its growth from the fall of 2002 was school-specific rather than simply resulting from more general trends. In math, despite some declines from the fall of 2004 to 2007, the school has consistently and substantially outperformed the average for the state as well as for the district, starting with fall of 2002 testing (see Exhibits C.7 and C.8). By fall 2007, Mill continued to sustain its earlier significant achievement gains and was the district’s top-performing elementary school in math and third top performer in ELA.

While there have been some changes that impact the student populations, these do not appear to be the driving factor behind Mill’s improvement. There have been some enrollment fluctuations, marked by slight declines in the last two years examined. All English learner students within Mill’s attendance area have attended Stratford (an elementary comparison site for this study) since 1998–99 when the district established a cluster program.²⁷ Mill’s African-American population has declined from 27 percent in 2001–02 to 13 percent currently, due to the 2004 gradual reversal of the 1981 desegregation court order to bus in students from the nearby city public schools.

²⁵ The Panasonic National School Change Award (held by Fordham University) is a prestigious award recognizing “schools that have significantly changed for the better.” Its application process is extensive, and schools must provide documentation across 16 specific criteria.

²⁶ The state test was re-normed for the fall 2002 test cycle and may have had an impact on the increases in achievement, which were observed statewide. At the same time, Mill outgrew the state and district in that year.

²⁷ Prior to the fall 2003 test cycle, the scores for these students were reported by Stratford. Yet this should not have impacted Mill’s gains, since Mill transferred only between one and three students prior to 2003.

School Activities

School respondents attributed the sustained increases in student achievement to an experienced principal who arrived in fall 2000 and immediately tackled discipline problems. For example, although the principal was not allowed to make changes for a six-month period (in accordance with district policy), she immediately reduced the recess from 30 to 15 minutes and required that students “earn” it by completing homework—an act that invoked indignation from many parents.

The principal created a culture of high expectations for all students, irrespective of their home lives, which was reinforced by data analysis, transparency, and accountability. All teachers have been required since 2003–04 to have prominently displayed and regularly updated “data boards” that show the progress of the class as well as individual students toward state standards. Teachers are also required to post agenda boards, updated daily, which explain the state standards and what students will learn during that session.

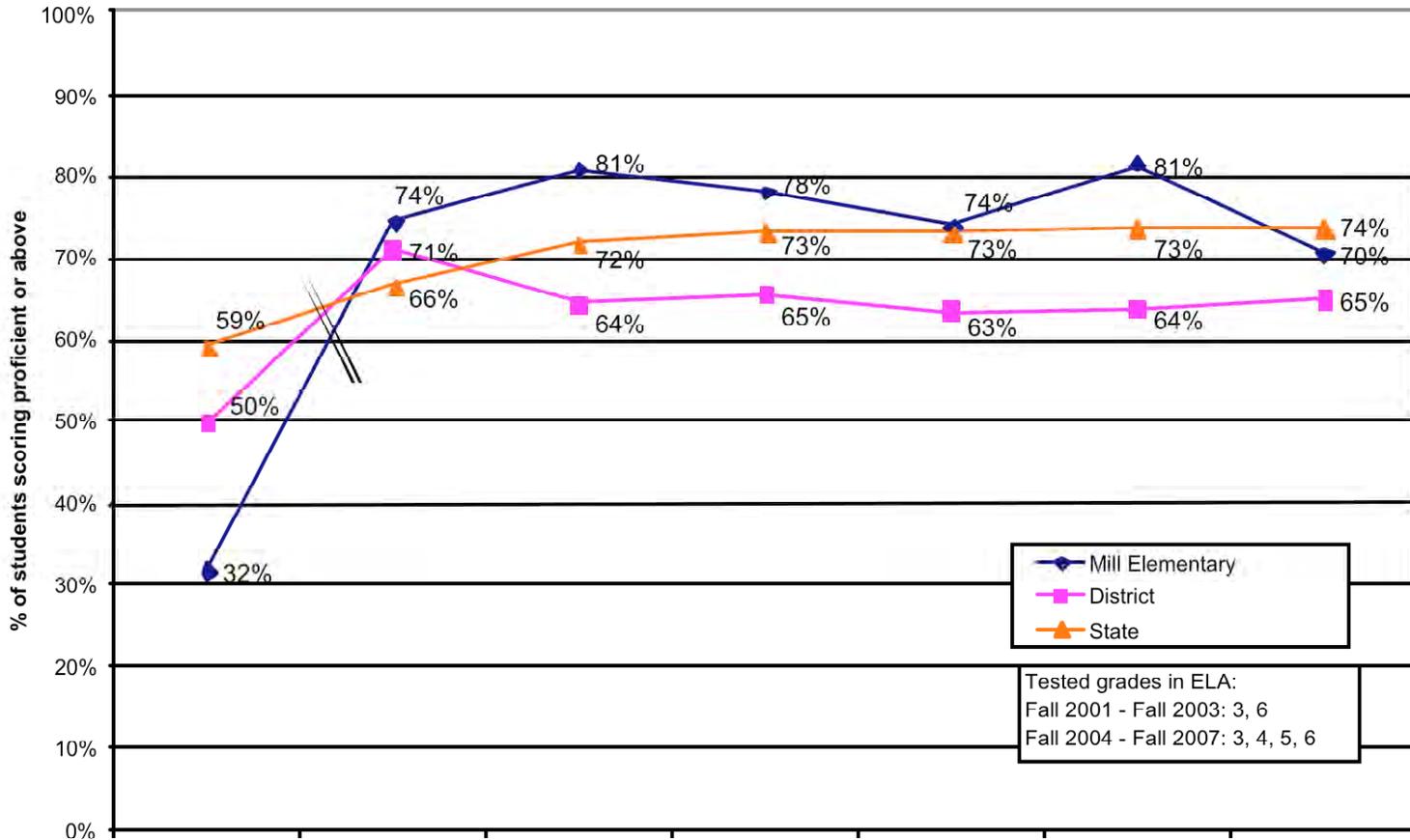
Specific actions prior to the fall 2002 achievement spike included the principal reassigning teachers (in 2001–02) across grade levels to stimulate collaboration and revitalize the professional climate. She also created instructional research teams to bolster vertical collaboration and encourage distributed leadership and ownership of instructional reforms. Just prior to the fall 2002 test cycle, the school also instituted “mini-looping” whereby students returned to their prior teacher to review the previous year’s standards and instruction to address summer break retention issues. The principal also conducted one-on-one conferences with each student to go over his or her prior state assessment results and to set high performance expectations.

With respect to curriculum, the principal expressed dissatisfaction with Success For All (SFA), which was in place at the time of her arrival, particularly because SFA “taught to the middle.” With help of an external consultant and research findings published by the National Reading Panel, the school developed its own reading and learning program to replace SFA. This program was piloted in January through April 2002, then fully rolled out in fall 2002. Elements of this locally developed program continued with the advent of Reading First, which started in fall 2003 (and ended in June 2007). The school used Larry Ainsworth’s Five Easy Steps to a Balanced Math Program to support its math curriculum starting in 2002–03, a strategy that eventually became a districtwide requirement.

All of these efforts were heavily supported by a school-selected external consultant who supported Mill from 2001 to 2007 and literacy coaches who originated from Reading First. Through Reading First, the school also had a district-assigned consultant who focused on literacy components. For a chronology of critical events, see Exhibit C.9.

Exhibit C.7
School, District, and State Student Achievement (2002–07), English Language Arts

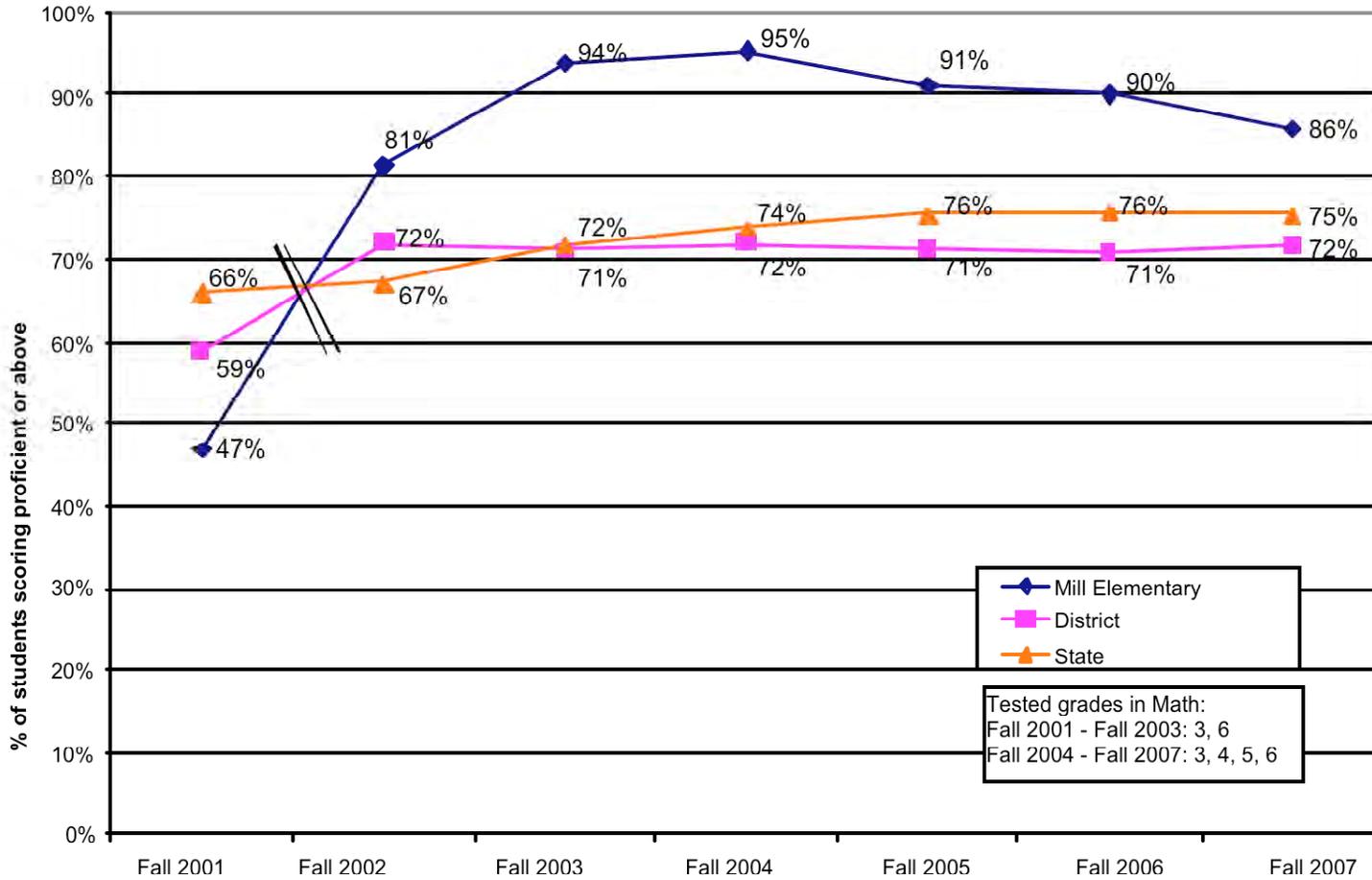
(Note: Double-line in the graph denotes the year in which the state assessment was re-normed.)



| | Fall 2001 | Fall 2002 | Fall 2003 | Fall 2004 | Fall 2005 | Fall 2006 | Fall 2007 |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Enrollment | 628 | 666 | 579 | 685 | 686 | 665 | 623 |
| % FRPL (1) | 73 | 68 | 72 | 71 | 63 | 77 | n/a |
| % FRPL (2) | 31 | 33 | 35 | 36 | 36 | 38 | n/a |

* Fall 2001 based on unweighted averages of %s. FRPL (1) is school level; FRPL (2) is statewide.

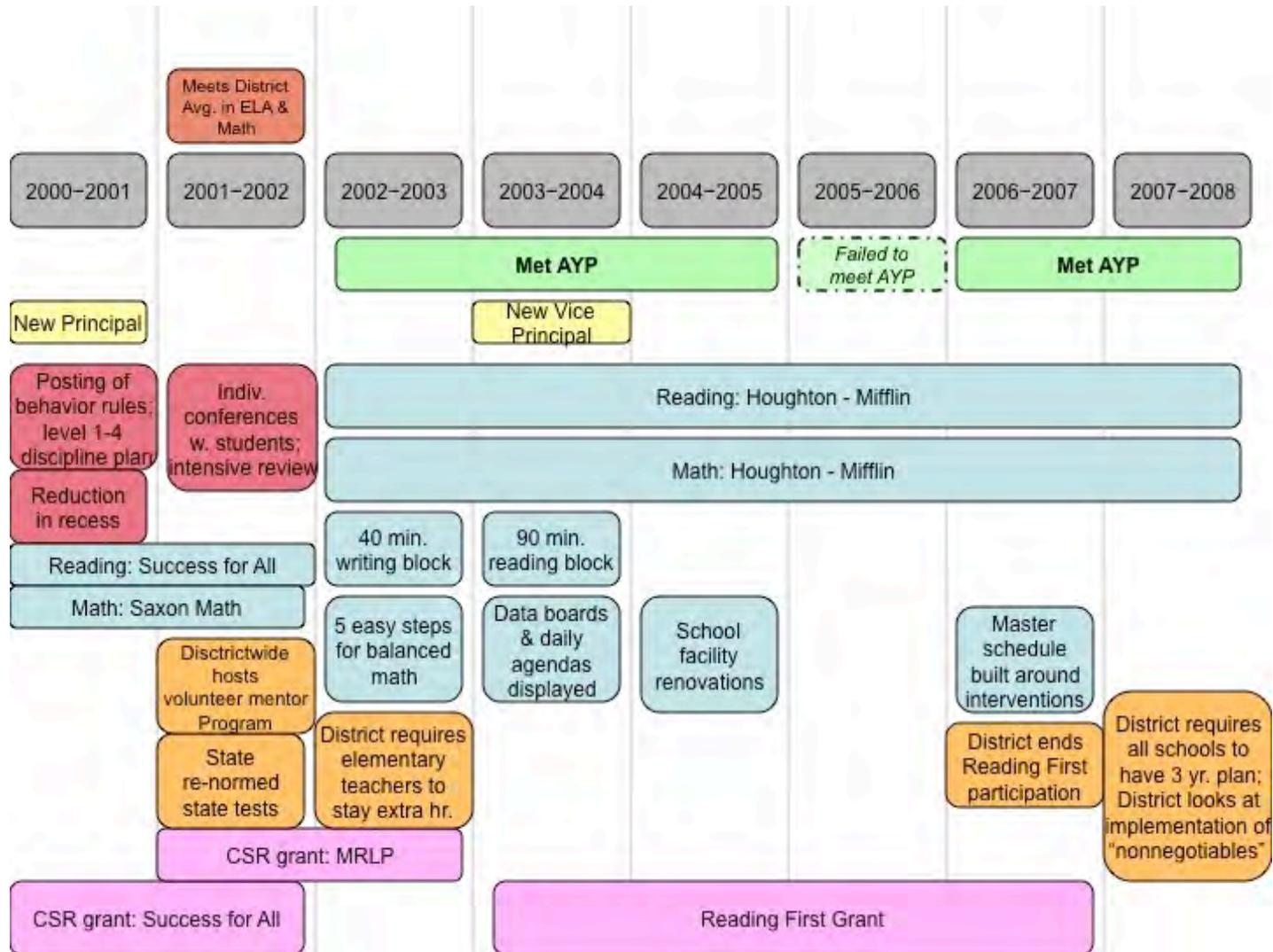
Exhibit C.8
School, District, and State Student Achievement (2002–07), Mathematics
 (Note: Double-line in the graph denotes the year in which the state assessment was re-normed.)



| | Fall 2001 | Fall 2002 | Fall 2003 | Fall 2004 | Fall 2005 | Fall 2006 | Fall 2007 |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Enrollment | 628 | 666 | 579 | 685 | 686 | 665 | 623 |
| % FRPL (1) | 73 | 68 | 72 | 71 | 63 | 77 | n/a |
| % FRPL (2) | 31 | 33 | 35 | 36 | 36 | 38 | n/a |

* Fall 2001 based on unweighted averages of %s. FRPL (1) is school level; FRPL (2) is statewide.

**Exhibit C.9
Critical Events Chronology (2000–01 to 2007–08) Mill Elementary School (PK–6)**



Stratford Elementary

Overview

Just a few miles from the downtown section of a nearby city, the area where this school is located quickly takes on a rural feeling, with subtle signs of poverty—run-down homes, an abandoned warehouse. With 669 students in 2007–08, Stratford (pre-K–6) has a predominantly white population (72 percent), with nearly equal distributions of African-American and Hispanic students (13 percent each). The new look of the renovated facility belies the high level of student poverty, with 82 percent of the student population eligible for the federal school lunch program (the second highest poverty school in the district). According to the teachers, many of these students endure a challenging home life, and the school nurse is the primary care physician for many students at Stratford. Students frequently require such basic necessities as shoes, coats, eyeglasses, and meals, which are sometimes purchased by staff: “We need to meet their basic needs before they can move on and learn,” noted one teacher.

Achievement Pattern

Initially designated as a comparison school for Mill, Stratford likewise experienced a dramatic increase in achievement from 2001 to 2002.²⁸ However, this surge was not fully sustained in either English language arts or math in subsequent years (see Exhibits C.10 and C.11). Unlike Mill, Stratford’s relative ranking in performance between 2001 and 2007 compared with other schools in the district remained relatively static, even including 2001–02, when it experienced dramatic achievement increases.

Stratford has experienced demographic shifts outside of its control. For example, it was one of three cluster program sites within the district starting in 1998–99 that enrolled English learner students from other schools.²⁹ Stratford also enrolled about 130 students from Mill in 2004–05, due to permanent redistricting to shift populations to relieve enrollment burden in the northern areas of the district.³⁰ Coupled with declines of the existing enrollment, the school experienced a net jump of 105 students in that year. While the distributions by ethnic group remained largely the same, this resulted in a growth in the numbers of Hispanic and African-American students. Its student poverty rate increased from 69 percent in 2001–02 to 82 percent in the 2007–08 school year.

²⁸ The state test was re-normed for the fall 2002 test cycle and may have had an impact on the increases in achievement, which were observed statewide.

²⁹ Prior to the fall 2003 test cycle, the scores for these students were reported by Stratford. Subsequently, the scores were reported by the resident school.

³⁰ The new attendance area for Stratford included 139 students originally in Mill’s attendance area; however, the district allowed sixth graders to complete 2004–05 at Mill.

School Activities

Stratford saw a change in school leadership in August 2000 and again in the spring of 2003. Also, nearly half of the teaching staff for the 2004–05 school year was new to the school (24 of 52 teachers, and 18 of those 24 were first-year teachers), due to teachers voluntarily transferring to a newly opened school within the district and new positions to accommodate enrollment increases from the redistricting. Given these staffing changes, the researchers for this study were not yet able to uncover specific activities that occurred just prior to the jump in achievement between 2001 and 2002. However, school respondents did discuss subsequent reforms and contributing school characteristics.

Among the most prominent characteristics, according to the school respondents, was the new principal in 2003 who focused on research-based strategies and use of data, established top-down expectations of professional collaboration, and fostered a strong supportive culture with emphasis on community building. The principal also redistributed all teaching staff across different grade levels in 2004–05 to mitigate the inexperience of the new teachers, to revitalize the veterans, and to signal change. Mill also undertook similar reforms, although Mill appeared to undertake these changes earlier in the process and more firmly embed them in the school’s daily practices.

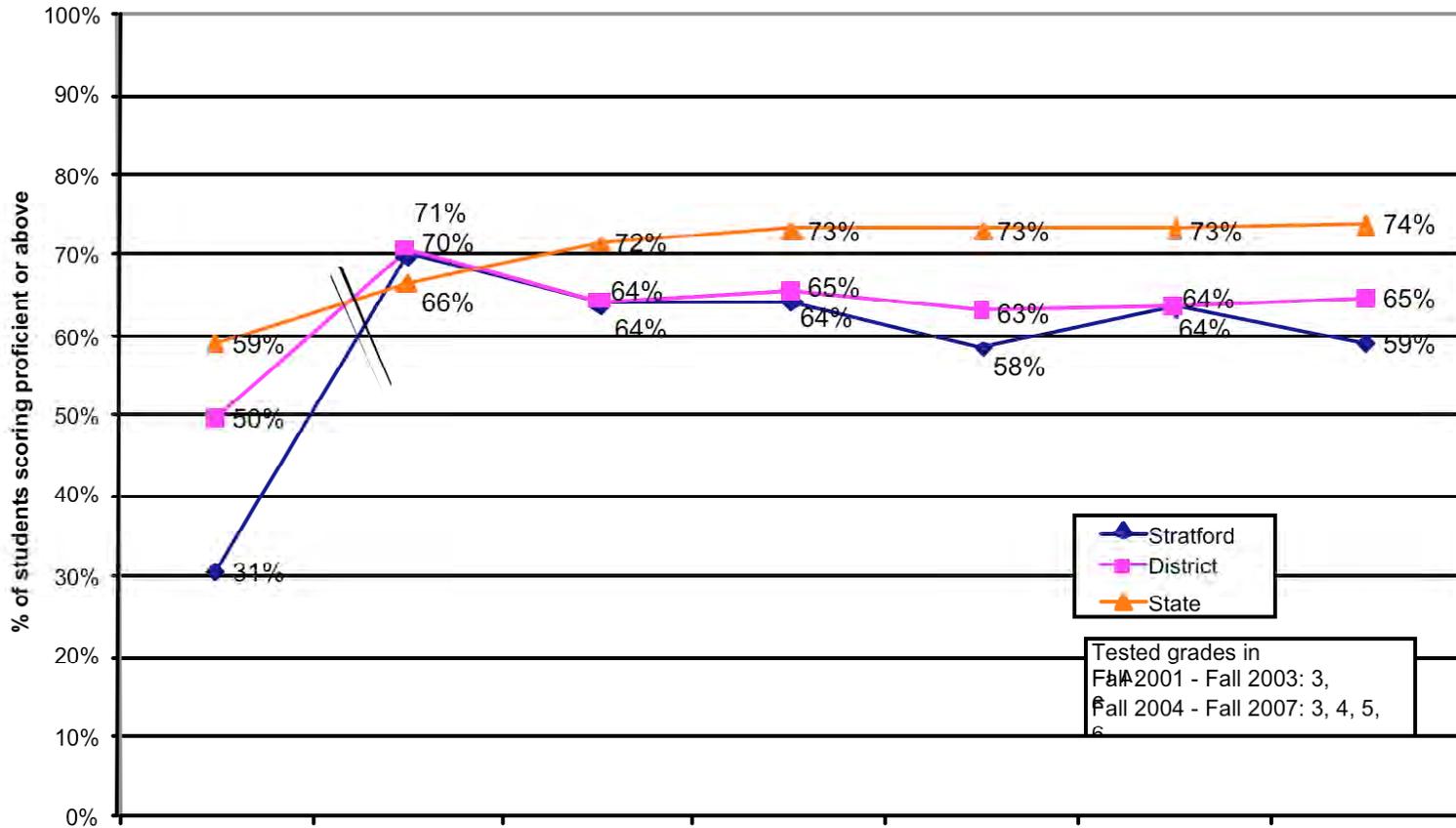
Stratford used its CSR funds to implement Success For All from 2000–01 to 2002–03. The school became heavily focused on literacy, with the start of the Reading First program in 2003–04 and the district-mandated “Literacy Framework,” which emphasizes components found in the National Reading Panel research (e.g., phonics, vocabulary, phonemic awareness, comprehension, fluency, writing to communicate). In accordance with another district mandate, the school used Larry Ainsworth’s Five Easy Steps to a Balanced Math Program to support its math curriculum starting in 2005–06.

Contributing to these reform efforts was a very dedicated, caring staff (following the influx of new staff in 2004–05) that coalesced around a common theme: doing what was best for the students. It was generally perceived by school and district respondents that potentially resistant staff transferred to a newly opened elementary school in the district prior to the 2004–05 school year. By default, the remaining staff were receptive to the wave of changes that followed, resulting in minimal resistance. District respondents noted that Stratford benefited from the “clean slate” in teaching staff in 2004–05, which enabled the principal to build a positive school climate with staff that embraced change. Conversely, it has taken time to train teachers to work with the school’s challenged student population.

Aside from providing professional development through the national Center for Performance Assessment consultants and providing a district-level Reading First consultant, the district’s earlier efforts seem to have played a peripheral role in the school’s improvement efforts, while permitting principals the flexibility to take reasonable risks. School respondents mentioned little or nothing of state or federal context, other than the requirements related to Reading First and Title I fiscal support. For a chronology of critical events, see Exhibit C.12.

Exhibit C.10
School, District, and State Student Achievement (2002–07), English Language Arts

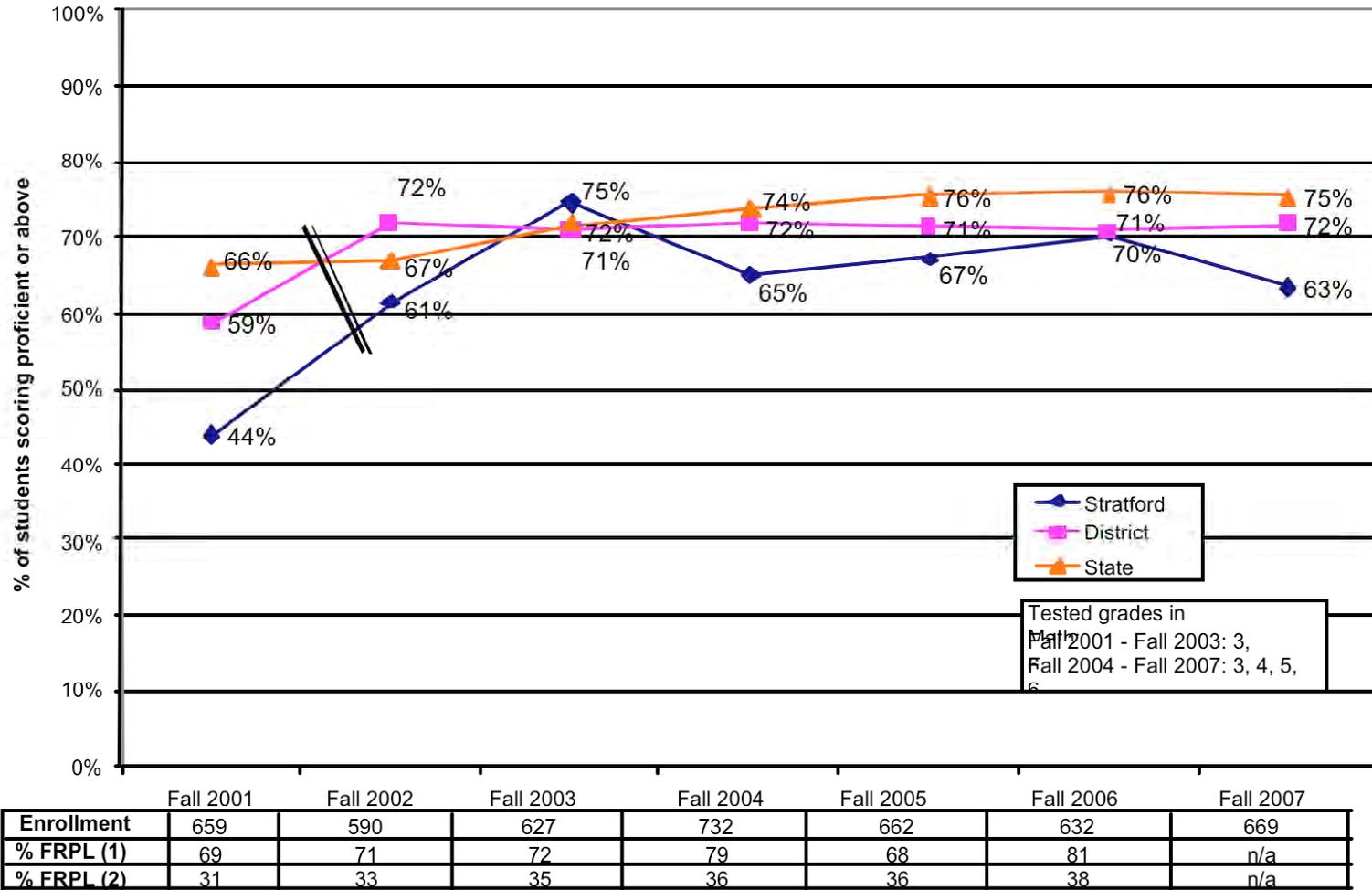
(Note: Double-line in the graph denotes the year in which the state assessment was re-normed.)



| | Fall 2001 | Fall 2002 | Fall 2003 | Fall 2004 | Fall 2005 | Fall 2006 | Fall 2007 |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Enrollment | 659 | 590 | 627 | 732 | 662 | 632 | 669 |
| % FRPL (1) | 69 | 71 | 72 | 79 | 68 | 81 | n/a |
| % FRPL (2) | 31 | 33 | 35 | 36 | 36 | 38 | n/a |

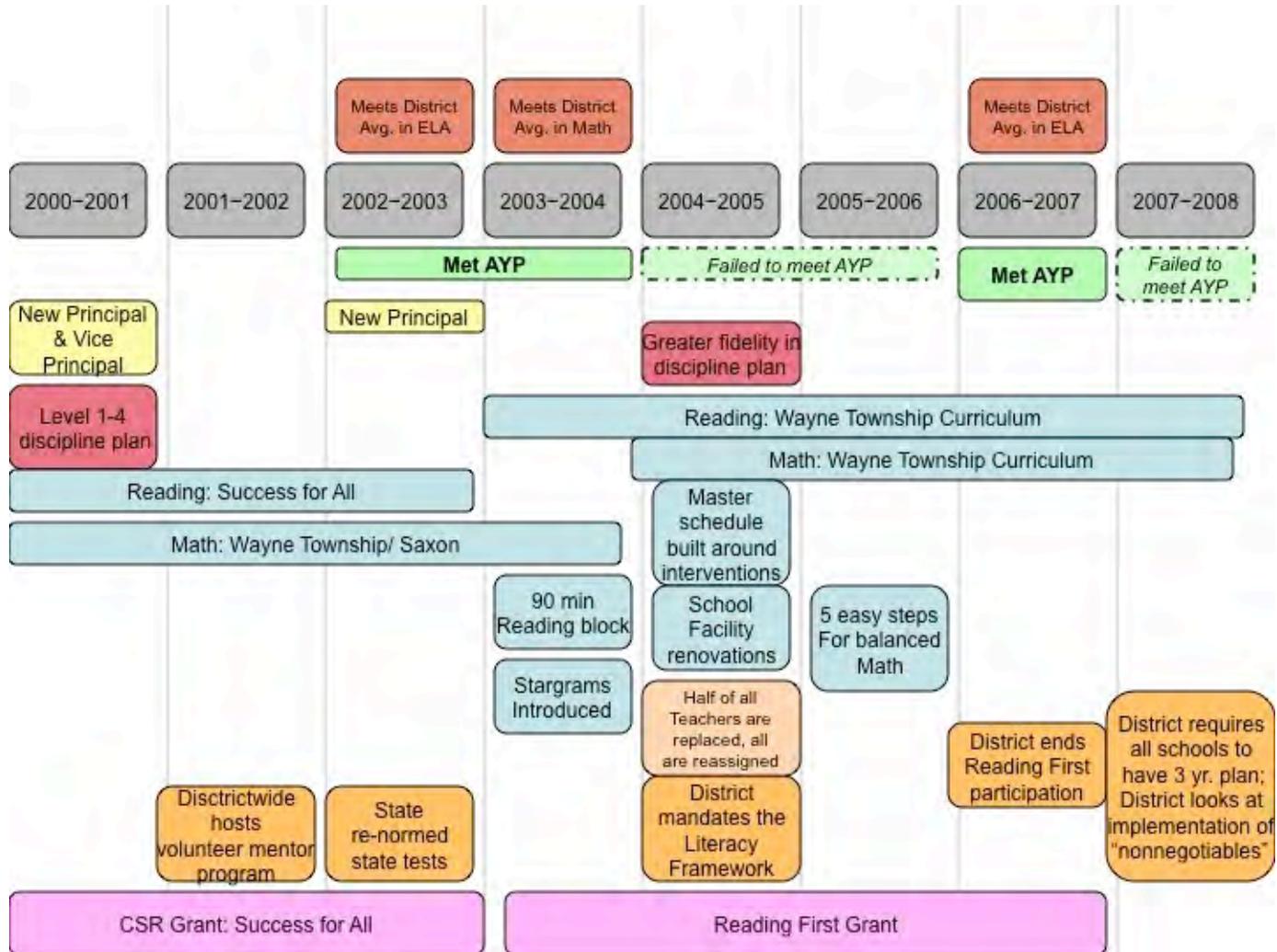
* Fall 2001 based on unweighted averages of %s. FRPL (1) is school level; FRPL (2) is statewide.

Exhibit C.11
School, District, and State Student Achievement (2002–07), Mathematics
 (Note: Double-line in the graph denotes the year in which the state assessment was re-normed.)



* Fall 2001 based on unweighted averages of %s. FRPL (1) is school level; FRPL (2) is statewide.

Exhibit C.12
Chronology of Critical Events 2000 to 2007, Stratford Elementary (PK-6)



Swift Middle School

Overview

Situated next to the high school on a large flat plain in a rural area, Swift's greatest challenge, according to several school respondents, is not only to educate its students but also to keep them from leaving the community for higher growth areas locally and beyond. With 663 students, the school's population is roughly half African-American and half white, with 73 percent of the students eligible for the federal school lunch program. The school also has a relatively high percentage of special education students, ranging from 21 to 25 percent from 2000–01 to 2006–07. Swift is a very rural and stable community, and there have been relatively few changes in the student population or teaching staff in recent years.

Achievement Pattern

Swift exhibited slow-and-steady improvement from 2001 to 2007–08. In English language arts and reading, the percent proficient was considerably below the statewide average in 2001, and the school's students rose in both subjects to be on par with the statewide average by 2007 (see Exhibits C.13 and C.14). In math, the percentages of students scoring proficient or above on state assessments exceeded the statewide average from 2004 through 2007 (see Exhibit C.15). The school's trend line is fairly similar to the district's performance, as Swift serves approximately 70 percent of students in grades 6 through 8 districtwide.³¹

School Activities

In the fall of 1999, a new principal began his six-year tenure at Swift. During the years prior to this new leader, school administration had been weak and fractured, and teachers felt completely unsupported, according to those interviewed for this study. In the new principal's first two years as the school leader, he selected core staff focused on creating a more structured, cohesive, learning-focused atmosphere at the school. In particular, in his first two years as principal, he increased behavioral expectations (e.g., focused on teaching students schoolwide expectations, such as how to walk quietly in the halls; established consistent routines; and supported teachers in holding students accountable) and introduced block scheduling for math and language arts. He also required teachers, with the support of coaches, to analyze student data, gave teachers one period per week for common planning time, and shifted staff around to better suit student needs.

The school failed to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) in 2000–01 and 2001–02 and subsequently fell into Needs Improvement status for the following two years. During the two years in Needs Improvement, the school received additional school improvement funds from the state, which were spent on an in-school school improvement specialist position (filled by existing leadership staff) and additional training and professional development in Max Thompson's

³¹ In addition to Swift, there are two other schools within the district that serve middle grades (a pre-K–8 school and a school serving grades 6–12).

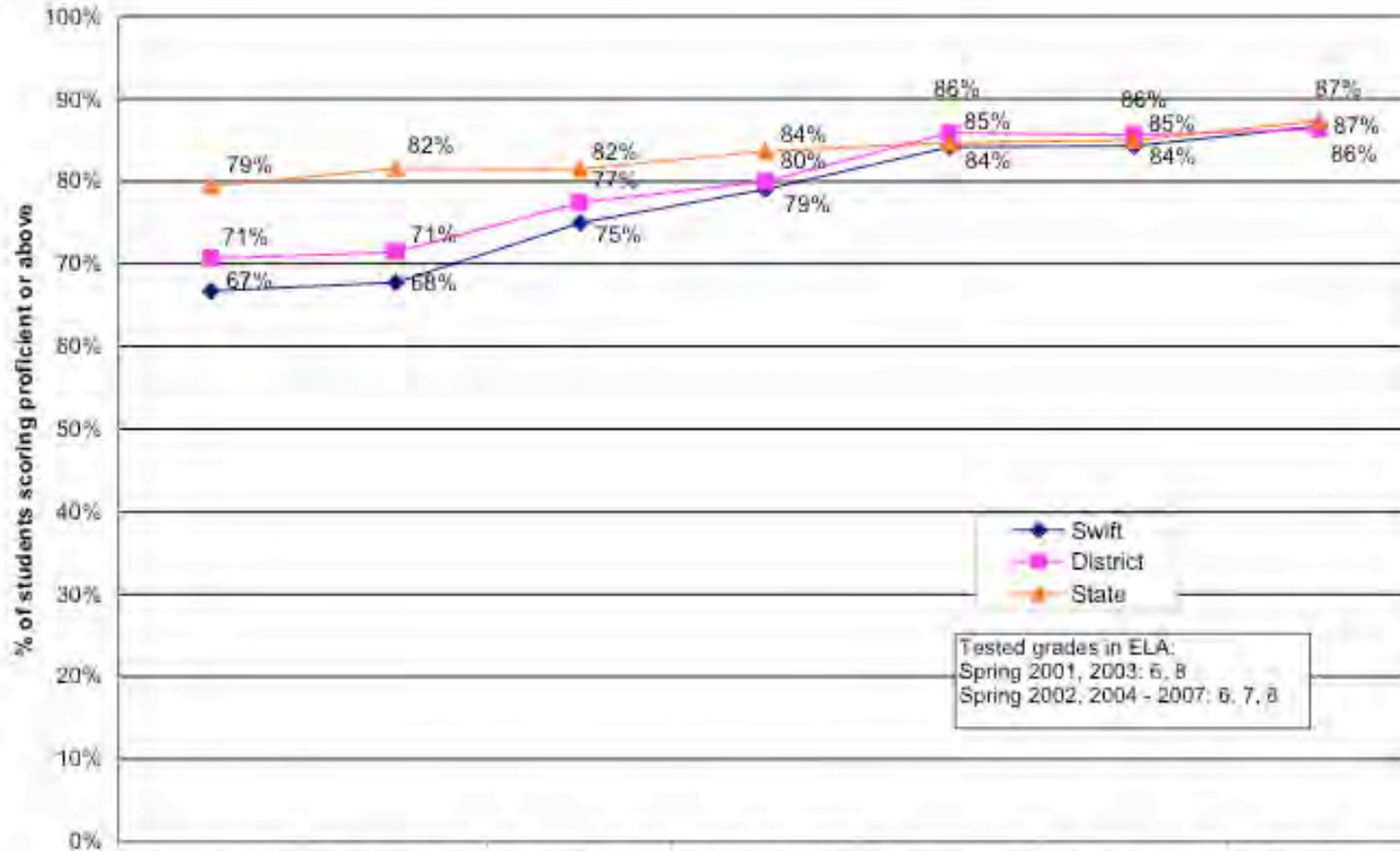
Learning Focused model of instructional improvement that was spearheaded by a consultant from the local Regional Educational Services Agency (RESA). In the summer of 2002, this RESA consultant began training a specially selected group of teachers, who were regarded as role models by other school staff, in essential techniques and skills to enhance their instruction. Teachers reported feeling positively supported by the RESA consultant; however, she is no longer serving the school due to lack funding when the school came out of Needs Improvement status.

The strength and cohesiveness of the staff appears to have helped facilitate the school's improvements. A benefit of the earlier years when administrative leadership was reported to have been weak is that the staff banded together and depended on one another because they represented the only continuity and stability during this period, according to the experienced teachers. A core of veteran teachers shared the responsibility for leading the school improvement efforts with the new principal and was trained by the RESA external consultant in "best practices." This core of teachers implemented these practices in their own classrooms first, then trained their colleagues in these techniques and strategies, which included curriculum alignment and mapping, use of data for benchmarking and instructional decision-making, and cooperative learning techniques.

This core of teacher leaders continued to be the mainstay of the improvement effort and to bolster reform even when changes occurred in administrative leadership (such as a new principal in 2006–07) and state improvement funds were withdrawn.

Furthermore, the school increased its emphasis on inclusion of special education students into mainstream classes, exposing students to the same curriculum and skill standards as the general population. School improvement funds were utilized to hire paraprofessionals to augment the special education staff and to support the increased inclusion effort. After-school tutoring was also emphasized to help special education students keep up with the core curriculum. Teaming at the grade and subject levels enabled all faculty to work with and support the efforts of students with special needs. For a chronology of critical events see Exhibit C.16.

Exhibit C.13
School, District, and State Student Achievement (2001–07), English Language Arts



| | Spring 2001 | Spring 2002 | Spring 2003 | Spring 2004 | Spring 2005 | Spring 2006 | Spring 2007 |
|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Enr | 768 | 718 | 760 | 738 | 703 | 688 | 663 |
| % FRPL (1) | 68 | 70 | 68 | 70 | 72 | 70 | 73 |
| % FRPL (2) | 43 | 44 | 45 | 46 | 48 | 50 | 50 |

FRPL (1) is school level. FRPL (2) is statewide. There are only 3 schools in total that serve middle school grades. Swainsboro serves the majority of these students.

Exhibit C.14
School, District, and State Student Achievement (2001–07), Reading

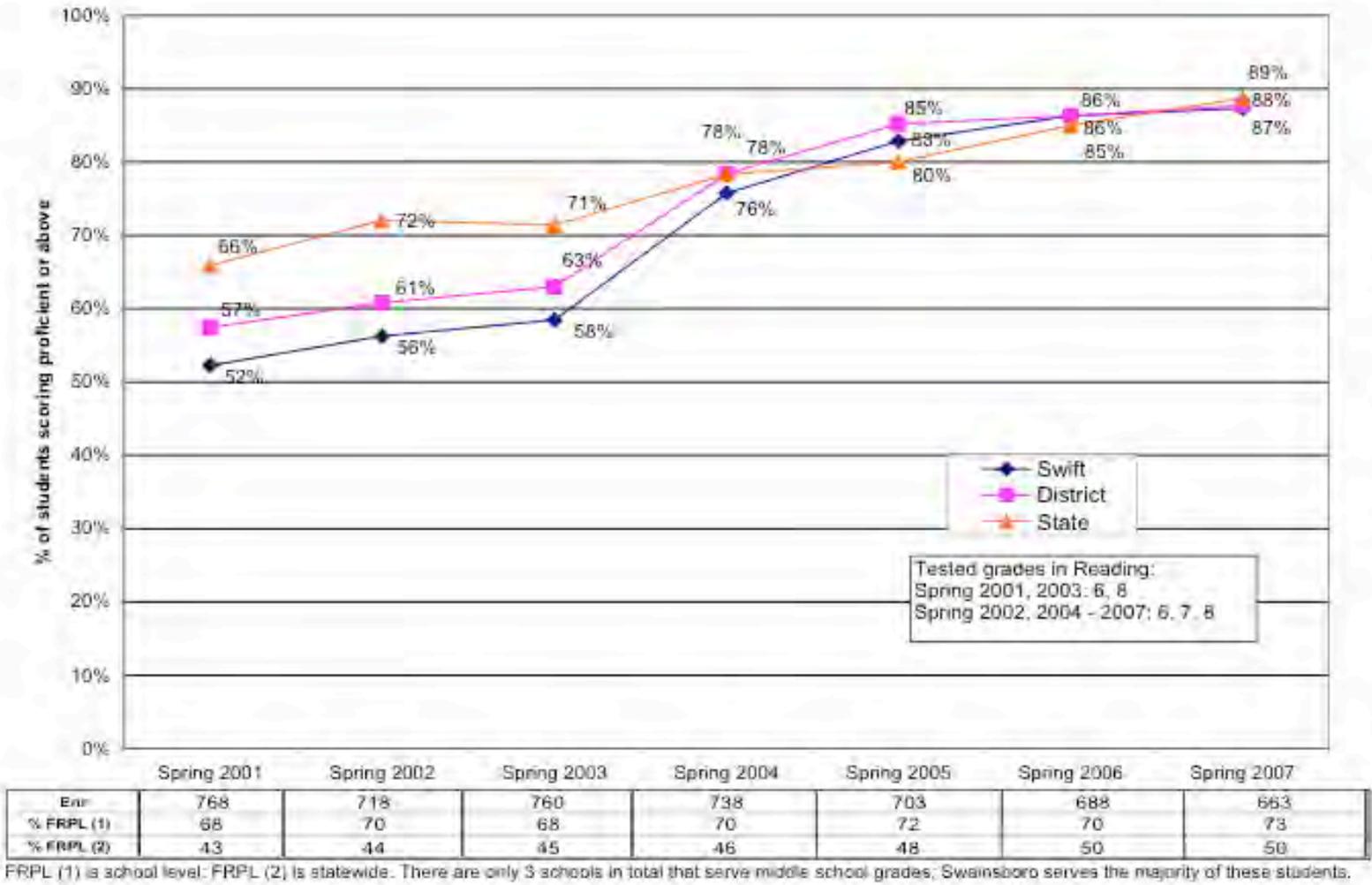
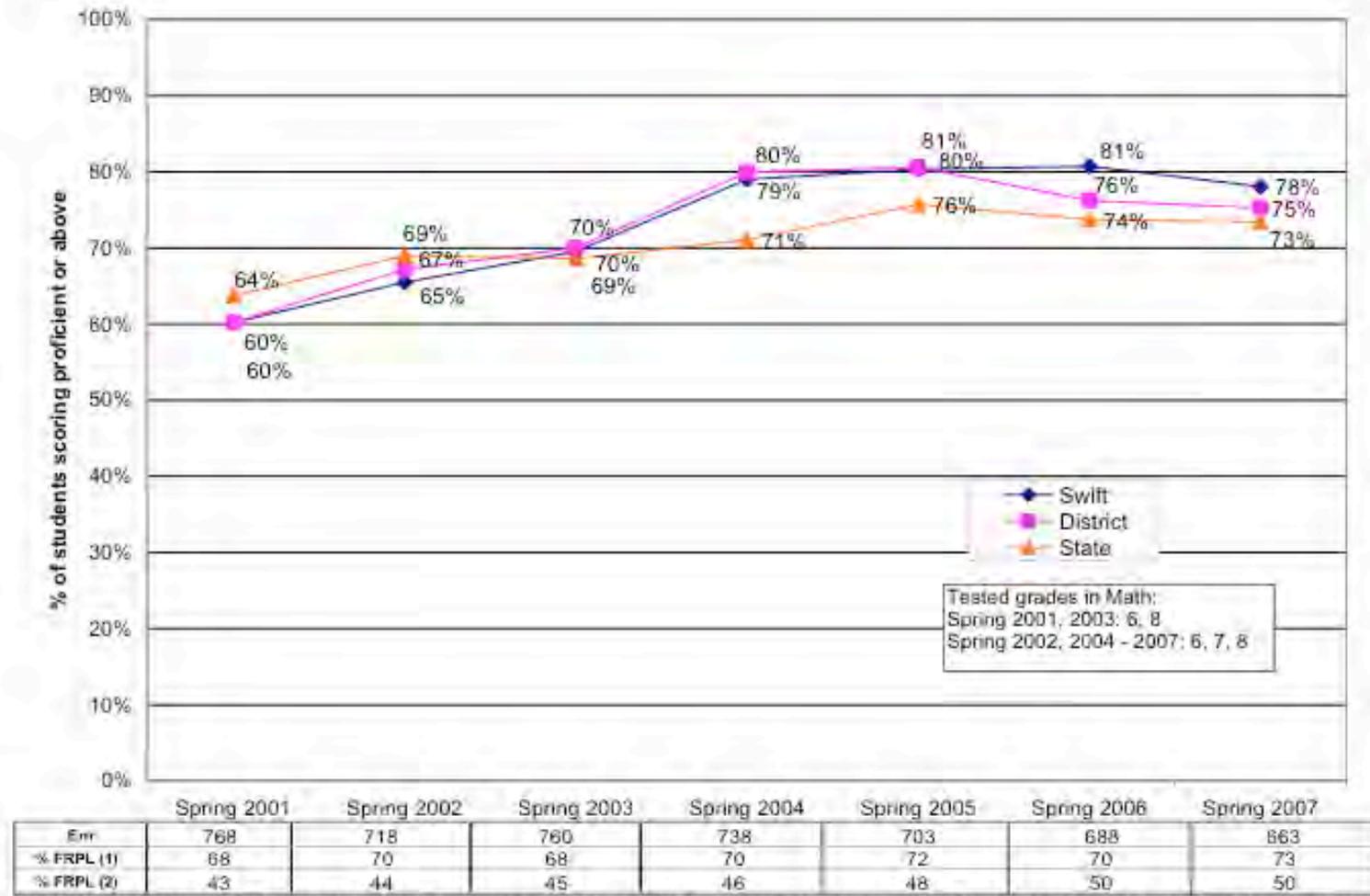
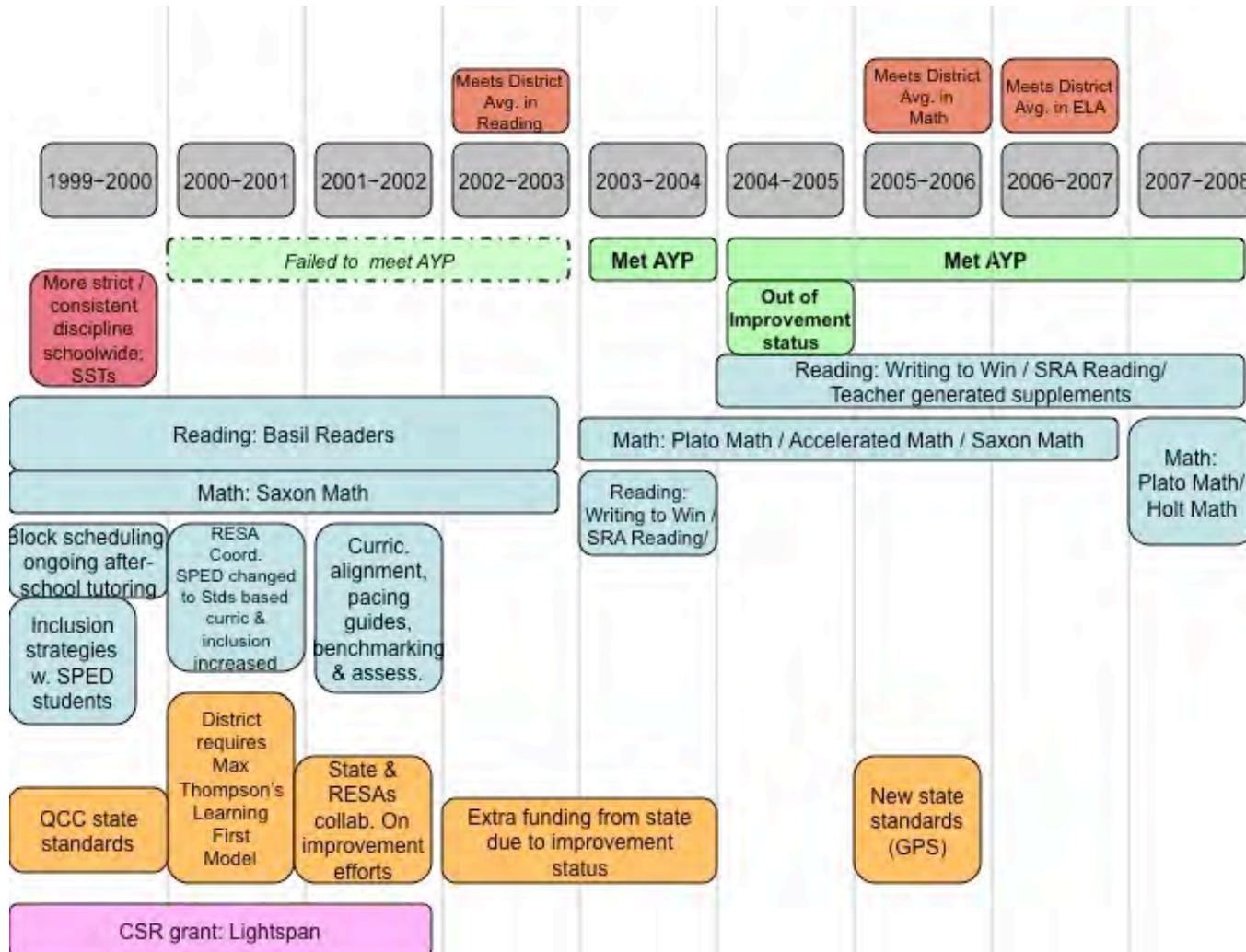


Exhibit C.15
School, District, and State Student Achievement (2001–07), Mathematics



FRPL (1) is school level. FRPL (2) is statewide. There are only 3 schools in total that serve middle school grades; Swainsboro serves the majority of these students.

Exhibit C.16
Critical Events Chronology (1999–2000 to 2007–08), Swift Middle School (6–8)



Walker Academy

Overview

Walker (pre-K–12) is a charter school in a southern state. Formerly a private Christian school, Walker reopened under a public charter in 1998 with a predominantly uncertified teaching staff. As a charter school, it was not accountable to state performance standards prior to 2002–03. This school was challenged with high student, teacher, and principal turnover. Enrollment in grade levels tested (3–11) between 2002 and 2007 ranged from 17 to 22 students, with enrollment in K–12 ranging from 251 to 313 students. These low enrollment figures were accompanied by high rates of student mobility, with about one-third of students not enrolled in the school at least 83 percent of the school year, according to state education agency data. In the same period, the proportion of African-American students increased from 9 to 16 percent, while that of white students decreased from 69 to 54 percent; the proportion of students eligible for the federal school lunch program ranged from 49 to 65 percent, staying above 60 percent from 2003 on. Average teacher experience ranged from 0.6 to 1.0 years. Teachers left the school often for better pay and benefits in surrounding districts. Walker had three changes in principal—first in summer 2004, then in spring 2006, and again in summer 2006. The last principal change was accompanied by a wholesale release of the teaching staff on the part of the charter management organization; only four teachers from the prior year remained. Between 2001 and 2004, Walker’s school budget per pupil increased from \$3,577 to \$5,466.

Achievement Pattern

While the data show that student achievement peaked in 2005, it was not sustained. From 2003 to 2005, the proportion of students attaining proficiency in reading rose 22 points (compared to a seven-point gain at the state level) and the proportion attaining proficiency in mathematics rose 29 points (versus a 10-point gain at the state level). In spring 2005, Walker exceeded the state-level proportion in reading by six points and fell two points short of state-level in mathematics, despite the fact that the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills proficiency standards were raised from prior years. However, between 2005 and 2006, Walker reading achievement declined by 15 points; between 2005 and 2007, mathematics achievement declined by 14 points. Ultimately, overall gains in reading and mathematics between 2003 and 2007 paralleled state gains (see Exhibits C.17 and C.18). Walker made adequate yearly progress (AYP) from 2002–03 through 2005–06. In 2006–07, it did not make AYP in mathematics.

School Activities

Walker initiated several activities aimed at improving achievement after 2002–03, the year in which it became subject to state accountability standards. Walker applied for and received a Reading First grant and used it to implement Open Court Reading in grades K–3 in 2003–04. Walker also used the funds to hire a reading coach, three reading specialists, and two instructional assistants. The assistants worked with the coach and specialists to provide intensive

intervention to struggling readers. During this year, teachers supplemented Open Court with other reading curricula. In 2004–05, the school obtained Open Court training for its teachers after the state mandated use of Open Court exclusively. Both the reading coach and Open Court training remained in place through the 2007–08 school year.

In 2004–05, a new principal, a former teacher and a key lead in school grant writing, was assigned at Walker. This principal worked closely with coaches and staff at the site to promote the use of data for instructional decision-making. Teachers collected Dibels Fluency assessment data, as required by Reading First. School staff also collected data using the Texas Primary Reading Inventory and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. The principal and reading coach periodically reviewed the data to determine which standards needed to be addressed more extensively through instruction and intervention. This principal vacated her position two months prior to the end of the 2005–06 year for medical reasons. She was replaced by the prior principal for the remainder of the year.

In 2005–06, Walker received a Comprehensive School Reform grant, which it used to implement High Schools That Work, extend the focus on literacy into the secondary grades, and establish block scheduling.

In fall 2005, the charter management organization provided Walker with a scope and sequence in all grade levels and content areas that mapped the state content standards into six-week intervals. For 2005–06, the organization hired a mathematics curriculum specialist who revised the scope and sequence and provided professional development to teachers and continues to support the school. However, teachers noted that since 2002–03 Walker had not updated the mathematics curriculum, which was not aligned to state standards. The organization required use of earlier versions of the state accountability assessment three times per year as benchmark assessments. At the end of 2005–06, the organization released all but four teachers, so the new principal for 2006–07 could hire her own staff.

The state provided reading technical assistants in 2003–04 and 2004–05. According to school staff, the assistant in the latter year was more effective than her predecessor. The assistant continues to serve the school. The state’s Region 10 Education Service Center provided a large majority of teachers to the site through an alternative certification program.

In 2007–08, the school also received state funds through the accelerated reading and mathematics initiatives based on the number of students underperforming on the state assessments.

In spite of the adoption of a research-based reading curriculum and a high school comprehensive school reform model, increased funding per student, extensive use of assessment data for decision-making, and coaching, the significant turnover in staff and students, small school size, and turnover in leadership confound attribution of achievement gains to specific reforms. For a chronology of critical events, see Exhibit C.19.

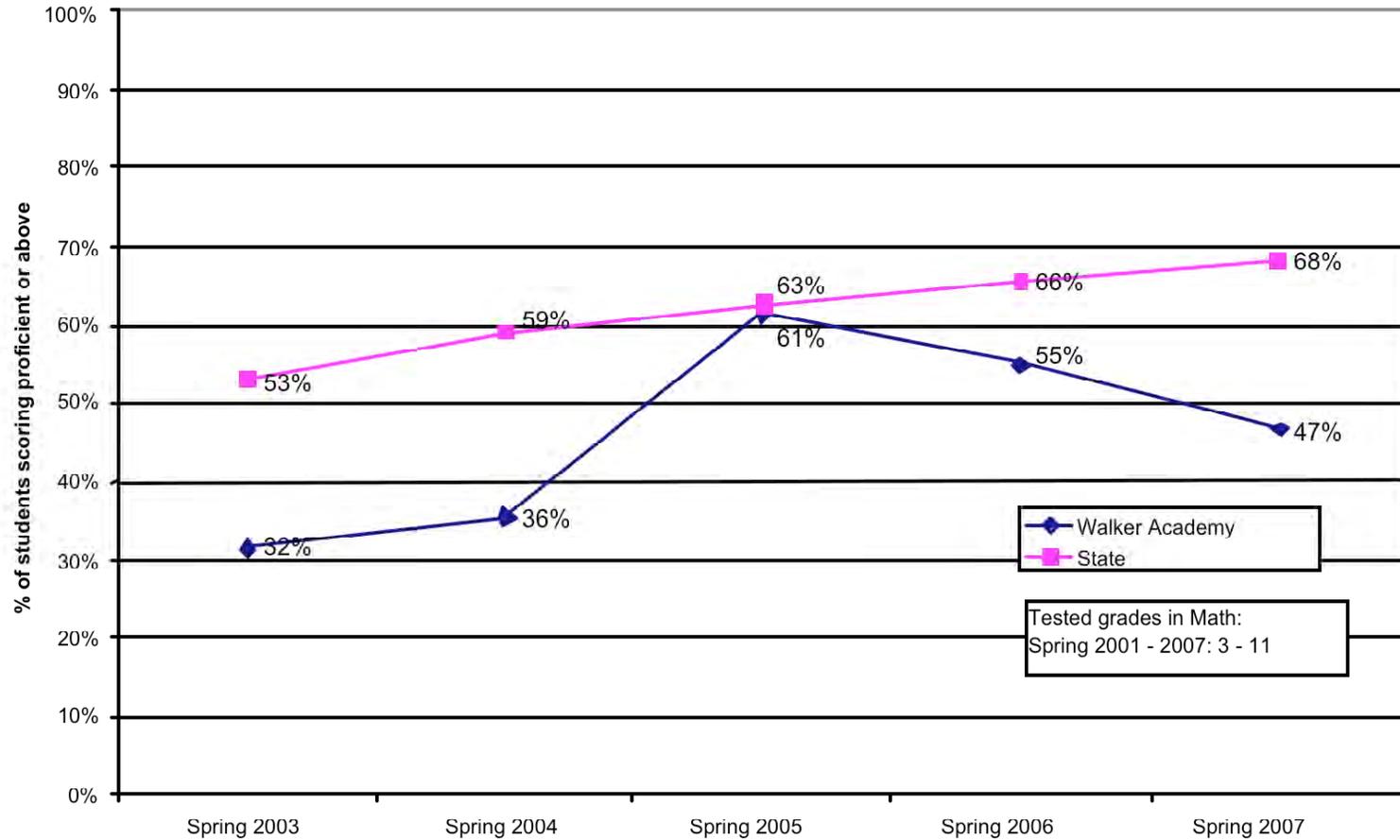
Exhibit C.17
School, District, and State Student Achievement (2003–07), English Language Arts



| | Spring 2003 | Spring 2004 | Spring 2005 | Spring 2006 | Spring 2007 |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Enrollment | 313 | 269 | 293 | 251 | 255 |
| % FRPL | 49 | 66 | 61 | 62 | 65 |
| %¹ FRPL | 52 | 53 | 55 | 56 | 56 |

Enrollment is K-12 (excludes Pre-K). FRPL (1) is school-level; FRPL (2) is statewide. Waxahachie is a charter school and therefore its own LEA.

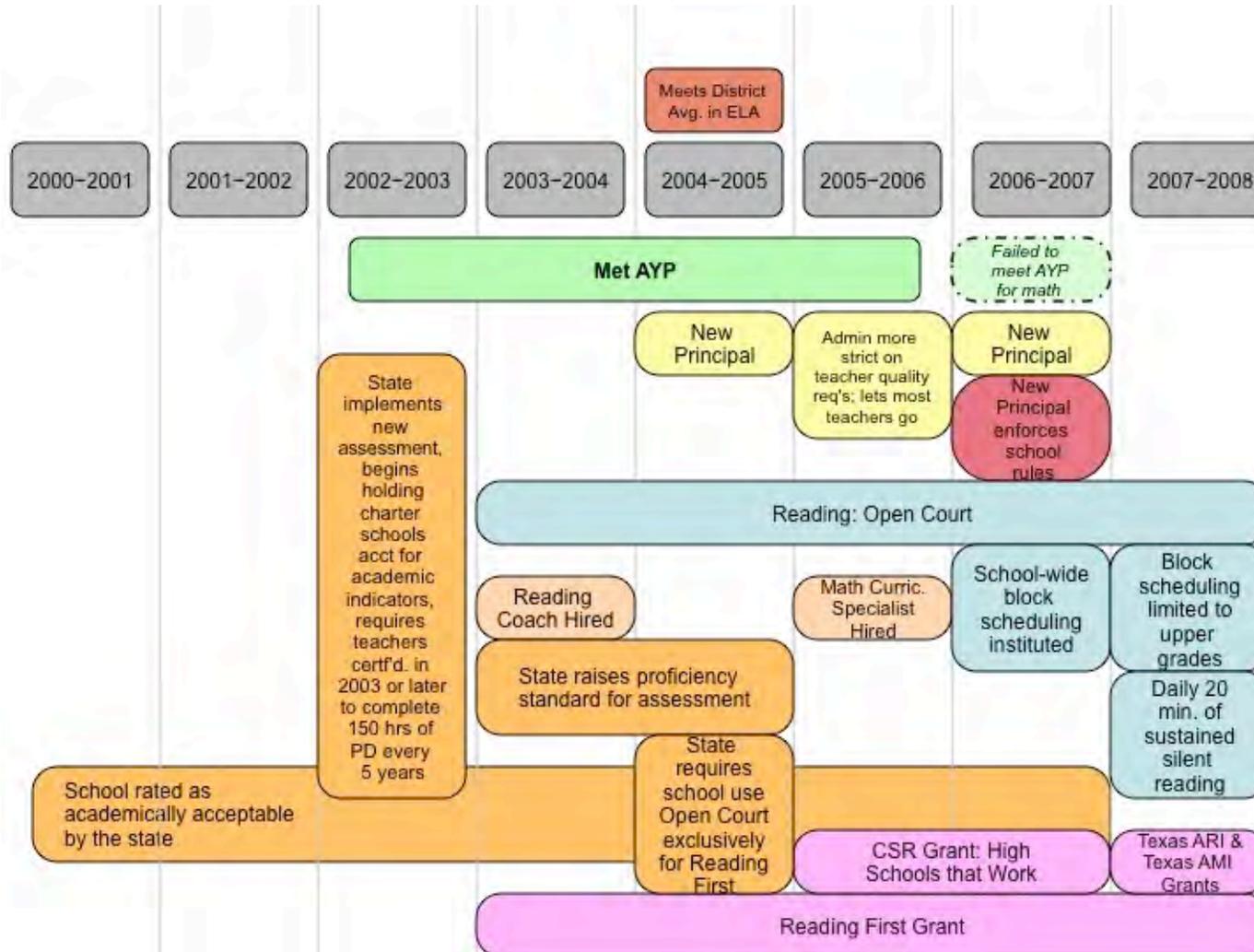
Exhibit C.18
School, District, and State Student Achievement (2003–07), Mathematics



| | Spring 2003 | Spring 2004 | Spring 2005 | Spring 2006 | Spring 2007 |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Enrollment | 313 | 269 | 293 | 251 | 255 |
| % FRPL (1) | 49 | 66 | 61 | 62 | 65 |
| % FRPL (2) | 52 | 53 | 55 | 56 | 56 |

Enrollment is K-12 (excludes Pre-K). FRPL (1) is school level; FRPL (2) is statewide. Waxahachie is a charter school and therefore its own LEA.

Exhibit C.19
Critical Events Chronology (2000–01 to 2007–08), Walker Academy (PK–12)



Weston Elementary School

Overview

Weston Elementary School is a small, K–5, elementary school in a small city of a southern state. In 1999, the school became an arts magnet school, drawing mostly but not entirely from the surrounding neighborhood. The magnet program ended in 2003–04, though the name persists. The school has consistently served a population of low-income (85–90 percent eligible for the federal school lunch program), African-American (87–92 percent) students. To a visitor, the neighborhood does not appear to be particularly disadvantaged, but school staff warn that just off the main street, homes deteriorate and there are several public housing projects with crime and drug activity. The school itself is elegant, historic, and well preserved: Built in 1926, the main entry hall is flanked by two large staircases, the stone steps of which are worn with decades of students' treads. A large brass chandelier lights the entry, and hardwood floors are found in many classrooms. The arts rooms, renovated with a federal magnet schools grant, are state-of-the-art.

Achievement Pattern

Weston School exhibited quick, dramatic improvements in student achievement from 2002 to 2004 and has continued to exceed or approximate statewide student achievement. In those two years, students at Weston moved from 43 percent proficient in reading and 47 percent in mathematics to over 90 percent in both subject areas. (See Exhibits C.19 and C.20.) During the same period, the school district overall showed substantial, but less dramatic improvements in both mathematics and reading. The district schools remain below the state average, while Weston has generally stayed above the state average since 2004. Weston has consistently made adequate yearly progress since the 2003–04 school year.

Demographic changes in the student population could be a contributing factor in accounting for Weston's improvements. First, the school has been a magnet school for many years and draws a small but significant number of students from outside its neighborhood. Currently, about 25 students come from outside the neighborhood. Second, though the demographic makeup of the school has remained largely constant, overall enrollment has declined dramatically from almost 250 students in 2000–01 to only 175 in 2007–08. Many classes now have as few as 15 students. The principal attributes the decline to the school's inability, with the loss of magnet grant funding, to provide transportation for students from outside the school's neighborhood.

School Activities

During its first years as an arts magnet school (1999–2001), a substantial proportion of the school day at Weston was devoted to the fine and performing arts. This left little time for core academics and consequently, student achievement in mathematics and reading was low. While the "Big Show" in the spring was always a highlight, basic supplies and mathematics texts were often lacking. In 2001, the school district replaced the principal with a veteran principal known

for turning around schools in the district. That same year, the state intervened and placed the school in the Partnership for Achieving Successful Schools (PASS) initiative. In a visit to the school, the state explicitly threatened to terminate teachers' employment unless substantial changes were made and improvement was achieved. Under this threat of layoffs, the principal initiated several strategies, including regular use of data, targeted intervention, extended learning time, schoolwide disciplinary practices, and greater community involvement. School climate and school improvement also benefited from low student-teacher ratios.

Teachers use data regularly to guide and focus instruction. Every nine weeks, the school tests students, a practice initiated by the district. The data guide the topics of intersession instruction. Weston did regular benchmark testing while participating in PASS, but that was less widely used than the current district-driven process. Intersession instruction focuses on topics on which at least 75 percent of students had not demonstrated proficiency. The names of students who received perfect scores on the state Standards of Learning are posted at the front of the school. Faculty also use data to provide academic support to students as soon as it becomes evident that a student has not mastered the material.

Weston has used a year-round calendar since 2002–03. During each of the several three-week intercessions except summer break, instruction is offered for two of the three weeks. Ninety-two percent of students voluntarily choose to attend school during intersession. Weston also offers before-school and after-school tutoring opportunities for students.

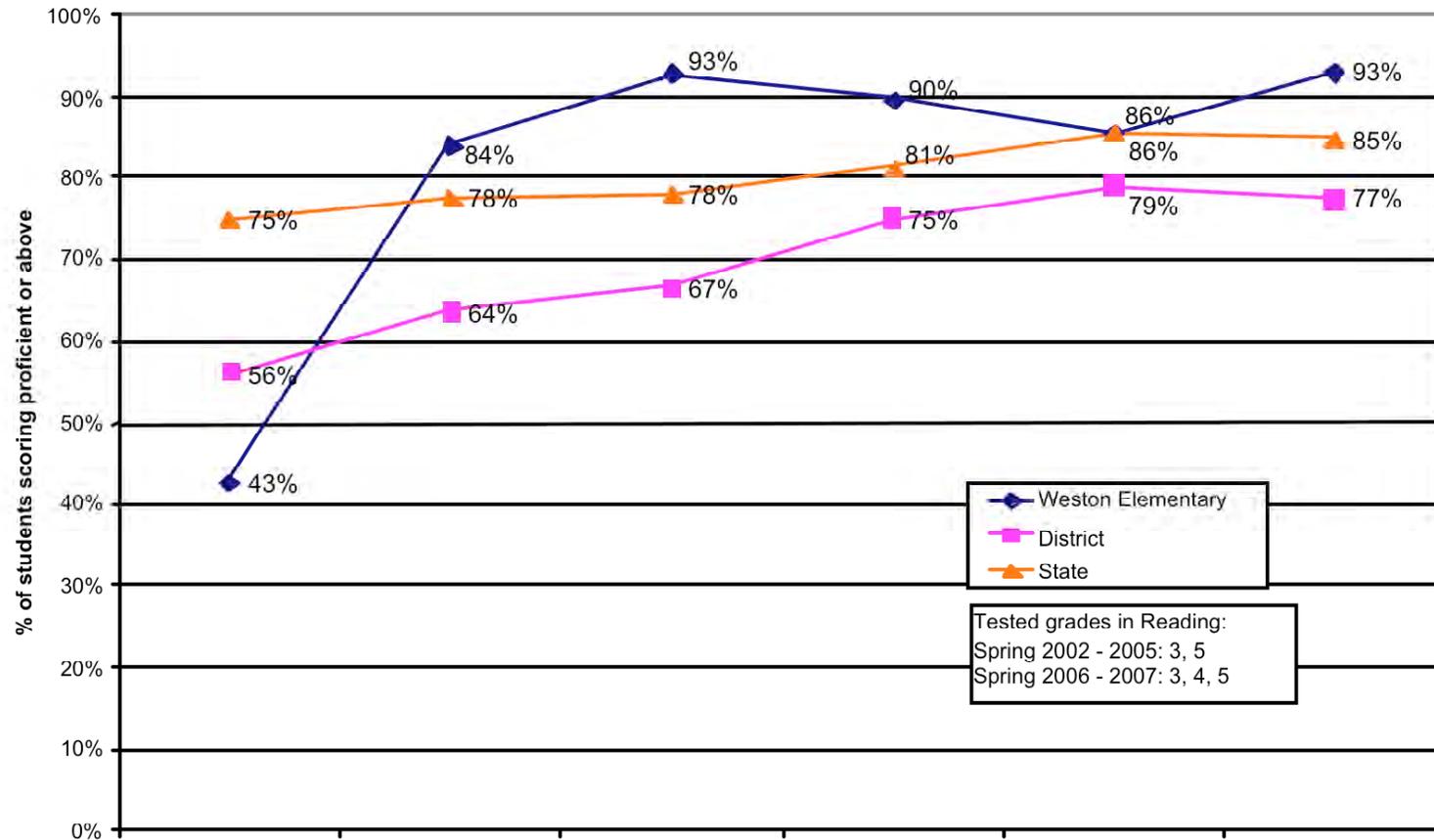
Weston enforces a strict schoolwide behavior program. Early in the improvement period, staff jointly developed expectations detailing the use of homework folders, appropriate backpacks, pencil sharpening, classroom apparel, and even hallway behavior. Students today walk down the hallways with their hands behind their backs, having been told this is how "great thinkers walked." These common disciplinary and behavioral expectations are drilled into students during the first week of school that teachers call "boot camp."

The small class sizes and low student-teacher ratio facilitate some of the strategies employed at Weston. These changes may explain as much of the improvement in student achievement as any other single factor. Some classes are as small as 12 students. Others have as many as 18–20 students. This was not a strategic design by Weston, rather a function of declining enrollment. One unintended consequence has been a high level of communication and collaboration among the staff. Teachers have a very high level of awareness of what is going on in each others' classrooms, a strong sense of community, and a high level of mutual support. Staff are expected to be responsible for the well-being of the students; this extends beyond the school day.

Additional Fact

Despite its success, the school district may decide to close Weston in the near future due to its declining enrollment and the high costs of maintaining this facility.

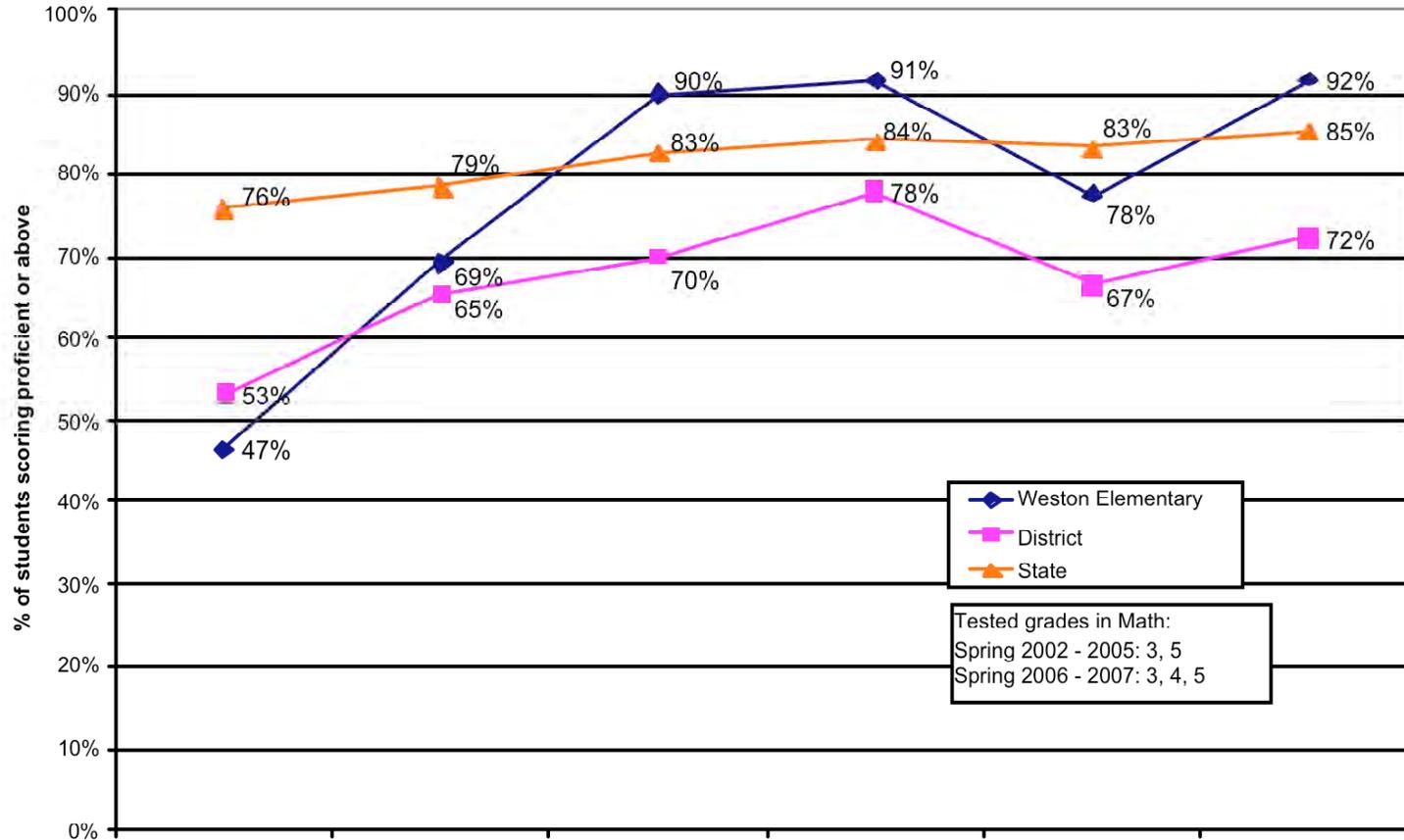
Exhibit C.20
School, District, and State Student Achievement (2002–07), Reading



| | Spring 2002 | Spring 2003 | Spring 2004 | Spring 2005 | Spring 2006 | Spring 2007 |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Enrollment | 247 | 218 | 227 | 215 | 191 | 175 |
| % FRPL (1) | 85 | 86 | 88 | 86 | 89 | 90 |
| % FRPL (2) | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 33 | 34 |

FRPL (1) is school-level; FRPL (2) is statewide.

**Exhibit C.21
School, District, and State Student Achievement (2002–07), Mathematics**



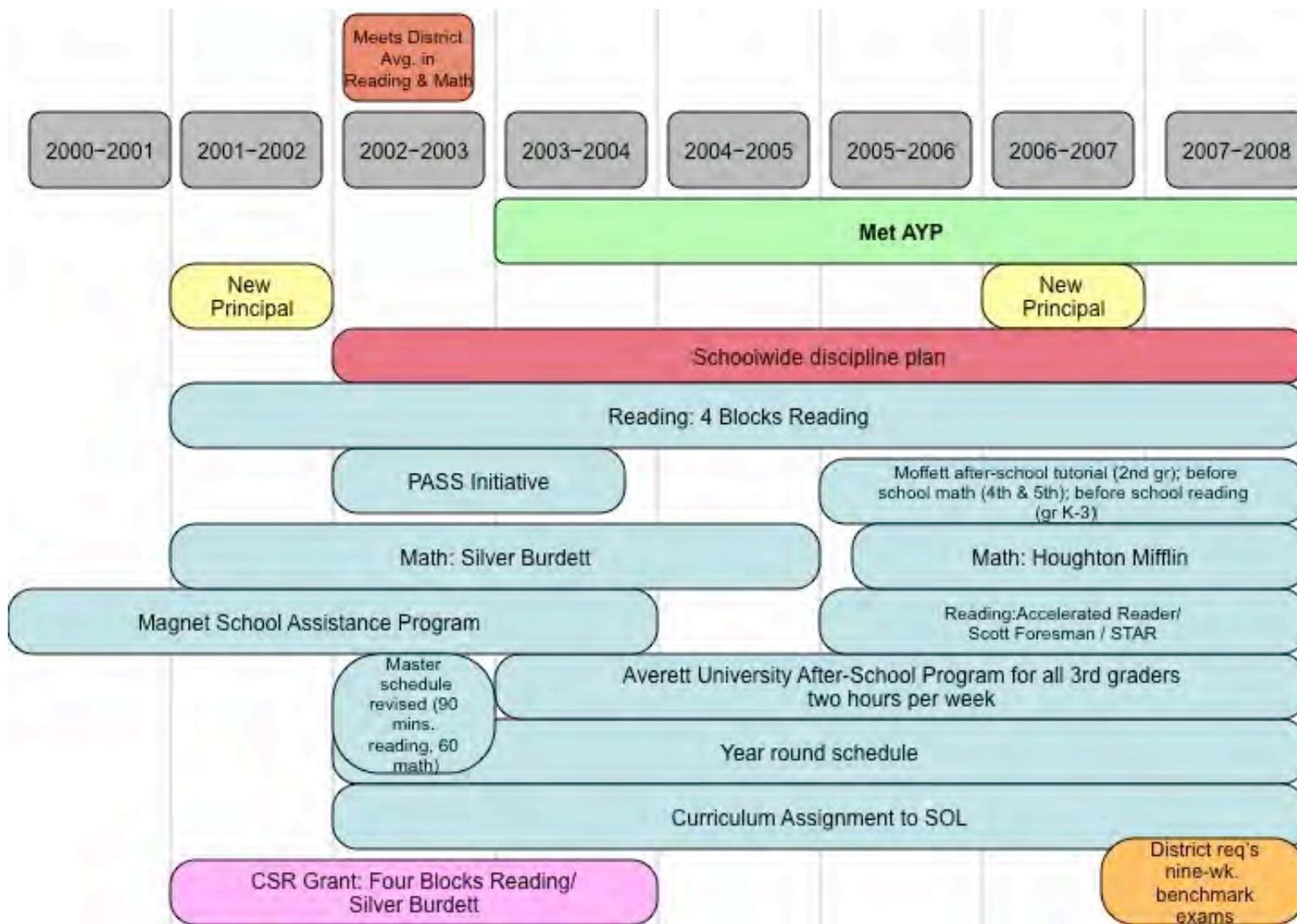
◆ Weston Elementary
■ District
▲ State

Tested grades in Math:
 Spring 2002 - 2005: 3, 5
 Spring 2006 - 2007: 3, 4, 5

| | Spring 2002 | Spring 2003 | Spring 2004 | Spring 2005 | Spring 2006 | Spring 2007 |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Enrollment | 247 | 218 | 227 | 215 | 191 | 175 |
| % FRPL (1) | 85 | 86 | 88 | 86 | 89 | 90 |
| % FRPL (2) | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 33 | 34 |

FRPL (1) is school-level; FRPL (2) is statewide.

Exhibit C.22
Critical Events Chronology (2000–01 to 2007–08), Weston Elementary School (PK–5)



Dogwood County Middle School

Overview

Dogwood County Middle School (grades 6 through 8), serves approximately 340 students in a rural area. In its town, most storefronts, such as the local gun shop, have long since shut down, cotton plants grow incidentally on roadsides, and the cotton mill provides an example of local industry. The county correctional facility sits not far from the school. The county also has one high school and one elementary school. Prior to 2003–04, the school was considered the worst in the area. Teacher supervision was limited, staff morale was low, and the district provided little monitoring or oversight of student performance. The building was “dilapidated” and generally run down. In 2003–04, the school reopened in a brand new facility. The new facility has large halls, high ceilings, and light streaming from large windows. Classrooms are built around a large library and media center. During the researchers’ site visit for this study, school and district staff noted that the new site increased staff and student morale and signaled a “new start.”

Achievement Pattern

After declines in reading, English language arts, and mathematics between 2002 and 2003, Dogwood demonstrated quick and dramatic achievement gains in all three areas between spring 2003 and 2004. Dogwood sustained gains in reading and English language arts through 2007 (see Exhibits C.22 and C.23), while losing most of its gains in mathematics (see Exhibit C.24). From 2003 to 2004 Dogwood gained 20 points in the percentage of students attaining proficiency or above in reading, and 29 points in the percentage attaining proficiency or above in language arts (77 percent proficient in both areas, compared to 84 percent in both reading and 78 percent in language arts statewide). By 2007, Dogwood came within 1 percentage point of both the statewide proficiency levels in reading (87 percent) and language arts (89 percent). Dogwood experienced a gain of comparable scale in mathematics from 2003 to 2004 (24 percentage points) and came within 5 percentage points of the statewide proficiency level (71 percent). These gains were largely sustained until 2007 when the percent proficient or above dropped to 56 percent compared to 73 percent statewide. Dogwood has met adequate yearly progress (AYP) since 2004–05. Dogwood had stable enrollment and no student mobility during the entire period examined for this study.

School Activities

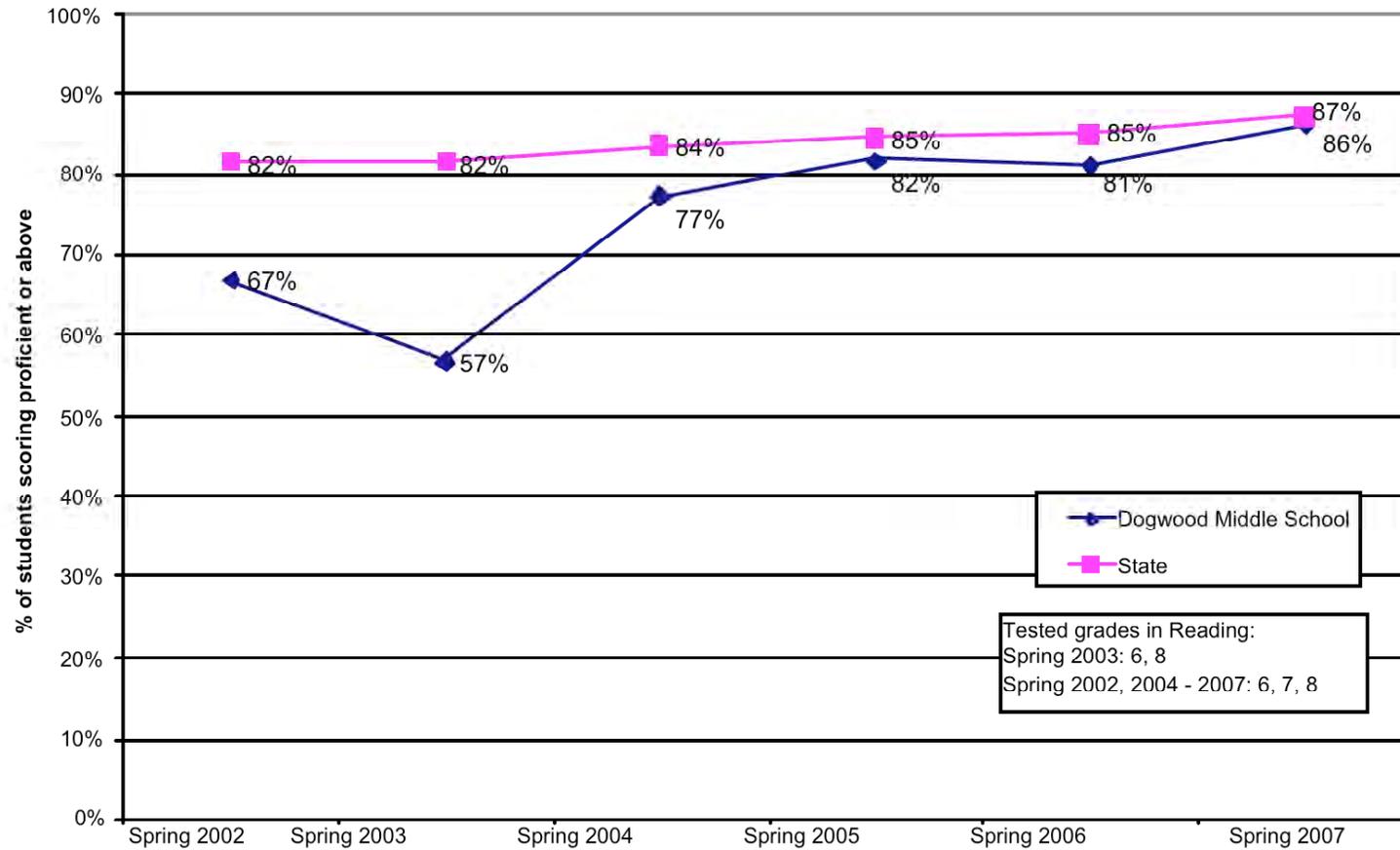
In 2001–02, the district began an effort to improve achievement by aligning its English language arts curriculum with state standards (with other content areas to follow). The district provided professional development to teachers for the resulting new curriculum guides, which included lessons, resources, and tools for teachers. In the same year, the school adopted a single-track year-round calendar and developed an intersession program providing remedial instruction in reading, language arts, and mathematics.

In 2003–04, Dogwood was assigned a new principal, the former assistant principal of Dogwood High School. The new principal immediately changed the focus of leadership at the school from a “facilities” focus to enhancing the teaching and learning environment for teachers and students. In January 2004, a new superintendent, who turned out to be very supportive of the initiatives of the new principal at Dogwood, was appointed.

The new principal addressed instruction, attendance, and discipline. He implemented the school improvement plan, which had been developed prior to his arrival by a district leadership team but was not being implemented. Teachers used achievement data to identify low-performing students for participation in intersession and remedial classes. Given excessive student absences (21 percent of students were absent at least 15 days in 2001–02), poor discipline, and declines in student achievement, the new principal in 2003–04 instituted an incentive program for students, including limited cash awards and traditional student recognition activities. As a result of the program, attendance increased and discipline improved. The school adopted a formal attendance plan in 2005–06. In 2006–07, 11 percent of students were absent at least 15 days. In 2005–06, to maintain a schoolwide focus on instruction, the principal and assistant principal conducted classroom observations daily on an informal basis, as well as three formal observations of each teacher annually using a protocol provided by the state department of education.

In 2000–01, the district began aligning the curriculum and changed the school to a year-round calendar, but it hardly monitored student achievement. In 2002–03, the district implemented a districtwide attendance policy. Parents of students absent 10 days were required to meet with the district attorney, a social worker, and a school representative and could be fined or jailed. The combination of principal and district reform efforts resulted in a climate of increased expectations for all students and of collaboration and support among school staff. The district provided weekly professional development workshops for all teachers on differentiated instruction, developing a high-performing learning community, classroom management, and on curriculum alignment with state content standards since 2003–04. It also created separate reading and language arts classes at Dogwood because it recognized that middle school students required additional reading instruction. The district relinquished to Dogwood the responsibility for developing the school budget and selecting professional development activities. In 2006–07, the district required mandatory Monday meetings for professional development in teaching reading to middle school students. Meetings included book studies on differentiated instruction and district presentations on curriculum guides, tools, and resources. The district shared assessment data with the school board, students, parents, community, and local press. For a chronology of critical events see Exhibit C.25.

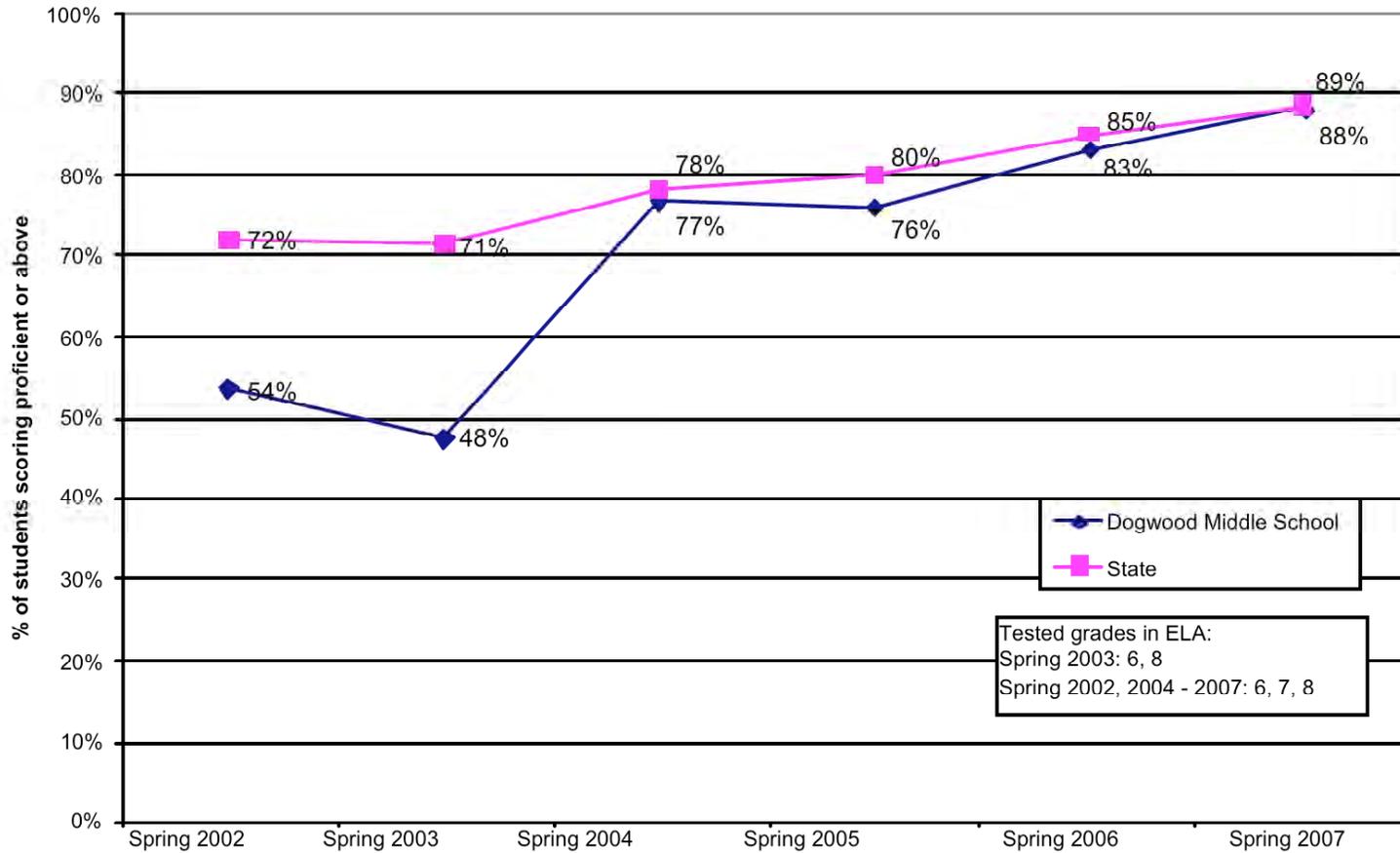
**Exhibit C.23
School and State Student Achievement (2002–07), Reading**



| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Enrollment | 359 | 364 | 357 | 343 | 336 | 339 |
| % FRPL(1) | 84 | 84 | 85 | 86 | 85 | 85 |
| % FRPL(2) | 44 | 45 | 46 | 48 | 50 | 50 |

FRPL (1) is school level; FRPL (2) is statewide. NOTE: Dooly is the only middle school in the district; hence there is no district trend line.

**Exhibit C.24
School and State Student Achievement (2002–07), English Language Arts**



| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Enrollment | 359 | 364 | 357 | 343 | 336 | 339 |
| % FRPL (1) | 84 | 84 | 85 | 86 | 85 | 85 |
| % FRPL (2) | 44 | 45 | 46 | 48 | 50 | 50 |

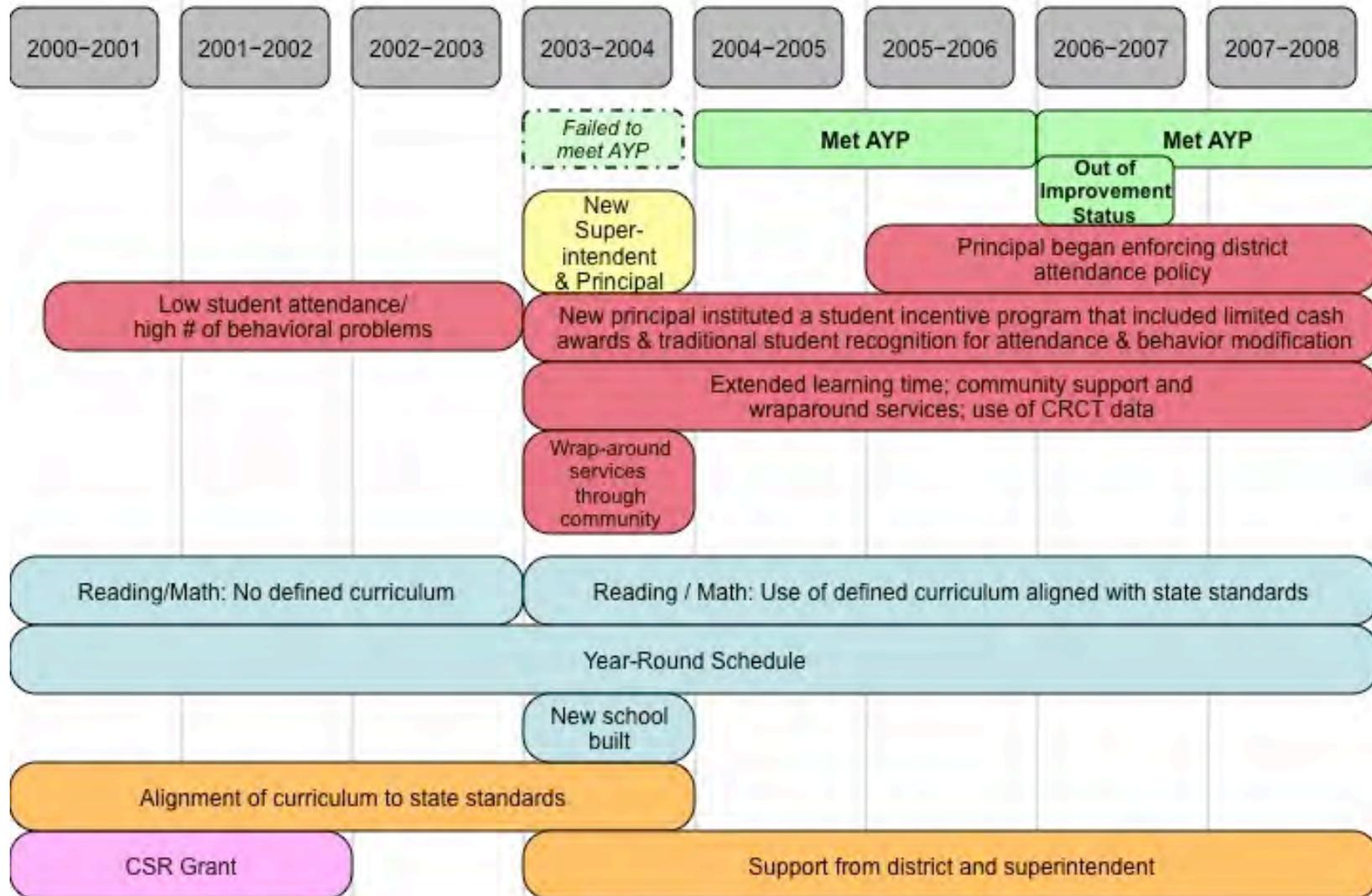
FRPL (1) is school level; FRPL (2) is statewide. NOTE: Dooly is the only middle school in the district; hence there is no district trend line.

**Exhibit C.25
School and State Student Achievement (2002–07), Mathematics**



FRPL (1) is school level; FRPL (2) is statewide. NOTE: Dooly is the only middle school in the district; hence there is no district trend line.

Exhibit C.26
Critical Events Chronology (2000–01 to 2007–08), Dogwood Middle School (6–8)



Martin Elementary School

Overview

Martin Elementary is a pre-K through 5 school in a northern city public school system. Located in a southern section of the city on a small peninsula, this school is somewhat isolated geographically. The school is also very close to a neighboring county. For the 2007–08 school year, enrollment was 425 students. Of these students, 41 percent are black, 39 percent white, and 16 percent Hispanic. Across the school district, approximately 90 percent of the students are black, 8 percent are white. Student mobility is constant, with more than one-third of the students entering and leaving the school during the year. Many properties near the school are rentals. Not too many years ago, most residents owned their homes. Safety concerns prevent the teachers from allowing the students to play on the school’s recently built playground. Drug dealing exists in the neighborhood, yet some respondents interviewed considered the school to be somewhat of a haven for its students. When a new principal arrived at the beginning of the 1999–2000 school year, he had to transform a dysfunctional school. There were nearly 2,000 office referrals. A culture of blame for low student achievement permeated the school. The school was on a list of the 10 worst schools for compliance with special education requirements. This brought added attention from a federal court monitor.

Achievement Pattern

From 2003 to 2007 the achievement levels in this school showed steady growth. Large gains in reading and math in 2004 were followed by continuous, though smaller improvements. The initial gain of 19 percentage points made the reading achievement level comparable to the district average, though still well below the state. Subsequent achievement gains were comparable to districtwide improvements (see Exhibit C.27). The pattern of math achievement was very similar (see Exhibit C.28). This school has met AYP every year in all achievement categories. AYP for attendance was met every year except for the 2005–06 school year.

This school was selected as a comparison school for another site in this study, Cooke. While achievement gains in Cooke substantially exceeded those shown for Martin through the data available at the time of sample selection (i.e., through spring 2005), Cooke dropped fairly substantially over the subsequent two years, while Martin achievement continued to grow. In retrospect, Cooke Elementary can be seen as a low-performing school that rose fairly dramatically (but then declined), while Martin has been able to sustain and continue its more gradual ascent.

This school experienced sharp demographic shifts from the 1999–2000 school year to the more recent school years. Total enrollment, racial composition, students eligible for the federal school lunch program, as well as students with disabilities have all fluctuated. In 1999–2000, the racial composition of the school was markedly different. At that time, the student population was 86 percent white, 12 percent black, and less than 1 percent Hispanic. By the 2004–05 school year, the percentage of black students increased by a factor of three; Hispanic students made up 9

percent of the enrollment, and white students decreased by 30 percentage points. At the same time, the percentage of students eligible for the federal school lunch program increased from 64 percent to 82 percent. The percentage of students with disabilities was 14.5 percent. Over the next three years, the percentage of Hispanic students doubled to 16.5 percent, while the number of black students continued to increase, and the number of white students continued to decrease. The percentages of poor students and of students with disabilities decreased slightly during this period.

School Activities

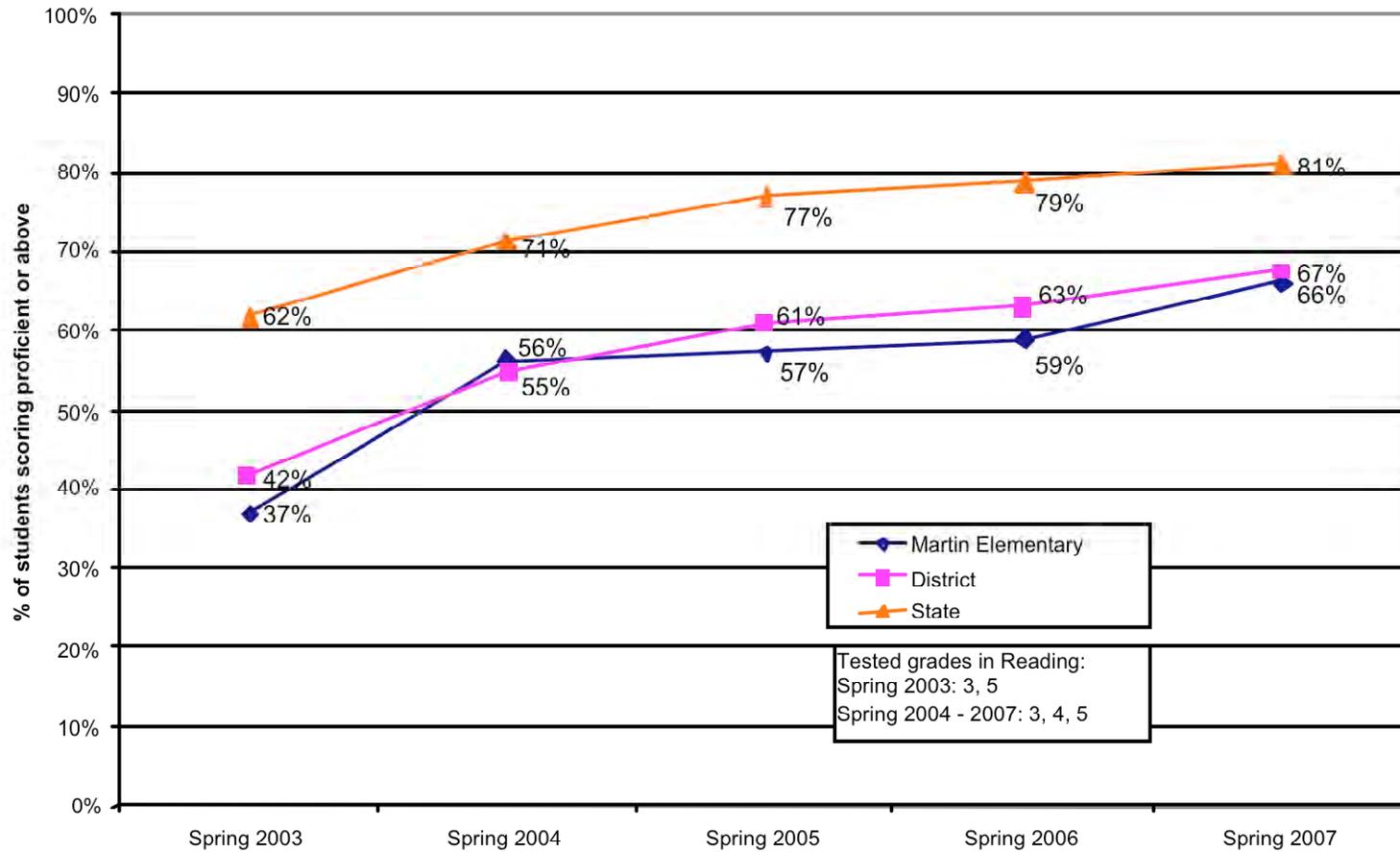
The principal in charge of this school during the CSR award period arrived for the 1999–2000 school year. After dealing with immediate student behavior problems, he began instituting new reforms for academic progress. By the 2001–02 school year, teachers had multiple years of experience with the Open Court curriculum and a better understanding of how to teach reading in grades K through 3. The Core Knowledge curriculum was implemented to improve instruction in grades 4 and 5. Project Achieve was implemented to improve student behavior. Other reforms during that year included the creation of an Instructional Technology Integration Program to introduce technology into teaching. With the direct participation of teachers, the school selected and implemented the Core Knowledge model. The Project Achieve behavioral intervention program was implemented also. More teachers began using technology, for which they received training. The principal implemented programs to make learning more interactive. At the same time, according to teachers, he created a learning community among staff by giving them authority for selecting new teachers and creating an environment in which risks and failure were acceptable. This self-described change-agent principal left the schools at the same time the CSR grant expired and accepted a position as a director of coaching, training, and school support with a school leadership development organization.

The fall of 2005 brought a new principal. There was some staff turnover that year also. The new principal selected all new hires, in contrast to the previous principal's policy of letting the school's teachers select new teachers. Technology improvements continued, so that all teachers had whiteboards and laptop computers for instructional use. To support a learning community environment, the principal rearranged the schedule to allow more common planning time. Collegiality was also supported through participation of all teachers on the School Improvement Team. Work on a subcommittee required analyzing relevant data and developing strategies for improvement. Writing became a priority when Basic Constructed Response (BCR) assignments were mandated by the district. In 2007–08, more scripted science and social studies curricula were mandated. Hence, Core Knowledge was phased out. Project Achieve was discontinued when the program teacher left the school. Also of note, the new voluntary state curriculum had a direct influence on the school. The former principal required the school to align its curriculum with the voluntary state curriculum. For the new principal, district policy directly influenced the school curriculum. Core Knowledge was required for science and social studies, while Scott Foresman was required for math.

Additional Facts

Beginning with the 2008–09 school year, this school will add sixth-grade students, thus becoming an extended elementary school. Additional grades will be added over the following two school years to make this a K–8 school. Overcrowding may be an issue.

**Exhibit C.27
School, District, and State Student Achievement (2003–07), Reading**

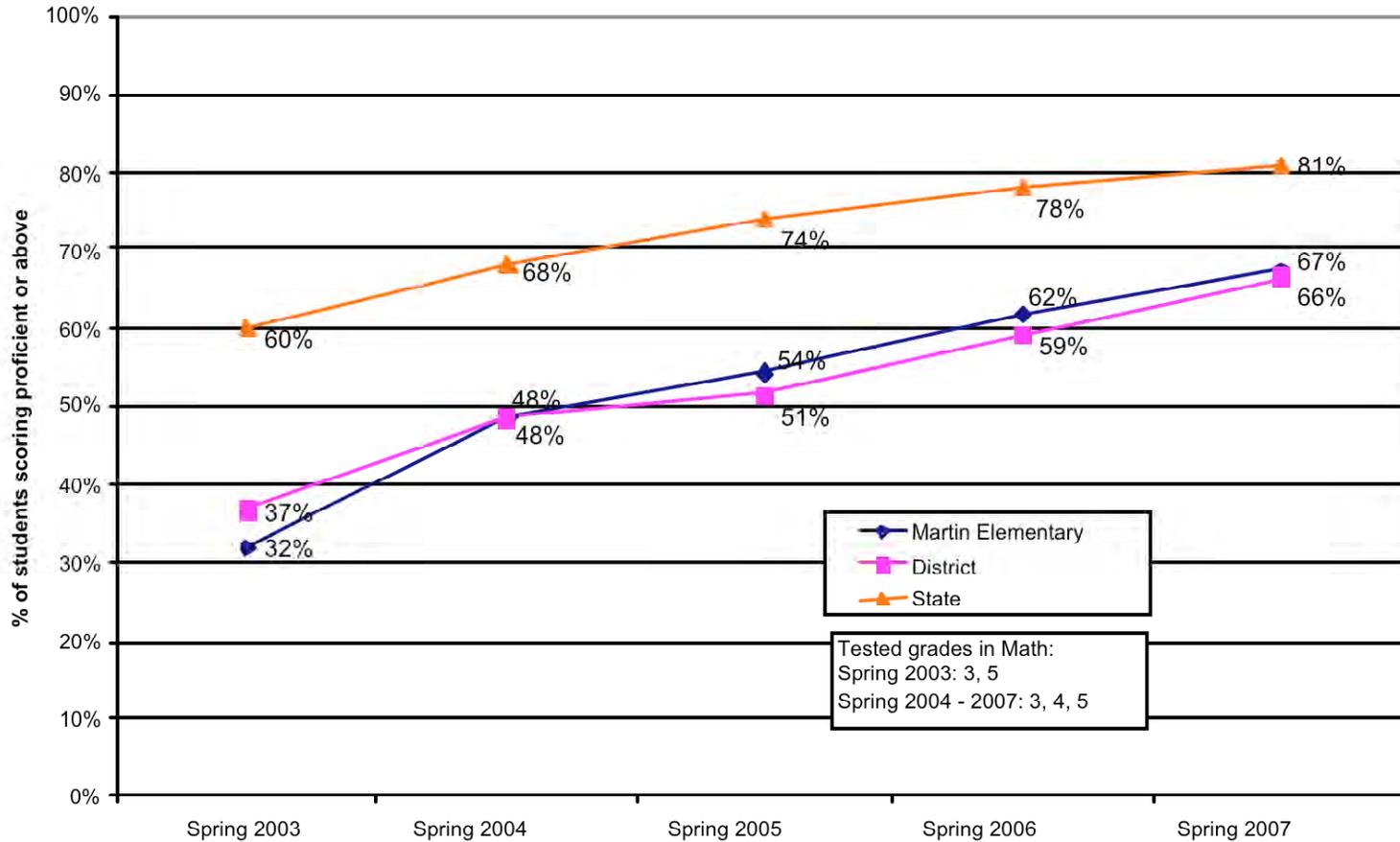


Tested grades in Reading:
Spring 2003: 3, 5
Spring 2004 - 2007: 3, 4, 5

| | Spring 2003 | Spring 2004 | Spring 2005 | Spring 2006 | Spring 2007 |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Enrollment | 457 | 395 | 423 | 471 | 461 |
| % FRPL (1) | 82 | 83 | 82 | 80 | 73 |
| % FRPL (2) | | 31 | 32 | 32 | 32 |

FRPL (1) is school level; FRPL (2) is statewide.

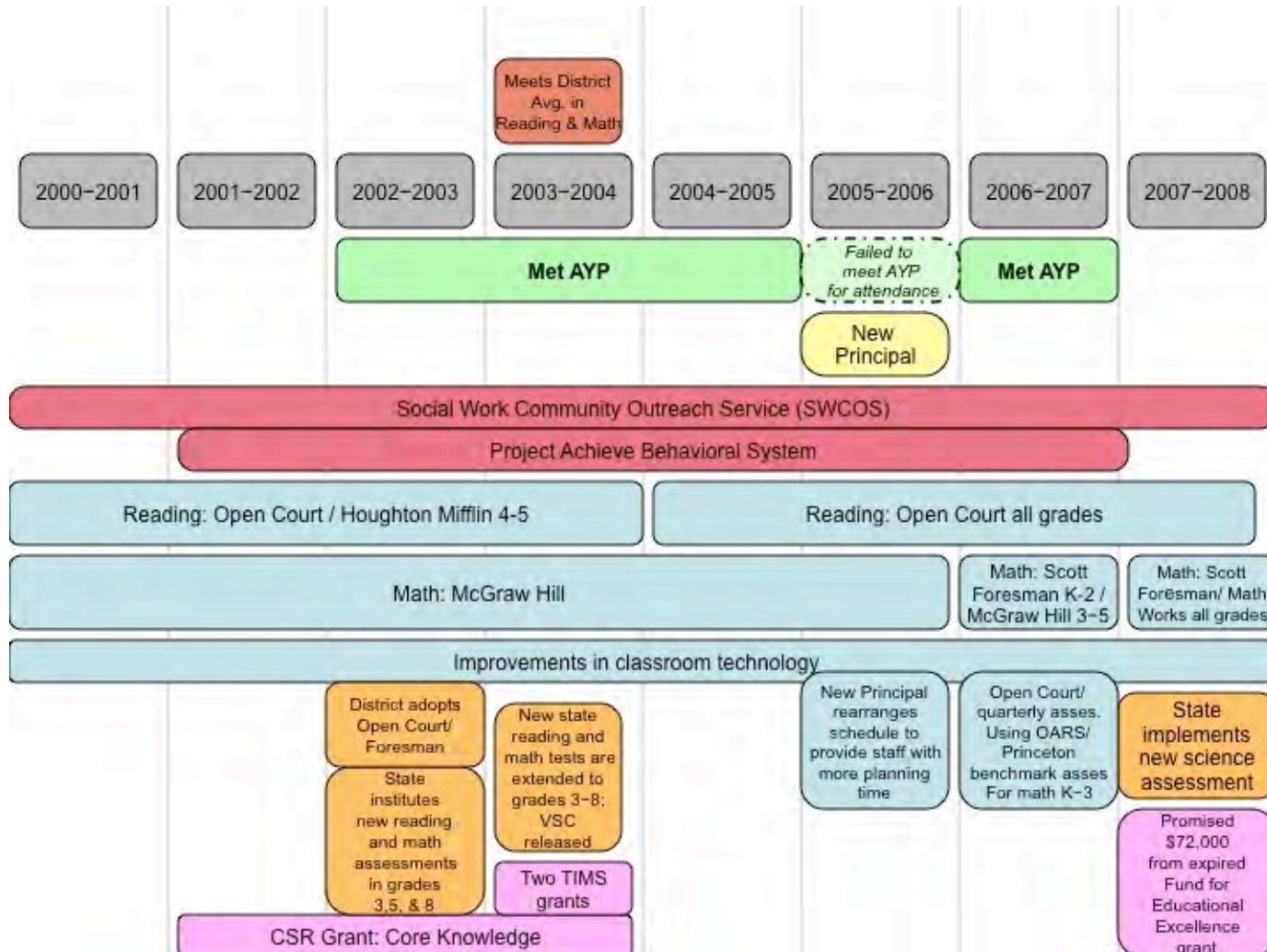
Exhibit C.28
School, District, and State Student Achievement (2003–07), Mathematics



| | Spring 2003 | Spring 2004 | Spring 2005 | Spring 2006 | Spring 2007 |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Enrollment | 457 | 395 | 423 | 471 | 461 |
| % FRPL (1) | 82 | 83 | 82 | 80 | 73 |
| % FRPL (2) | | 31 | 32 | 32 | 32 |

FRPL (1) is school level; FRPL (2) is statewide.

Exhibit C.29
Critical Events Chronology (2000–01 to 2007–08), Martin Elementary School (PK–5)



Chelsea Elementary School

Overview

Chelsea School (pre-K–8) is situated in a neighborhood that has gentrified over the last 10 years. Serving 278 students in 2007–08, Chelsea has changed drastically since the late 1990s, when it served over 1,000 students and had what interviewees referred to as “gang problems.” Chelsea enrolled 571 students in 2001–02 and had further enrollment declines in 2003–04 (of 28 percent) and 2004–05 (19 percent). Several interviewees noted that increased rents caused the declines, as couples without children replaced low-income families with children. Some families who moved out continued to send their children to Chelsea, but most did not. Through 2004–05, students were bused in from other neighborhoods. Teachers welcomed the end of busing, noting that other schools had been sending their lower-performing students. Between 2001 and 2007, the proportion of low-income students³² remained at or above 90 percent; the proportion of Hispanic students ranged from 83 to 90 percent, and English language learners ranged from 23 to 29 percent.

School leadership was remarkably stable. The new principal in 2007–08 had worked at Chelsea for 30 years, just previously serving as assistant principal. The previous principal spent over 30 years in the position. Teacher staffing was also stable, with average experience at least 13 years since 2000–01, though diminishing enrollment has compelled annual teacher reductions. As of the 2007–08 school year, Chelsea had 15 teachers.

Achievement Pattern

Chelsea demonstrated quick and dramatic achievement gains in both reading and mathematics between spring 2003 and 2007. From spring 2003 to 2005, the proportion of students meeting or exceeding state standards in reading increased by 30 percentage points to 63 percent (compared to a six-point gain at the district level and two-point gain at the state level), equaling the state-level proportion and exceeding the district-level proportion by 15 points (see Exhibit C.30). In mathematics, from 2003 to 2006, the proportion of students meeting or exceeding standards increased by 55 points to 80 percent (compared to 22-point and 10-point gains by the district and state, respectively), ultimately exceeding the district-level proportion by 16 points and nearly equaling the state level of 82 percent (see Exhibit C.31). Chelsea made adequate yearly progress (AYP) in 2005–06 and 2006–07, exiting program improvement status, after failing to make AYP since 2002–03. By district mandate, Chelsea became a magnet “cluster” school focused on mathematics and science in August 2003. Unlike typical magnets in the district, a “cluster” school has attendance boundaries and offers a programmatic theme in collaboration with several other schools in its neighborhood. Families outside of attendance boundaries may apply for openings not filled by neighborhood students.

³² Students eligible for the federal lunch program, living in institutions for neglected or delinquent children, supported with public funds in foster homes, or from families receiving public aid.

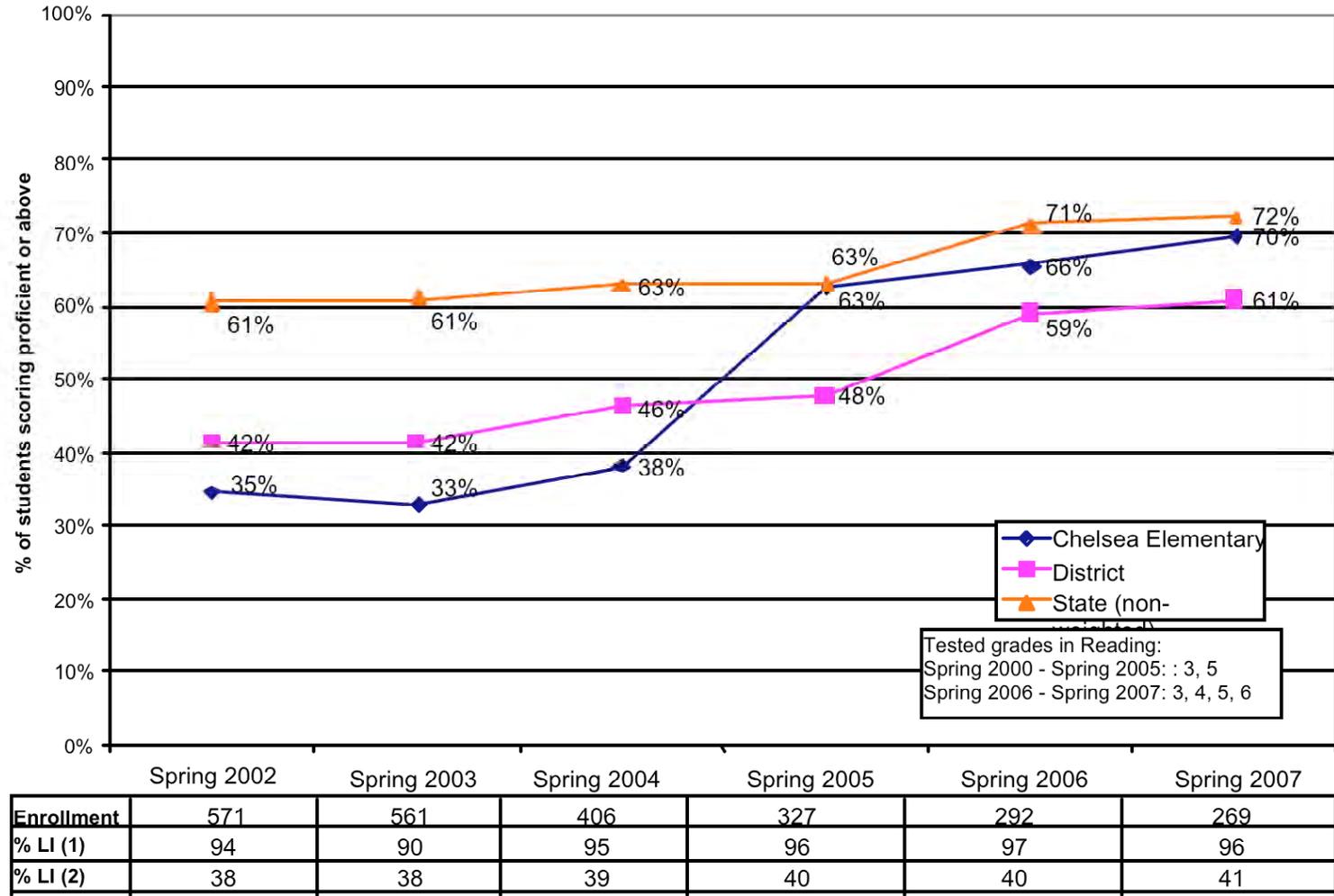
School Activities

Beginning in 2001–02, Chelsea began working closely with a community partner to provide extended day learning programs and increase parent involvement at the school. These efforts were sparked by parent concerns that students did not have a “safe haven” during after-school hours. Chelsea received two major grants, a five-year district grant (which was later extended for a sixth year) and two federal 21st-Century Community Learning grants (in 2002–03 and 2005–06, the latter for \$100,000), both to fund before- and after-school programs. These programs provided students with intensive tutoring, remediation, and enrichment and were predominantly staffed by teachers. Funds were also used to sponsor quarterly parent events—a reading night, a math and science night, a sports event, and “Kermes,” a Mexican tradition celebrating student completion of a school year. These events still take place at Chelsea. Parents are also members of the school council established in the 1980s, which includes the principal, two teachers, six parents, and two community members. The school council approves the School Improvement Plan and school expenditures. A parent group, facilitated by the community partner, meets weekly and provides classroom volunteers, helps with grading papers, assists English learners, and helps plan family events. Parents also take computer classes at Chelsea once a week. Parents interviewed expressed satisfaction with the current principal—indicating she maintained the same leadership style as the prior principal—and the level of communication from the school.

In 2001–02, Chelsea also received a federal GEAR UP grant, funded through 2006–07. Staff used funds to provide teacher professional development in analysis of student data. Chelsea also hired a professor from a nearby university to consult and work with teachers on data analysis and use of student data to guide improvement efforts. In 2002–03, the principal and assistant principal decided to focus on teacher quality by hiring “more qualified” teachers as teachers who were not in line with their reform plans left. They also provided more ongoing supervision, including weekly meetings and formal walkthroughs. In 2003–04, Chelsea received a three-year Reading First grant and introduced a new reading program by mandate of the district Area Instructional Office. In 2005–06, Chelsea adopted new mathematics curricula—Everyday Math (K–5) and Connected Math (6–8). However, even though the school adopted pre-packaged curricula, the principal gave teachers individual flexibility on how to teach reading and mathematics, so long as student achievement remained high.

The district, through the Area Instructional Office, provided a mathematics coach, two literacy coaches, and two English learner specialists who conducted workshops and modeled lessons for teachers. Coaches and specialists visited the school at least biweekly. In 2005–06, district coaches provided professional development on use of the new mathematics programs. They conducted formal walkthroughs to ensure that curricula were being implemented, although one teacher noted using the adopted mathematics curriculum only when observed. For a chronology of critical events, see Exhibit C.32.

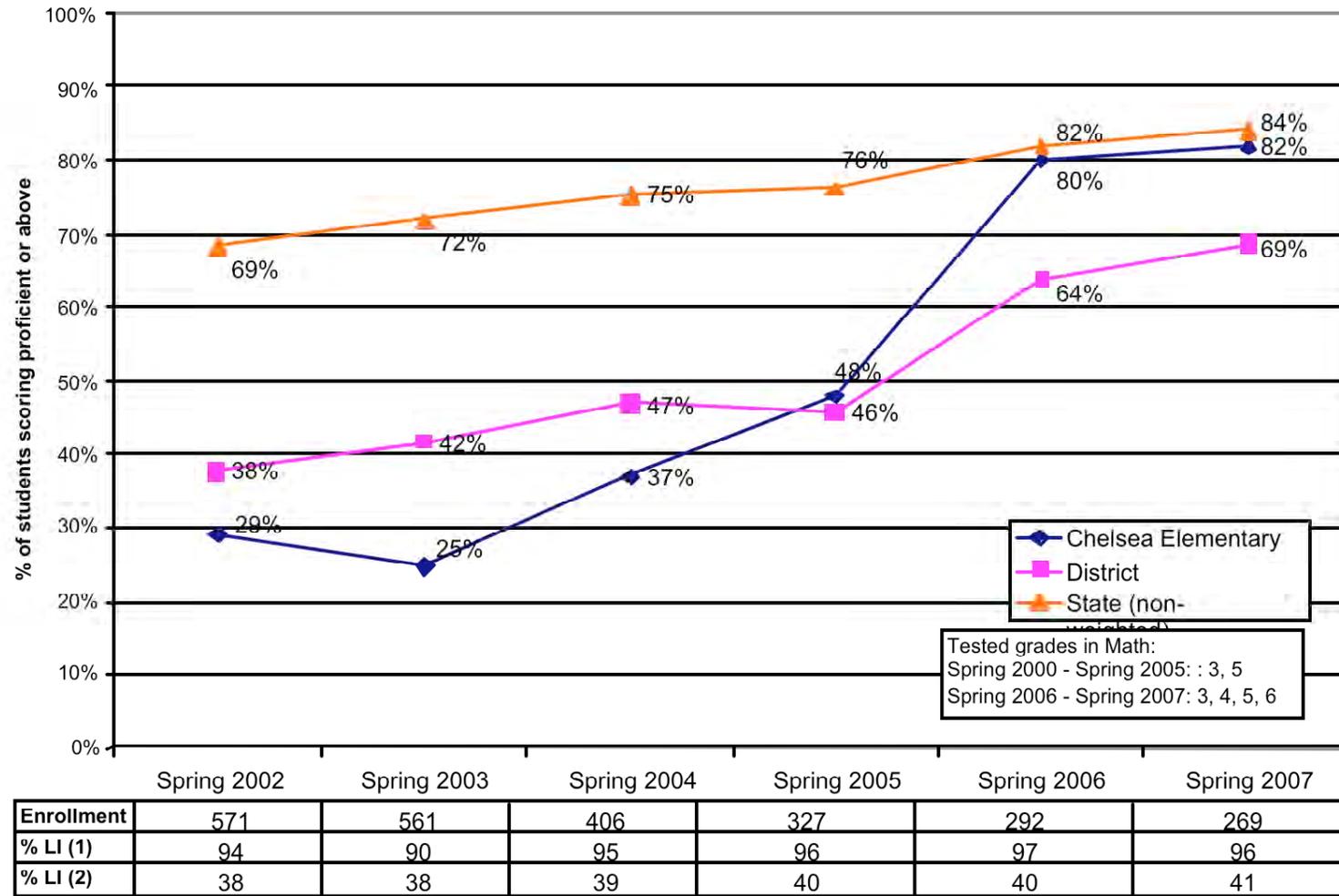
Exhibit C.30
School, District, and State Student Achievement (2002–07), Reading



State trend line uses non-weighted statewide averages. % LI (1) is low-income students for the schools; % LI (2) is for the state.

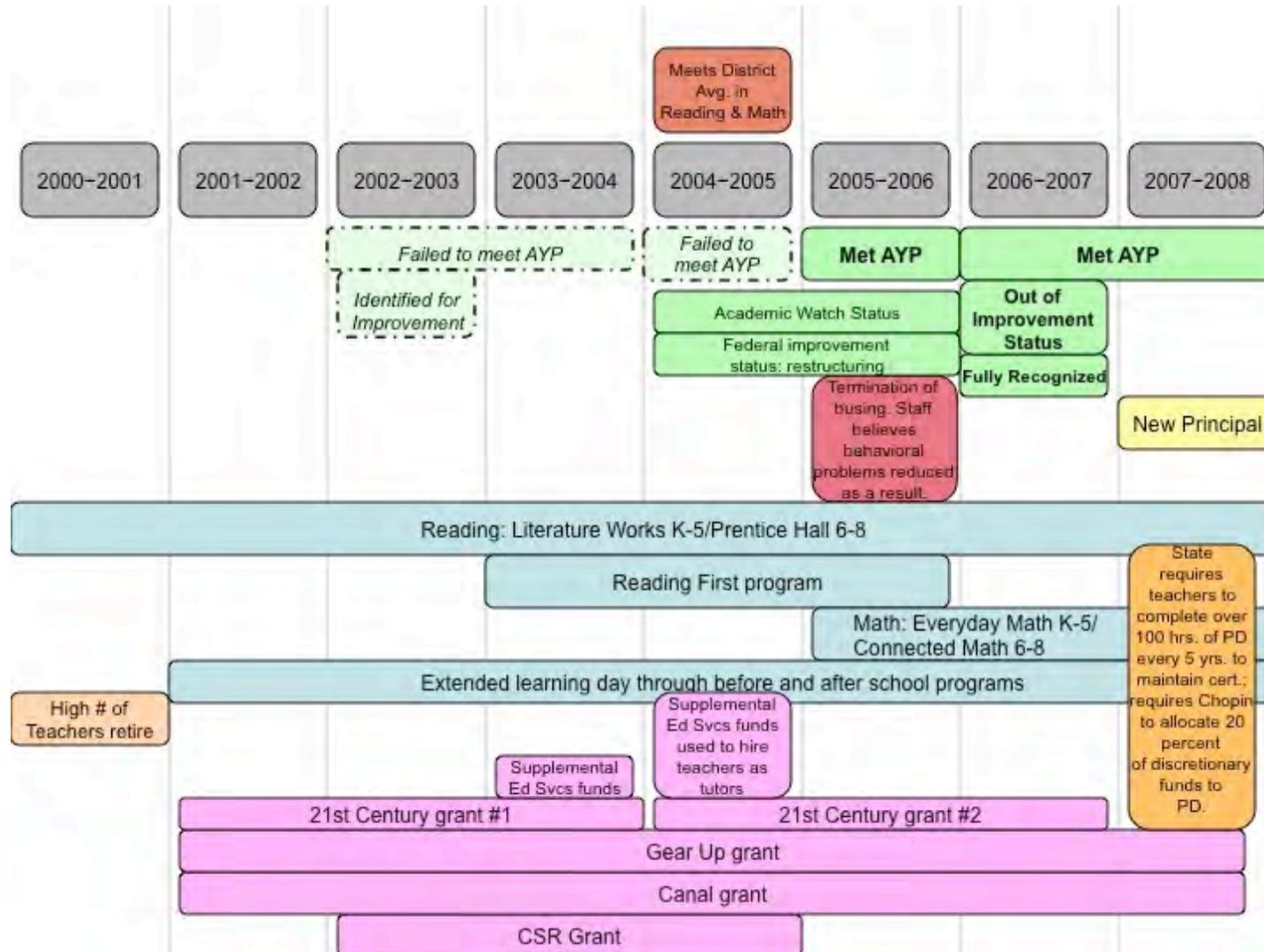
| | Spring 2002 | Spring 2003 | Spring 2004 | Spring 2005 | Spring 2006 | Spring 2007 |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Enrollment | 571 | 561 | 406 | 327 | 292 | 269 |
| % LI (1) | 94 | 90 | 95 | 96 | 97 | 96 |
| % LI (2) | 38 | 38 | 39 | 40 | 40 | 41 |

Exhibit C.31
School, District, and State Student Achievement (2002–07), Mathematics



State trend line uses non-weighted statewide averages. % LI (1) is low-income students for the schools; % LI (2) is for the state.

Exhibit C.32
Critical Events Chronology (2000–01 to 2007–08), Chelsea Elementary School (PK–8)



Cooke Elementary School

Overview

Cooke is a K–5 elementary school in the located in the southwestern section of a city. The school’s neighborhood is both racially and economically diverse. Although the vast majority of residents in the surrounding ZIP Code have a high school level education or less, there are some college graduates, including a few with advanced degrees. Grants are available to encourage small business development, and incentives are available to attract new residents. As of the 2007–08 school year, the school enrolls approximately 300 students. More than 90 percent are eligible for the federal school lunch program. Slightly more than half are black (56 percent), one quarter are white (25 percent), and 9 percent are Hispanic. The percentage of black students is much lower than the overall district rate of 88 percent. One of the community partners indicated that many of the students have families in which someone is afflicted with substance abuse problems, and “a lot of the students are living with their grandparents because their parents are drug-addicted.” Drug dealers and prostitutes transact their business in the neighborhood around the school.

Achievement Pattern

The net increase in the percentages of students scoring at the proficient level or higher was 18 percentage points in both reading and math from 2003 to 2007. However, the patterns are best described as dramatic increases followed by at least partial decline. In reading, gains over two years raised the percent proficient by 36 points and virtually identical with the state level. But this increase was followed by a 20-point decline over the next two years, bringing the school’s performance level well below the state average (see Exhibit C.33). Similarly, in math, two years of large gains were followed by another two of sharp declines (see Exhibit C.34). The school made adequate yearly progress (AYP) in the first four years represented in the exhibits. At the end of the 2003–04 school year, it exited the state school improvement process. The school did not make AYP in 2007 due to poor performance among students with disabilities and students eligible for the federal lunch program.

This school experienced some demographic shifts in recent years. Since 2002–03, the percentage of Hispanic students has more than doubled. Also, the percentage of black students increased by 6 percentage points, while the percentage of white students decreased by 9 percentage points. Students with disabilities have consistently made up 15 to 18 percent of all the school’s students. This exceeds the district-level average of 13 percent for elementary schools.

School Activities

According to almost everyone interviewed during the site visit, the leadership of the school principal was the major influence on this school’s improvement. Upon her arrival in fall 2002, the principal quickly established herself as the school leader. Policies and practices, such as how to enter and exit the school, were put in place to improve student behavior. A “Very Good Store”

was established, so students could redeem credits for good behavior. Because parent behavior had been an issue, parents were no longer permitted to roam the halls at will. These initial actions helped to make the school environment more conducive to learning.

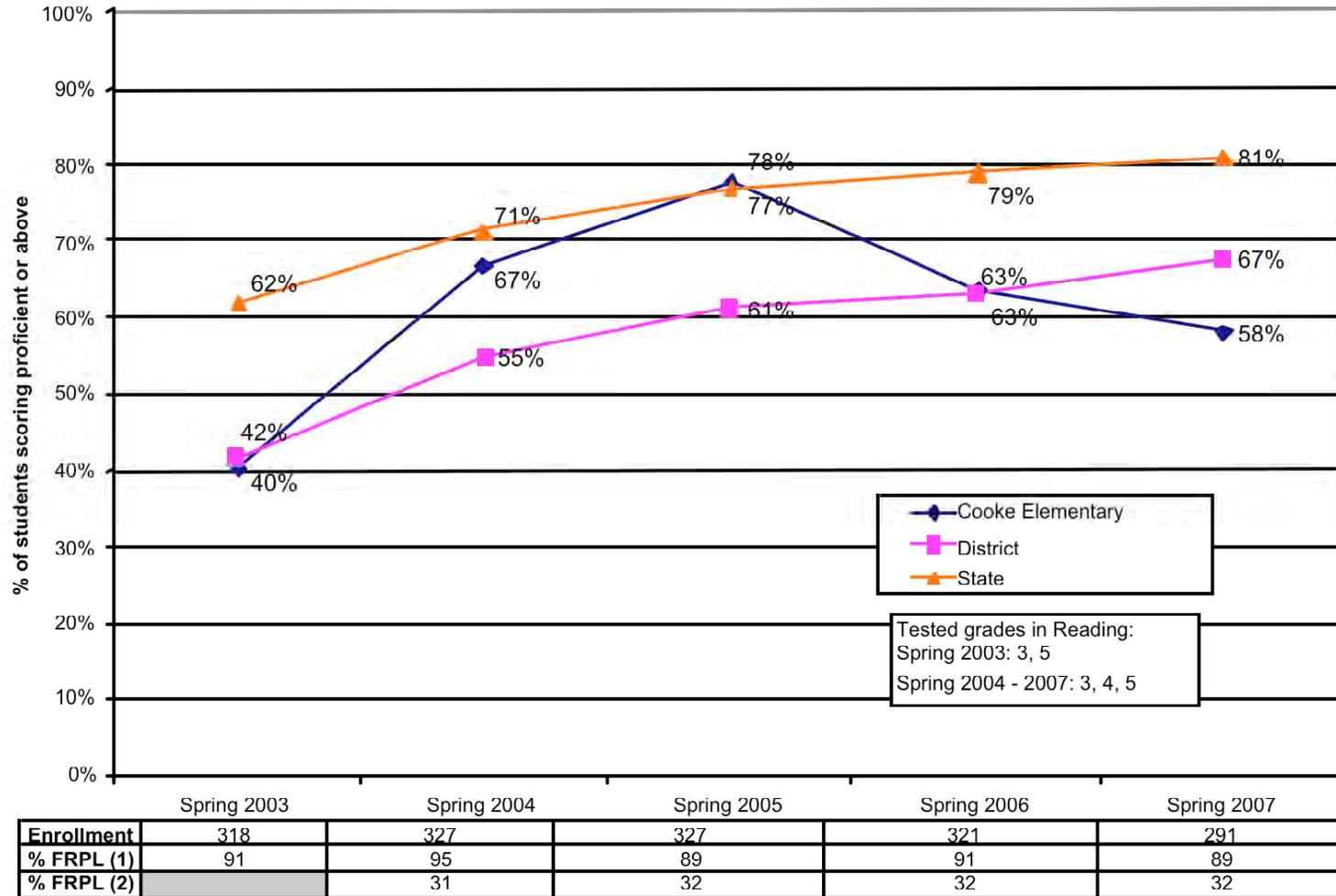
The principal established herself as the instructional leader through her presence in the classroom and by improving the skills of her teachers. Her methods included routine classroom walkthroughs with feedback and an emphasis on data-driven decision-making. The main source of information was the attendance and achievement data book that each teacher kept on his or her class. The principal required the data book and compelled the teachers to have current information and to regularly analyze it.

Teachers were supported and a climate was created in which teachers could openly exchange ideas and seek support or guidance from each other as well as from the principal. While it was clear that the principal was the ultimate decision maker, all teachers had input into the operation of the school. All teachers served on a School Improvement Plan committee. A clear focus on students by the administration and staff guides the school.

For its curriculum, the school used Direct Instruction for reading and math through the 2005–06 school year. Professional development support from the district declined after the district switched from Direct Instruction. A teacher-led study at the school found a lack of alignment between the curriculum and the voluntary state curriculum, so a change request was made to the district administration. After a one-year delay, Open Court Reading (OCR) and Scott Foresman Math (SFM) were implemented for the 2006–07 school year. Teachers who had been in the school more than five years had a tougher time with the shift because they had become accustomed to the scripted nature of Direct Instruction. In the conversion to Open Court and Scott Foresman, teachers received professional development over the summer for Open Court and used professional development days during the year for Scott Foresman. Also, teachers participated in after-school professional development in the new curricula; the principal funded this with Title I funds.

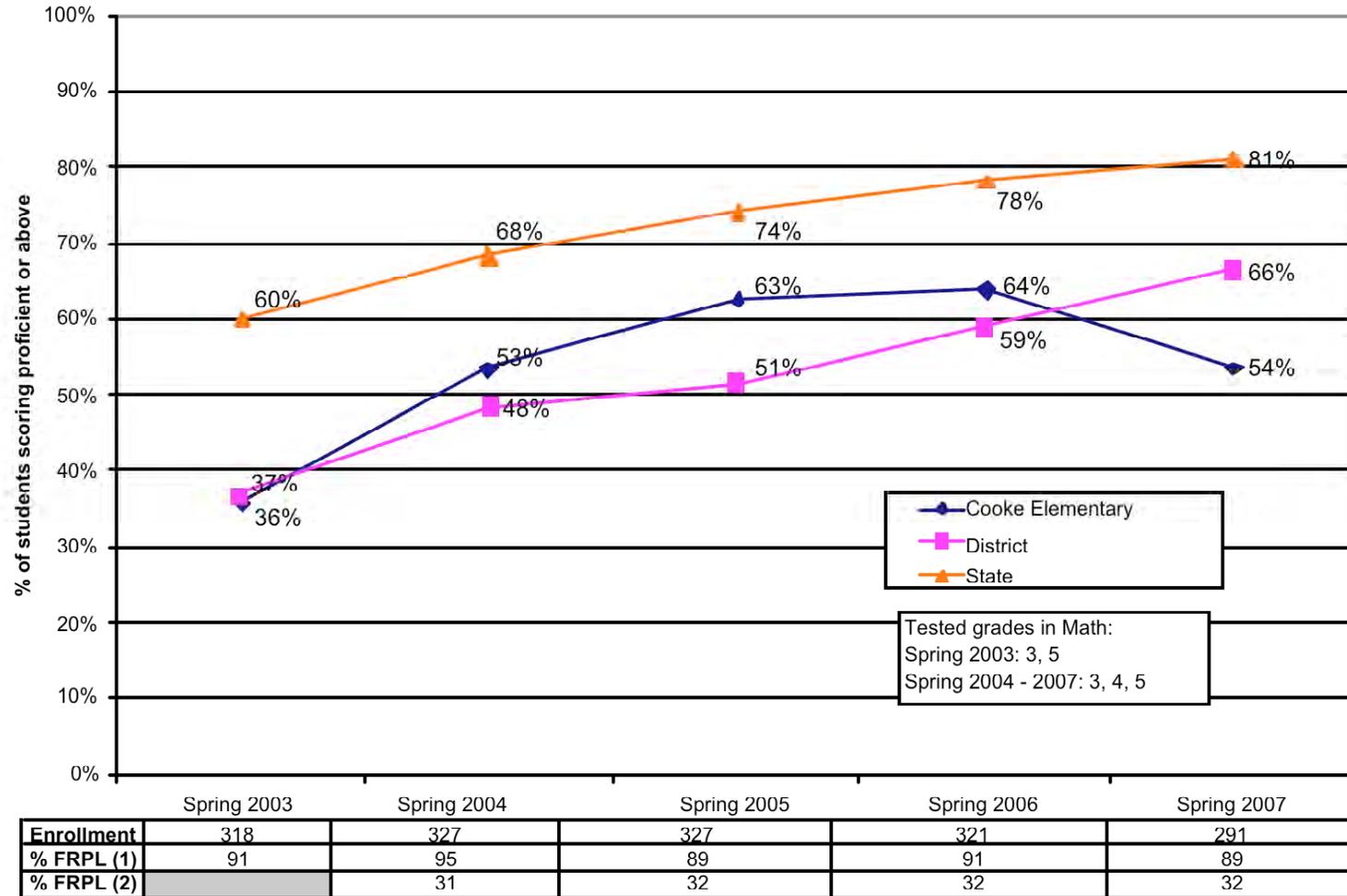
Teacher turnover tended to be low, except for two time periods. Approximately one-third of the teachers left the school at the same time the principal arrived. The principal described her new teachers as “eager to learn at every moment.” Other notable staff changes occurred in 2006–07 when three new teachers came to this school, and the school had two fewer classroom teachers than in previous school years. The decline of two teachers in this small school represented 10 percent of the classroom teachers. For a chronology of critical events see Exhibit C.35.

Exhibit C.33
School, District, and State Student Achievement (2003–07), Reading



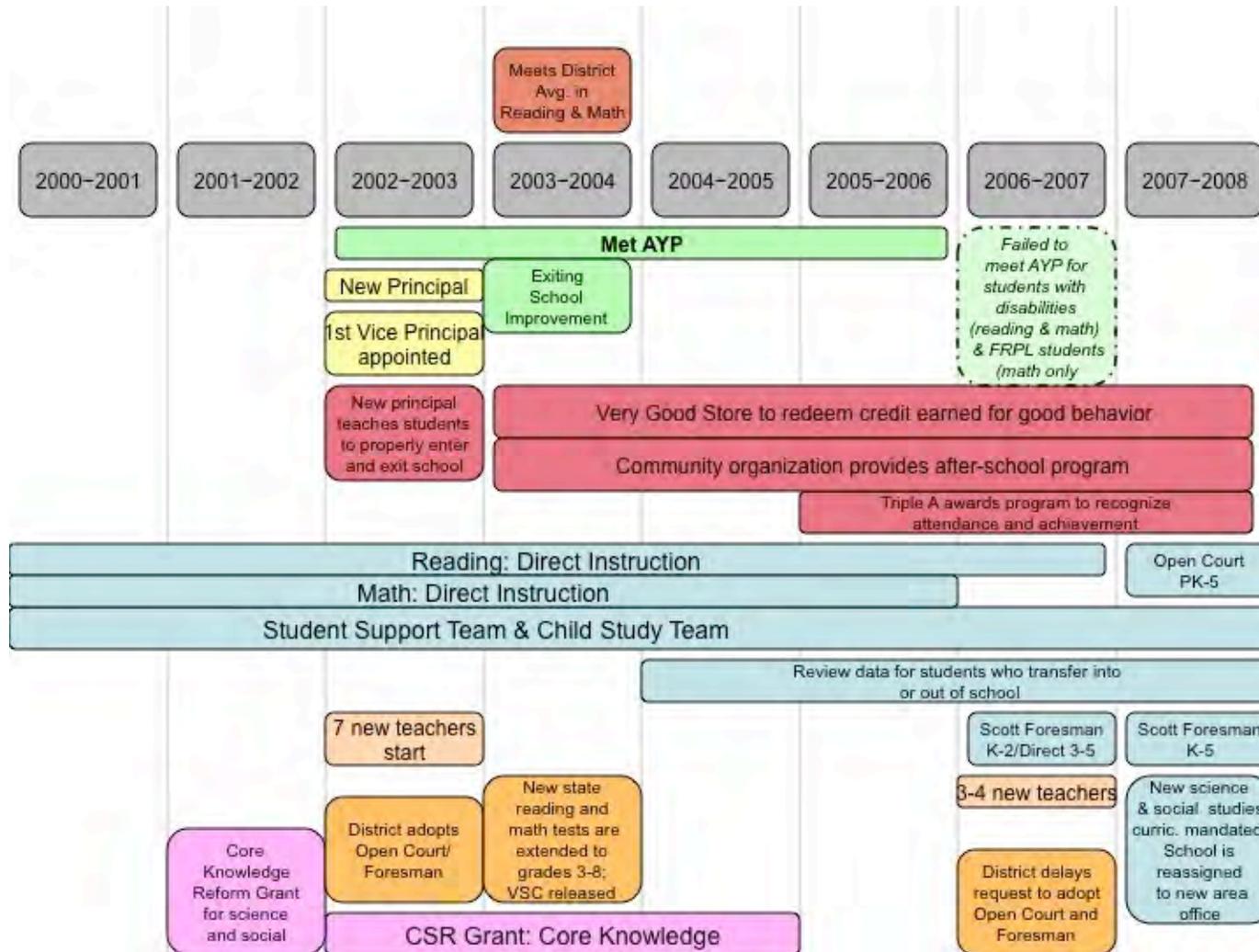
FRPL (1) is school level; FRPL (2) is statewide.

Exhibit C.34
School, District, and State Student Achievement (2003–07), Mathematics



FRPL (1) is school level; FRPL (2) is statewide.

Exhibit C.35
Critical Events Chronology (2000–01 to 2007–08), Cooke Elementary School (PK–5)





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