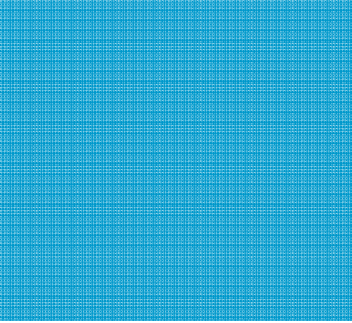


**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:
ROCHESTER CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT ENGLISH LANGUAGE
ARTS 4TH GRADE ASSESSMENT**



GUILLERMO MONTES, Ph.D. ¹
MAY, 2000

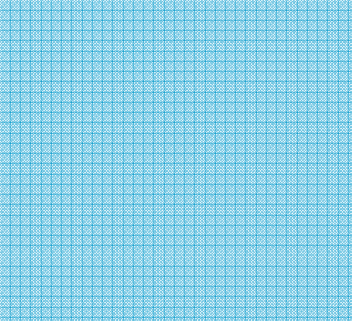


children's institute
Strengthening social and emotional health

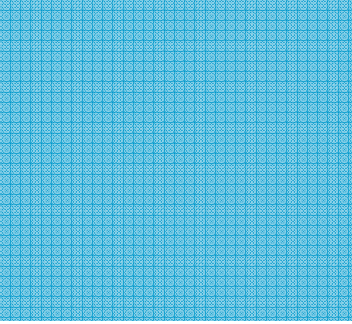


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

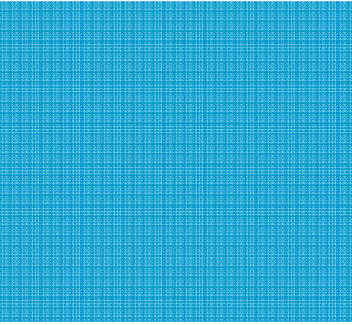
The data used was a retrospective cohort of all city school district students who took the English Language Arts (ELA) 4th grade State test in January of 1999.




We created an additional outcome variable known as the value added that measures the difference in national percentiles between the ELA 4 reading subtest score and a previous score (often 3rd grade or 1st grade reading scores). To compare across tests we used only the reading subtest of the ELA 4. Value added tells us whether the children, classroom, or school improves or declines over time compared to the national norms. Value added is more resilient to the influence of non-school factors because *stable* influences in the life of the child (e.g., learning style, parental expectations) influence every assessment but not the improvement or decline across assessments. Obviously, non-school transient factors (e.g., divorce, illness) influence both the performance in individual tests and the value added. Therefore, value added mitigates but does not eliminate the influence of non-school unobserved factors on outcome measures.



Overall picture



The average first grade reading performance of the children who took the ELA 4 in 1999 was good by any standard. Their performance in the ELA4, however, evidenced a decline in percentile scores for most of the children taking both tests. On average, RCSD failed to add positive value during the intervening two and half years. For the not retained, general education students the value added was a loss of 7.8 percentiles.



Students, who were high achievers in first grade, are Black or Hispanic and come from poverty backgrounds are the ones most likely to decline. Without targeting a prevention program to avoid the decline of high achievers RCSD is unlikely to substantially improve its overall percentage of passing students in the ELA 4 state test. In fact, if RCSD were able to maintain the competitive position of its students at the original 1st grade level, it would have had 31 % of students in 3rd state quartile and, 22% of students in the top state quartile in the ELA 4 reading subtest. Such results would place RCSD in the category of a very successful urban district.

Because RCSD has a high level of concentration of both minority students and poverty levels, the strategy to prevent decline must

be particularly successful in preventing poor, minority high achievers from declining.

Note: Reference T00-601

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¹Thanks to A. Dirk Hightower, Andrew MacGowan III, Ann Brown and Lauri Brugger for comments on previous drafts.

