



The Performance of Historically Underachieving Groups of Students in South Carolina Elementary and Middle Schools: Answering the Call to Action

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The achievement gaps among demographic groups of students have been described extensively (Jencks and Phillips, 1998). The focus in many of these studies is on historically underachieving groups of students (members of racial minority groups and students in poverty). Reducing achievement gaps between student groups by raising the scores of lower scoring members of those groups is recognized as a necessary component of efforts to raise overall educational levels.

In 2003 the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) issued a report on the achievement gaps revealed in the 2002 Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT) data, and in 2004 a second report based on 2003 PACT data was issued (EOC, 2004). The reports published in 2003 and 2004 reported the size of the achievement gaps and recognized schools which were closing those gaps, and the 2004 report presented a call to action listing actions which needed to be taken to reduce the achievement gaps in all South Carolina elementary and middle schools. This report continues the previous studies by analyzing the 2004 PACT data and provides an update of progress toward fulfilling the call to action made a year ago.

What is the achievement gap?

The achievement gap is often described in terms of differential performance by different student demographic groups on state or national achievement tests. For example, a finding from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is that the performance of White students exceeds that of African-American students, and the performance of students living above the poverty line exceeds that of students living in poverty (Grissmer, Flanagan, and Williamson, 1998; Hedges and Nowell, 1998).

A primary goal for education reform is to close the achievement gaps among demographic groups by raising the performance of all groups, with the expectation that the lower scoring groups must improve more rapidly than the higher scoring groups to “catch up.” The gap is described in terms of the target group (the lower-scoring demographic group) and the comparison group (the higher-scoring group). The target groups are members of historically underachieving demographic groups such as African-American or Hispanic students or students living in poverty, while the comparison groups include White students and students having more affluent families. The difference in achievement between the target and comparison groups at various performance levels (on PACT, these are the Basic, Proficient, or Advanced performance levels) is the achievement gap. Reducing the gap can be accomplished in two ways. Both the target and comparison groups can be poorly performing, resulting in small gaps but low achievement for all. Or, the achievement of both target and comparison groups can be raised to a similar high level. The latter is the desirable outcome, and the approach South Carolina educators are pursuing.

The studies

EOC staff studied the 2003-2004 performance of elementary and middle school students on PACT English language arts (ELA) and mathematics in grades three through eight. The performance was studied of African-American, Hispanic, and White students, and of students participating in the federal free/reduced price lunch program and students who pay for lunch. The target groups were African-American and Hispanic students and students participating in the free/reduced lunch program. The comparison groups were White students and students not participating in the lunch program (pay lunch). A breakdown of the numbers and percentages of students belonging to these demographic groups in the PACT data used for this analysis revealed that approximately 55% of the 306,506 students whose data were studied were White, 42% were African-American, and 3% were Hispanic. Approximately 54% of the students received free or reduced price lunches, while 46% of the students

had sufficiently high family incomes that they were not eligible to participate in the federal lunch program.

There were large differences among the ethnic groups in their participation in the free/reduced lunch program, which reflects differences among the groups in the extent of poverty in their communities. For example, 81% of African-American and 76% of Hispanic students participated in the free/reduced lunch program compared to 32% of White students. Two-thirds of all the students receiving free or reduced price lunch are African-American or Hispanic, and one-third are White. On the other hand, only 20% of the students who were not eligible to participate in the free/reduced lunch program (pay lunch) because of their family incomes were African-American or Hispanic, while 80% of the pay lunch students were White.

The PACT achievement levels studied were the percentages of students in the target and comparison groups scoring Basic or above (Basic, Proficient, or Advanced) and percentages scoring Proficient or higher (Proficient or Advanced) on the PACT English language arts (ELA) and Math tests administered in spring 2004.

We also identified a group of schools that were closing the achievement gap for at least one of the target groups in at least one subject area. These schools provide examples of educational practices that can be encouraged and implemented in other schools.

Results from the PACT study

Data for the study came from two primary sources: 2004 PACT test results for demographic groups published on the SC Department of Education (SDE) Web site (www.myscschools.com); and the original 2004 PACT test data files. The 2004 PACT results reported on the SDE web site are from students who were attending the same school on both the 45th day and on the first day of testing; these data also include data from students with disabilities tested at a lower grade level than their nominal grade based on age (off-level testing).

PACT Achievement Gaps in 2004

The data analysis is presented first at the statewide level for five demographic groups: African-American students; Hispanic students; White students; students participating in the federal free/reduced price lunch program (free/reduced or subsidized meals); and students not participating in the federal lunch program (full-pay meals). The analyses are presented for ELA percent Basic or above; ELA percent Proficient or Advanced; Math percent Basic or above; and Math percent Proficient or Advanced.

The statewide results for the 2002, 2003, and 2004 PACT ELA and Math administrations are listed in Table 1, and the achievement gaps are listed in Table 2.

Table 1
2002, 2003, and 2004 PACT Results By Demographic Group

Demographic Group	ELA						Math					
	Percent Basic or Above			Percent Proficient or Advanced			Percent Basic or Above			Percent Proficient or Advanced		
	2002	2003	2004	2002	2003	2004	2002	2003	2004	2002	2003	2004
All Students	74.7	70.5	75.2	31.2	27.3	33.4	68.2	73.8	75.9	28.6	29.6	31.8
White	84.8	81.1	84.9	42.9	37.8	44.4	80.4	84.9	85.8	40.2	41.7	43.9
African-American	61.2	57.2	62.8	15.3	13.6	18.7	51.6	59.4	62.9	12.7	13.4	15.5
Hispanic	NA	NA	61.6	NA	NA	22.5	NA	NA	65.4	NA	NA	21.6
Free/Reduced Lunch	63.3	58.9	64.8	16.7	14.6	20.3	55.4	63.0	66.1	15.2	16.1	18.5
Pay Lunch	86.9	83.5	86.3	46.4	41.4	47.3	81.8	85.9	86.5	42.8	44.5	46.1

NA - Not Available

Source: SC Department of Education

The data in Table 1 indicate that pay lunch students have the highest scores in all three years. The percentages of students scoring Proficient or Advanced are considerably lower than the percentages scoring Basic or above for all groups.

The data in Table 1 also show that PACT ELA and Math performance increased for all groups in 2004 compared to 2003. ELA performance, which dropped in 2003, rose back to 2002 levels in 2004. ELA gains in 2004 at both the Basic or above and the Proficient or Advanced levels were substantial for all groups, especially for African-American and free/reduced lunch students. The 2004 gains in Math at the Basic or above level were smaller than seen in ELA, especially for White and pay lunch students, with modest gains for Math Proficient or Advanced performance for all groups.

The achievement gaps among the groups listed in Table 2 below were calculated by subtracting the performance of the target groups (African-American, Hispanic, and free/reduced lunch) from that of the comparison groups (White and pay lunch). Since the comparison groups score higher than the target groups, the differences are positive. For example, the percentage of White students scoring Basic or above in ELA was 23.6 percentage points higher than African-American students in 2002, 23.9 percentage points higher in 2003, and 22.1 percentage points higher in 2004. The gaps in 2004 ranged from 20.4% (Math percent Basic or above for White vs. Hispanic students and for free/reduced vs. pay lunch students) to 28.4% (Math percent Proficient or Advanced, White vs. African-American students). Among the eight possible comparisons of 2004 and 2003 gaps (comparisons involving Hispanic students were not available for the 2003 data), all the gaps at the Basic or above levels for ELA and Math declined in 2004. However, three of the four gaps at the Proficient or Advanced levels (ELA White vs. African-American; ELA pay lunch vs. free/reduced lunch; and Math White vs. African-American) were larger in 2004 than in 2003, and only one gap (Math pay vs. free/reduced lunch) was smaller.

Table 2
2002, 2003, and 2004 PACT Achievement Gaps Among Demographic Groups

Comparison Group – Target Group	ELA						Math					
	Percent Basic or Above			Percent Proficient or Advanced			Percent Basic or Above			Percent Proficient or Advanced		
	2002	2003	2004	2002	2003	2004	2002	2003	2004	2002	2003	2004
White African-American	23.6	23.9	22.1↓	27.6	24.2	25.7↑	28.8	25.5	22.9↓	27.5	28.3	28.4↑
White Hispanic	NA	NA	23.3	NA	NA	21.9	NA	NA	20.4	NA	NA	22.3
Pay Lunch - Free/Reduced Lunch	23.6	24.6	21.5↓	29.7	26.8	27.0↑	26.4	22.9	20.4↓	27.6	28.4	27.6↓

NA = not available

↑ = gap increased from 2003

↓ = gap decreased from 2003

The achievement gaps for 2002, 2003, and 2004 are also displayed in Figures 1 – 4 for all groups but Hispanic students (gap data for Hispanic students were not available in 2002 and 2003). Figures 1 and 2 present the data on the gaps in the percentages of students scoring at the Basic or above levels on PACT ELA and Math, respectively. In PACT ELA Basic or above (Figure 1), the sizes of the achievement gaps among the target and comparison groups were similar each year studied. The gaps increased slightly in 2003 compared to 2002, but then decreased in 2004 so the 2004 gaps are slightly lower than those observed in 2002. Minimal progress in reducing the gaps in ELA at the Basic or above levels has been achieved since 2002.

In contrast, progress in reducing the gaps in PACT Math performance at the Basic or above levels has been consistent and encouraging since 2002 (Figure 2). However, gaps between White and African-American students, while lower each year studied, remain consistently larger than gaps between pay and free/reduced lunch students.

As shown in Figures 3 and 4, the achievement gaps observed at the Proficient or Advanced levels in PACT ELA and Math, respectively, are larger than those at the Basic or above performance levels for both tests. Further, the gaps in PACT ELA increased slightly in 2004 compared to 2003, although they remain smaller than the gaps observed in 2002 (Figure 3). In PACT ELA Proficient or Advanced, the gaps between pay and free/reduced lunch students are slightly larger than between White and African-American students, although in 2004 the increase in the size of the gap between White and African-American students compared to a much smaller increase in the gap between pay and free/reduced lunch students resulted in similar gaps for both groups.

The largest achievement gaps were observed in PACT Math at the Proficient or Advanced level (Figure 4). The gaps were similar in size for all groups studied, and the sizes of the gaps have increased slightly since 2002. The increases or very slight reductions of the achievement gaps at the Proficient or Advanced levels for both ELA and Math observed since 2002 are not encouraging if South Carolina is to meet its achievement goals for all students.

Figure 1
PACT ELA Achievement Gaps, Percent Basic or Above, 2002-2004

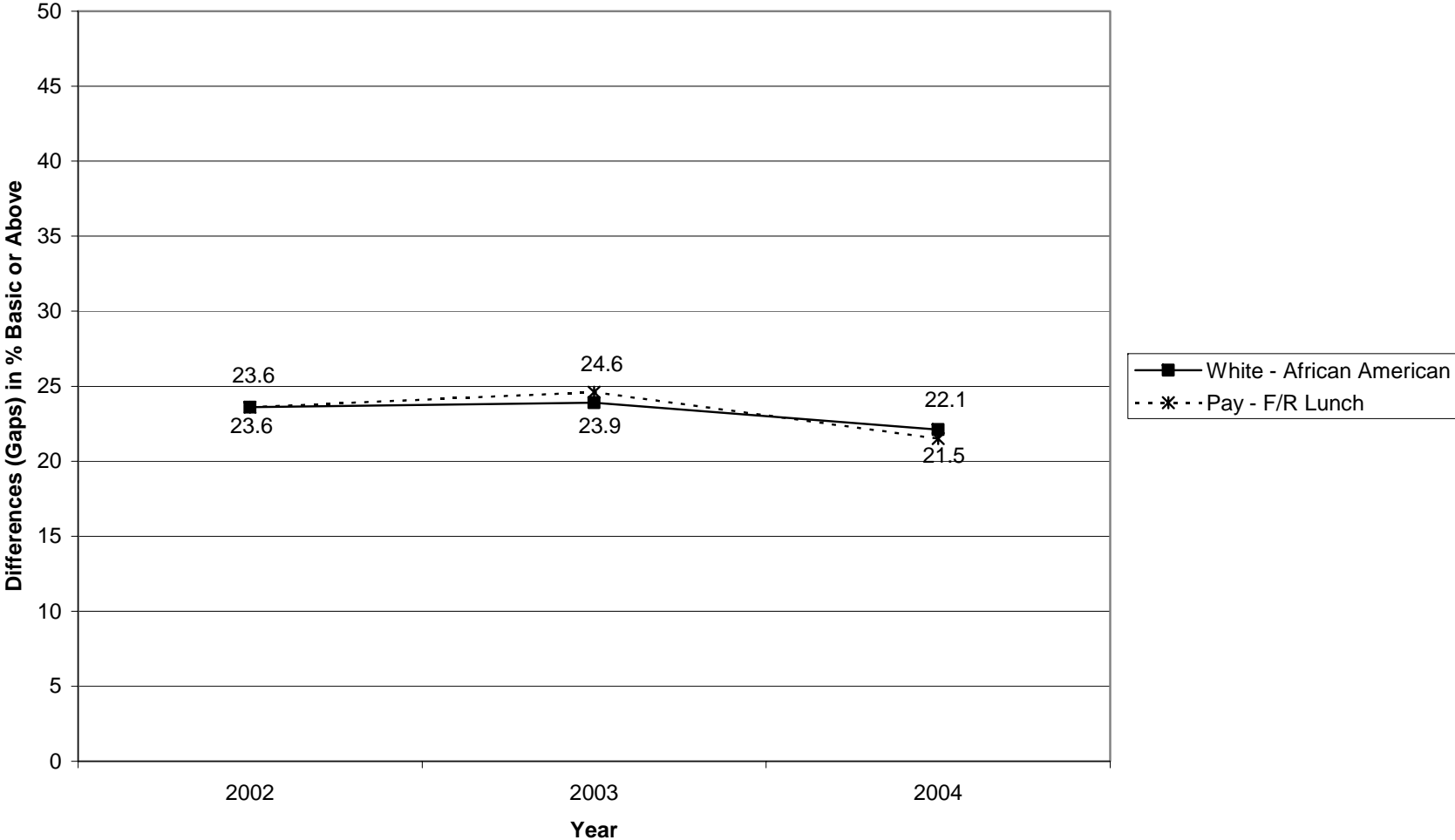


Figure 2
PACT Math Achievement Gaps, Percent Basic or Above, 2002-2004

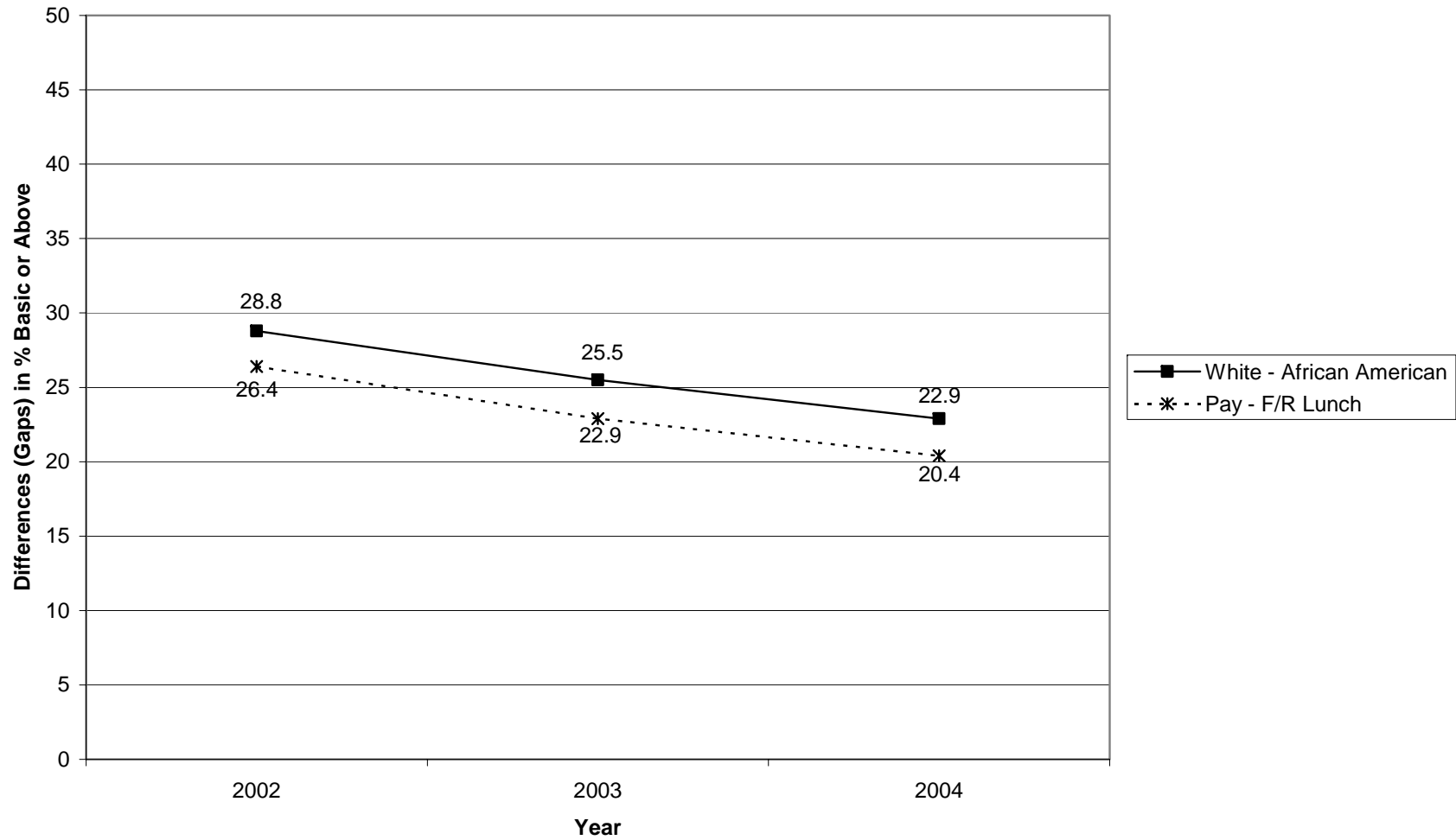


Figure 3
PACT ELA Achievement Gaps, Percent Proficient or Advanced, 2002-2004

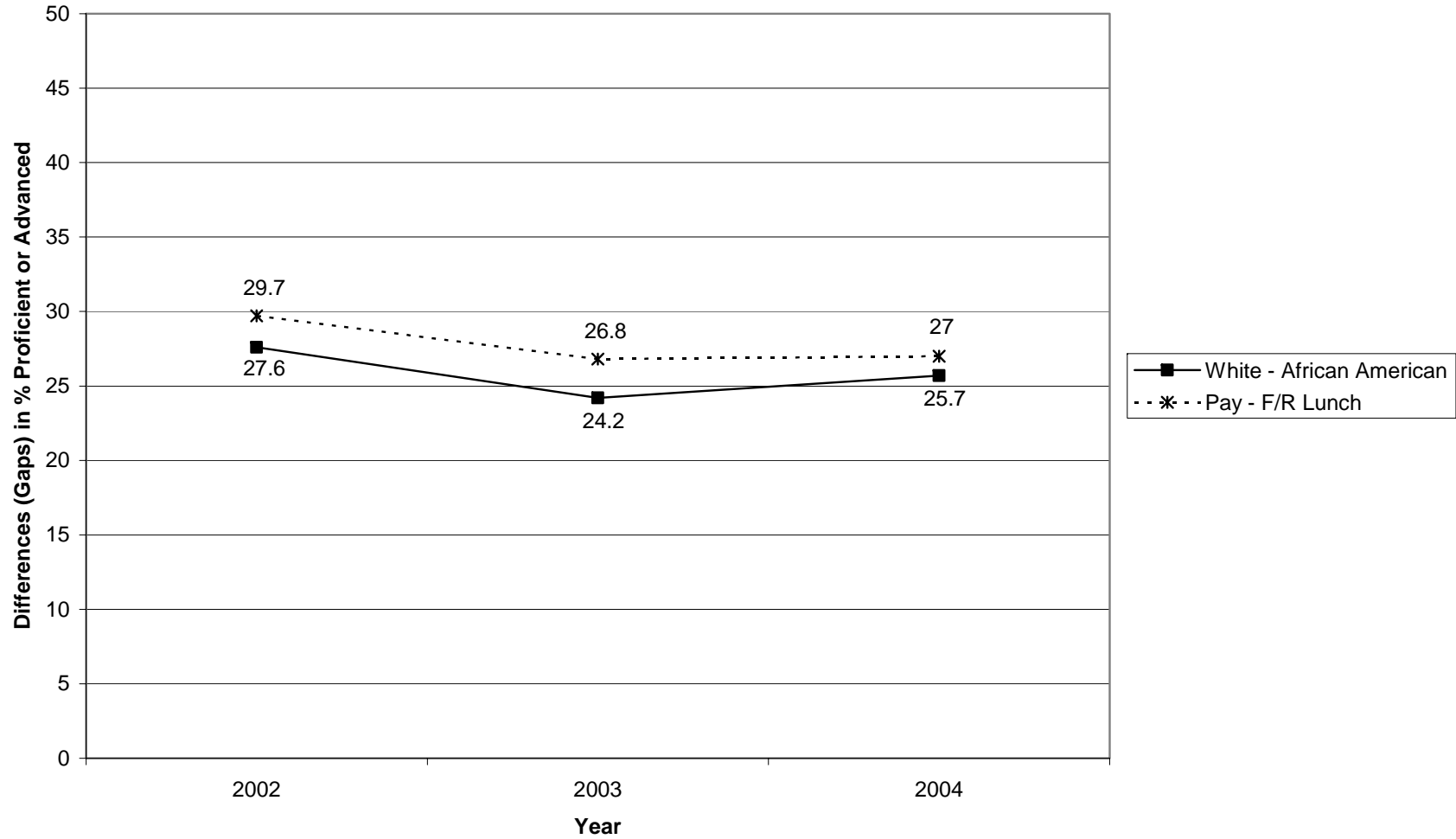
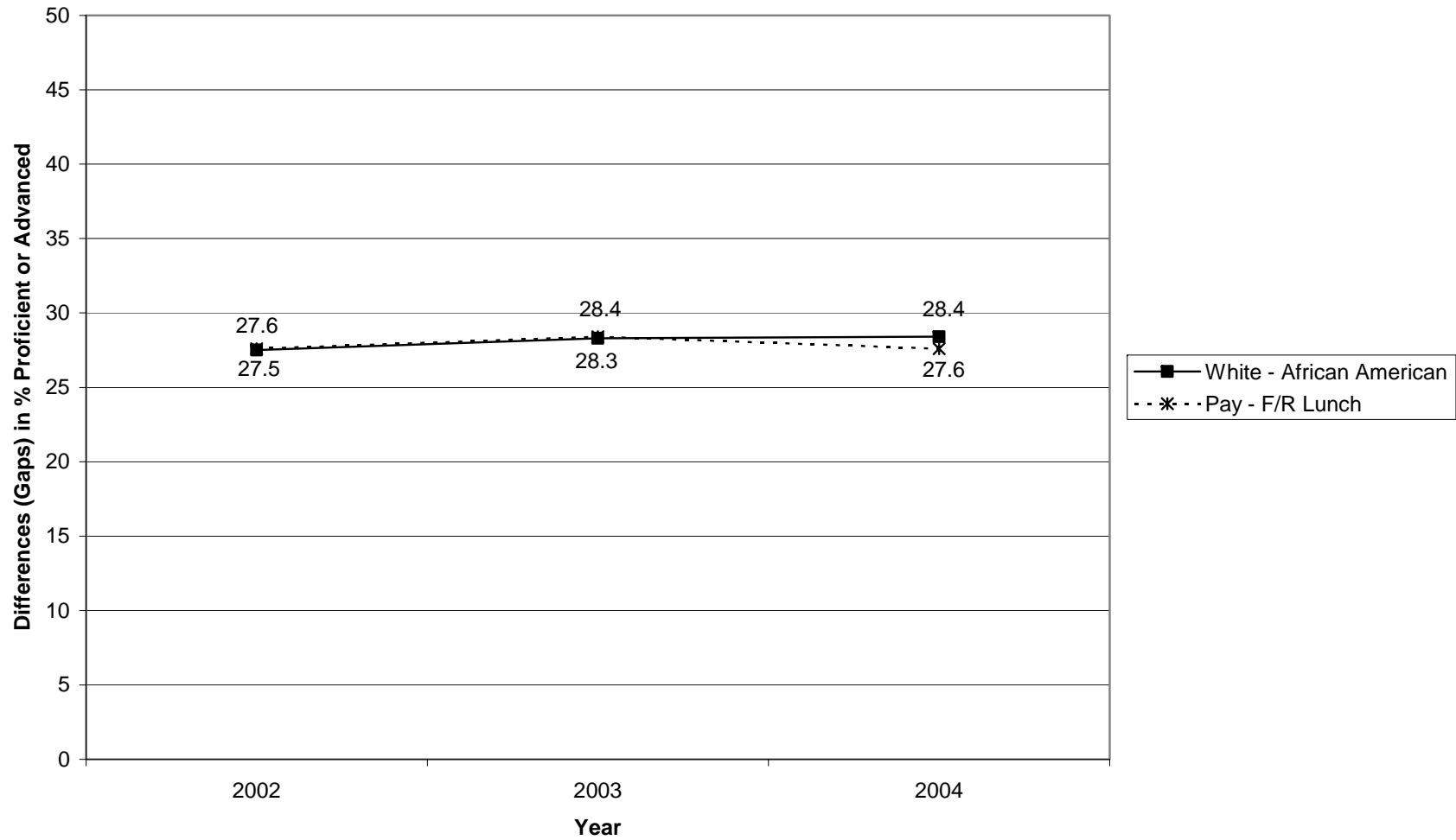


Figure 4
PACT Math Achievement Gaps, Percent Proficient or Advanced, 2002-2004



Identification of schools closing the gap

To provide further insight into the achievement gap in South Carolina, we identified schools that showed high levels of performance by one or more of the target groups in ELA, math, or both. The performance of the target group of students had to be in the range of the statewide performance of the comparison group or higher. For example, a school in which the percentage of African-American students (target group) scoring Proficient or Advanced was in the range of or higher than the percentage of White students (comparison group) scoring at that level statewide would meet the criteria for selection. The following process was used to identify these schools.

These prerequisite conditions had to be met for a school to be considered:

- The school must have test results from at least one of the target groups to be considered;
- The size of the target group in the school must be large enough to provide reliable information (at least 30 students enrolled and tested);
- The target group and the “all students” category in the school must meet the NCLB Adequate Yearly Progress objectives for percent tested, performance, and attendance.

The target and comparison groups studied were:

Target Group	Comparison Group
African American Students	White Students
Hispanic Students	White Students
Free/Reduced Price Lunch Students	Pay Lunch Students

To obtain the achievement cut points to identify schools making exemplary progress in closing the gap, schools were ranked by the 2004 PACT achievement performance of all students in the school for these tests and performance levels:

- ELA - percent scoring Basic or above;
- ELA - percent scoring Proficient or Advanced;
- Math - percent scoring Basic or above;
- Math - percent scoring Proficient or Advanced.

The achievement level for each test corresponding to the 75th percentile and the 90th percentile for all students in all schools was identified. These data and the averages of the school percentages of students scoring at each achievement level for all students and for the demographic groups are shown in Table 3. These analyses were carried out with school as the level of analysis, so the percentages listed in Table 3 represent the percentile ranks of schools and the average of the school percentages for all schools.

For comparison purposes, similar data for the years 2002, 2003, and 2004 are presented in Figures 5-8 (data for Hispanic students are not available for 2002 and 2003 and are not listed in the comparisons in Figures 5-8). These figures display, for PACT ELA percent Basic or above, ELA percent Proficient or Advanced, Math percent Basic or above, and Math percent Proficient or Advanced, the 75th and 90th percentiles among schools for the performance of all students, as well as the mean performance at the school level of African-American and White students and of students receiving free/reduced price lunch or paying for their lunch.

Figures 5 through 8 provide an overview of school-level PACT achievement over the past three years for all students and for demographic subgroups of students. For example, Figure 5 displays PACT ELA achievement as the percentage of students scoring at the minimal passing level (Basic) or higher. Figure 5 shows the drop in PACT achievement seen in 2003: the average (mean) percentage at the school level of all students in grades 3 through 8 dropped to 71.4% in 2003 from 74.7% in 2002, but rose to 75.5% in 2004, slightly above the 2002 level. African-American students had the lowest percentages passing each year (61.2% in 2002, 61.4% in 2003, and 65.8% in 2004), followed closely by students participating in the free/reduced price lunch program (63.3% in 2002, 63.0% in 2003, and 68.3% in 2004). Figure 5 also shows that performance at the school level for free/reduced price lunch students gained somewhat faster between 2003 and 2004 than that for African American students: the average school saw an increase of 5.3 percentage points in the performance of free/reduced price lunch students scoring Basic or above compared to an increase of 4.4 percentage points for African-American students.

The data in Figure 5 also show that the average school-level performance of White students and of students not participating in the free/reduced price lunch program (pay lunch) is well above the average performance of all students and is at the approximate level of performance of the top 25% of schools in the state (75th percentile). For example, when ranked by the percentage of students scoring Basic or above on PACT ELA, the percentage of students in the top quarter (75th percentile) of all South Carolina schools passing the PACT ELA at the Basic or above level in 2004 was 84.5%; the performance of White students at the average school was 84.0% scoring Basic or above, and the performance of pay lunch students at the average school was 85.5%.

Figure 6 displays the school-level performance for PACT ELA for all students and for student demographic groups at the Proficient or Advanced performance levels. The percentages of all students scoring Proficient or Advanced (31.2% in 2002, 28.0% in 2003, and 34.2% in 2004) are well below the percentages scoring Basic or above (from Figure 5, 74.7%, 71.4%, and 75.5%, respectively). Similar to the data in Figure 5 on percentages scoring Basic or above in ELA, the school-level performance of African-American students was the lowest performance of the groups displayed in Figure 6 (15.3% Proficient or Advanced in 2002, 16.3% in 2003, and 21.4% in 2004), followed by students participating in the free/reduced price lunch program (16.7% in 2002, 17.7% in 2003, and 23.8% in 2004). Also similar to the data in Figure 5, in 2004 the performance of free/reduced price lunch students on average increased at a faster rate than that of African-American students (an increase of 6.1 percentage points for free/reduced price lunch students, compared to an increase of 5.1 percentage points for African-American students).

The data in Figure 6 also suggest another trend in the data: the increase in average percentages of White and of pay lunch students scoring Proficient or Advanced in 2004 compared to 2003 was larger than that for African-American or free/reduced price lunch students. The average school-level percentage of White students scoring Proficient or Advanced in ELA increased by 7.0 percentage points in 2004, and the average for pay lunch students increased by 7.5 percentage points. If this trend continues, the gaps among these groups will continue to widen over time.

The data on PACT Math performance displayed in Figures 7 (percent scoring Basic or above) and Figure 8 (percent scoring Proficient or Advanced) show that increases in performance between 2003 and 2004 were smaller than those observed for ELA. Also, with the exception of White students at the Basic or above level (Figure 7), the increases in performance for White and pay lunch students in 2004 were larger than those observed for African-American and free/reduced price lunch students. Figure 8 also shows that the performance of all groups of students is lowest at the Proficient or Advanced level on the PACT Math test.

Table 3
75th and 90th Percentiles and Averages of
School Percentages of Students in Each Category
2004 PACT Test Performance

PACT Test Performance Levels	All Students – 75th School Percentile and Above	All Students – 90th School Percentile and Above	Mean School Performance - All Students	Mean School Performance - African-American Students	Mean School Performance - Hispanic Students	Mean School Performance - White Students	Mean School Performance Free/Reduced Lunch Students	Mean School Performance - Pay Lunch Students
ELA percent Basic or above	84.5%	89.9%	75.5%	65.8%	57.3%	84.0%	68.3%	85.5%
Math percent Basic or above	85.0%	89.9%	75.4%	64.4%	65.0%	84.5%	68.3%	85.5%
ELA percent Proficient or Advanced	44.1%	54.7%	34.2%	21.4%	20.3%	44.1%	23.8%	46.8%
Math percent Proficient or Advanced	39.3%	48.1%	30.1%	16.2%	22.2%	41.4%	19.6%	43.2%

Source: SC Department of Education www.myschools.com

Figure 5
Elementary and Middle School Percentages of Students Scoring Basic or Above - ELA

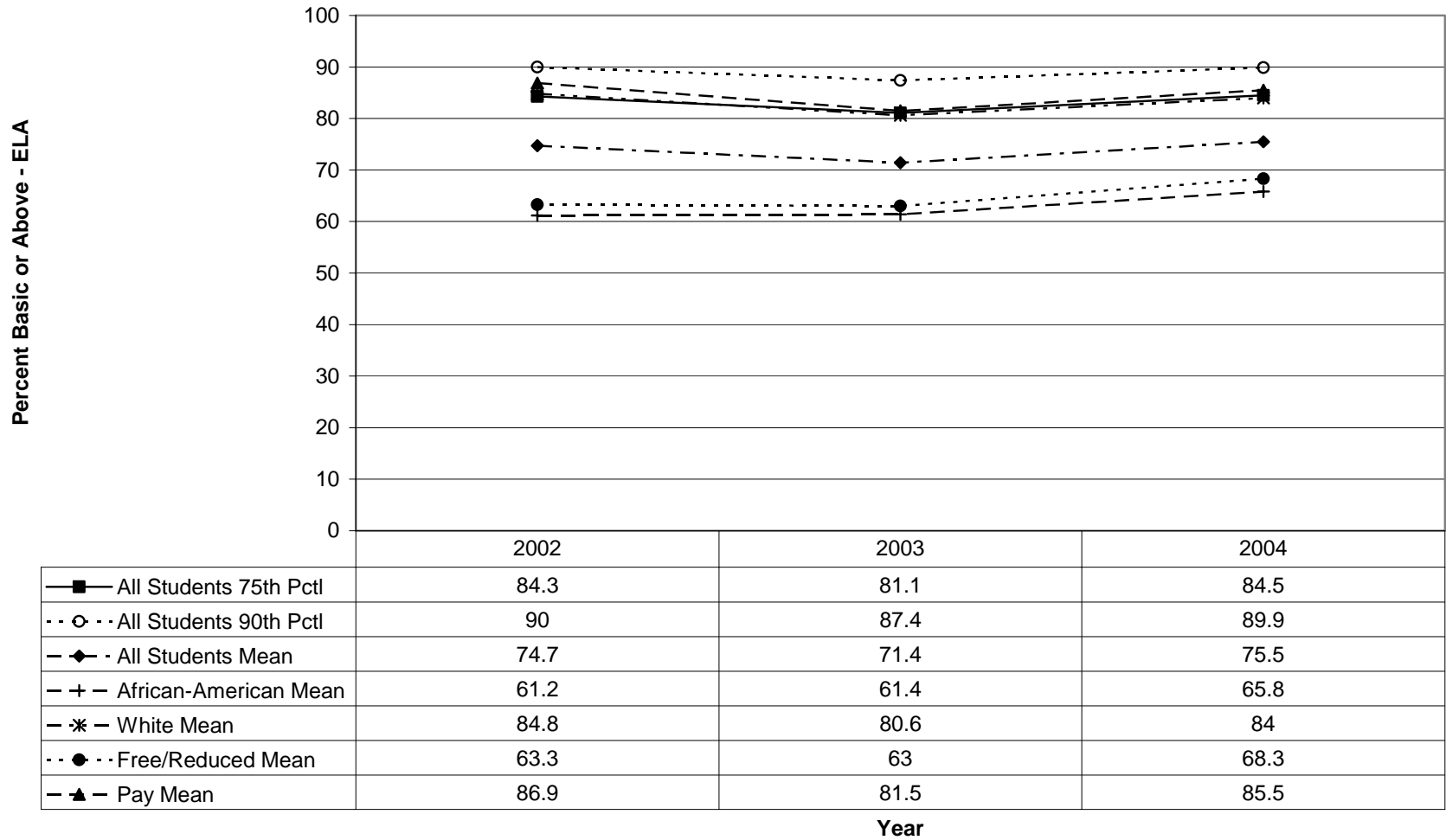


Figure 6
Elementary and Middle School Percentages of Students
Scoring Proficient or Advanced - ELA

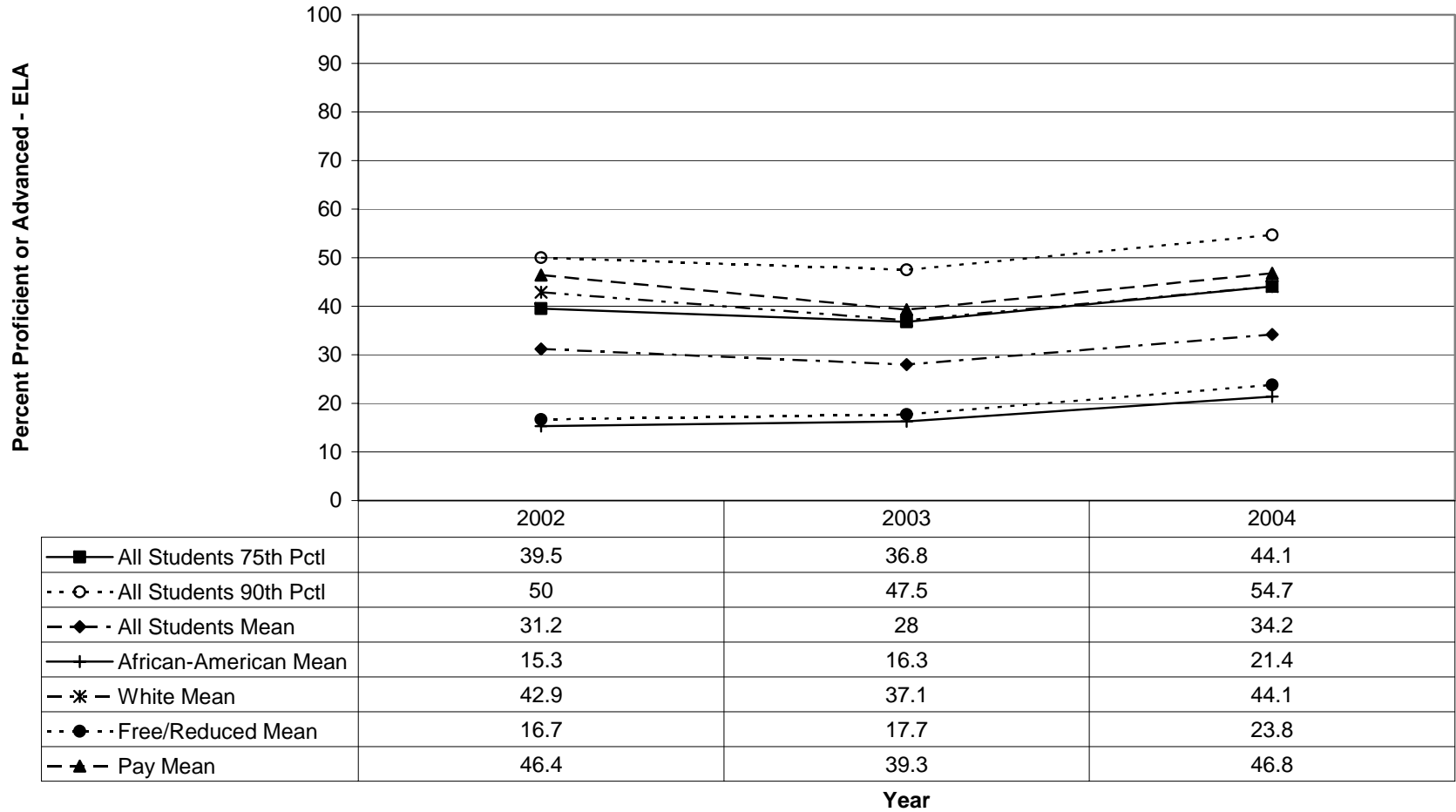


Figure 7
Elementary and Middle School Percentages of Students Scoring Basic or Above - Math

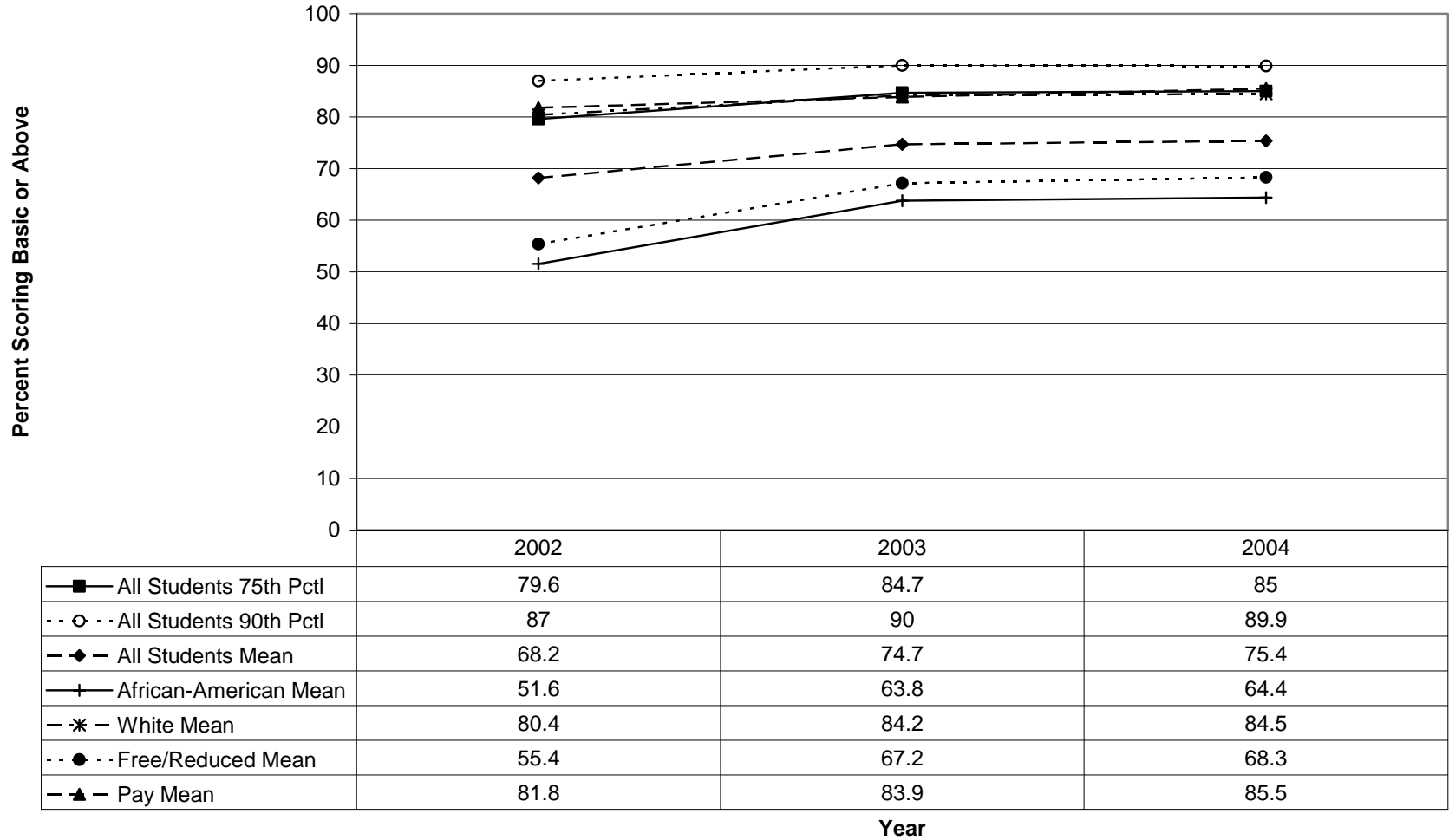
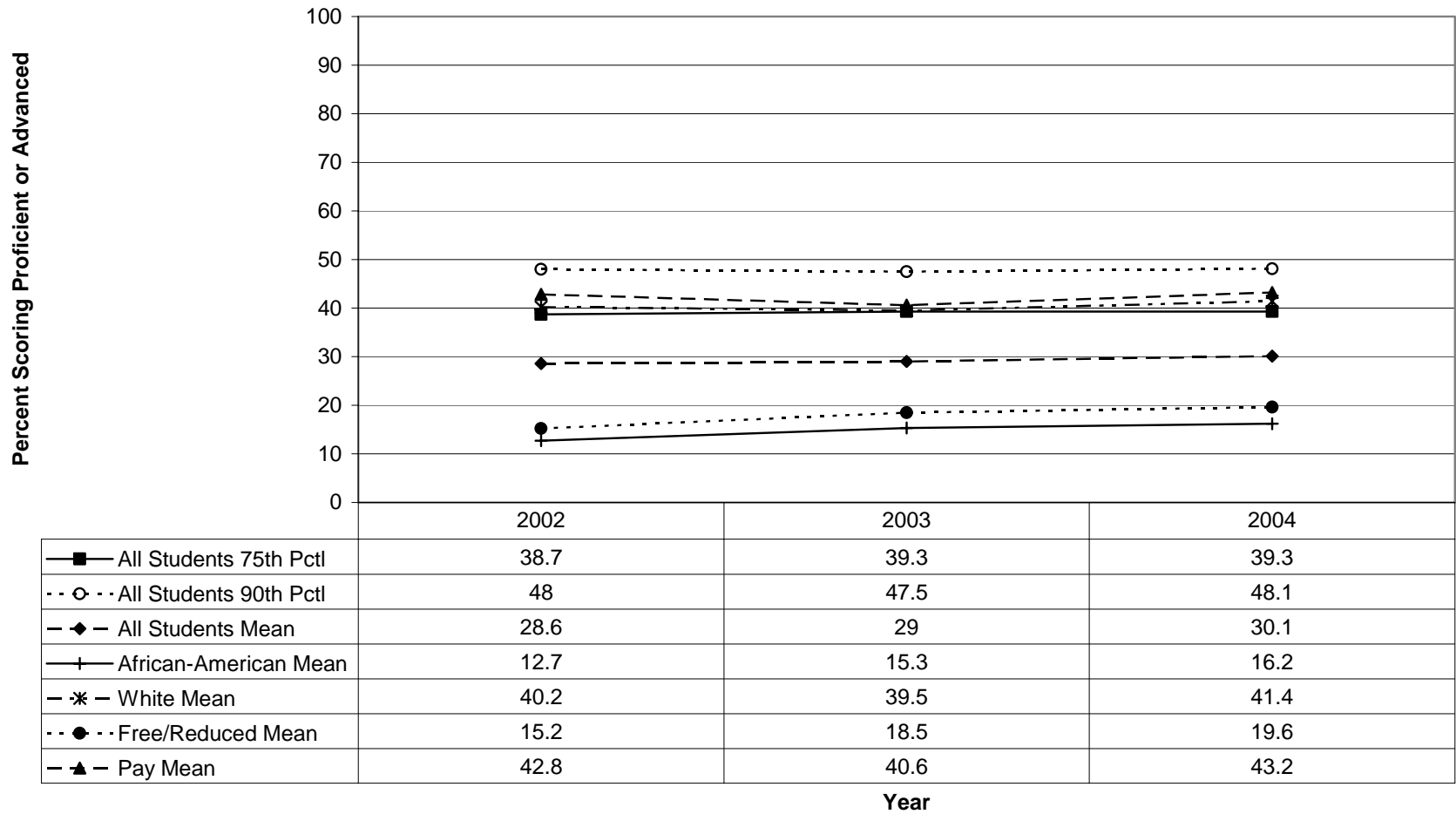


Figure 8
Elementary and Middle School Percentages of Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced - Math



The data displayed in Table 3 and in Figures 5-8 illustrate that the average performance of the target groups of students (African-American, Hispanic, and free/reduced lunch students) at each performance level on each test is lower than the performance of all students statewide and considerably lower than the performance of the comparison groups (White and pay lunch students). The data also indicate that the 75th school percentile for all students is very similar to that of the average performance of White and pay lunch students, and that the 90th school percentile for all students is well above the average performance of any of the comparison groups studied. If the average performance of target group students were at the same level as comparison group students, the students in the target groups would be scoring at approximately the 75th school percentile for all students based on current data. Since the goal is to eliminate the achievement gaps among groups while at the same time achieving at high levels for all groups, the 75th school percentile for all students was chosen as the goal for target group achievement for this study – if all target group students had achieved at this level while at the same time the comparison groups achieved at the same high level, the gaps in achievement would be eliminated. If a target group achieves at the level of schools at the 90th percentile for all students, its performance would be exceptional.

To identify schools closing the achievement gap, the performance of each qualifying target group (having at least 30 tested students) in each school was evaluated against the performance corresponding to the 75th and 90th percentiles for all schools statewide. The criteria for identification were that the target group had to score at least at the level of the 75th percentile for all students in all schools (this level of performance was near that of the comparison groups) on at least one subject area test. For example, a school in which 36 of the 42 African-American students (85.7%) tested scored Basic or above on the ELA test would be identified as a school closing the gap because 85.7% of the target group (African-American students) scored Basic or above, which is greater than the 75th percentile for all students (84.5% - see Table 3).

The performance of each target group in schools meeting the 75th percentile criterion was also examined to see if it was at or above the 90th percentile for all students in all schools (exceeded the performance of the comparison group). In our example school, the 85.7% scoring Basic or above was less than the criterion at the 90th percentile (89.9% - Table 3).

Schools in which at least one target group met or exceeded the 75th or 90th percentile on at least one of the tests were identified as schools showing strong evidence of closing the achievement gap.

Results:

Eighty-nine schools reporting PACT test data did not have a sufficient number of African American students (at least 30), and nineteen schools did not have a sufficient number of free/reduced lunch participants, so they could not be evaluated for the performance of these target groups. Only seventy-eight schools had sufficient numbers of Hispanic students (at least 30) to include in the analysis. Eight hundred thirty-three schools had sufficient data to be evaluated for the performance of at least one target group of students.

One hundred thirty-two schools (three of which had both elementary and middle school grades and thus two report cards) were identified. These schools represent approximately 16% of all schools having sufficient numbers of students in the target groups for analysis. Eight-eight schools had at least one target group achieve between the 75th and 89th state percentiles, and forty-four had at least one group achieve at the 90th percentile or higher. Sixty-five of the schools identified in 2004 had also been recognized in 2003 for high performance by at least one target group in at least one subject area, and thirty-eight were similarly recognized for all three years studied (2002, 2003, and 2004). These schools are of particular interest because they show sustained progress in reducing achievement gaps. The schools recognized for performance in 2004 are listed in Table 4.

Table 4
Schools With Target Demographic Groups Scoring At or Above the 75th or 90th Percentiles

Obs.	BEDS	District	School	Group(s) Identified*							
1.	160019	Abbeville	Diamond Hill Elementary [†]	FR ELA B+ 75	FR Math B+ 75	FR Math PA 75					
2.	201016	Aiken	Aiken Elementary	AA ELA B+ 75							
3.	201031	Aiken	Hammond Hill Elementary [#]	FR ELA PA 75							
4.	201035	Aiken	Millbrook Elementary [†]	AA ELA B+ 75	FR ELA B+ 75	FR Math B+ 75					
5.	401004	Anderson 1	Palmetto Elementary [†]	AA ELA B+ 75	AA ELA PA 75	FR ELA B+ 90	FR Math B+ 90				
6.	401005	Anderson 1	Cedar Grove Elementary ^{#†}	FR ELA B+ 90	FR ELA PA 75	FR Math B+ 90					
7.	401007	Anderson 1	Pelzer Elementary [†]	FR Math B+ 75							
8.	401008	Anderson 1	Wren Middle [†]	FR Math PA 75							
9.	401009	Anderson 1	West Pelzer Elementary ^{#†}	FR ELA B+ 90							
10.	401013	Anderson 1	Wren Elementary ^{#†}	FR ELA B+ 75							
11.	401014	Anderson 1	Hunt Meadows Elementary ^{#†}	FR ELA B+ 90							
12.	401062	Anderson 1	Powersville Elementary [†]	FR ELA B+ 90	FR Math B+ 75						
13.	402013	Anderson 2	Belton Elementary	AA ELA B+ 75	AA Math B+ 75	FR ELA B+ 75	FR Math B+ 75				
14.	402018	Anderson 2	Honea Path Elementary ^{#†}	AA ELA B+ 90	AA ELA PA 75	AA Math B+ 75	FR ELA B+ 90	FR ELA PA 90	FR Math B+ 90		
15.	402021	Anderson 2	Wright Elementary [†]	FR ELA B+ 90	FR ELA PA 75	FR Math B+ 90	FR Math PA 90				
16.	405044	Anderson 5	Centerville Elementary [†]	AA ELA B+ 75	FR Math B+ 75						
17.	405045	Anderson 5	Concord Elementary	AA ELA B+ 90	FR ELA B+ 75						
18.	405051	Anderson 5	New Prospect Elementary [†]	FR ELA B+ 75							

Obs.	BEDS	District	School	Group(s) Identified*							
19.	405059	Anderson 5	Whitehall Elementary [†]	AA ELA B+ 90	AA Math B+ 75	FR ELA B+ 75	FR Math B+ 75				
20.	405061	Anderson 5	Midway Elementary	AA ELA B+ 90	FR ELA B+ 75						
21.	701005	Beaufort	Robert Smalls Middle	HI Math PA 75							
22.	701018	Beaufort	Shell Point Elementary	FR ELA B+ 75							
23.	701020	Beaufort	St Helena Elementary [#]	AA ELA B+ 75	AA ELA PA 75	FR ELA B+ 75	FR ELA PA 75				
24.	801022	Berkeley	Westview Middle	HI Math B+ 75							
25.	801025	Berkeley	MenRiv Elementary ^{#†}	FR ELA B+ 90	FR ELA PA 90	FR Math B+ 75	FR Math PA 75				
26.	801031	Berkeley	Westview Elementary	AA ELA B+ 75							
27.	801033	Berkeley	Marrington Elementary ^{#†}	AA ELA B+ 90	AA Math B+ 75	FR ELA B+ 90	FR ELA PA 75	FR Math B+ 90			
28.	801036	Berkeley	Howe Hall Elementary	AA ELA PA 75	FR ELA B+ 90	FR ELA PA 90	FR Math B+ 75				
29.	801044	Berkeley	Hanahan Elementary	AA ELA B+ 75	FR ELA B+ 75						
30.	1001043	Charleston	Harbor View Elementary	AA Math B+ 90	FR Math B+ 90						
31.	1001061	Charleston	Jennie Moore Elementary	AA Math B+ 75							
32.	1001069	Charleston	Orange Grove Elementary ^{#†}	AA Math B+ 75							
33.	1001082	Charleston	St Andrews School of Math & Sc	AA ELA B+ 75	AA Math B+ 75	FR ELA B+ 90	FR Math B+ 75				
34.	1001083	Charleston	Angel Oak Elementary	AA ELA B+ 75							
35.	1001085	Charleston	Stono Park Elementary ^{#†}	AA ELA B+ 90	AA ELA PA 90	AA Math B+ 90	AA Math PA75	FR ELA B+ 90	FR ELA PA 90	FR Math B+ 90	FR Math PA 75
36.	1001094	Charleston	Buist Academy [†]	AA ELA B+ 90	AA ELA PA 90	AA Math B+90	AA Math PA 90				
37.	1001102	Charleston	Charles Pinckney Elementary ^{#†}	FR ELA B+ 75							
38.	1101012	Cherokee	Goucher Elementary ^{#†}	FR Math							

Obs.	BEDS	District	School	Group(s) Identified*							
				B+ 75							
39.	1301014	Chesterfield	Edwards Elementary ^{#†}	FR Math B+ 75							
40.	1301023	Chesterfield	Ruby Elementary	FR ELA B+ 75	FR Math B+ 75						
41.	1601018	Darlington	Pate Elementary ^{#†}	AA ELA B+ 90	AA ELA PA 75	FR ELA B+ 90	FR ELA PA 75				
42.	1702007	Dillon 2	East Elementary ^{#†}	AA ELA B+ 75	AA ELA PA 75	AA Math B+ 75	FR ELA PA 75	FR Math B+ 75			
43.	1702008	Dillon 2	South Elementary [†]	AA ELA B+ 75	AA ELA PA 90	AA Math B+ 90	AA Math PA 90	FR ELA PA 90	FR Math B+ 75	FR Math PA 90	
44.	1802012	Dorchester 2	R H Rollings Middle School of the Arts ^{#†}	AA ELA B+ 75	AA ELA PA 75	AA Math B+ 90	AA Math PA75	FR ELA B+ 75	FR Math B+ 90	FR Math PA 90	
45.	1802014	Dorchester 2	Flowertown Elementary	FR Math B+ 75							
46.	1802017	Dorchester 2	Oakbrook Elementary [#]	FR Math B+ 75							
47.	1901008	Edgefield	Merriwether Elementary ^{#†}	AA ELA B+ 75	AA Math B+ 75	FR ELA B+ 75					
48.	2001014	Fairfield	Fairfield Primary	FR ELA PA 75							
49.	2101009	Florence 1	Carver Elementary	AA ELA B+ 75	AA ELA PA 75	AA Math B+ 75	FR ELA B+ 75	FR ELA PA 75	FR Math B+ 75		
50.	2201009	Georgetown	Browns Ferry Elementary [†]	AA ELA B+ 75	AA ELA PA 75	AA Math B+ 90	AA Math PA 90	FR ELA PA 75	FR Math B+ 75	FR Math PA 75	
51.	2201012	Georgetown	Pleasant Hill Elementary [†]	FR ELA B+ 75	FR Math B+ 75						
52.	2201014	Georgetown	Kensington Elementary	AA ELA B+ 75	FR ELA B+ 75						
53.	2201023	Georgetown	Sampit Elementary [†]	AA ELA B+ 75	FR ELA B+ 75						
54.	2301081	Greenville	Simpsonville Elementary	AA ELA B+ 75							
55.	2301083	Greenville	Skyland Elementary	FR Math B+ 90							
56.	2301093	Greenville	Buena Vista Elementary	FR ELA PA 75							
57.	2301098	Greenville	Westcliffe Elementary	FR ELA B+ 75							

Obs.	BEDS	District	School	Group(s) Identified*							
58.	2301108	Greenville	Oakview Elementary ^{#†}	AA ELA B+ 90	AA ELA PA 75	AA Math B+ 90	AA Math PA 90				
59.	2301110	Greenville	Mauldin Middle	HI ELA B+75							
60.	2301111	Greenville	Riverside Middle	HI Math B+ 75							
61.	2301112	Greenville	Bell's Crossing Elementary	FR ELA B+ 75							
62.	2450014	Greenwood 50	Pinecrest Elementary	AA ELA B+ 75							
63.	2601014	Horry	Aynor Elementary [†]	FR ELA PA 75	FR Math B+ 75	FR Math PA 90					
64.	2601029	Horry	Lakewood Elementary ^{#†}	FR ELA PA 75	FR Math PA 90						
65.	2601030	Horry	St James Elementary ^{#†}	FR Math PA 75							
66.	2601033	Horry	Midland Elementary [†]	FR ELA B+ 75	FR Math B+ 75	FR Math PA 75					
67.	2601034	Horry	Myrtle Beach Elementary [†]	AA Math B+ 90	FR ELA B+ 90	FR ELA PA 90	FR Math B+ 75				
68.	2601036	Horry	Conway Elementary	AA ELA B+ 75	FR ELA B+ 75	FR Math B+ 75					
69.	2601046	Horry	Forestbrook Elementary ^{#†}	FR ELA B+ 90	FR ELA PA 90	FR Math B+ 90	FR Math PA 90				
70.	2601048	Horry	North Myrtle Beach Elementary	FR ELA B+ 75	FR ELA PA 75						
71.	2601049	Horry	Carolina Forest Elementary ^{#†}	FR ELA B+ 75							
72.	2601050	Horry	Seaside Elementary ^{#†}	FR ELA B+ 90	FR ELA PA 75	FR Math B+ 90	FR Math PA 75				
73.	2601053	Horry	Myrtle Beach Intermediate	FR Math B+ 75	HI Math PA 75						
74.	2601054	Horry	Socastee Elementary	FR ELA PA 75	HI ELA PA 75						
75.	2601056	Horry	Palmetto Bays Elementary [†]	FR ELA B+ 75	FR ELA PA 75	FR Math B+ 75	FR Math PA 75				
76.	2801018	Kershaw	Lugoff Elementary ^{#†}	FR Math B+ 75							
77.	3055010	Laurens 55	E B Morse Elementary	AA Math	FR Math						

Obs.	BEDS	District	School	Group(s) Identified*									
				B+ 75	B+ 75								
78.	3055014	Laurens 55	Waterloo Elementary [†]	FR ELA B+ 75	FR ELA PA 75								
79.	3056022	Laurens 56	Joanna-Woodson Elementary	AA ELA B+ 75	AA Math B+ 90								
80.	3201010	Lexington 1	Lexington Middle	HI Math PA 90									
81.	3201049	Lexington 1	White Knoll Elementary	AA ELA PA 75									
82.	3202022	Lexington 2	Pineview Elementary	AA ELA B+ 75	FR ELA B+ 75								
83.	3202024	Lexington 2	Springdale Elementary [†]	AA Math PA75	FR ELA B+ 75	FR ELA PA 75	FR Math B+ 90	FR Math PA 75					
84.	3205041	Lexington 5	Chapin Elementary	FR Math B+ 75									
85.	3205042	Lexington 5	Dutch Fork Elementary ^{#†}	AA ELA B+ 90	AA ELA PA 75	FR ELA B+ 90	FR ELA PA 75						
86.	3205043	Lexington 5	Irmo Elementary	AA ELA B+ 75	FR ELA B+ 75								
87.	3205045	Lexington 5	Seven Oaks Elementary [#]	FR ELA B+ 75									
88.	3205049	Lexington 5	H E Corley Elementary	FR ELA B+ 75									
89.	3205052	Lexington 5	Lake Murray Elementary	FR Math B+ 90									
90.	3205053	Lexington 5	River Springs Elementary ^{#†}	AA ELA B+ 75	AA ELA PA 75	AA Math B+ 75	AA Math PA75	FR ELA B+ 75	FR ELA PA 75				
91.	3205055	Lexington 5	Ballentine Elementary	AA ELA B+ 75	AA ELA PA 75								
92.	3601010	Newberry	Little Mountain Elementary	FR ELA B+ 90	FR ELA PA 75								
93.	3701012	Oconee	Keowee Elementary [#]	FR Math B+ 75									
94.	3701013	Oconee	Northside Elementary [#]	AA ELA B+ 90	FR ELA B+ 75								
95.	3701016	Oconee	James M. Brown Elementary [#]	FR Math B+ 75	HI Math B+ 75								
96.	3701020	Oconee	Tamassee-Salem Elementary [†]	FR Math B+ 90									

Obs.	BEDS	District	School	Group(s) Identified*								
97.	3701023	Oconee	Westminster Elementary#†	FR Math B+ 75								
98.	3701026	Oconee	Seneca Middle	HI Math B+ 75								
99.	3701028	Oconee	Orchard Park Elementary#	FR ELA B+ 75	FR Math B+ 75							
100.	3805035	Orangeburg 5	Mellichamp Elementary	AA ELA B+ 75								
101.	3901010	Pickens	Ambler Elementary#†	FR Math B+ 90								
102.	3901017	Pickens	East End Elementary#†	FR Math B+ 75								
103.	3901020	Pickens	Holly Springs Elementary#†	FR ELA B+ 90	FR ELA PA 75	FR Math B+ 90	FR Math PA 90					
104.	3901021	Pickens	A R Lewis Elementary†	FR ELA B+ 75	FR Math B+ 75	FR Math PA 75						
105.	3901022	Pickens	Liberty Elementary#†	FR ELA B+ 75	FR ELA PA 75	FR Math B+ 75						
106.	4001054	Richland 1	Rosewood Elementary	AA ELA B+ 75	FR ELA B+ 75							
107.	4002073	Richland 2	L W Conder Elementary	AA ELA B+ 75								
108.	4002078	Richland 2	E L Wright Middle	HI Math PA 75								
109.	4002080	Richland 2	North Springs Elementary#†	AA ELA B+ 75	AA ELA PA 75							
110.	4002081	Richland 2	Pontiac Elementary	AA ELA PA 75								
111.	4002083	Richland 2	Rice Creek Elementary#†	AA ELA B+ 75	AA ELA PA 75							
112.	4002087	Richland 2	Bookman Road Elementary#†	AA ELA B+ 75	AA ELA PA 75	AA Math B+ 90	AA Math PA75	FR Math B+ 75				
113.	4002089	Richland 2	Lake Carolina Elementary†	AA ELA B+ 90	AA ELA PA 75	AA Math B+ 75						
114.	4201009	Spartanburg 1	Holly Springs-Mottlow Elementary#	FR ELA B+ 75	FR Math B+ 75							
115.	4201011	Spartanburg 1	New Prospect Elementary#†	FR ELA B+ 75	FR ELA PA 75	FR Math B+ 90						
116.	4202014	Spartanburg 2	Boiling Springs Junior High#	AA ELA								

Obs.	BEDS	District	School	Group(s) Identified*									
				B+ 75									
117.	4202019	Spartanburg 2	Cooley Springs-Fingerville Elementary [#]	FR Math B+ 75									
118.	4203028	Spartanburg 3	Cannons Elementary	FR ELA B+ 75	FR Math B+ 75								
119.	4203031	Spartanburg 3	Clifdale Elementary [#]	FR ELA B+ 75									
120.	4205052	Spartanburg 5	Wellford Elementary	FR Math B+ 75									
121.	4302008	Sumter 2	Cherryvale Elementary [†]	FR ELA B+ 75									
122.	4302009	Sumter 2	F. J. Delaine Elementary	AA ELA B+ 75	AA Math B+ 75	FR Math B+ 75							
123.	4302017	Sumter 2	Rafting Creek Elementary	AA ELA B+ 75	FR ELA B+ 75								
124.	4317041	Sumter 17	Kingsbury Elementary [†]	FR ELA B+ 75									
125.	4501013	Williamsburg	W M Anderson Primary ^{#†}	AA ELA B+ 90	AA ELA PA 90	AA Math B+ 90	AA Math PA 90	FR ELA B+ 90	FR ELA PA 90	FR Math B+ 90	FR Math PA 90		
126.	4501020	Williamsburg	Chavis Elementary	AA ELA B+ 75	AA Math B+ 75	FR Math B+ 90							
127.	4501023	Williamsburg	St Mark Elementary ^{#†}	AA Math B+ 90	AA Math PA75	FR Math B+ 90	FR Math PA 75						
128.	4602011	York 2	Bethany Elementary ^{#†}	FR ELA PA 75									
129.	4602012	York 2	Bethel Elementary [†]	FR Math PA 75									
130.	4602047	York 2	Griggs Road Elementary [†]	FR Math B+ 75	FR Math PA 75								
131.	4602051	York 2	Crowders Creek Elementary/Middle [#]	AA Math B+ 75									
132.	4603032	York 3	Rosewood Elementary	AA Math B+ 75	FR Math B+ 75								

Notes for Table:

[#] Recognized for closing gap in 2002 and 2004

[†] Recognized for closing gap in 2003 and 2004

* Groups are:

AA ELA B+ 75 = African-American students, ELA test, at or above 75th percentile, scored Basic or above;

AA ELA B+ 90 = African-American students, ELA test, at or above 90th percentile, scored Basic or above;
AA Math B+ 75 = African-American students, Math test, at or above 75th percentile, scored Basic or above;
AA Math B+ 90 = African-American students, Math test, at or above 90th percentile, scored Basic or above;
AA ELA PA 75 = African-American students, ELA test, at or above 75th percentile, scored Proficient or Advanced;
AA ELA PA 90 = African-American students, ELA test, at or above 90th percentile, scored Proficient or Advanced;
AA Math PA 75 = African-American students, Math test, at or above 75th percentile, scored Proficient or Advanced;
AA Math PA 90 = African-American students, Math test, at or above 90th percentile, scored Proficient or Advanced;
FR ELA B+ 75 = Free/reduced lunch students, ELA test, at or above 75th percentile, scored Basic or above;
FR ELA B+ 90 = Free/reduced lunch students, ELA test, at or above 90th percentile, scored Basic or above;
FR Math B+ 75 = Free/reduced lunch students, Math test, at or above 75th percentile, scored Basic or above;
FR Math B+ 90 = Free/reduced lunch students, Math test, at or above 90th percentile, scored Basic or above;
FR ELA PA 75 = Free/reduced lunch students, ELA test, at or above 75th percentile, scored Proficient or Advanced;
FR ELA PA 90 = Free/reduced lunch students, ELA test, at or above 90th percentile, scored Proficient or Advanced;
FR Math PA 75 = Free/reduced lunch students, Math test, at or above 75th percentile, scored Proficient or Advanced;
FR Math PA 90 = Free/reduced lunch students, Math test, at or above 90th percentile, scored Proficient or Advanced;
HI ELA B+ 75 = Hispanic students, ELA test, at or above 75th percentile, scored Basic or above;
HI ELA B+ 90 = Hispanic students, ELA test, at or above 90th percentile, scored Basic or above;
HI Math B+ 75 = Hispanic students, Math test, at or above 75th percentile, scored Basic or above;
HI Math B+ 90 = Hispanic students, Math test, at or above 90th percentile, scored Basic or above;
HI ELA PA 75 = Hispanic students, ELA test, at or above 75th percentile, scored Proficient or Advanced;
HI ELA PA 90 = Hispanic students, ELA test, at or above 90th percentile, scored Proficient or Advanced;
HI Math PA 75 = Hispanic students, Math test, at or above 75th percentile, scored Proficient or Advanced;
HI Math PA 90 = Hispanic students, Math test, at or above 90th percentile, scored Proficient or Advanced;

The numbers of elementary and middle schools recognized for closing the achievement gap for at least one target group in at least one subject area has increased over the three years studied: 87 schools were recognized in 2002, 110 in 2003, and 132 in 2004 (7 of the schools recognized in 2004 were recognized for the performance of Hispanic students only). The number of schools recognized for each target group in 2004 is listed in Table 5.

Table 5
Numbers of Schools Recognized for Gap Reduction in 2004
Target Groups Identified for High Performance

Target Group(s)	Number of Schools Recognized	Percent of Recognized Schools
African-American Students Only	20	15.2%
African-American Students; Free/Reduced Lunch Students	41	31.1%
Hispanic Students Only	7	5.3%
Hispanic Students; Free/Reduced Lunch Students	3	2.3%
Free/Reduced Lunch Students Only	61	46.2%
Totals	132	100%

Forty-nine schools were recognized in 2004 for closing the gap for at least one target group in PACT ELA only, thirty-five schools for closing the gap in Math only, and forty-eight schools for closing gaps in both ELA and Math.

Not surprisingly, since these schools were chosen because their target demographic groups were achieving near or above the levels of the comparison groups statewide, their overall achievement for all students tended to be high. Of the 135 report card absolute ratings issued for these 132 schools (three schools received both elementary and middle school report cards), 70 were Excellent, 60 were Good, and 5 were Average. These schools also received recognition for achievement and for other qualities in the past year:

- 54 received Palmetto Gold Awards;
- 7 received Palmetto Silver Awards;
- 1 received the Palmetto's Finest award;
- 3 were National Blue Ribbon Award schools; and
- 7 received Red Carpet awards.

In an attempt to identify characteristics of these schools which would help to differentiate them from other schools, their report card profile data were compared to those from all schools in the State and to those from schools rated Excellent or Good. These comparisons for selected report card data are listed in Table 6. The data for 2002, 2003, and 2004 are listed in Table 7 for comparison purposes.

Table 6
Comparison of 2002, 2003, and 2004 Selected Report Card Variables
Schools In Which Target Group Scores Are At or Above 75th Percentile for All Students (Gap Closing Schools)
Compared to All Schools And to Schools Rated Excellent or Good

Report Card Variable	Gap Closing Schools			Excellent or Good Schools			All Schools (Grades 3-8)		
	Mean 2004 [2003] (2002)	5%ile 2004 [2003] (2002)	95%ile 2004 [2003] (2002)	Mean 2004 [2003] (2002)	5%ile 2004 [2003] (2002)	95%ile 2004 [2003] (2002)	Mean 2004 [2003] (2002)	5%ile 2004 [2003] (2002)	95%ile 2004 [2003] (2002)
Poverty Index	56.6 [56.7] (52.8)	20.2 [17.9] (17.7)	92.8 [92.2] (90.9)	55.9 [51.6] (49.0)	21.4 [18.9] (18.3)	87.3 [81.6] (79.2)	68.3 [65.3] (64.2)	30.6 [28.2] (26.2)	96.3 [95.2] (95.5)
Dollars per Student	6144 [6113] (5545)	4531 [4625] (4140)	8047 [8197] (7000)	5986 [5937] (5531)	4633 [4577] (4172)	7758 [7712] (7075)	6270 [6217] (5665)	4705 [4695] (4194)	8524 [8589] (7681)
Student Teacher Ratio	20.0 [19.1] (19.2)	15.0 [14.3] (14.4)	25.0 [23.1] (22.9)	20.0 [19.7] (19.2)	16.0 [14.9] (12.3)	24.6 [24.6] (24.5)	19.5 [19.2] (18.4)	13.8 [12.8] (10.6)	25.1 [24.6] (24.5)
Student Attendance	96.8 [96.0] (96.5)	95.6 [94.5] (95.2)	99.3 [97.3] (97.7)	96.6 [95.9] (96.3)	95.4 [93.9] (94.1)	99.1 [97.3] (97.5)	96.3 [95.5] (96.1)	94.5 [92.8] (93.5)	98.8 [97.2] (98.0)
Teacher Attendance	95.0 [95.4] (95.1)	92.8 [92.8] (92.1)	97.2 [98.0] (97.4)	94.9 [95.5] (95.4)	92.5 [93.0] (92.4)	96.9 [98.6] (98.3)	94.7 [95.2] (95.2)	92.3 [92.4] (92.4)	96.9 [98.4] (98.2)
Student Retention	2.9 [2.8] (3.5)	0.5 [0.2] (0.6)	7.3 [6.9] (7.5)	2.8 [2.6] (3.1)	0.5 [0.2] (0.5)	6.6 [6.3] (7.0)	3.5 [2.9] (4.1)	0.5 [0.2] (0.7)	9.0 [7.4] (9.2)
Days Prof. Development	12.2 [12.2] (11.0)	6.9 [6.5] (6.9)	19.5 [20.8] (17.1)	12.2 [11.3] (10.6)	6.7 [6.1] (6.5)	19.6 [18.0] (16.7)	12.5 [11.6] (10.5)	6.5 [5.6] (5.8)	20.4 [19.2] (16.4)
Teachers Advanced Degrees	53.0 [47.8] (50.7)	35.0 [26.1] (30.0)	73.6 [73.1] (71.4)	52.8 [50.6] (51.4)	33.3 [29.4] (30.0)	71.4 [70.5] (71.1)	50.4 [48.5] (48.3)	29.4 [27.3] (25.6)	70.4 [69.6] (69.0)

Report Card Variable	Gap Closing Schools			Excellent or Good Schools			All Schools (Grades 3-8)		
	Mean 2004 [2003] (2002)	5%ile 2004 [2003] (2002)	95%ile 2004 [2003] (2002)	Mean 2004 [2003] (2002)	5%ile 2004 [2003] (2002)	95%ile 2004 [2003] (2002)	Mean 2004 [2003] (2002)	5%ile 2004 [2003] (2002)	95%ile 2004 [2003] (2002)
Percent Cont. Contract Teachers	87.9 [87.3] (85.6)	75.0 [70.6] (71.2)	100 [100] (97.4)	87.8 [87.1] (86.1)	75.0 [73.0] (71.2)	100 [100] (97.3)	83.9 [83.2] (81.6)	62.5 [63.2] (58.6)	98.2 [97.4] (96.4)
Teachers Out of Field	2.0 [1.1] (1.4)	0 [0] (0)	7.7 [5.0] (7.0)	2.0 [1.4] (1.6)	0 [0] (0)	8.3 [6.5] (7.4)	4.0 [1.8] (2.3)	0 [0] (0)	16.2 [7.9] (9.5)
Teacher Retention	86.0 [86.7] (88.1)	74.4 [76.2] (79.5)	94.7 [95.4] (95.0)	86.8 [86.2] (86.7)	74.7 [73.1] (75.4)	94.8 [94.2] (94.4)	84.8 [83.8] (83.9)	70.4 [68.5] (69.1)	94.1 [93.8] (93.6)
Average Teacher Salary	41274 [40119] (40057)	37240 [35645] (36178)	45883 [44253] (44433)	41541 [40694] (40335)	37490 [36462] (36333)	45625 [44799] (44433)	40648 [39865] (39347)	36406 [35538] (34807)	45032 [44275] (43707)
Percent Spent on Teacher Salaries	64.6 [64.9] (65.1)	55.7 [56.8] (54.9)	72.8 [71.9] (72.3)	65.3 [65.5] (65.7)	56.3 [56.8] (57.5)	73.4 [72.7] (74.5)	64.4 [64.4] (64.9)	55.0 [54.4] (55.5)	73.4 [73.2] (74.1)
Principal's Years At School	7.1 [6.3] (6.8)	1.0 [1.0] (1.0)	19.0 [19.0] (17.0)	6.4 [6.3] (6.1)	1.0 [1.0] (1.0)	19.0 [18.0] (17.0)	5.5 [5.5] (5.3)	1.0 [1.0] (1.0)	17.0 [17.0] (16.0)
Percent Parents Conferencing	97.6 [97.6] (97.2)	92.1 [91.4] (82.8)	99.6 [99.7] (100)	97.0 [96.5] (96.6)	88.4 [83.9] (80.6)	99.7 [99.6] (99.8)	94.5 [93.2] (92.3)	74.5 [66.0] (61.3)	99.6 [99.5] (99.7)
Gifted and Talented Students	21.9 [20.5] (19.9)	5.2 [4.5] (5.2)	42.8 [42.8] (40.4)	21.8 [21.7] (21.6)	6.6 [6.7] (6.8)	42.8 [43.2] (41.5)	15.8 [15.4] (14.7)	2.2 [2.2] (1.4)	36.0 [35.5] (35.8)
Students with Disabilities	8.3 [8.0] (7.9)	3.5 [3.2] (3.3)	15.6 [15.9] (14.6)	9.0 [8.8] (8.9)	3.6 [3.2] (3.4)	16.7 [16.7] (17.0)	10.4 [10.4] (10.2)	3.6 [3.5] (3.3)	19.4 [19.6] (20.1)
Teacher Satisfaction Learning Environment	94.9 [95.8] (96.2)	77.8 [85.7] (84.4)	100 [100] (100)	95.0 [95.0] (94.2)	82.0 [81.1] (79.2)	100 [100] (100)	88.1 [88.2] (86.5)	58.3 [57.1] (53.6)	100 [100] (100)

Report Card Variable	Gap Closing Schools			Excellent or Good Schools			All Schools (Grades 3-8)		
	Mean 2004 [2003] (2002)	5%ile 2004 [2003] (2002)	95%ile 2004 [2003] (2002)	Mean 2004 [2003] (2002)	5%ile 2004 [2003] (2002)	95%ile 2004 [2003] (2002)	Mean 2004 [2003] (2002)	5%ile 2004 [2003] (2002)	95%ile 2004 [2003] (2002)
Student Satisfaction Learning Environment	88.1 [88.3] (90.1)	74.2 [73.6] (76.6)	98.2 [98.8] (100)	86.2 [85.5] (85.7)	68.7 [66.7] (67.2)	97.0 [97.5] (97.6)	81.4 [80.6] (80.7)	58.8 [55.1] (56.3)	96.1 [96.7] (96.6)
Parent Satisfaction Learning Environment	89.1 [89.4] (90.4)	77.4 [78.2] (77.8)	96.7 [98.1] (100)	88.5 [87.8] (88.0)	75.9 [73.3] (71.3)	97.1 [97.7] (100)	83.3 [82.9] (82.5)	62.7 [61.5] (60.0)	96.8 [96.9] (97.4)
Teacher Satisfaction Phys. and Social Environment	95.6 [95.3] (95.2)	83.9 [82.6] (81.8)	100 [100] (100)	95.4 [94.9] (94.0)	84.0 [80.0] (80.0)	100 [100] (100)	89.1 [88.9] (87.4)	60.0 [61.2] (55.6)	100 [100] (100)
Student Satisfaction Phys. and Social Environment	87.9 [87.7] (88.7)	74.1 [73.5] (73.1)	97.1 [98.0] (98.8)	86.2 [85.6] (86.3)	71.8 [68.1] (69.1)	96.7 [97.3] (97.8)	81.2 [80.5] (81.5)	59.7 [58.1] (59.6)	96.1 [96.8] (97.1)
Parent Satisfaction Phys. and Social Environment	88.1 [88.9] (89.4)	72.6 [75.0] (77.8)	97.6 [97.5] (100)	86.6 [87.3] (86.9)	71.4 [73.5] (70.0)	97.6 [97.4] (99.2)	80.3 [80.7] (80.5)	55.9 [56.7] (56.1)	96.0 [91.2] (97.6)
Teacher Satisfaction Home-School	89.2 [88.6] (88.5)	56.5 [60.0] (55.2)	100 [100] (100)	88.4 [88.2] (87.5)	58.8 [60.0] (56.5)	100 [100] (100)	72.7 [71.3] (69.5)	26.2 [25.0] (23.8)	100 [100] (100)
Student Satisfaction Home-School	90.0 [89.9] (91.9)	79.5 [79.8] (83.3)	97.8 [97.4] (100)	89.2 [89.0] (89.9)	79.7 [79.2] (78.8)	97.4 [98.0] (98.8)	86.8 [86.5] (87.8)	75.2 [74.2] (75.1)	96.7 [97.0] (97.7)
Parent Satisfaction Home-School	77.2 [78.0] (81.5)	60.7 [61.0] (63.8)	90.3 [92.0] (94.4)	75.5 [75.6] (76.9)	58.2 [57.6] (56.3)	90.4 [90.3] (92.1)	71.3 [71.3] (72.7)	51.9 [51.2] (50.0)	89.8 [89.5] (90.2)
Enrollment	558 [488] (542)	232 [197] (224)	986 [822] (955)	575 [581] (600)	225 [236] (232)	986 [976] (1043)	535 [541] (546)	210 [212] (213)	958 [949] (955)

In all three years studied the identified schools had a higher poverty rate than the Excellent or Good schools but lower than that for all schools. In all years their dollars spent per student were less than all schools, but higher than Excellent or Good schools. The identified schools had at least somewhat higher levels of the following than Excellent or Good schools and all schools:

- teacher attendance;
- student attendance;
- teachers with advanced degrees;
- teachers under Continuing Contract;
- total years principal has been at school; and
- percent of gifted and talented students.

The identified schools also had somewhat lower percentages of students with disabilities than Excellent or Good schools or all elementary and middle schools. The differences between the identified schools and Excellent or Good and all schools in most measures were modest, but indicate that the identified schools may have had somewhat more experienced staffs and higher attendance by both students and teachers.

However, most of the differences between the identified schools and other schools were small. One exceptional area was in the teacher, student, and parent survey results, where the identified schools tended to have consistently higher results than the schools they were compared to. This difference was observed in 2002 and 2003, as well. Parents, teachers, and students in the gap-reducing schools tended to be much more satisfied with the physical and social environment and with home and school relations than survey respondents from other South Carolina schools. Parents and students also reported greater satisfaction with the learning environment in gap-closing schools than in Excellent or Good schools or in all schools. However, teachers in the gap-closing schools expressed slightly less satisfaction with the learning environment than teachers in Excellent or Good schools (although teachers in both the gap-closing schools and in Excellent or Good schools reported much higher levels of satisfaction with the learning environment than teachers in all South Carolina elementary and middle schools). Teacher satisfaction with the learning environment may be an indicator of the levels of academic achievement they expect their students to attain: teachers who believe that the students in their school are being asked to achieve at high levels and are attaining those levels may express more satisfaction with the learning environment. The survey data suggest that teachers, students, and parents in gap-closing schools perceive their schools to be welcoming and positive places with a strong focus on learning.

The performance of the identified target group(s) in these schools was at such a high level that the achievement gap for those students compared to students statewide was virtually eliminated. What the adults in these schools and their communities do every day is making a positive difference for their students.

Discussion

Previous EOC studies of the achievement gaps in schools analyzed by their Absolute Rating status (Excellent, Good, Average, Below Average, or Unsatisfactory) revealed gaps in PACT performance in schools at all rating levels, with smaller gaps among the lowest-rated schools (EOC, 2003; EOC, 2004). Unsatisfactory and Below Average

schools demonstrated an undesirable gap reduction: overall low achievement for all groups led to small achievement gaps. The challenge for these schools is to raise the achievement levels of all groups. The large gaps among student demographic groups in the percentages of students scoring Proficient or Advanced in Excellent and Good schools presents a somewhat different challenge. The challenge for these schools is to raise the achievement of their lower income students and students of color while maintaining the high levels of achievement of their higher-scoring students.

The analyses of the 2004 PACT data used for this study provide a glimpse into the challenges to be met if achievement gaps are to be meaningfully reduced. One particularly salient finding is the relationship between high-poverty schools and ethnicity. Approximately 25% of African-American students enrolled in the PACT grades (3-8) attended schools in which 90% or more of students were in poverty (e.g., received free or reduced price meals and/or were eligible for Medicaid services at any time over the previous three year period), while slightly more than 2% of White students attended these schools. African-American students made up over 85% of the enrollments in grades 3-8 of these 158 high poverty schools, while White students made up less than 11% of the enrollments. Thirteen of these extremely high poverty schools reported no White students enrolled in the PACT grades. In contrast, White students made up almost 75% of the students enrolled in the PACT grades in the 82 schools where less than 40% of the students were in poverty. African-American students represented less than 20% of the enrollments of these relatively low poverty schools, and one of these 82 schools reported no African-American students enrolled in the PACT grades. Effectively educating children attending schools in which most of the children experience poverty poses special challenges such as how to maintain high expectations of all students and how to identify and use instructional methods appropriate for diverse learners.

There is a clear need to reduce the achievement gaps among demographic groups of students if we are to meet our goal that all students achieve at high levels of performance. While the achievement gaps remain large, the trend data indicate that South Carolina educators have risen to the initial challenge to reduce the numbers of poor and African-American children who are scoring below grade level. Even though the percentage of schools closing the gaps increased between 2003 and 2004, in 2004 only about 16% of South Carolina elementary and middle schools are coming close to eliminating the gap, and then only for some groups in one subject area in many cases.

The trends in PACT results from 2002 through 2004 provide both encouragement and cause for concern. On the positive side, PACT ELA and Math achievement increased in 2004 for all students and for the demographic groups studied. Further, the achievement gaps at the Basic or above level decreased for both ELA and Math. However, in 2004 the gaps between groups at the Proficient or Advanced levels for PACT ELA increased for both groups studied, as did the Math gap at the Proficient or Advanced levels for one of the two groups. This trend is troubling because South Carolina's goals for both No Child Left Behind and for the EAA accountability system are centered on achievement at the Proficient level or higher, and the current trend will be inadequate to meet those goals.

The data indicate that what adults in schools and in communities do makes a difference, and that schools can be successful in raising the achievement levels of all students to a high level regardless of the risk factors students bring to school with them. There is no doubt that unacceptably large achievement gaps among demographic groups of

students exist in South Carolina. This has long been recognized, and many studies and recommendations from a variety of groups to reduce those gaps, such as the *African American Student Achievement Committee Report* (SDE, 2001) and *Miles To Go* (Southern Education Foundation, 2002) have been made. The 2004 EOC report on closing the achievement gaps made the following recommendations in its call to action on the part of South Carolinians to improve the achievement of all children:

- Carry out all the recommendations of the *African American Student Achievement Committee Report*;
- Focus attention on those students falling behind in school and provide for their needs as provided in the EAA:
 - ✓ Increase instructional time for these students;
 - ✓ Develop clear, effective Academic Assistance Plans for each child and rigorously fulfill the Plan;
 - ✓ Improve the literacy development of our youngest children by providing effective family literacy programs;
 - ✓ Focus our preschool intervention programs, such as the four year old child development program, on children most at risk for later school failure;
- Provide for the health and safety of all our children, with special attention to children who currently lack access to care;
- Provide strong interventions to reduce the academic weaknesses of students entering high school.

What progress has been made in carrying out these recommended actions during the past year?

- The base student cost was fully funded for the 2005-2006 school year;
- Funding for summer school increased by almost 50%, from \$21 million to \$31 million;
- \$45 million were allocated for K-5 instructional improvement grants, and \$2 million were allocated for instructional improvement in grades 6 through 8;
- Beginning in Fall 2005, students entering 9th grade who scored below Proficient on the 8th grade PACT ELA test can participate in EAA summer school and/or in comprehensive remediation strategies;
- Efforts were made to improve student reading skills, including directing 25% of funds for professional development on the academic standards toward improving teachers' skills at teaching reading; expanding the Governor's Institute on Reading to include the high school grades; providing a special \$500,000 appropriation for high school reading; and including knowledge about the teaching of reading in the content of the Principal Executive Leadership Institute; and preliminary evaluation data from the South Carolina Reading Initiative indicated progress in reducing gaps in reading achievement;
- Development and expansion began of the Parents and Adults Inspiring Reading Success (PAIRS) program, a project of South Carolina's daily newspapers administered by the SC Education Oversight Committee which provides a supportive network for grassroots efforts to improve children's appreciation for and skills in reading;
- Family literacy programs are now required to have an intergenerational focus;

- The Education and Economic Development Act was passed to support students' motivation and purpose for successfully completing school through career development;
- State regulations on student attendance were revised to improve the identification of students truant from school, established categories of truancy based on the extent of school non-attendance, and more clearly defined actions to be taken, including judicial referral, to prevent and treat truancy;
- State regulations regarding programs for gifted and talented students provide for the disaggregation of data from students participating in these programs;
- No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Education Accountability Act increased the use of disaggregated test score and other data for decision making;
- NCLB provided for school choice and supplemental educational services for students attending schools failing to make adequate progress; and
- A wide variety of local community and school district efforts were undertaken, such as the African-American Community Achievement Network in Aiken, SC; single gender and magnet school programs in a number of school districts; and the development of freshmen academies for entering ninth graders in high schools.

These actions are encouraging, as is the increase in 2004 PACT performance for all groups, the reduction in gaps at the Basic or above performance level, and the increase in the number of schools recognized for reducing achievement gaps. However, not all the actions recommended in 2004 have been taken. In particular, the investments in K-12 education have not been matched in pre-school education or in children's health and safety, areas of great need and importance. Data from Voices for South Carolina's Children (2005) indicate that in the past year:

- 189,812 children in South Carolina live in poverty;
- 6,692 South Carolina children failed grades 1-3;
- 11,178 South Carolina children were victims of abuse or neglect;
- 128,764 South Carolina children had no health insurance;
- 21% of mothers of children in South Carolina did not graduate from high school;
- Less than 7% of child care centers in South Carolina are nationally accredited.

Further, this study found that achievement gaps were not effectively reduced at the Proficient or Advanced level. It is clear that we have a long way to go and that continued, focused efforts will be required to meet our goals for all students.

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