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ABSTRACT

The effects of current school reforms on teaching and learning for students at risk of educational failure were studied by examining systemic reform strategies in two large school districts, Montgomery County (Maryland) and Philadelphia (Pennsylvania). Montgomery County is implementing the "Success for Every Student" program, an educational policy that provides broad strategies and specific tasks for schools. Philadelphia began its "Children Achieving" agenda in 1995. Impacts of these reforms on Title I schoolwide programs, curriculum standards, assessment, professional development, and parental involvement were studied at the school/classroom and system levels. Student achievement trends were also examined. Overall, the case studies of Title I programs in these two districts indicate that the schools are making efforts to move toward systemic improvements. Standards are being taken seriously in both districts, and professional development is being emphasized. Flexibility at the school and classroom levels is allowing innovation in instructional strategies. However, parent involvement efforts should be increased in both districts. Test scores still present a less than positive picture of achievement in both districts, especially when scores are disaggregated by race and ethnicity; but given the newness of the reform efforts, it would be unfair to conclude that these districts have failed in their attempts to provide success for all students. An appendix contains a list of sources used in the study and a description of the components of the Philadelphia plan. (Contains 10 tables and 21 references.) (SLD)

Toward Systemic Reform in High-Poverty Schools: A Comparative Analysis of Two Large School Districts

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Introduction

The purpose of this research is to examine the effects of current school reforms on teaching and learning for students at risk of educational failure. In particular, we studied the impact of school reform on practices in Title I schoolwide programs. This research collected and analyzed information that connects local reforms to classroom learning in schools implementing Title I schoolwide programs. Our goal is to examine the impact of local reforms on the following practices in Title I schoolwide programs: resource allocation, teacher recruitment and professional development, collaboration between special program staff and regular teachers, inclusion practices, ability grouping within the classroom, use of outside resources, and curriculum design and textbook selection.

We pay particular attention to the extent to which Title I schoolwide programs are adopting "systemic reforms." According to O'Day and Smith (1993) most systemic reform strategies share a common purpose: to upgrade significantly the quality of the curriculum and instruction delivered to all children. To accomplish this goal, the reforms require major changes in the way states and local school systems make and implement policy. Three changes characterize an idealized version of the model of systemic reform:

1. *Curriculum frameworks* that establish what students should know and be able to do would provide direction and vision for significantly upgrading the quality of the content and instruction within all schools in the state.
2. *Alignment of state education policies* would provide a coherent structure to support schools in designing effective strategies for teaching the content of the frameworks to all their students.
3. Through a *restructured governance system*, schools would have the resources, flexibility, and responsibility to design and implement effective strategies for preparing their students to learn the content of the curriculum frameworks to a high level of performance.[1]

Using qualitative methods we will compare the "systemic" reform strategies in two large school districts, Montgomery County, MD and Philadelphia, PA, and look at their ability to improve schooling overall for all children. While Montgomery County implements *Success for Every Student*; Philadelphia began the *Children Achieving* reform in 1995. We are interested in the impact of systemwide reforms on the following practices in Title I schoolwide programs: curriculum standards, assessment, professional development, and parental involvement. Further, how do students, especially minority and low-income students fare under a new reform initiative? In this paper, we will examine the implementation of these "systemic" features in selected Title I schoolwide programs in the two districts at (1) the systemwide level and (2) the school/classroom levels. We also conduct preliminary analysis on student achievement trends in the two districts. This paper is based on data collected for the Laboratory Network Program of the Regional Educational Laboratory Program led by the Laboratory for Student Success at Temple University.

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[1]O'Day and Smith, 1993, *Systemic reform and educational opportunity*, p. 251.

Two Large School Districts in Perspective

One may ask how can one compare two school districts like Montgomery County and Philadelphia. Montgomery County, located on the border of the District of Columbia, is one of the largest counties in Maryland. Its population of 757,027 is affluent with a median household income of $59,652 and well-educated, of the persons 25 years and older 90.6% have at least a high school diploma and 49.9% are college graduates. The population of Philadelphia (1,585,577) has a median household income of $26,854, 64.3% of those 25 years and older have a high school diploma and only 15.2% are college graduates. Even based on poverty estimates 5.4 percent of Montgomery County's population is in poverty versus 23.8% of Philadelphia's population. See Table 1 for a more detailed comparison of the two communities.

However, Montgomery County (MCPS) has a school system with many of the same problems facing older urban schools systems like Philadelphia. In 1983 about one in eight students were eligible for the Free and Reduced-price Meals program, while in 1997 one in four students were eligible for this program. In 1983 3,500 students enrolled in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program, while in 1997 the number had increased to 7,600, making MCPS the school system with over half of the ESOL students in the state.[2] Additionally, Jones and Hill (1997) state that Montgomery County has: (1) A teaching staff that is not fully equipped or trained to effectively teach a diverse student population in the 1990s, (2) Less than adequate parental involvement, especially among poor and minority parents, and (3) Less than adequate infrastructure, i.e., overcrowded or deteriorated buildings.[3]

To address many of these problems the Montgomery County Public schools (MCPS) adopted a new educational policy called *Success for Every Student* in 1992. The plan provides broad strategies together with specific tasks for schools, central administrative offices and other departments, parents and communities designed to concentrate attention on the achievement of specific outcome measures. Special and critical emphasis is placed upon addressing the needs of low- to average-achieving African American, Native American, Asian American and Latino students, as well as students with limited English proficiency and special needs. The strategies and tasks are organized to support a vision statement of four specific and succinct goals: (1) Ensure Success for Every Student, (2) Provide an Effective Instructional Program, (3) Strengthen Productive Partnerships for Education, and (4) Create a Positive Work Environment in a Self-renewing organization.

Three years later in 1995 Superintendent David Hornbeck introduced the *Children Achieving* agenda to the Philadelphia School District. The *Children Achieving* Action Design charts a four and one-half year course that is organized around ten components that are similar to

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[2]Montgomery County Public Schools, 1998, *Success for every student plan: A strategic plan for the MCPS future*, p. 7.

[3]Jones and Hill, 1997, *Strategy and tactics in subsystem protection: The politics of education reform in Montgomery County, Maryland*, p. 2.

the goals, strategies and outcomes of the *Success for Every Student* plan. Philadelphia hopes to be the first urban school system to have *all* of its children succeed.

Table 1.
DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD AND PHILADELPHIA, PA
Based on 1990 US Census Data[1]

	Montgomery County		Philadelphia	
Total population	757,027		1,585,577	
Median household income[2]	$59,652		$26,854	
Persons 25 years and over	512,839		1,024,833	
Race	**Number**	**Percentage**	**Number**	**Percentage**
White	548,453	72.45%	825,839	52.08%
Black	89,184	11.78%	623,510	39.32%
Hispanic	55,684	7.36%	89,193	5.63%
Asian or Pacific Islander	60,972	8.05%	42,156	2.66%
American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut	1618	0.21%	3144	.20%
Other Race	1116	0.15%	1735	.11%
Poverty Estimates[2] (Population as of July 1996)	**Number**	**Percentage**	**Number**	**Percentage**
People of all ages in poverty	44,078	5.4	351,002	23.8
People under age 18 in poverty	15,252	7.5	141,134	37.4
Related children age 5-17 in families in poverty	9,249	6.6	94,622	36.1
Educational Attainment[3] (based on persons 25 years and over)	**Number**	**Percentage**	**Number**	**Percentage**
High school graduates	464,632	90.6%	658,968	64.3%
College graduates	255,907	49.9%	155,775	15.2%

[1]Source: 1990 US Census Data, Database C90STF1A, unless otherwise indicated.
[2]Source: Bureau of the Census, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates Program
[3]Source: US Bureau of the Census, USA Counties 1996 CD-ROM

Research Design

This study gathered three kinds of information: (1) school-level data by interviewing twice during the academic year district-level administrators, principals, and teachers from selected sites that are implementing Title I reforms; (2) student-level data, including individual achievement test scores in reading and mathematics and socioeconomic data; and (3) district-level information on the implementation of Title I programs and reforms initiatives.

First, our research staff made site visits to schoolwide program sites in Philadelphia and Montgomery County and collected school and classroom data on the implementation of reform

and the effect of reform on Title I schoolwide programs. At each site, project staff interviewed and/or surveyed the principal, program coordinators for Title I services, reading specialists, instructional aides, and classroom teachers. Classroom observations were also conducted. Particular attention was given to instructional practices, curriculum, and resource allocation patterns. Project staff also reviewed other efforts by the school staff to improve academic achievement, including better coordination of Title I resources and other categorical funds. Each participating school was scheduled for a day-long site visitation. Interviews with principals and teachers varied from thirty minutes to one hour and were scheduled to accommodate teachers and principals' schedules. Confidentiality of interviewees is guaranteed.

Second, the student-level data includes individual test scores in reading and mathematics, socioeconomic data, and participation in Title I programs for all elementary students in the district. We plan to collect this information for the four years of the project. Confidentiality of all student information is guaranteed. We will not identify individual students or their schools. Data will be reported at the aggregate level and disaggregated by school and race/ethnic group.

Third, we reviewed the district's public documents on federal Title I, briefly interviewed district administrators about Title I programs, and gathered information on Title I program funding. (See Table A in the Appendix for a list of sources used in this paper.)

Data Collection

We have been studying three schools (School A, School B, and School C)[4] in Montgomery County that have been implementing Title I schoolwide programs since 1995. School A has a predominately African American and Latino population. School B and C have a predominately Latino population. Our research in the school district began in September of 1997 with a brief visit to each of the schools to meet the principals, to become familiar with the community and to visit the school district's accountability office. Since that time only School A and School B were visited twice for data collection in November, 1997 and all three schools were visited in March, 1998.

In Philadelphia four inner-city elementary schools (Frank, Jane, George and Lucy) were selected to be analyzed and compared, each one from a different cluster. Selection was based on socio-economic characteristics of the schools to represent the diversity in Philadelphia's School District.[5] One school in the study has a predominately Hispanic population, another has a significant LEP population. The two remaining schools are predominately African-American.

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[4]To insure confidentiality pseudonyms have been used for all schools in the two districts.

[5]The selection process for the schools in Montgomery County was different from the process for Philadelphia. Montgomery County only has four schools that are using Title I funds schoolwide. Three of those schools were used in this study.

Researchers visited these four schools and their respective cluster offices[6] to conduct staff interviews and classroom observations in May 1996, November 1996, May 1997, and February 1998. We did not visit Lucy in February 1998.

Background Information

Tables 2 and 3 provide detailed information about the schools and districts[7]. Information is also provided about state enrollment. As of September 1998 MCPS had 185 schools and Philadelphia had 261 schools. It is important to note that overall the three schools in Montgomery County have a significantly higher special services population, with the exception of percent special education, than the district and the state of Maryland. Additionally, while whites make up over 50% of the district and state school population, they make up approximately 7.8% of the student population at School A, 15.4% of the population at School B, and 12.2% of the population at School C. These percentages are more representative of the school population in Philadelphia. However, the schools in Philadelphia are much more disadvantaged than the schools in MCPS.

Further, based on 1994-95 fiscal data (Table 3) Philadelphia's per pupil expenditure was $2,000 less than that of MCPS. This can be explained by the fact that a majority (approximately 80%) of MCPS revenues come from the local government and as stated in the beginning of this paper the median income in Montgomery County is $59,000 opposed to Philadelphia's $26,000. Stated simply Montgomery County is a wealthier school district. Overall, Montgomery County's schools are far more racially integrated than schools in the nation as a whole; and the average student achievement for all racial groups exceeds national averages. However, there is a continuing disparity between the school performance of some African American, Latino, Asian American, and Native American and White students. And the overall achievement of the students in these three schools is significantly lower than that of the district. We will explore these disparities later in the paper.

Title I Programs

In order to analyze the impact of the reform initiatives on the schools, it is necessary to understand the scope, goals, and operations of the federal Title I schoolwide programs in Montgomery County and Philadelphia.

In the Philadelphia School District, a majority of the schools are Title I schools. Presently, two-thirds of all of Philadelphia's 261 schools receive Title I funding. During the 1996-1997 school year, these schools collectively received 78.9 million dollars in federal Title I funding. This funding has allowed these schools to employ 1,900 staff persons to provide instructional and

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[6] One of the strategies of the *Children Achieving* agenda was to decentralize the school district by reorganizing schools into 22 clusters. Each cluster consists of elementary, middle and senior high schools.

[7] For the purpose of this paper we will focus only on public school enrollment.

support services to over 131,000 students (School District of Philadelphia, 1996-97). Since 1988, Philadelphia schools with high proportions of at-risk students eligible for federal Title I aid began receiving their funding as schoolwide programs. This schoolwide opportunity allows schools to use Title I funds for all children in the school. As of 1996-1997, all 169 of Philadelphia's Title I schools were schoolwide programs.[8]

In the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) the Title I program receives approximately 58% of its funds from the federal government, 21% from the state, and 21% from the county.[9] As of the 1997-98 school year there were 58 schools in MCPS eligible to receive Title I funds. Of those 58, only four schools use the funds schoolwide.[10] Title I resources are allocated to the eligible schools based on an educational load formula that "weighs" the following four factors[11]:

- The percentage of students approved for free and reduced price meals in each Title I eligible school;
- The actual number of free and/or reduced price lunch students enrolled in the school as of October 31;
- The percentage of students receiving ESOL services in each eligible school; and
- The mobility rate of the school's population.

As stated above and shown in Table 2 the three schools in this study exceed the county and the state in percentage of students with limited English proficiency, receiving Title I, and receiving Free/Reduced Lunch. According to a Title I staff person[12] in Montgomery County schools are awarded two additional instructional assistant (I.A.) hours if they have an Limited English (ESOL) population higher than 11% and four additional hours if the population is higher than 20%. Any school above the average mobility rate of 26.4% is awarded two additional I.A. hours

[8]Wong and Brown (1998), p. 7-8.

[9]From MCPS' "Education a Quality Investment," 1998.

[10]In schools with schoolwide programs, all students enrolled are counted as Title I participates, as indicated in Table 2.

[11]From MCPS "Title I Handbook for Teachers and Instructional Assistants."

[12]From November 1997 interview.

Table 2.	School Information Select Schools, School Districts and States										
	Montgomery County, Maryland					Philadelphia, Pennsylvania					
	Schools			*District*	*State*	*Schools*				*District*	*State*
	School A	**School B**	**School C**	**Montgomery County**	**Maryland**	**George**	**Jane**	**Lucy**	**Frank**	**Philadelphia**	**Pennsylvania**
Student Enrollment	269	764	590	125,023	818,583	380	409	1020	794	213,850	1,815,151
Grade Levels	3-6	Pre K-5	Pre K-2	K-12	K-12	K-4	K-5	K-8	K-4	K-12	K-12
Number Full Time Staff	22.1	52.2	40.8	6982.7 (ave = 38.4)	47,943	43	42	76	58	11,049.4 ave = 42.7	106,432 ave = missing
Population of Students Served											
African American	38.3%	28.5%	28.8%	19.8%	35.6%	98.2%	99.5%	81.8%	37.8%	64%	14.2%
Asian	14.5%	6.3%	12.7%	12.6%	3.9%	0.5%	0.0%	16.1%	0.8%	5%	1.8%
Latino	39.4%	49.5%	47.1%	12.5%	3.5%	0.2%	0.2%	0.7%	60.6%	11%	3.7%
Native American	0.0%	0.3%	0.2%	.36%	.31%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	not reported	.10%
White	7.8%	15.4%	12.2%	54.7%	56.7%	0.5%	0.2%	1.3%	0.9%	20%	80.1%
Special Services											
Limited English	19.7%	26.0%	40.6%	6.4%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.4%	4.8%	4.0%	Missing
Title I	100%	100%	100%	3.7%	13.1%	99.0%	83.0%	95%	44.0%	Missing	Missing
Free/Reduced Lunch	81.7%	70.2	75.7%	22.4%	30.9%	96.0%	95.9%	90.6%	96.3%	80.0%	22%
Special Education	13.3%	9.3%	5.5%	11.8%	12.2%	0.7%	1.5%	2.8%	2.7%	11.0%	Missing

SOURCES:
Special Services information from MCPS School Performance Report, 1998, MCPS website

School
All other information provided by schools.

District
Race information based on NCES Common Core of Data Agency Universe, 1996-97.

State
Information taken from the NCES Common Core of Data State Nonfiscal, 1996-97

SOURCES:
School
Raw data provided by the district 1995-96 and information provided by the schools.

District
Race and special services information from "A Citizen's Guide to Philadelphia School Budget, Philadelphia Campaign for Public Education, 1997-98.
Grade level information from NCES Common Core of Data Public Elementary and Secondary Universe, 1996-97.

State
Race information based on NCES Common Core of Data Agency Universe, 1996-97.

Table 3.
Revenues by source, Current expenditures, and Current expenditures per pupil for the districts: Fiscal Year 1995

	Montgomery County		Philadelphia	
Total Enrollment Fall 1994	117,082		208,710	
Current expenditures per pupil	7,813		4,785	
Revenues and expenditures, 1994-95 (in thousands of dollars)				
Revenues, by source	**Amount**	**Percentage**	**Amount**	**Percentage**
Total	$1,057,931		1,389,214	
Federal	29,312	2.77%	163,445	11.76%
State	190,634	18.02%	684,446	49.27%
Local	837,985	79.21%	541,323	38.97%
Current expenditures	**Amount**	**Percentage**	**Amount**	**Percentage**
Total	914,754		1,065,286	
Instructional[1]	584,113	63.85%	560,358	52.6%

[1]Instructional expenditures are current expenditures for activities directly associated with the interaction between teachers and students. These include teacher salaries and benefits, supplies (such as textbooks), and purchased instructional services.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1995, *1995 Annual Survey of Local Government Finances: School Systems.*

Systemwide Level: Major Components of the Reform Initiatives

In addition to offering school districts more flexibility and authority in the use of Title I funds, the 1994 Re-authorization of Title I legislation "established the principle that Title I students will be taught to the same high standards as other children, and evaluates the performance of Title I schools and students using the same state standards and assessments that apply to all children"[13]. High standards for all children and "all children can learn" fall in line with the reform initiatives of each of the school districts. They are also the key assumptions of the systemic reform movement. These assumptions are supported by recent psychological theory and research that finds that all children engage in complex (higher-order) thinking tasks [and] "dumbing down" the material for the "disadvantaged" represents a clear denial of their opportunity to learn challenging material of the curriculum.[14] Table 4 provides a comparison of the reform initiatives. A complete listing of the ten components of Philadelphia's *Children Achieving* agenda can be found in the Appendix, Table B.

We will compare the reform initiatives of the two districts along four areas: standards,

[13]School District of Philadelphia, *1996-97, Title I informational tickler file: An implementation guide for the Children Achieving educational plan and Title I initiatives*, p. 1.

[14]O'Day & Smith, 1993, *Systemic Reform and Educational Opportunity*, p. 264.

assessment, professional development, and partnership, with emphasis on reading and mathematics. These are the overlapping components of each plan and we will analyze how they affect teaching and learning for all students in the district and individual schools. We will focus on the elementary grades.

Table 4.	MAJOR COMPONENTS OF THE TWO REFORM INITIATIVES	
Name	***Success for Every Student* Plan** Montgomery County	***Children Achieving* Action Plan** Philadelphia
Adopted	January 6, 1992	February 6, 1995
Design	The plan provides broad strategies together with specific tasks for schools, central administrative offices and other departments, parents and communities. It identifies specific outcomes for student achievement among all racial/ethnic groups and provides a systemwide focus and direction. Furthermore, the plan provides an accountability element to ensure the full and successful completion of each responsibility.	The plan delineates the steps for four and one-half years (starting from 1995) to lead the city's public school children into the 21st century confident of the future. Its comprehensive scope ranges from the new high standards our students must meet to compete in our global economy to the additional time our teachers will need to prepare students to meet those standards; and from the implementation of full-day kindergarten and smaller class sizes to the reorganization of the entire School District.
Goals/Components		
Belief that all students can and will achieve at high levels.[1]	**Ensure Success for Every Student** Provide the services and environment each student needs for intellectual challenge and social and emotional development. Each student will be able to communicate effectively, obtain and use information, solve problems, and engage in active, life-long learning. (Goal 1)	**Set high expectation for everyone.** The challenge we face is both inside and outside the schoolhouse door. It is about high expectation for us all. The first component of Children Achieving does not apply just to students. High Expectations calls on all of us to perform significantly better and differently than we have been performing. (Component 1)
Standards and Assessment	**Provide an Effective Instructional Program** Teach all students a curriculum that describes what they should know and be able to do, includes the many perspectives of a pluralistic society, and establishes learning standards. Instruction must include a variety of teaching strategies and technologies, actively involve students, and result in their mastery of learning objectives. (Goal 2)	**Set high expectations for everyone** (Component 1) **Design accurate performance indicators to hold everyone accountable for results.** At the end of the day, we can claim success only if students are successful in knowing and are able to do what they must to function effectively as good citizens and productive workers. We have failed if that does not occur. (Component 2)
Professional Development	**Create a Positive Work Environment in a Self-Renewing Organization** Develop a climate in which staff effectiveness and creativity are encouraged, respected, valued and supported to promote productivity and ownership for student success. Provide efficient and effective support and staff development for the instructional program. (Goal 4)	**Provide intensive and sustained professional development to all staff.** Professional development must be intensive and sustained. It will involve observing good practice, practicing good practice, being coached in good practice, reflecting on good practice and repeating the process. Professional development will be structured so that it does not rely on sitting occasionally at the feet of experts in workshops. It will emphasize building skill and knowledge teacher to teacher, being informed from time to time by both the opportunity to observe exemplary practice and to benefit from experts. (Component 4)

Table 4.	MAJOR COMPONENTS OF THE TWO REFORM INITIATIVES	
Name	***Success for Every Student* Plan** Montgomery County	***Children Achieving* Action Plan** Philadelphia
Partnerships	**Strengthen Productive Partnerships for Education** Secure commitment of the entire community to maintain quality education in Montgomery County by building partnerships of families, community, business and staff that promote and support initiatives to help all children succeed. (Goal 3)	**Provide students with the community supports and services they need to succeed in school.** Community services and supports can make the difference between success and failure. Children who are unhealthy, hungry, abused, ill-house, ill-clothed or otherwise face the kinds of problems outside the school born of poverty will not achieve at high levels. Therefore it is imperative that initiatives be dramatically expanded to provide the necessary services and supports to reduce the impact of these major barriers to learning. (Component 6) **Engage the public in shaping, understanding, supporting and participating in school reform.** Absent public understanding and support in both the neighborhoods and the boardrooms, we cannot provoke change in the first place nor sustain it into the future. (Component 8) **Make sure that all students are ready for school.** How civilized a country is can be determined by how it treats its young children. In partnership with other city and private agencies, we will approach the challenge in new and bold ways. Only by reducing the barriers that are built by inadequate support in the early years will we ensure a generation of young people who can maintain the economic and civic strengths that have made this nation great. (Component 5)

[1] Including those from low-income families, racial and language minorities, students with disabilities, and other populations.

SOURCES:
School District of Montgomery County, *Success for Every Student* Plan: Vision and Goals, Outcomes, Strategies and Assessment, 1994.
School District of Philadelphia, Action Design *Children Achieving*, 1995

Standards - High Expectations

Philadelphia. The underlying premise of Philadelphia's *Children Achieving* plan is the standard "that all children can and will achieve at high levels." The school district has created content and performance standards that apply to all students in the district. The Philadelphia academic content standards and cross-cutting competencies tell what students should know and be able to do in and across all the subject areas.[15] They were approved by the Philadelphia Board of Education in September 1997. The standards tell what subject-specific knowledge and skills student should have, and benchmarks describe the general knowledge, skills, and concepts that students should know by the end of grades 4, 8, and 11 in order to achieve the broader standards. Cross-cutting competencies are common to all learning and should be integrated throughout all subject areas. They represent skills and awareness such as Communication, Technology,

[15]School District of Philadelphia, *Standards-Driven Instruction - School District of Philadelphia Curriculum Framework*, www.philsch.k12.pa.us, March 1999.

Problem-Solving, Citizenship, School-to-Career, and Multicultural Competence.[16]

As guidelines for using the standards Philadelphia presented its Curriculum Frameworks to the teachers (the second edition is now available online) in February 1998. The frameworks (divided by grade level into a K-4 book, a 5-8 book, and a 9-12 book) explain what students should know and be able to do at each grade, give examples of what work the students can be doing to help them obtain these skills, include strategies for assessing the students' work, and name recommended resources and books, as well as instructional strategies, teachers can use in their classrooms.[17]

At the elementary level, the framework advises that reading should be taught to children at their instructional level (i.e., the level at which the child can best profit from instruction. This is the level at which the child can read aloud with 90-94% accuracy, and comprehend 75% of the information or story. This may be determined through retellings, running records, and Informal Reading Inventories). The framework cautions teachers and administrators against feeling pressured to instruct children with materials designated for a particular grade level before children acquire requisite skills and strategies to use them effectively. Other content area materials at grade level are expected to be part of each classroom's daily instruction through a shared reading experience.[18]

The mathematics frameworks map the specific concepts and skills embedded in benchmarks for every grade level and every course. These documents also include examples of student work for each grade level and course. Most of the performance tasks can be used to assess what students know and can do. Some are appropriate for use in group work and others are projects which may cover several class periods or even weeks. Many have been designed to involve more than one of the standards or cross-cutting competencies. Suggested instructional and assessment strategies, along with resources and best practices, are also presented to support teachers implementing the standards in their classrooms.[19]

Montgomery County. Montgomery County's *Success for Every Student* (SES) plan is three years older than Philadelphia's reform initiative, yet it is not as detailed. The underlying premise is similar to that in Philadelphia - all children can learn and schools are ethically responsible to teach all children. The 1992 plan provides broad strategies together with specific tasks for schools, central administrative offices and other departments, parents and communities designed to concentrate attention on the achievement of twelve specific outcome measures. The 1998 updated plan and draft material expands and redefines the strategic goals of the plan. The

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[16]School District of Philadelphia, *Standards-Driven Instruction - School District of Philadelphia Curriculum Framework*, www.philsch.k12.pa.us, March 1999.

[17]School District of Philadelphia, *Standards-Driven Instruction - School District of Philadelphia Curriculum Framework*, www.philsch.k12.pa.us, October 1998.

[18]Ibid.

[19]School District of Philadelphia, *Standards-Driven Instruction - School District of Philadelphia Curriculum Framework*, www.philsch.k12.pa.us, October 1998.

four goals of the plan, as shown in Table 4, have not been changed but attempts have been made to make it more of a long-range plan.

The updated plan provides ways to build synergy between continuous improvement and community collaboration. This plan presents an expansive perspective on the role of all students, staff, and community members in ensuring success for every student and places a high value on shared responsibility of staff and the community for student success.[20] The plan provides a high level of flexibility while maintaining a sharp focus on outcomes and key results.

The MCPS Instructional Program in Reading/Language Arts and English is based on current research about language, language learning, and effective instruction, and addresses both content and process.[21] In mathematics the Instructional System in Mathematics (ISM) is used which provides teachers with: (1) a consistent description of learning outcomes, (2) tests to provide approximate starting points, (3) resources to support the individual instructional planning of teachers, (4) consistent assessment recommendations for judging student progress, and (5) reports to show student achievement in various formats for communication and planning purposes.[22]

Assessment

Both school districts recognized the dangers of over-reliance on multiple choice and nationally-normed tests and turned to criterion-referenced or performance-based assessments. These assessments measure how students are faring against a high standard, as well as pay attention to the needs of students of diverse language backgrounds.

Philadelphia. In 1996 the Philadelphia school district discontinued the use of the California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) in favor of the Stanford Achievement Test, ninth edition (SAT-9). The test meshes with the district's emphasis on standards-driven instruction and performance assessment. The district also implements a Spanish language test called the Spanish Language Aprenda, Second Edition. Philadelphia was the first large urban school district to adopt the SAT-9 test. The SAT-9 retains multiple-choice questions but also includes what are called "open-ended" questions. These require students to construct an answer that might involve writing or drawing a chart or graph. These questions typically require the student to analyze information, make inferences and draw conclusions. Instead of being graded simply right or wrong, the SAT-9's open-ended questions are graded according to a detailed scoring guide. Typically a group of educators create a scoring guide that includes a working standard for

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[20]Montgomery County Public Schools, *Success for every student plan: A strategic plan for the MCPS future*, p. 7.

[21]Montgomery County Public Schools, *Reading/Language Arts & English*, www.mcps.k12.md.us/curriculum/english, March, 1999.

[22]Montgomery County Public Schools, *General Overview of ISM*, www.mcps.k12.md.us/schools/stonegatees/ism, March, 1999.

determining degrees of proficiency in the skill being measured.[23]

Philadelphia also has an incentive system based directly on the performance of students and schools. The Professional Responsibility Index sets targets every two years which will bring every school to high levels of achievement in one student generation (12 years). A score of 95 is the twelve year target. Schools are not compared to other schools. Each school is compared against its own baseline performance over time. The plan provides penalties and rewards for schools depending on SAT-9 test scores, promotion rates and attendance. This plan has been met with many objections from the Teachers' Union. School progress in Philadelphia is measured in two-year intervals. The first cycle spans September 1996 through June 1998.

Montgomery County. The accountability component of MCPS' plan includes outcomes for students that focuses on Goals 1 and 2: to ensure success for every student and to provide an effective instructional program. As of June 1998 there were no outcomes that focus on Goals 3 and 4.[24] The two outcomes that we will look at in this paper are Outcome11or K: Increase the percentage of students each year who meet the Montgomery County Public Schools criterion-referenced test proficiency levels so that within five years all racial groups in the *system* meet the standards; and Outcome 12 or L: Increase the percentage of students each year who meet the Montgomery County Public Schools criterion-referenced test proficiency levels so that within five years all racial groups in the *school* meet the standards. The standard for individual student performance in MCPS is a high level of proficiency. The standard for individual school performance is that 75% to 100% of eligible students taking the test meet the individual student standard by 1999. The standard for school system performance is that 100% of the schools administering the tests have 75% to 100% of the eligible students meeting the individual student standard by 1999.[25]

According to the MCPS Assessment booklet "the CRTs closely match what is taught in the classrooms and give students different ways of showing what they know. These test also allow students to demonstrate what they have learned in solving real problems." They were first administered in Spring 1994. In 1997 the math CRT was expanded to include an open-ended section. This new section is more difficult than the multiple-choice questions that have been used since 1994. The standard for the multiple-choice section has been raised in Grades 3, 4, and 5. These changes were made to produce higher student achievement, provide greater prediction of future success, and allow for earlier intervention for students performing below standards.[26]

Professional Development

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[23]Philadelphia Public School Notebook, 1997, p.5.

[24]Montgomery County Public Schools, 1998, *Success for every student plan: A strategic plan for the MCPS future*, p. 5.

[25]Montgomery County Public Schools, 1997, *Annual Report on the systemwide outcome measures: Success for every student plan.*

[26]Montgomery County Public Schools, 1997, *Annual Report on the systemwide outcome measures: Success for every student plan.*

Each district realizes that one cannot expect all students to achieve at high standards without providing teachers and other school staff with the training and tools they need to teach the standards. In Philadelphia the school district provides the resources equivalent to twenty (20) days for all school-based teachers, administrators and staff, in support of the District's commitment to the capacity development of School District personnel. "Resources equivalent to days" signifies the cost of providing a substitute teacher for professional staff. For paraprofessional and non-instructional staff, it means the cost of providing a substitute in their job title."[27] Schools have a network of people who provide support in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The network of people -- Teaching and Learning Coordinator, Teaching and Learning facilitators and Equity Coordinator -- come from the Cluster Office. There are after school and Saturday paid workshops about curriculum. As part of the *Success for Every Student* reform four or five days are set aside for professional development in addition to the training and workshops that schools and teachers choose to participate in.

Partnerships

The school districts of Philadelphia and Montgomery County have made great efforts to involve parents and the community in the schools. Some of the efforts include strategies that link students and families with needed health and social service supports, link schools with at least one community based organization, recruit volunteers in the schools.

Reform at the School and Classroom Levels

In this section, we examine how teachers and principals implement the reforms. At the school and classroom level is where we see if the reform initiatives are being successfully implemented.

Philadelphia. Earlier studies of the implementation of the *Children Achieving* agenda showed evidence that the program's introduction was met with considerable confusion and resistance at the sub-District level and school level.[28] At the school level there were reports that the teachers and principals felt overloaded and while schools were expected to begin implementing many components of the new reform program simultaneously, surveys showed that in reality, schools only focused on starting one or two initiatives at a time, weaving them into existing programs.[29] At the classroom level, activities were shaped by strategies in place before *Children Achieving*; "the new reforms were simply added on top of earlier initiatives."[30] In the second year of the Philadelphia initiative teachers, principals, and Teaching and Learning

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[27]School District of Philadelphia, 1995, *Children Achieving* Action Design, p. IV-2.

[28]Wong and Brown, 1998, *The implementation of two reform programs in Philadelphia: Lessons learned from Children Achieving and Title I schoolwide strategies,* p. 4.

[29]Wong and Brown, 1998, *The implementation of two reform programs in Philadelphia: Lessons learned from Children Achieving and Title I schoolwide strategies,* p. 4.

[30]Wong and Sunderman, 1997, *The effects of local reform on Title I schoolwide programs in Philadelphia,* p. 8.

Coordinators[31], and school staff reported that new curriculum and assessment priorities were beginning to be integrated into activities of professional development, planning sessions, lesson plans, instruction, assessment, and testing at the school and classroom level.[32]

When we visited the schools during the third year of the reform and asked how schools applied state- and district-wide standards we were informed that the Curriculum Frameworks had recently been introduced to the teachers. One teacher from the Jane school mentioned the Frameworks as the curriculum she used with students. She said that "there is flexibility in the use of the curriculum . . . . It is fabulous. I use a lot of the suggestions."[33] Another teacher at that same school said that the standards are the same for all students. "There is no lower benchmark."[34] In fact there is a reminder in the *Children Achieving* School Plan (the school improvement plan) that "whatever instructional strategies and assessments that are developed for regular education students should be reflected through adapted instruction and assessments for special education students." Sections of each school improvement plan are devoted to strategies for implementing standards-driven instruction/assessment in reading/language arts and mathematics and other components of the reform initiative.

Principals at George and Frank stated that the overall vision for their school was to have *all* children reading on grade level. This was also an evident vision at Jane as seen through interviews and classroom observations. The schools varied on the strategies used to implement this goal. Jane used "story mapping, story re-telling (one of the strategies of the curriculum frameworks), Venn diagrams (graphic organizers), meta-cognition strategies, word maps, open-ended questions, vocabulary awareness, performance tasks and writing journals"[35] to teach children. The schools integrate reading in all subject areas. George uses the Houghton-Mifflin Program to incorporate writing, math, science and social studies in every lesson. A schoolwide journal writing program was added to the program during the 1997-98 school year.[36] Thematic units are used to integrate reading in all subject areas at Frank. An example of some of these strategies and other strategies used at the schools are seen at Frank during observation of a third grade reading lesson.

> Students continue reading "Sing Little Sack" Canto Saquito!. The teacher reviews what they did last time which was using the skill of **predicting**. She asks the class what is predicting. A student responds. The task for the day is **story retelling** and **sequencing**. She asks them what is

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[31]The Teaching and Learning Network is designed to provide cluster support to teachers for improving instructional strategies and to assist learning communities and schools to develop instructional programs. The Network includes a coordinator and six to eight facilitators for each cluster. The Network is structured to train selected teachers and principals from each school, who then provide turn-around training in the schools. It also provides staff development on such things as the development of small learning communities, team building, and the implementation of standards. (Wong & Sunderman, 1997, p. 18-19)

[32]Wong and Brown, p. 18.

[33]From interview with 3rd grade teacher from Jane, February 1998.

[34]From interview with 5th grade teacher from Jane, February 1998.

[35]From interview with Reading Resource Teacher at Jane, February 1998.

[36]From George's School Improvement Plan, 1997-98.

sequencing and a student responds. Teacher asks students where the story takes place. A student responds - Puerto Rico. Teacher asks students to find Puerto Rico on the map that was handed out earlier [integration of reading with social studies]. She asks them what bodies of waters are north and south of Puerto Rico. Two students respond correctly. The teacher writes on the board as different students give her the sequence of events in the story. After they are finished there are eight sentences on the board which the teacher asks students to read. Books are handed out and they begin reading where they left off in the story. Since part of the story is in Spanish the Spanish speaking students read those parts of the story. Students raise their hands and are called on to read. The teacher walks around the room to see that other students are following along with the reader. They reach a stopping point in the story and the teacher asks them to write down what they predict will happen next.[37]

The focus area for Lucy during the 1997-98 school year was mathematics based on their SAT-9 scores. Grades 2-8 are using the Jumping Levels as an ongoing program for assessment and for basic fact practice.[38] Jane's math program for grades 1 through 5 including Special Education addresses the math standards and emphasizes problem solving with a problem of the day with use of the text *Exploring Mathematics*. Problem solving activities, performance-based assessments, and the extensive use of manipulatives are common strategies throughout all four schools. The principal at Jane reported that the main thrust for the year was performance-based standards. She said that "the school's vision is tied into our performance index. We had two years to improve performance by 10% in SAT-9, promotion, and attendance. We were able to reach it in one year."[39] Improving critical thinking skills seems to be a common thread for all schools. All schools use small group instruction, particularly for students with special needs, and cooperative learning to assist in reading and mathematics.

During the 1997-98 there was a lot of staff development around the Curriculum Frameworks and the Comprehensive Support Process (formerly the Pupil Support Team). The Comprehensive Support Process implements the Children Achieving agenda and is a two tiered system with the goal of "creating a bridge of support services that meet the needs of all students in the least restrictive environment."[40] There was a workshop on the Standards for all teachers citywide the previous summer. The principal at George school said that professional development is very rich at her school and many take advantage of it. "I encourage teachers to take observation days where they visit other schools and look at teachers who are doing innovative things in their classrooms."[41] Teachers and other staff also participated in a lot of training geared toward the reading and mathematics strategies mentioned earlier.

Professional development is the main job of the Teaching and Learning Network (TLN). They are responsible for doing training on how to use the curriculum frameworks and how to set

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[37]From third grade classroom observation at Frank, February 1998.
[38]From Lucy's School Improvement Plan, 1998-98/99.
[39]From interview with principal from Jane, February 1998.
[40]School District of Philadelphia, *Implementing the Comprehensive Support Process: An overview*, p. 15.
[41]From interview with principal from George, February 1998.

up small learning communities. "Professional development is a big piece, direct classroom support: workshops at schools and cluster level, facilitate meetings within schools, grade groups."[42] The TLN Coordinators work with schools to determine the type of professional development for the year. Many teachers and principals mentioned training provided by the TLN as being key for that year.

In Philadelphia the formation of small learning communities is a very important strategy of the *Children Achieving* Agenda. These learning communities serve 200 to 500 students. In most schools, there are more than one small learning community. They are heterogeneous and committed to enabling all students to achieve rigorous standards. Learning communities are accountable for student outcomes and have decision-making authority commensurate with that responsibility.[43] Most learning communities are formed around a particular theme like cultural diversity or technology. Each of the schools we visited had two small learning communities. The SLCs were frequently mentioned as one of the most positive aspects of the *Children Achieving* agenda and several teachers reported that it gave them more time to plan with other teachers and share instructional strategies, time that was not specifically organized for that before.[44] Some teachers and principals expressed frustration at the difficulties of regrouping hundreds or students, rearranging teaching schedules, and re-coordinating instruction time.[45]

An increase in parental involvement is needed in each of the schools. The job of the Home and Schooling Coordinator (a position that is funded by Title I) is to work with parents. During the school year Jane was preparing a workshop on what parents should expect to help their children. One of the goals of the School Council is to plan more effective workshops for parents that revolve around the standards, performance assessments, and preparation for the SAT-9.[46] All schools have volunteers come into the schools to listen to the students read. Parents and grandparents volunteer their time during "Families and Reading Month" to read to small groups of children at George and Community Assistants work with children to become better readers at Frank. At Jane volunteers from Americorp work with children who need more support in math and basic skills.

Montgomery County. Schools develop their own tasks and specific objectives for achieving the system goals in the form of the *Success for Every Student* School Improvement Plan (SESP). The plan consists of reading/language arts, mathematics, and pupil service area objectives. In MCPS when asked what was the school's vision and goals each teacher and principal interviewed stated several aspects of the district educational policy *Success for Every Student* and their local school plan. However, staff at School B additionally stated that their focus for the 1997-98 school year was writing across the curriculum. This focus was repeated in

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[42]From interview with Teaching and Learning Coordinator for Frank, February 1998.
[43]School District of Philadelphia, *Children Achieving* Agenda.
[44]Wong and Brown, p. 22.
[45]Wong and Brown, p. 23.
[46]From George's School Improvement Plan, 1997-98.

interviews and witnessed in classroom observations at the school. For example,

- During a reading lesson in November students edit a paragraph using the overhead projector and handouts. The teacher tells students that the purpose of the assignment is to help improve students' writing.
- In the math class for this same teacher students use blocks and mats for regrouping and subtraction and the teacher has them write down each step.
- The principal also cites examples of walking into classrooms and seeing students working with manipulatives like letters and writing down what they are doing.
- Students use graphic organizers to complete a research project on animals in a lesson integrating reading, writing and social studies.
- Another teacher in the same school says "I incorporate it [writing] in math for example or science we keep journals. They have their entries everyday and whatever they answer in complete sentences. And we have this little symbol that says sentences please and whenever we have in one of the centers probably you saw a piece of paper where they record their information. We try to have them write more and use complete sentences." (School B)

Staff at School A and School B identified program differentiation and high expectations under the "all children can learn" theme as being positive aspects of the SES plan. On the negative side one teacher at School B stated that with the need for differentiation comes more work. "You cannot only plan for two or three subjects, you're planning for two or three levels."[47] Also there was the complaint at both schools of there not being enough time to implement the objectives. If you are in a meeting every week when do you have the time to implement. "They ask for certain proof before we are able to show them".[48] Teachers at School A complained also about pressure from testing. Another teacher at the school said that the vision of the school is passing the state tests. When staff visited this teacher's math class in March the teacher had basically halted the normal lesson plan and was focusing on preparing the students for the Maryland State Performance Assessments and CRTs which would take place in May. Students spent the entire class taking I.S.M. (Instructional System in Math) tests which they are required to pass before going on to another topic/level in math. Students are responsible for a certain amount of objectives per marking period. I.S.M. testing goes on every week.

Each school improvement plan lists various strategies for the implementation of the stated objectives and goals of the reform, all of which involved increasing achievement on the CRTs by a certain percentage over the next two years, 10 points each year. There wasn't much variation among the three schools in the strategies for reading: Reading incentives programs, Writer's Workshop, Daily DEAR and Read Aloud Times, writing to inform and persuade, interpreting expository discourse from various sources, listening stations, the utilization of computers to complete research reports.

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[47]Staff person from School B, March 1998 interview.

[48]Another staff person from School B, March 1998 interview.

In mathematics School A's strategies related a lot to testing data and grouping strategies. Students were regrouped for math and reading/language arts by ability in School A. This was not the case in School B. In School C the students were heterogeneously grouped. According to the a staff person in School C "there is heterogeneous grouping in the 1st grade because that is good for the kids. She says that it is irreparable the damage to kids that homogenous grouping can do. Kids and students need that spark in the classroom. They [the school] have done research on this."[49]

School B and School C's SESP stated in greater detail the strategies to be used in math. Some of these strategies are: use of prompts and rubrics, the employment of manipulatives, and the use of real life problems. Although not stated in their SESP some of these strategies were also used at School A.

When asked what instructional strategies are used in the classrooms "small groups" was the common thread through all interviews at each school. The practice was seen more in School B and School C. During the reading lesson at School B the instructional assistants would work with a small group of students, which consisted of students in need of additional help, while the teacher worked with the rest of the class. Small groups were also mentioned for use with students in need of extra help. Other strategies for students in need of assistance as mentioned in interviews were: direct instruction, shared reading, readjustment of the lesson, individual instruction, constant repetition, and extra time.

It was common in School B to have two reading groups within the same class. In School C students worked a lot in centers. In one class the students broke up into reading centers - Read the room, Silent read, Poetry corner, and Write own story. There were groups of 5 or 6 students at each center. The teacher worked with two different groups, one after the other and the instructional assistant worked with another. Only in one classroom in School A was there observed differentiation in the instructional strategies used in the classroom. A third grade teacher pulled three students to listen to a tape of the story that the rest of the class was reading. They were instructed to read along with the tape. For the most part all students were working on the same assignment in School A.

In MCPS it was apparent at each school that the schoolwide use of the instructional assistants was the greatest benefit/resource. According to a staff person at School B "prior to the [schoolwide program] we had to restrict the use of the Title I instructional assistants. Now we can do it from K-5 and that's very helpful because children leaving 4th grade do not all of the sudden not need the extra coaching or the extra involvement of the Title I aide."[50] Their responsibilities are to work directly with the students and not to be an aide to the teacher. Each teacher observed had an instructional assistant working in the classroom at some point during the reading and mathematics lessons that were observed.

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[49]From March 1998 interview.
[50]From November 1997 interview.

School B seemed to use the instructional assistants more effectively. In School B assistants would work with a small group while the teacher worked with the remaining class. In School A the assistants were mostly used to grade test papers. Despite the increased presence of IAs in the classrooms, "teachers complain that the [the IAs are always being taken] out for meetings and training and kids are missing time with assistants."[51] Similar complaints were made by teachers at School B and during one of the visits to this school the IAs were called out of the classrooms for a meeting with the principal that lasted approximately one half hour. The schools in Philadelphia also have classroom and supportive assistants, but their presence was not as prominent in the classrooms that we visited as in MCPS.

There is a lot of professional development on teaching and assessment strategies at each school. As part of the *Success for Every Student* reform four or five days are set aside for professional development in addition to training that schools and teachers choose to participate in. "Certain days are designated for schools to look at test data and to analyze it and develop a plan to address areas that need to be reinforced/improved."[52]

As in Philadelphia, parental involvement in MCPS is not as great as principals and teachers would like. "Parents are involved typically when students perform or are chaperons on field trips."[53] Title I provides meetings by grade level to inform parents about what they can do to help their children be successful in school. Our staff attended two of these sessions in November. Literature and handouts are provided and a translator if necessary. School C also has a school leadership team that consists of, in addition to the principal, teachers and other staff, a parent coordinator and a couple of parents. The team meets monthly.

School B is involved with different county agencies: social services, protective services, child welfare services - that deliver health services and also some ethnic support groups such as Casa de Maryland, NAACP, and an African American Sorority. Also "we have senior citizens that belong to an intergeneration bridges group that comes in once or twice a week and works with children who are non-English speaking and help them in a social context, mentor them, sometimes they go out of the building."[54]

To summarize, the schoolwide programs in the four schools in Philadelphia and three schools in Montgomery County appear to be moving toward "systemic" reform. Overall our case studies of Title I schoolwide programs in the two districts suggest that the schools are making efforts to move toward systemic improvements (1) Standards are in – schools and teachers have incorporated them into the schools' visions and take them seriously. (2) There is a lot of professional development in the schools that we visited. (3) There is flexibility at the school and classroom levels to enable experiments and innovation in the instructional strategies. (4)

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[51]From interview with Title I person, November 1997.
[52]From interview with Title I administrator, November 1997.
[53]From interview with Principal from School A, March 1998.
[54]From interview with Principal from School B, November 1997.

However, more work is needed on parental involvement.

What the Test Scores Say

Although our study has focused on the implementation of reforms, we also consider the performance at the district, school level and race/ethnic level. Table 5a shows the percentage of students meeting the district standard for proficiency in reading and mathematics for grade 4 for the districts for the last three consecutive years. Table 5b shows the same information as in Table 5a for the two schools in Montgomery County. School C is a K-2 school. And Table 5c shows the same information as in Table 5a for the four schools in Philadelphia. Tables 6a - 6c show the same information disaggregated by race. We chose the 4th grade because it is the only elementary grade level where students in both MCPS and Philadelphia are tested. These percentages are based on the number of students who were tested.

Using the districts' own assessment standards, one may observe that a higher percentage of 4th graders in MCPS attained proficiency than their counterparts in Philadelphia. See Table 5a. Approximately 70 percent of MCPS' fourth graders were proficient in reading during the last three academic years, opposed to only 16 percent of the fourth graders during 1995-96, 19 percent during 1996-97 and 23 percent during 1997-98 in Philadelphia. In mathematics the differences are not as dramatic, however, over 55 percent of students in MCPS were proficient compared to as little as 10 percent during the 1995-96 school year, 14.2 percent during the 1996-97 school year, and 16.1 percent during the 1997-98 school year. However, if we consider the percentages for the students with partial mastery in reading and mathematics (basic level) in Philadelphia the percentages for MCPS and Philadelphia are comparable.

At the school level (see Table 5b) there is not much difference between the percentages for the four schools in Philadelphia and the overall school district percentages. The percentages are equally low for each school. In all cases, except at George during the 1997-98 school year, the percentages of students proficient in reading and math at each school were lower than the district percentages. In fact the 1997–98 school year witnessed a decrease in the proficiency percentages from the previous year. In the two schools in MCPS the overall percentages in most cases are less than half the percentages for reading for the whole school district for the corresponding school year (see Table 5c). The percentages in School B are higher than School A.[55] In math the percentages for the schools are lower but it is important to note that at School A the percentage of students proficient in math almost doubled from 1996/97 to 1997/98 and at School B the percentages increased by more than a third.

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[55]In mid-May of 1998 it came down from the superintendent's office that School A and School C, which is the feeder school (grades pre K - 2) for School A will share one administrator and each school will have an assistant principal. The current principal at School C is the administrator. The decision was based on 1996-97 county and state test scores on which School A's did very poorly. Over the last four months the community was very vocal and active in wanting a change. This became effective as of Fall 1998. During the 1996-97 school year on which this decision was based grade 3 was at School C.

Looking at the percentages for the Montgomery County district and schools disaggregated by race/ethnic group (Tables 6a and 6b) we see a large gap between White and African American and Latino percentages. In most cases the District-wide gap is smaller than at the schools but it is still large and remains relatively the same for the three years. The differences are between 34 and 39 percentage points in reading and 33 and 44 in math. For Asian American students the differences are relatively small. Additionally, there is not much difference in the gap between the percentages for African American fourth graders and White fourth graders and the gap between Latino and White students. At School A the gap is much greater between the White and African American students than the White and Latino and White and Asian American students, with the gap between Asian American and White students being the smallest. At School B the reverse is true, the gap between Latino and White students is greater than the gap between African American and White students. This can possibly be explained by the fact that almost 50 percent of School B's student population is Latino as opposed to 40 percent of School A's population.

The disaggregated percentages for those proficient or above at the four schools in Philadelphia do not tells us anything more substantial than the percentages for the schools overall since these schools are predominately African American or predominately Latino and African American. It is important to note that Philadelphia has increased the number of students taking the tests. "Across all three subjects (science is the other subject tested), 93.5 percent of 4th graders participated in 1997-98. This is an increase of 9.0 points from 1995-96, when 84.5 percent took the test."[56] Frank is the school that had the largest number of untested students in 1995-96. In 1995-96 thirty-four students at Frank were not tested in reading and mathematics and in 1997-98 only 5 students were not tested. In each case the non-tested students were mostly Latino.

[56]The School District of Philadelphia, *Sat-9 Results: Philadelphia's Achievement Results*, p. 3.

Table 5a. Percentage of Students in Districts Proficient in Reading and Mathematics for Grade 4 for consecutive years

	Montgomery County[1]			Philadelphia		
	95-96	96-97	97-98	95-96	96-97[3]	97-98
Reading						
Proficient and Advanced	69%	69%	72%	15.6%	18.6%	22.5%
Basic (partial mastery)				35.7%	37.0%	38.6%
Not Proficient	31%	31%	28%	48.7%	44.4%	38.9%
Mathematics						
Proficient or above		56%	57%	10.4%	14.2%	16.1%
Basic (partial mastery)				35.4%	34.2%	35.0%
Not Proficient		44%	43%	54.2%	51.6%	48.9%

Montgomery County

[1]Based on District Level Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT) Scores. The CRT measure how well elementary and middle school students are progressing in learning and applying specific information and skills taught in the county schools. The proficient score means that a child is progressing well through the curriculum at grade level. The CRTs are administered each spring to students in grades 3 through 8 in reading and mathematics.

SOURCE: Montgomery County Public Schools, *Annual Report on the Systemwide Outcome Measures: Success for Every Student Plan*, www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/publishingservices/SES..., March 1999.

Philadelphia

[2]Based on District Stanford-9 Achievement (SAT-9) Test scores. The SAT-9 covers a student's knowledge of facts as well as the ability to use those facts. It is administered each spring to students in grades 4, 8, and 11 in reading, mathematics, and science. These scores are based on the total number of students tested and are thus slightly higher than the percentages reported by the district which are based on the number of students enrolled during the time of the test (i.e., included number of students not tested).

Note: The publisher of the SAT-9 made errors scoring the 1995-1996 and 1996-1997 results (very few errors [less than 20] were made in 1996-1997). Although these errors were fixed in the performance indexes for all schools, the disaggregated data for 1995-1996 was never re-run with the corrected SAT-9 results. The impact of these errors was to assign some students higher performance levels than they had in fact achieved on the SAT-9.

SOURCE: School District of Philadelphia, Office of Accountability and Assessment, March 1999

Table 5b. **Percentage of Students in Philadelphia Schools Proficient in Reading and Mathematics for Grade 4 for Consecutive Years**

	George			Jane			Lucy			Frank		
	95-96	96-97	97-98	95-96	96-97	97-98	95-96	96-97	97-98	95-96	96-97	97-98
Reading												
Proficient and Advanced	8.2	14.8	34.4	4.9	9.1	13.9	7.4	6.3	8.2	11.2	9.2	15.2
Basic (partial mastery)	34.4	37.7	39.3	32.8	38.2	49.4	30.5	26.3	39.2	27.6	43.7	42.8
Not Proficient	57.4	47.5	26.2	62.3	52.7	36.7	62.1	67.4	52.6	61.2	47.1	42.0
Mathematics												
Proficient and Advanced	8.1	17.5	14.1	6.6	7.3	3.8	3.8	9.6	8.6	3.1	7.3	3.6
Basic (partial mastery)	37.1	30.2	35.9	37.7	27.3	45.6	26.3	25.5	22.6	28.6	34.1	41.7
Not Proficient	54.8	52.4	50.0	55.7	65.5	50.6	70.0	64.9	68.8	68.4	58.5	54.7

Based on District Stanford-9 Achievement (SAT-9) Test scores. The SAT-9 covers a student's knowledge of facts as well as the ability to use those facts. It is administered each spring to students in grades 4, 8, and 11 in reading, mathematics, and science.

These scores are based on the total number of students tested and are thus slightly higher than the percentages reported by the district which are based on the number of students enrolled during the time of the test (i.e., includes number of students not tested).

Note: The publisher of the SAT-9 made errors scoring the 1995-1996 and 1996-1997 results (very few errors [less than 20] were made in 1996-1997). Although these errors were fixed in the performance indexes for all schools, the disaggregated data for 1995-1996 was never re-run with the corrected SAT-9 results. The impact of these errors was to assign some students higher performance levels than they had in fact achieved on the SAT-9.

SOURCE: The School District of Philadelphia, Office of Accountability and Assessment, March 1999

Table 5c. **Percentage of Students in Montgomery County Schools Meeting Standard in Reading and Mathematics for Grade 4 for Consecutive Years**

	School A			School B		
	95-96	96-97	97-98	95-96	96-97	97-98
Reading						
Proficient and Advanced	30%	27%	49%	57%	42%	55%
Not Proficient	70%	73%	51%	43%	58%	45%
Mathematics						
Proficient and Advanced		23%	53%		30%	44%
Not Proficient		77%	47%		70%	56%

Based on Criterion-Referenced Test Scores (CRT). The CRT measure how well elementary and middle school students are progressing in learning and applying specific information and skills taught in the county schools. The CRTs are administered each spring to students in grades 3 through 8 in reading and mathematics.

Math results are reported for two years only. This is because the test has been expanded and the standards have been raised. Comparisons to earlier results is not valid.

SOURCE: Montgomery County Public Schools, *Annual Report on the Systemwide Outcome Measures: Success for Every Student Plan*, www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/publishingservices/SES..., March 1999

Table 6a. **Percentage of Students in Districts by Race/Ethnic Group Proficient/Basic in Reading and Mathematics for Grade 4 for Consecutive Years**

	Montgomery County			Philadelphia					
	95-96	96-97	97-98	95-96		96-97		97-98	
	% P	% P	% P	% P	%B	%P	%B	%P	%B
Reading									
African American	41 (-38)	44 (-37)	47 (-35)	10.8 (-22)	33.0 (-8.6)	13.2 (-22.7)	36.3 (-3.3)	17.3 (-25.2)	38.6 (1.5)
Asian American	72 (-7)	74 (-7)	76* (-6)	24.0 (-8.8)	46.6 (5)	31.7 (-4.2)	37.1 (2.5)	34.7 (-7.8)	39.4 (2.3)
Latino	43 (-36)	42 (-39)	48 (-34)	8.8 (-24)	36.6 (-5)	16.0 (-19.9)	37.0 (-2.6)	17.8 (-24.7)	40.8 (3.7)
White	79*	81*	82*	32.8	41.6	35.9	39.6	42.5	37.1
Total	69	69	72	15.6	35.7	18.6	37.0	22.5	38.6
Mathematics									
African American		24 (-44)	25 (-44)	5.8 (-18)	30.9 (-16)	8.0 (-23.5)	31.7 (-8.1)	10.3 (-23.4)	32.9 (-7.7)
Asian American		68 (-1)	67 (-2)	28.3 (4.5)	46.7 (-0.2)	38.5 (7.0)	37.5 (-2.3)	38.1 (4.4)	39.2 (-1.4)
Latino		28 (-40)	36 (-33)	5.1 (-18.7)	37.0 (-9.9)	11.0 (-20.5)	37.9 (-1.9)	14.3 (-19.4)	36.9 (-3.7)
White		68	69	23.8	46.9	31.5	39.8	33.7	40.6
Total		56	57	10.4	35.4	14.2	34.2	16.1	35.0

%P = Percent Proficient %B = Percent Basic (partial proficiency)

Montgomery County

*Group meets MCPS proficiency standard - 75% of students meeting or exceeding the proficiency level.

Number in parentheses represents the difference from the White percentage.

- Based on Criterion-Referenced Test Scores (CRT). The CRT measure how well elementary and middle school students are progressing in learning and applying specific information and skills taught in the county schools.
- Math results are reported for two years only. This is because the test has been expanded and the standards have been raised. Comparisons to earlier results is not valid.

SOURCE: Montgomery County Public Schools, *Annual Report on the Systemwide Outcome Measures: Success for Every Student Plan*, www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/publishingservices/SES..., 3/99.

Philadelphia

These scores are based on the total number of students tested and are thus slightly higher than the percentages reported by the district which are based on the number of students enrolled during the time of the test (i.e., included number of students not tested).

Note: The publisher of the SAT-9 made errors scoring the 1995-1996 and 1996-1997 results (very few errors [less than 20] were made in 1996-1997). Although these errors were fixed in the performance indexes for all schools, the disaggregated data for 1995-1996 was never re-run with the corrected SAT-9 results. The impact of these errors was to assign some students higher performance levels than they had in fact achieved on the SAT-9.

SOURCE: School District of Philadelphia, Office of Accountability and Assessment, March 1999

Table 6b. Percentage of Students in Montgomery County Schools by Race/Ethnic Group Proficient in Reading and Mathematics for Grade 4 for Consecutive Years

	School A			School B		
	95-96	96-97	97-98	95-96	96-97	97-98
Reading						
African American	28% (-39)	12% (-59)	37% (-51)	50% (-30)	52% (-28)	50% (-25)
Asian American	33% (-34)	43% (-28)	50% (-33)	N/A	57% (-23)	N/A
Latino	19% (-48)	25% (-46)	45% (-43)	48% (-32)	23% (-57)	47% (-28)
White	67%	71%	88%*	80%*	80%*	75%*
Total	30%	27%	49%	57%	42%	55%
Mathematics						
African American		12% (-45)	37% (-51)		36% (-28)	32% (-43)
Asian American		43% (-14)	75%* (-13)		43% (-21)	N/A
Latino		20% (-37)	45% (-43)		15% (-49)	38% (-37)
White		57%	88%*		64%	75%*
Total		23%	53%		30%	44%

N/A - Data not reported because there were five or fewer students in the group.

* Group meets MCPS proficiency standard - 75% of students meeting or exceeding the proficiency level.

Number in parentheses represents the difference from the White percentage.

Based on Criterion-Referenced Test Scores (CRT). The CRT measure how well elementary and middle school students are progressing in learning and applying specific information and skills taught in the county schools. The CRTs are administered each spring to students in grades 3 through 8 in reading and mathematics.

Math results are reported for two years only. This is because the test has been expanded and the standards have been raised. Comparisons to earlier results is not valid.

SOURCE: Montgomery County Public Schools, *Annual Report on the Systemwide Outcome Measures: Success for Every Student Plan*, www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/publishingservices/SES..., 3/99.

Table 6c. **Percentage of Students in Philadelphia Schools by Race/Ethnic Group Proficient in Reading and Mathematics for Grade 4 for Consecutive Years**

	George						Jane						Lucy						Frank					
	95-96		96-97		97-98		95- 96		96-97		97-98		95-96		96 -97		97-98		95-96		96-97		97-98	
	%P	%B	%P	%B	%P	%B	% P	%B	%P	%B	%P	%B	%P	%B	%P	%B	%P	%B	%P	%B	%P	%B	%P	%B
Reading																								
African American	8.2	34.4	18.4	44.9	35.0	40.0	4.9	32.8	9.1	38.2	13.9	49.4	6.1	31.7	6.4	28.2	8.6	40.7	11.1	25.0	5.3	50.0	12.2	32.7
Asian American													15.4	23.1	6.7	13.3	7.7	30.8	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
Latino			N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A									N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	11.7	30.0	11.7	40.3	17.0	47.7
White			N/A	N/A											N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	8.2	34.4	14.8	37.7	34.4	39.3	4.9	32.8	9.1	38.2	13.9	49.4	7.4	30.5	6.3	26.3	8.2	39.2	11.2	27.6	9.2	43.7	15.2	42.8
Mathematics																								
African American	8.1	37.1	18.0	27.9	14.3	36.5	6.6	37.7	7.3	27.3	3.8	45.6	5.9	25.0	9.1	24.7	9.1	26.0	8.8	11.8	2.5	40.0	2.0	24.0
Asian American													0.0	33.3	13.3	26.7	7.7	15.4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
Latino			N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A									N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.0	36.6	10.1	31.6	4.5	52.3
White			N/A	N/A											N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A			N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	8.1	37.1	17.5	30.2	14.1	35.9	6.6	37.7	7.3	27.3	3.8	45.6	3.8	26.3	9.6	25.5	8.6	22.6	3.1	28.6	7.3	34.1	3.6	41.7

%P = Percent proficient %B = Percent basic (partial proficiency) N/A = Data not reported because there were five or fewer students in the group.

Shaded in areas indicate that school does not have any students in that group.

These scores are based on the total number of students tested and are thus slightly higher than the percentages reported by the district which are based on the number of students enrolled during the time of the test (i.e., included number of students not tested).

Note: The publisher of the SAT-9 made errors scoring the 1995-1996 and 1996-1997 results (very few errors [less than 20] were made in 1996-1997). Although these errors were fixed in the performance indexes for all schools, the disaggregated data for 1995-1996 was never re-run with the corrected SAT-9 results. The impact of these errors was to assign some students higher performance levels than they had in fact achieved on the SAT-9.

SOURCE: School District of Philadelphia, Office of Accountability and Assessment, March 1999

Conclusion

This paper only provides a snapshot of the complex reform initiatives in Title I schoolwide programs in both Montgomery County and Philadelphia. Despite their many differences, the two districts seem to be fairly similar in their experiences in systemic improvements. They use similar standards, similar types of assessments, and similar instructional strategies. We see that the goals and strategies of the reforms are not just words that one finds written in a lengthy plan or that only the administration has read, but are actually being implemented in the schools and classrooms. Also, each district does not seem to be wedded to their plans and allow flexibility in the way schools and teachers implement the reforms. In short, efforts are being made toward "systemic reform" in the Title I schoolwide programs that we studied.

To be sure, the test scores present a less than positive picture of achievement in both school districts, particularly when we disaggregate the scores by race and ethnicity. But given the relatively newness of the reforms in the school districts it would be unfair to conclude that the reforms have failed at their goal to provide success for all students. Students must have had the opportunity to learn well the material on the assessment.[57] But when can we say enough time has passed? And how do we know that teachers are teaching the material? The latter question cannot be answered by our data.

Further, allowing for the newness of the tests does not address the issue of why certain students are performing better than others on the same test. The gap between the white students and most minority students still persists in Montgomery County, remaining relatively the same in most cases and in some cases widening from one year to the next for some ethnic and racial groups. It is important to note that although MCPS saw *Success for Every Student* as a plan that would allow it to address minority achievement without provoking opposition from the larger population, there has been criticism that the goals are far too general without specific strategies for improving performance goals for minority students.[58] Additionally, O'Day and Smith cautioned that the widening of the measured gap would be exacerbated if the achievement measures place a greater emphasis on higher-order skills and content to which large numbers of poor students have not been given access.[59] These are the type of assessments used in MCPS and Philadelphia. These gaps clearly call for greater districtwide efforts to ensure that minority students have access to quality instruction.

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[57]O'Day and Smith, p. 286.
[58]Jones and Hill, p. 18.
[59]O'Day and Smith, p. 260.

Appendix

Table A. Sources Used in this Study		
	Montgomery County, MD	**Philadelphia**
Interviews	2nd, 3rd, & 5th grade teachers Principals Reading Specialists Math Specialists Magnet Coordinator Teacher Specialist I.S.M. Instructional Assistant N = 22	2nd, 3rd, 4th, & 5th grade teachers Principals Small Learning Community Coordinators Basic Skills Teachers/Pupil Support Teacher School Community Coordinators Math Resource Teachers Reading Specialists Cluster Leaders Teaching & Learning Network Coordinator Equity Coordinator N = 40
Surveys	Instructional Assistants N = 4	
Classroom Observations	2nd, 3rd, & 5th grade lessons in reading and mathematics	2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th grade lessons in reading and mathematics
Documents	School Improvement Plans Enrollment data School Budget data Newsletters, Newspaper/website articles	School Improvement Plans Enrollment data Title I Assessments Newsletters, Newspaper/website articles
Test Data	Criterion Referenced Test data	Stanford - 9 Test data

Table B. **Ten Components of Philadelphia's *Children Achieving* Design**

1. **Set high expectation for everyone.**

The challenge we face is both inside and outside the schoolhouse door. It is about high expectation for us all. The first component of Children Achieving does not apply just to students. High Expectations calls on all of us to perform significantly better and differently than we have been performing.

The operating assumption for all policies, all planning, and all decisions at the school and classroom levels must be that all students–including those from low-income families, racial and language minorities, students with disabilities, and other populations we have historically failed--can and will achieve at high levels.

2. **Design accurate performance indicators to hold everyone accountable for results.**

At the end of the day, we can claim success only if students are successful in knowing and are able to do what they must to function effectively as good citizens and productive workers. We have failed if that does not occur.

3. **Shrink the centralized bureaucracy and let schools make more decisions.**

Professionals who are expected to produce results, reaping consequences based on those results, also have the right to determine how they practice their profession. Thus, significant authority to determine the nature of the school learning environment should move down the bureaucratic pipeline so that those closer to the students make more of the decisions that shape instruction.

4. **Provide intensive and sustained professional development to all staff.**

Professional development must be intensive and sustained. It will involve observing good practice, practicing good practice, being coached in good practice, reflecting on good practice and repeating the process. Professional development will be structured so that it does not rely on sitting occasionally at the feet of exerts in workshops. It will emphasize building skill and knowledge teacher to teacher, being informed from time to time by both the opportunity to observe exemplary practice and to benefit from experts.

5. **Make sure that all students are ready for school.**

How civilized a country is can be determined by how it treats its young children. In partnership with other city and private agencies, we will approach the challenge in new and bold ways. Only by reducing the barriers that are built by inadequate support in the early years will we ensure a generation of young people who can maintain the economic and civic strengths that have made this nation great.

6. **Provide students with the community supports and services they need to succeed in school.**

Community services and supports can make the difference between success and failure. Children who are unhealthy, hungry, abused, ill-house, ill-clothed or otherwise face the kinds of problems outside the school born of poverty will not achieve at high levels. Therefore it is imperative that initiatives be dramatically expanded to provide the necessary services and supports to reduce the impact of these major barriers to learning.

7. **Provide up-to-date technology and instructional materials.**

The learning environment in which virtually all students learn at high levels will be one that is highly individual. A necessary part of individualization will be technology-rich classrooms.

8. **Engage the public in shaping, understanding, supporting and participating in school reform.**

Absent public understanding and support in both the neighborhoods and the boardrooms, we cannot provoke change in the first

place nor sustain it into the future.

9. **Ensure adequate resources and use them effectively.**

Adequate resources is a commonsense precondition to virtually all children achieving at high levels. Additional resources are not the only requirement for radical change -- they are not even the most important ingredient -- but additional resources is an absolute prerequisite for dramatically improving student outcomes. The provision of these resources is a key indicator of citizens' desire for significant change as expressed through our elected officials in Harrisburg and Philadelphia.

10. **Be prepared to address all of these priorities together and for the long term -- starting now.**

The Children Achieving agenda is not a "pick and choose menu." We must approach the challenge of education reform in a comprehensive and integrated way. If one or more features of the whole agenda is not implemented, its power to yield high achievement by all students will be significantly diminished.

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