

FIVE BRIDGEPORT SCHOOLS RISE TO THE CHALLENGE

Showing Substantial Academic Gains Over 5 Years

Federal No Child Left Behind Act

The federal No Child Left Behind Act required each state to develop tests to measure student performance in math, reading, and writing for all elementary and middle school students, and for math, reading, writing, and science for all high school students. In Connecticut, these are the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT).

The law also requires the reporting of test scores for all students as well as for subgroups of students for the school district and for each school. The subgroups include all racial/ethnic groups, gender, poor students, English language learners, and students receiving special education services. This detailed reporting enables the state and districts to identify and close achievement gaps among the subgroups of students.

Test scores in Bridgeport showing only slight improvement, not enough to keep up with increasing requirements

The Bridgeport School District has been identified as a school district "In Need of Improvement" every year since 2002. This means that too few Bridgeport students are scoring at or above the Proficient level on the CMT and CAPT tests. In 2006-07, the state required that 68% of all students score at or above the Proficient level in reading and 74% in math. The proficiency targets keep going up every few years, making it harder for Bridgeport to show enough progress to be removed from the list of districts "In Need of Improvement."

Bridgeport schools work to raise test scores

The Bridgeport School District has made a determined effort to improve teaching and learning in every school. Many schools have made only slight or inconsistent progress. However, five schools have shown marked improvement gains over five years, from the 2002-03 school year to 2006-07. Much can be learned from these five schools.

They can provide a model and example for other Bridgeport schools that are still struggling to improve test scores.

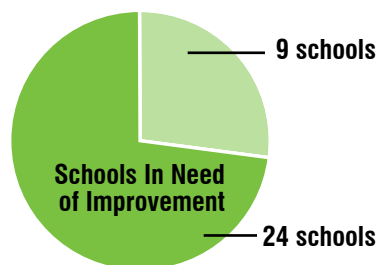


Teamwork matters

No one strategy has caused test scores to improve at the five schools showing the best test score gains. One common element in these schools is the extent to which teamwork is being used to improve teaching and learning. Raising student proficiency in reading and math takes the coordinated effort of many individuals: principals, teachers, and students working in partnership with parents and the community.

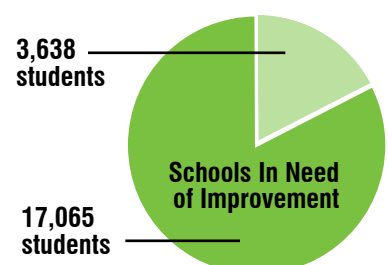
This report celebrates the success of the five schools in which proficiency levels in reading and math have risen substantially over the past five years for all students or a subgroup of students in a grade.

73% of Bridgeport Schools In Need of Improvement



2006-07

17,065 Bridgeport Students Attend a School In Need of Improvement



October 2007

Five schools showing most improvement over 5 years

Columbus School	4th Grade Reading and Math for Latino Students 6th Grade Reading and Math for All Students
Beardsley School	4th Grade Reading for Black Students and Math for All Students
Hall School	4th Grade Reading and Math for Black Students
Hallen School	6th Grade Reading and Math for All Students
Winthrop School	8th Grade Reading and Math for Latino Students

Two schools deserve honorable mention

Two schools achieved a rank of 1, 2, or 3 on two of BCAC's three measures, not on all three measures as the other schools did. While the two schools did not meet all of BCAC's criteria for most improved schools, they deserve special mention.

Read School	8th Grade Reading for Black Students and Math for All Students
Roosevelt School	6th Grade Reading for All Students and Math for Black Students

Five schools excel despite challenges of severe budget cuts

Over the last five years, the Bridgeport schools have suffered devastating budget cuts that have impacted every aspect of teaching and learning.

Chronic Underfunding from City and State Causes Devastating Budget Cuts

SCHOOL YEAR	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
BUDGET CUTS	\$4.5 million	\$6.2 million	\$11 million

Source: Bridgeport Board of Education

The 2008-09 school year will see another year of cuts — \$7.2 million — that will impact each and every school and student, threatening academic gains.

The schools in our study were: Barnum, Bassick, Beardsley, Blackham, Bryant, Central, Columbus, Cross, Curiale, Dunbar, Edison, Garfield, Hall, Hallen, Harding, Hooker, Longfellow, Madison, Marin, McKinley, Read, Roosevelt, Waltersville, and Winthrop.

The 2007-08 CMT and CAPT test scores were released in July after this report had gone into production, so they are not included. This report focuses on a longer-term, five-year analysis of test scores.

How BCAC identified Bridgeport schools with greatest improvement gains

BCAC analyzed CMT and CAPT test scores for 24 Bridgeport schools over five years, from the 2002-03 to 2006-07 school years. We used test scores for 4th, 6th, 8th, and 10th grades because these are the only grades for which test scores are available for all five years. Since we were looking for “improvement gains,” we did not include the magnet schools that have higher test scores, but did not show the dramatic gains that the five identified schools did. Magnet schools require applications by parents so they have a somewhat different student population from neighborhood schools. We also excluded schools that had special student populations or that did not have test scores for all five years.

BCAC used three different measures to determine the schools making significant gains in test scores.

- 1. Greatest increase** in the percent of students scoring at or above Proficient level in reading and math.
- 2. Largest decrease** in the percent of students scoring Below Basic, the lowest level on the CMT and CAPT tests, in reading and math.
- 3. Largest decrease** in the achievement gap in reading and math for students. The achievement gap was calculated by determining how much a school narrowed the gap between the percent of students scoring at or above Proficient in 2002-03 and the percent of students required by the Connecticut Education Department to score at or above Proficient in 2006-07 to comply with the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

BCAC selected the top three schools in grades 4, 6, or 8 that made the greatest improvement in BOTH reading and math test scores for all students or for Black or Latino students. Schools had to rank in the **top three** of the 24 schools **on all three measures** to be included in our list of schools showing the greatest improvement gains. Two schools ranked in the top three on two of the three measures and received an honorable mention.

Once the schools making the greatest test score improvements were identified, BCAC interviewed principals at each of the schools to find out what steps were taken at these schools to raise test scores over the five-year period.

School size, grades, and demographics differed among the schools

Differences among the five schools demonstrated that schools of all sizes, grades, and student demographics can show significant improvements. The two schools with Honorable Mention are both large schools with 860-940 students in grades Pre-K/K - 8.

SCHOOL	STUDENT POPULATION	RACE AND ETHNICITY	POOR STUDENTS*	ELL STUDENTS	SPECIAL ED STUDENTS
Beardsley School (Pre-K - 6)	596	37% Black 60% Hispanic 3% White	95%	9%	7%
Columbus School (Pre-K - 6)	839	28% Black 55% Hispanic 16% White 1% Asian	95%	34%	8%
Hall School (K - 6)	325	55% Black 42% Hispanic 3% White	95%	5%	12%
Hallen School (K - 6)	358	67% Black 28% Hispanic 4% White 1% Asian	91%	4%	10%
Winthrop School (K - 8)	810	35% Black 36% Hispanic 25% White 4% Asian	94%	7%	7%

Source: Connecticut State Department of Education Strategic School Profiles, www.sde.ct.gov. Data for 2006-07 school year.
* Poor students are students eligible for free or reduced price school meals.

The schools with higher percentages of ELL students (English language learners) and students receiving special education services face particular challenges.

Class size makes a difference

Researchers have found that academic gains occur when there are less than 20 students in a class. Gains are also stronger when classes are small in the early grades.

An enrollment decrease at Hall School and an additional 6th grade teacher at Hallen School resulted in smaller classes over the last three years in the grades showing significant improvement at each school. At Hall School, 4th grade class size fell from 26.5 to 18.5 students. At Hallen, 6th grade class size fell from 23.5 to 18.3 students.

School readiness: A known factor in improving academic outcomes

Children who participate in a high quality preschool, Head Start, or nursery school dramatically increase their literacy and language, math, social-emotional, and fine motor skills. The most improved schools showed a higher average percent of students with Pre-K experience than the lowest performing Bridgeport schools.

CMT PROFICIENCY LEVELS IN READING AND MATH IN GRADES 4, 6, AND 8	RANGE OF % STUDENTS WITH PRE-K OVER THE FIVE YEARS IN GRADES 4, 6, AND 8
Average of the 5 Bridgeport schools with lowest CMT scores	45% - 62%
Average of most improved schools selected by BCAC	55% - 73%
Average of the 5 Bridgeport schools with highest CMT scores	79% - 88%

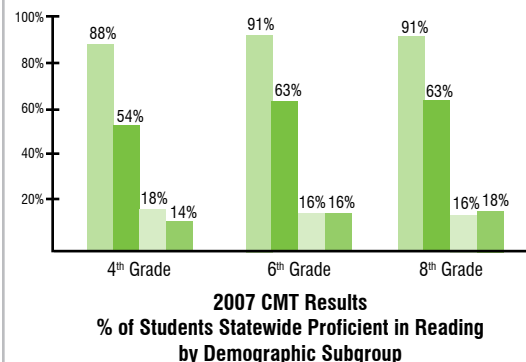
Sources: Connecticut State Department of Education Strategic School Profiles, www.sde.ct.gov, and Data Interaction for Connecticut Mastery Test, www.cmtreports.com

Hall, Hallen, and Winthrop schools had an average of 70% or more students with Pre-K experience over the five years.

Impact of student demographics on test scores

Three key student demographic groups characterize urban school districts — poor students, English language learners (ELL), and students receiving special education services. Each of these student demographic groups has a distinct impact on test scores.

Poor Students Who Are English Language Learners (ELL) or in Special Education Are Much Less Likely to Meet Proficiency on the CMT Test in Reading

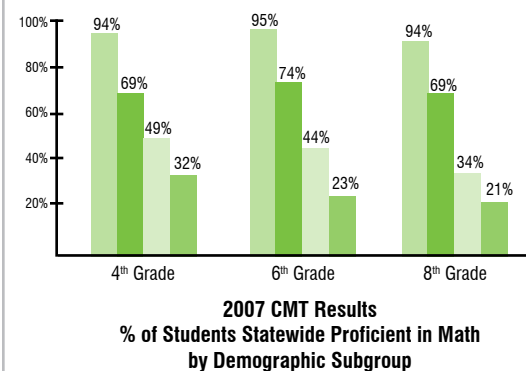


■ All Students*
■ Poor Students**
■ Poor and ELL
■ Poor and Special Education

* All Students excludes poor students, English language learners, and special education students

** Poor students are students who are eligible for free or reduced price school meals.

Poor Students Who Are English Language Learners (ELL) or in Special Education Are Much Less Likely to Meet Proficiency on the CMT Test in Math



Source: Data Interaction for Connecticut Mastery Test, www.cmtreports.com

HOW DID THE FIVE SCHOOLS DO IT?

Staff at the five schools can make a big difference in their students' test score gains. In schools with the greatest academic gains over the past five years, strong and sustained efforts were made to get teachers to work together to implement research-based strategies designed to improve teaching and learning.

Good teamwork depends on strong leadership. The principal is the instructional leader who sets high expectations for the success of every child and teacher, and motivates them to succeed. The principal fosters a collaborative atmosphere within the school and with parents and the community. Lastly, the principal must establish a shared process for continuous improvement that supports and welcomes participation from everyone within the school, district, and community. The schools with the greatest test score gains, as measured by BCAC, engaged students, parents, and the community in the educational process.



Teacher Data Teams unlock student data to raise achievement

The availability of standardized test results and district quarterly assessment data on-line has greatly increased in the past few years, providing teachers with an important tool for analyzing and monitoring student performance over time. With better data and training in how to use it, teachers are able to gather much more specific information about which students need help and what kind of help they need to improve reading and math skills. It has taken time, but the data are beginning to shape instructional practices — and lead to improvements in student academic achievement.

The Bridgeport Board of Education has been training its teachers and principals to form Data Teams to look at student performance across all grades and by classroom and teacher. This information can help provide the instructional staff with a better focus on curriculum, teaching, and learning. Teachers at each grade level can work together to analyze tests and assessments. With this information, they can jointly develop specific strategies to help their students improve.

Data Teams at Beardsley, Columbus, Hall, Hallen, and Winthrop are recognized by the Board of Education as being among the strongest in Bridgeport.

Beardsley and Columbus: Focusing on students who scored Below Basic, the lowest level on the CMT tests, special tutoring and other assistance are provided. Columbus School reduced by 25% the number of students needing summer school.

Beardsley and Hallen: For small group instruction within classrooms, students are re-grouped by skill level after each quarterly assessment. At the beginning of the school year, Hallen School assigns students to classrooms based on the best match of students' learning needs and teachers' instructional styles.

Coaches are crucial

Coaches are master teachers who have training in language arts or math. They help principals and teachers analyze school and student test data and use it to improve teaching. Coaches provide professional development for teachers, help develop and modify teaching strategies to meet student needs, and coordinate curriculum issues. Coaches may also work one-on-one with students and small groups of students to provide individualized help.

Most Bridgeport schools have two coaches, one for reading and one for math.

Beardsley, Columbus, and Hallen schools had special grants to enable them to hire as many as four coaches, twice the number in other Bridgeport schools.

Tutoring and individual student improvement plans make a difference

Most schools in Bridgeport hire tutors, usually retired teachers, with funds from the state priority grant to work with students who have not met performance benchmarks. Tutors work with small groups of students who need help during the regular school day.

Progress is monitored through individual student plans that establish learning goals for the student, identify who will work with the student, and develop the time frame for review of student progress.

Unfortunately, the state grant money for tutoring often runs out at some point in the year, frequently in the late winter.

Beardsley and Hall: Some teachers work with students on their own time before or after school hours.

Hallen: Students with the greatest academic need get more time with classroom teachers on individual work and are monitored closely for progress.

Columbus and Hallen: Student assessment data is prominently displayed in the schools. Most students know their reading and math levels and what they need to work on to improve.

Teacher collaboration: Shared learning and accountability

Research has shown that when teachers meet together regularly to plan targeted approaches based on assessment of data, and to share teaching experiences and strategies, teaching becomes more effective. The best collaboration engages teachers in a regular, systematic process of group problem solving where they take joint responsibility for achieving clearly defined instructional goals.

Bridgeport teachers have only one common planning period a week built into their schedules, which is often used for professional development programs, grade level Data Team meetings, and school-wide faculty meetings. This leaves little time for grade level teachers to meet together to do curriculum planning or develop targeted teaching strategies.

Columbus: Building on close collaboration among third grade teachers, a pilot program is being introduced to allow these teachers to meet on a weekly basis to develop common lesson plans. Coaches will provide classroom coverage as needed.

Hallen: Principal and teachers together conduct walkthroughs of classrooms using a structured checklist to evaluate the teaching environment and examples of student work. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate best practices.

Hall and Hallen: Teachers frequently visit each other's classrooms to share ideas.

Student engagement: Getting and keeping them on the team

Schools must first provide an orderly, purposeful environment where students can learn because they feel safe and respected. Expectations for student behavior must be clear and consistent. Students must know that poor behavior will not be tolerated. Schools showing most improvement have focused on character education and introduced programs to improve school climate.

Winthrop introduced anti-bullying and peer mediation programs.

Beardsley initiated a conflict resolution program.

Columbus has fully implemented PBIS (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports) to improve school climate and student discipline.

Next, the school's curriculum must also engage students by making learning fun.

Beardsley and Columbus: Both schools initiated reading challenges. Students at Beardsley read 10,000 books last year, an average of 16 books per student. Students at Columbus read 24,000 books, 4,000 more than the challenge number, and an average of 32 books per student.

Partnering with parents in educating their children

Children develop positive attitudes toward school when they see that their parents and families value education. For many parents, schools are negative, fearful places. To counteract negativity, schools must build trust and a true partnership with parents.

Hallen: Teachers make welcoming calls to parents at the beginning of each school year.

Winthrop: Parents participate in workshops to help them understand CMT and quarterly assessment results, and learn how they can help their children at home.

Columbus: Regular meetings by grade level are scheduled with parents to discuss what their children are learning. Parents come to “literacy nights” at the school to receive packets of materials and activities for them to work on at home with their children. Written materials are sent home to parents in three languages.

Community partnerships can help improve student achievement

No Bridgeport school has all the human and material resources it needs. Schools that make use of community resources and volunteers will be more successful in improving student achievement.

All five schools have community partnerships with one or more partners from businesses, churches, civic groups, hospitals, or universities. These partnerships provide volunteer tutors and mentors, as well as additional resources and expertise.

IN-DEPTH LOOK AT SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GAINS

HOW TO READ THE CHARTS:

Each chart below shows the percentage point gain or decrease on each of BCAC’s three measures of improvement.





BEARDSLEY SCHOOL

All students, Black students, and Latino students in 4th grade at Beardsley School made significant improvement in math. Black students in 4th grade made significant gains in reading.

Significant Improvement for All Students in 4th Grade in Math and for Black Students in Reading

4 TH GRADE READING BLACK STUDENTS	CHANGE IN PERCENTAGE POINTS OVER FIVE YEARS	4 TH GRADE MATH ALL STUDENTS	CHANGE IN PERCENTAGE POINTS OVER FIVE YEARS
Increase: CMT Scores at Proficient and Above	+24	Increase: CMT Scores at Proficient and Above	+19
Decrease: CMT Scores Below Basic	-35	Decrease: CMT Scores Below Basic	-20
Decrease: Achievement Gap	-13	Decrease: Achievement Gap	-9

OTHER NOTABLE HIGHLIGHTS

-  The percent of 4th grade Black students scoring at Proficient and above in reading increased from 26% to 50% over the five years.
-  Black students in 4th grade scoring Below Basic in reading dropped from 68% to 33%.
-  The percent of 4th grade Black students scoring Below Basic in math dropped from 50% to 27%.
-  Latino students in 4th grade scoring Below Basic in math dropped from 38% to 17%.

COLUMBUS SCHOOL

Kudos to Columbus School. It was the only Bridgeport school in which reading and math test scores improved significantly in two grades, 4th and 6th grades. Latino students in the 4th and 6th grades made major gains in test scores, and all students improved significantly in the 6th grade.

Significant Improvement for All Students in 6th Grade in Both Reading and Math and for 4th Grade Latino Students in Both Reading and Math

4 TH GRADE READING LATINO STUDENTS	CHANGE IN PERCENTAGE POINTS OVER FIVE YEARS	4 TH GRADE MATH LATINO STUDENTS	CHANGE IN PERCENTAGE POINTS OVER FIVE YEARS
Increase: CMT Scores at Proficient and Above	+22	Increase: CMT Scores at Proficient and Above	+17
Decrease: CMT Scores Below Basic	-21	Decrease: CMT Scores Below Basic	-17
Decrease: Achievement Gap	-11	Decrease: Achievement Gap	-8

6 TH GRADE READING ALL STUDENTS	CHANGE IN PERCENTAGE POINTS OVER FIVE YEARS	6 TH GRADE MATH ALL STUDENTS	CHANGE IN PERCENTAGE POINTS OVER FIVE YEARS
Increase: CMT Scores at Proficient and Above	+12	Increase: CMT Scores at Proficient and Above	+19
Decrease: CMT Scores Below Basic	-27	Decrease: CMT Scores Below Basic	-13
Decrease: Achievement Gap	-1	Decrease: Achievement Gap	-10

OTHER NOTABLE HIGHLIGHTS

- 🍏 The percent of 4th grade Latino students scoring Proficient and above in reading increased from 18% to 40% over the five years, while those scoring Below Basic dropped from 67% to 46%.
- 🍏 The percent of all students in 6th grade scoring Below Basic in reading dropped from 70% to 42%.
- 🍏 The percent of 6th grade Latino students scoring Below Basic in reading dropped from 69% to 46%.
- 🍏 Latino students in 6th grade scoring Below Basic in math dropped from 19% to 4%.
- 🍏 In 2006-07, 70% of 6th grade Latino students scored at Proficient and above in math.



HALL SCHOOL

Hall School made very significant gains on all three measures for both reading and math for its Black students in the 4th grade. It also made substantial gains for all 4th grade students scoring at Proficient and above in reading.

Significant Improvement for Black Students in 4th Grade in Both Reading and Math

4 TH GRADE READING BLACK STUDENTS	CHANGE IN PERCENTAGE POINTS OVER FIVE YEARS	4 TH GRADE MATH BLACK STUDENTS	CHANGE IN PERCENTAGE POINTS OVER FIVE YEARS
Increase: CMT Scores at Proficient and Above	+40	Increase: CMT Scores at Proficient and Above	+33
Decrease: CMT Scores Below Basic	-26	Decrease: CMT Scores Below Basic	-27
Decrease: Achievement Gap	-29	Decrease: Achievement Gap	-24

OTHER NOTABLE HIGHLIGHTS

- 🍏 Black students in the 4th grade scoring at Proficient and above in reading increased from 30% to 70% over the five years, exceeding the Connecticut Education Department requirement for all students for 2006-07 under No Child Left Behind.
- 🍏 The percent of all students in the 4th grade scoring at Proficient and above increased in reading from 32% to 60%.
- 🍏 The percent of 4th grade Black students scoring at Proficient and above in math increased from 54% to 87%, exceeding the Connecticut Education Department requirement for all students for 2006-07 under No Child Left Behind.
- 🍏 Black students in the 4th grade scoring Below Basic in math dropped from 27% to 0 over the five years. In 2006-07, no African-American student scored Below Basic in math on the CMT, an outstanding achievement.

HALLEN SCHOOL

At Hallen School, significant gains were made in reading and math for all 6th grade students. Black students in 6th grade also made significant improvement in both reading and math.

Significant Improvement for All Students in 6th Grade in Both Reading and Math

6 TH GRADE READING ALL STUDENTS	CHANGE IN PERCENTAGE POINTS OVER FIVE YEARS	6 TH GRADE MATH ALL STUDENTS	CHANGE IN PERCENTAGE POINTS OVER FIVE YEARS
Increase: CMT Scores at Proficient and Above	+40	Increase: CMT Scores at Proficient and Above	+29
Decrease: CMT Scores Below Basic	-23	Decrease: CMT Scores Below Basic	-22
Decrease: Achievement Gap	-28	Decrease: Achievement Gap	-19

WINTHROP SCHOOL

Winthrop was the only school with 8th grade students that showed significant improvement in test scores. However, this improvement was only for Latino students.

Significant Improvement for Latino Students in 8th Grade in Both Reading and Math

8 TH GRADE READING LATINO STUDENTS	CHANGE IN PERCENTAGE POINTS OVER FIVE YEARS	8 TH GRADE MATH LATINO STUDENTS	CHANGE IN PERCENTAGE POINTS OVER FIVE YEARS
Increase: CMT Scores at Proficient and Above	+14	Increase: CMT Scores at Proficient and Above	+31
Decrease: CMT Scores Below Basic	-21	Decrease: CMT Scores Below Basic	-31
Decrease: Achievement Gap	-3	Decrease: Achievement Gap	-22

Source: Data Interaction for Connecticut Mastery Test, www.cmtreports.com for all data in individual school charts

OTHER NOTABLE HIGHLIGHTS

- 🍏 The percent of 6th grade Black students scoring Proficient and above in reading increased from 26% to 69% over the five years, exceeding the Connecticut Education Department requirement for all students for 2006-07 under No Child Left Behind.
- 🍏 The achievement gap for 6th grade Black students decreased by 32 percentage points.
- 🍏 The percent of 6th grade Black students scoring Proficient and above in math increased from 46% to 77%, exceeding the Connecticut Education Department requirement for all students for 2006-07 under No Child Left Behind.
- 🍏 For 6th grade Black students, the percent scoring Below Basic dropped from 41% to 10%.

OTHER NOTABLE HIGHLIGHTS

- 🍏 The percent of Latino students in the 8th grade scoring Below Basic in reading dropped from 53% to 32% over the five years.
- 🍏 Among 8th grade Latino students, the percent scoring at Proficient and above in math increased from 39% to 70%.
- 🍏 The percent of 8th grade Latino students scoring Below Basic in math dropped from 47% to 16%.
- 🍏 In 2006-07, 70% of 8th grade Latino students scored at Proficient and above in math.



Thanks to the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund and The Perrin Family Foundation for their support for this report.

And a special thanks to Linda Brewster and Maria Mojica, BCAC's consultants, who researched and developed this report.