

TESTING BRIEF
Grade 8 Writing Assessment
Winter 2014 Administration
January 22, 2014

Georgia law (O.C.G.A. §20-2-281) states, “writing assessments shall be administered to students in grades three, five, eight, and eleven.” The purpose of the Grade 8 Writing Assessment is to assess student writing skills and improve writing instruction. The Grade 8 Writing Assessment provides students, their parents, and future high school teachers information about the students’ writing skills as they exit middle school. The assessment consists of an evaluation of each student response to an assigned prompt. Students are assigned a topic from a prompt bank representing two genres: expository and persuasive. Students are allowed 100 minutes to write their essays.

The scale score range for the Grade 8 Writing Assessment is 100 to 350. Writing scores are also reported in the following performance levels: Does Not Meet (100-199), Meets (200-249), and Exceeds (250-350).

KEY FINDINGS: ALL STUDENTS

- Eighty (80) percent of all students achieved the Meets or Exceeds standard set for writing, a decrease of two (2) percentage points from 2013.
- Since 2008, the percent of all students meeting or exceeding the standard has increased by three (3) percentage points.
- The mean scale score for this group for the current administration was 213, a two (2) scale score point decrease from the 2013 administration, but a one (1) scale score point increase since 2008.

KEY FINDINGS: BY RACE/ETHNICITY GROUPS

Asian Students

- Ninety-one (91) percent of Asian students achieved the Meets or Exceeds standard for writing, remaining the same as 2013.
- Since 2008, the percent of Asian students meeting or exceeding the standard has increased by two (2) percentage points.
- The mean scale score for this group was 230, a one (1) scale score point increase over the 2013 administration, and a three (3) scale score point increase over the 2008 administration.

Black Students

- Seventy-two (72) percent of Black students achieved the Meets or Exceeds standard for writing, a three (3) percentage point decrease from the 2013 administration.
- Since 2008, the percent of Black students meeting or exceeding the standard has increased by three (3) percentage points.
- The mean scale score for this group was 206, a two (2) scale score point decrease from the 2013 administration, but a two (2) scale score point increase over the 2008 administration.

Hispanic Students

- Seventy-nine (79) percent of Hispanic students achieved the Meets or Exceeds standard for writing, a three (3) percentage point decrease from the 2013 administration.
- Since 2008, the percent of Hispanic students meeting or exceeding the standard has increased by eight (8) percentage points.
- The mean scale score for this group was 210, a two (2) scale score point decrease from the 2013 administration, but a five (5) scale score point increase over the 2008 administration.

White Students

- Eighty-five (85) percent of White students achieved the Meets or Exceeds standard for writing, a two (2) percentage point decrease from the 2013 administration.
- Since 2008, the percent of White students meeting or exceeding the standard has remained the same at eighty-five (85) percent.
- The mean scale score for this group was 217, a two (2) scale score point decrease from the 2013 administration, and a one (1) scale score point decrease from the 2008 administration.

KEY FINDINGS: BY PROGRAM

Regular Program Students

- Eighty-four (84) percent of Regular Program students achieved the Meets or Exceeds standard for writing, a two (2) percentage point decrease from the 2013 administration.
- Since 2008, the percent of regular program students meeting or exceeding the standard has increased by two (2) percentage points.
- The mean scale score for this group was 215, a two (2) scale score point decrease from the 2013 administration, but remaining the same as the 2008 administration.

Special Education Students

- Forty-three (43) percent of Special Education students achieved the Meets or Exceeds standard for writing, a four (4) percentage point decrease from the 2013 administration.
- Since 2008, the percent of Special Education students meeting or exceeding the standard has increased by two (2) percentage points.
- The mean scale score for this group was 188, a four (4) scale score point decrease from the 2013 administration, but a three (3) scale score point increase over the 2008 administration.

English Learners

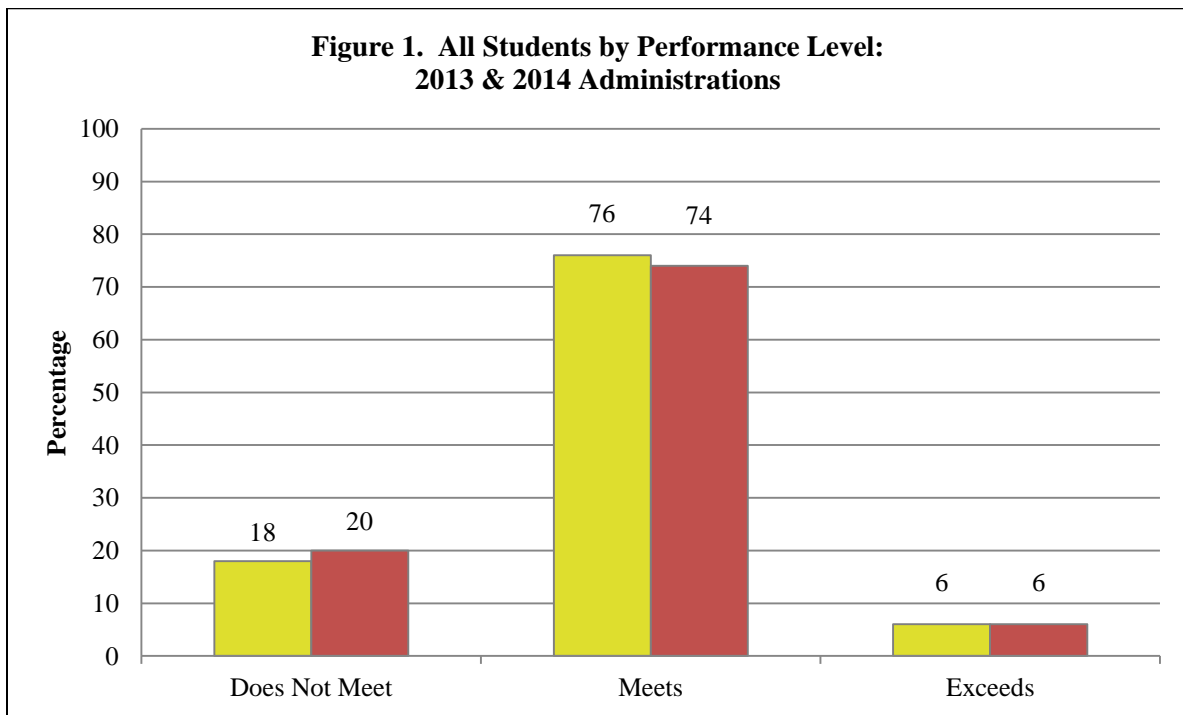
- Forty-eight (48) percent of English Learners (EL) achieved the Meets or Exceeds standard for writing, a three (3) percentage point decrease from 2013.
- Since 2008, the percent of English Learner students meeting or exceeding the standard has increased by eight (8) percentage points.
- The mean scale score for this group was 190, a three (3) scale score point decrease from the 2013 administration, but a six (6) scale score point increase over the 2008 administration.

KEY FINDINGS: CLOSING THE GAP

- Since 2008, accelerated growth has occurred in the achievement levels of minority and special population students. When comparing the 2014 results to 2008:
 - The achievement gap between Black and White students has narrowed from sixteen (16) percentage points in 2008 to thirteen (13) percentage points in 2014, in terms of the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the standard. This trend can be categorized as Positive Narrowing, wherein Black students showed gains (+3) while White students showed no change (0).
 - The achievement gap between Hispanic and White students has narrowed from fourteen (14) percentage points in 2008 to six (6) percentage points in 2014, in terms of the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the standard. This trend can also be categorized as Positive Narrowing, wherein Hispanic students showed gains (+8) while White students showed no change (0).
 - The achievement gap between English Learners and All Students has narrowed from thirty-seven (37) percentage points in 2008 to thirty-two (32) percentage points in 2014, in terms of the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the standard. This trend can be categorized as Very Positive Narrowing, wherein gains were made by both groups, but gains made by English Learners (+8) exceeded those made by All Students (+3).
- Similar comparisons can be made between the mean scale scores of various groups:
 - Black: White Students – The achievement gap between Black and White students has decreased from fourteen (14) scale score points in 2008 to eleven (11) scale score points in 2014.
 - Hispanic: White Students – The achievement gap between Hispanic and White students has decreased from thirteen (13) scale score points in 2008 to seven (7) scale score points in 2014.
 - English Learners: All Students – The achievement gap between English Learners and All Students has decreased from twenty-eight (28) scale score points in 2008 to twenty-three (23) scale score points in 2014.
 - Special Education Students: All Students – The achievement gap between Special Education students and All Students has decreased from twenty-seven (27) scale score points in 2008 to twenty-five (25) scale score points in 2014.

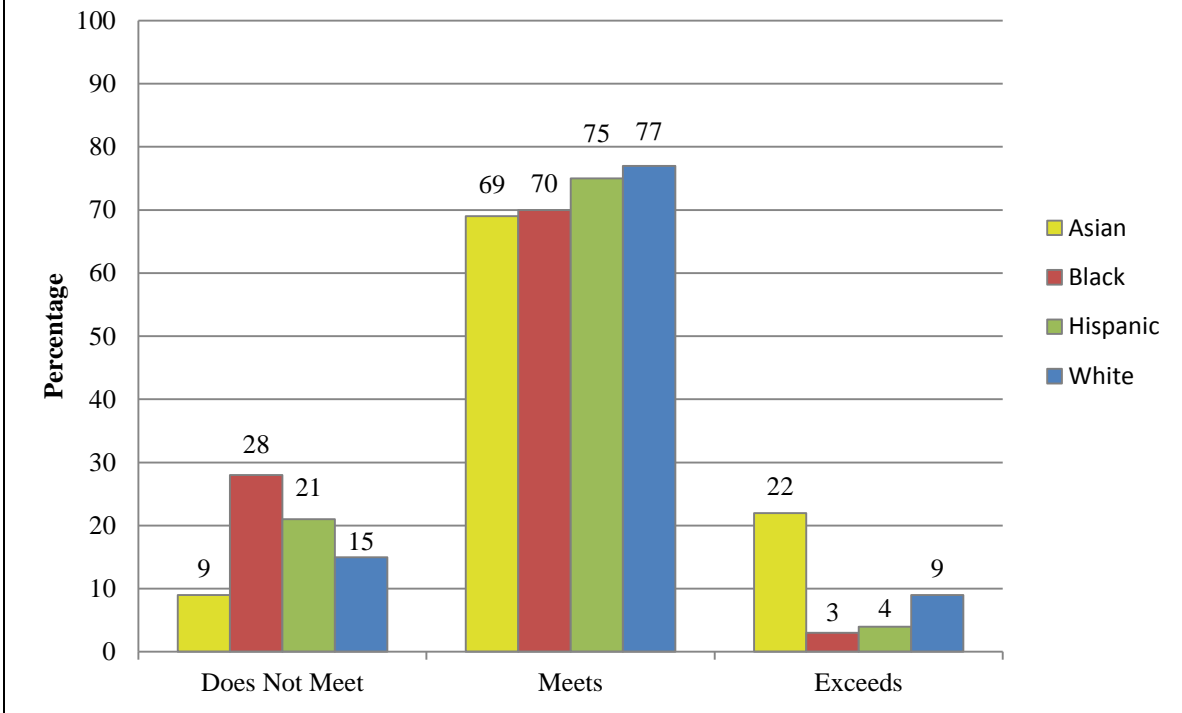
Table 1. Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding the Standard: 2008-2014

Student Groups	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Change from 2013 to 2014	Change from 2008 to 2014
All Students Tested	77	75	79	83	82	82	80	-2	+3
Regular Program	82	79	83	86	86	86	84	-2	+2
Special Education	41	38	43	48	47	47	43	-4	+2
English Learner	40	40	49	50	52	51	48	-3	+8
Asian/Pacific Islander	89	89	89	90	90	91	91	0	+2
Black, Non-Hispanic	69	66	71	77	75	75	72	-3	+3
Hispanic	71	70	75	80	82	82	79	-3	+8
American Indian/Alaskan Native	76	77	77	80	82	84	78	-6	+2
White, Non-Hispanic	85	82	85	87	87	87	85	-2	0
Multiracial	83	79	84	86	86	86	83	-3	0
Female	84	83	86	89	89	88	86	-2	+2
Male	72	67	72	77	76	76	73	-3	+1



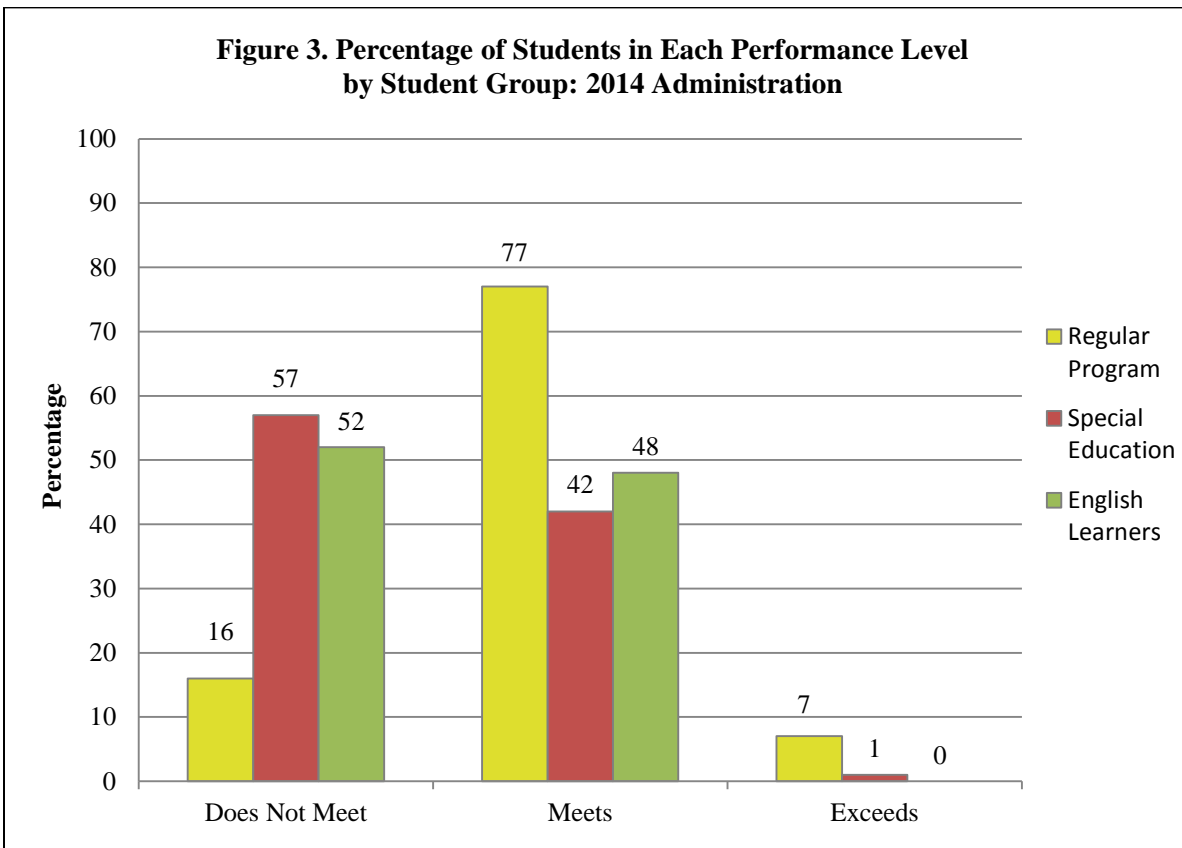
Note: Due to rounding, performance levels may not sum to 100%.

Figure 2. Percentage of Students in Each Performance Level by Race/Ethnicity: 2014 Administration



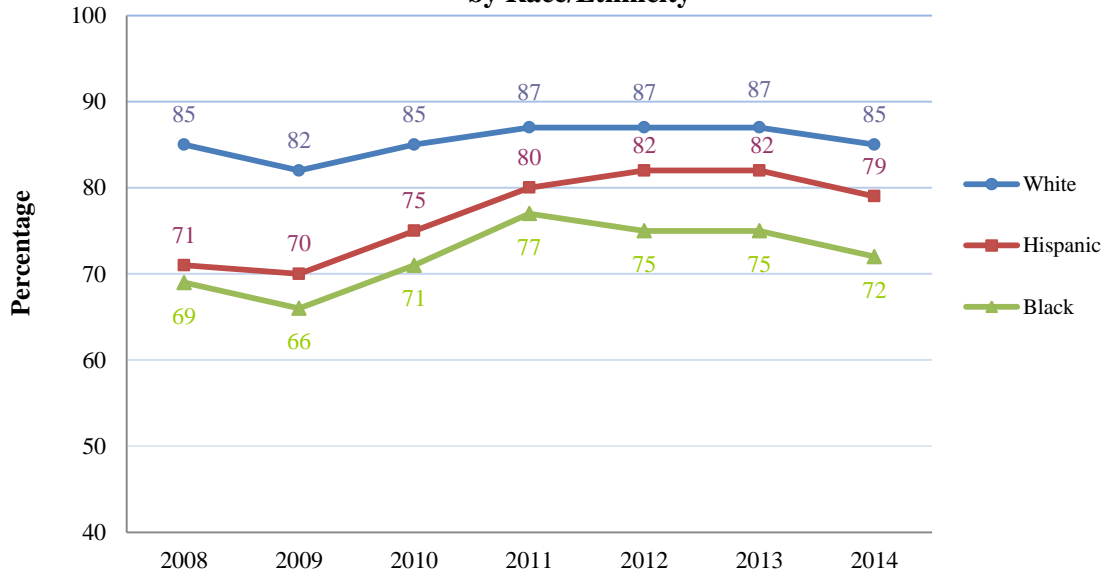
Note: Due to rounding, performance levels may not sum to 100%.

Figure 3. Percentage of Students in Each Performance Level by Student Group: 2014 Administration



Note: Due to rounding, performance levels may not sum to 100%.

**Figure 4. Closing the Gap:
Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding the Standard
by Race/Ethnicity**



**Figure 5. Closing the Gap:
Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding the Standard
by Student Group**

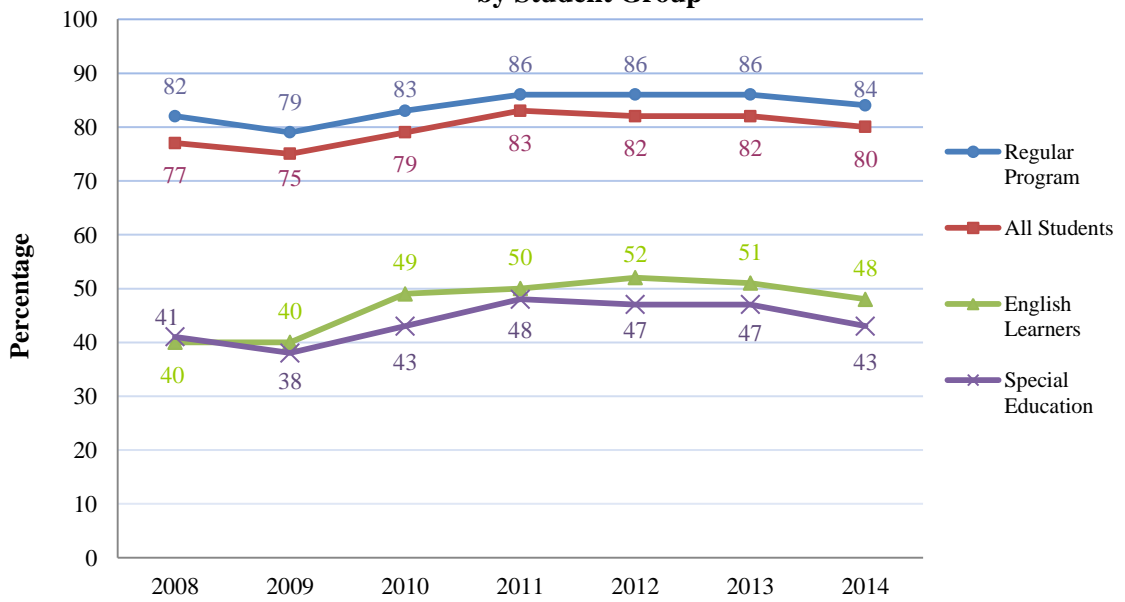
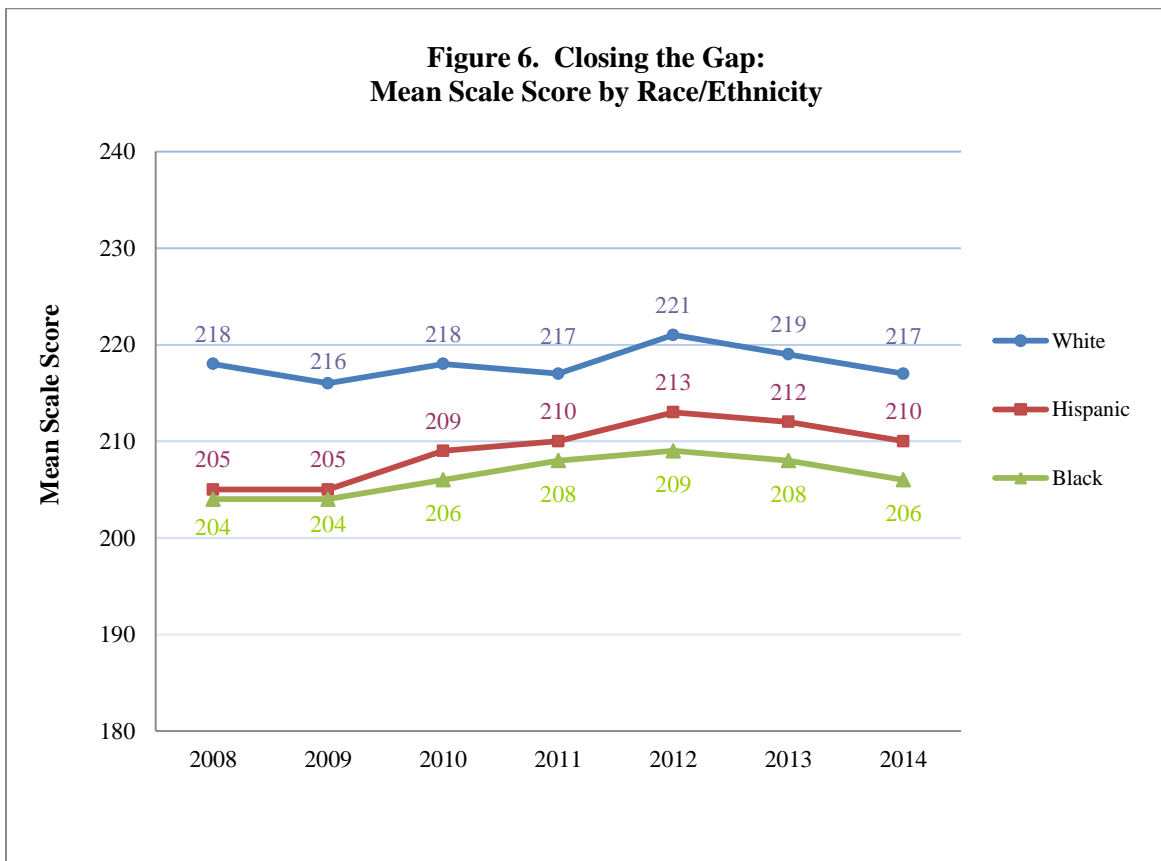


Table 2. Mean Scale Scores: 2008-2014

Student Groups	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Change from 2013 to 2014	Change from 2008 to 2014
All Students Tested	212	210	213	213	216	215	213	-2	+1
Regular Program	215	213	216	216	218	217	215	-2	0
Special Education	185	184	188	191	191	192	188	-4	+3
English Learner	184	187	193	191	193	193	190	-3	+6
Asian/Pacific Islander	227	227	228	228	231	229	230	+1	+3
Black, Non-Hispanic	204	204	206	208	209	208	206	-2	+2
Hispanic	205	205	209	210	213	212	210	-2	+5
American Indian/Alaskan Native	211	210	213	213	215	213	211	-2	0
White, Non-Hispanic	218	216	218	217	221	219	217	-2	-1
Multiracial	215	213	217	216	218	218	216	-2	+1
Female	217	216	218	218	221	219	217	-2	0
Male	207	205	208	209	211	210	208	-2	+1



**Figure 7. Closing the Gap:
Mean Scale Score by Student Group**

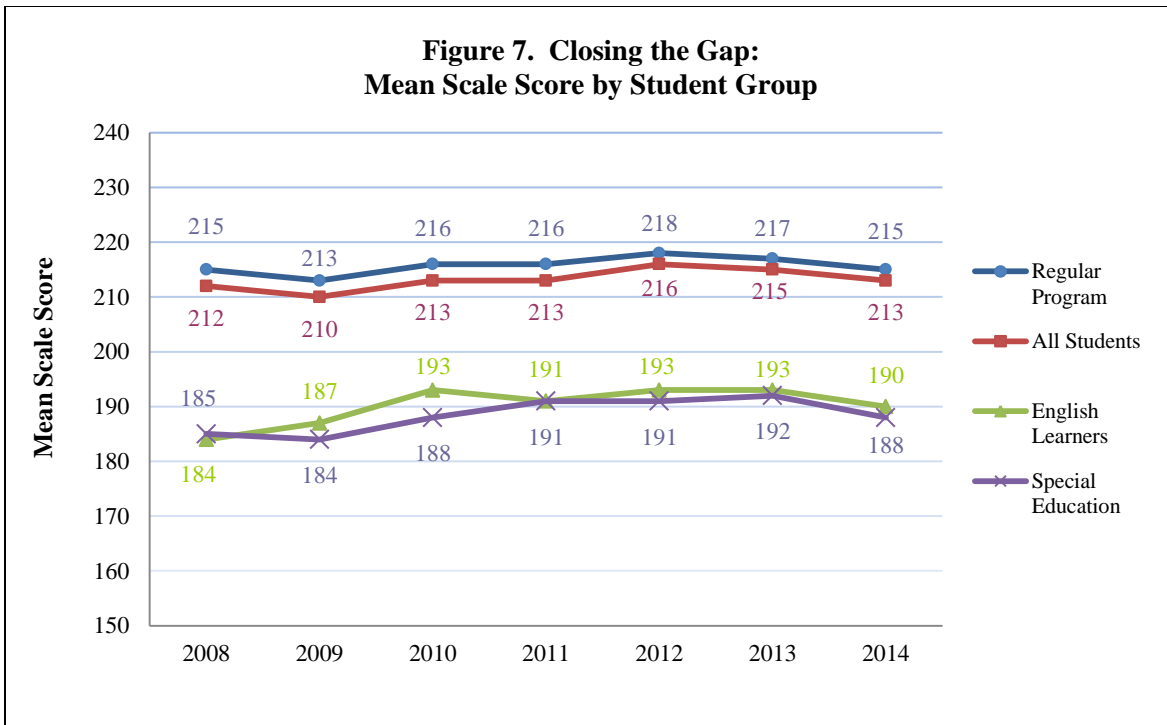


Table 3. Number of Students Tested by Program: 2008-2014

Year	All Students	Regular Program	Special Education	English Learners
2008	119,716	107,099	12,617	2,604
2009	119,435	107,249	12,186	2,457
2010	119,816	107,662	12,154	2,297
2011	119,761	108,315	11,446	2,518
2012	123,071	111,166	11,905	2,428
2013	124,257	112,219	12,038	2,647
2014	127,130	114,387	12,743	2,977

Table 4: Number of Students Tested by Race/Ethnicity: 2008-2014

Year	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Black, Non- Hispanic	Hispanic	American Indian/ Alaskan Native	White, Non- Hispanic	Multiracial
2008	3,615	47,091	10,099	202	55,361	3,062
2009	3,735	46,198	10,582	196	55,114	3,354
2010	3,976	45,544	12,325	307	54,482	3,033
2011	4,082	45,336	12,582	286	54,096	3,216
2012	4,263	46,523	13,255	291	55,198	3,334
2013	4,253	46,432	14,300	266	55,307	3,567
2014	4,587	48,048	15,411	268	55,024	3,678