

TESTING BRIEF
Grade 8 Writing Assessment
Winter 2012 Administration
January 18, 2012

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 achievement on the Georgia Performance Standards in writing and to improve student writing skill and writing instruction. The Grade 8 Writing Assessment provides predictive information to eighth graders about their future writing performance in advance of taking the Georgia High School Writing Test (GHSWT). 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-two (82) percent of all students achieved the Meets or Exceeds standard set for writing, a one (1) percentage point decrease from 2011.
- Since the inception of the Grade 8 Writing Assessment as a GPS-based test in 2007, the percent of all students achieving the Meets or Exceeds standard set for writing has increased by fifteen (15) percentage points.
- The mean scale score for this group for the current administration was 216, a three (3) scale score point increase over the 2011 administration and a nine (9) scale score point increase since 2007.

KEY FINDINGS: BY RACE/ETHNICITY GROUPS

Asian Students

- Ninety (90) percent of Asian students achieved the Meets or Exceeds standard for writing, remaining the same as 2011.
- Since the inception of the Grade 8 Writing Assessment as a GPS-based test in 2007, the percent of Asian students meeting or exceeding the standard has increased by nine (9) percentage points.
- The mean scale score for this group was 231, a three (3) scale score point increase over the 2011 administration, and a ten (10) scale score point increase over the 2007 administration.

Black Students

- Seventy-five (75) percent of Black students achieved the Meets or Exceeds standard for writing, a two (2) percentage point decrease from 2011.
- Since the inception of the Grade 8 Writing Assessment as a GPS-based test in 2007, the percent of Black students meeting or exceeding the standard has increased by seventeen (17) percentage points.
- The mean scale score for this group was 209, a one (1) scale score point increase over the 2011 administration, and a nine (9) scale score point increase over the 2007 administration.

Hispanic Students

- Eighty-two (82) percent of Hispanic students achieved the Meets or Exceeds standard for writing, a two (2) percentage point increase over 2011.
- Since the inception of the Grade 8 Writing Assessment as a GPS-based test in 2007, the percent of Hispanic students meeting or exceeding the standard has increased by twenty-six (26) percentage points.
- The mean scale score for this group was 213, a three (3) scale score point increase over the 2011 administration, and a sixteen (16) scale score point increase over the 2007 administration.

White Students

- Eighty-seven (87) percent of White students achieved the Meets or Exceeds standard for writing, remaining the same as 2011.
- Since the inception of the Grade 8 Writing Assessment as a GPS-based test in 2007, the percent of White students meeting or exceeding the standard has increased by eleven (11) percentage points.
- The mean scale score for this group was 221, a four (4) scale score point increase from the 2011 administration, and a seven (7) scale score point increase over the 2007 administration.

KEY FINDINGS: BY PROGRAM

Regular Program Students

- Eighty-six (86) percent of Regular Program students achieved the Meets or Exceeds standard for writing, remaining the same as 2011.
- Since the inception of the Grade 8 Writing Assessment as a GPS-based test in 2007, the percent of regular program students meeting or exceeding the standard has increased by fourteen (14) percentage points.
- The mean scale score for this group was 218, a two (2) scale score point increase over the 2011 administration, and a seven (7) scale score point increase over the 2007 administration.

Special Education Students

- Forty-seven (47) percent of Special Education students achieved the Meets or Exceeds standard for writing, a one (1) percentage point decrease from 2011.
- Since the inception of the Grade 8 Writing Assessment as a GPS-based test in 2007, the percent of Special Education students meeting or exceeding the standard has increased by twenty (20) percentage points.
- The mean scale score for this group was 191, the same as in 2011, but reflects a fourteen (14) scale score point increase over the 2007 administration.

English Language Learners

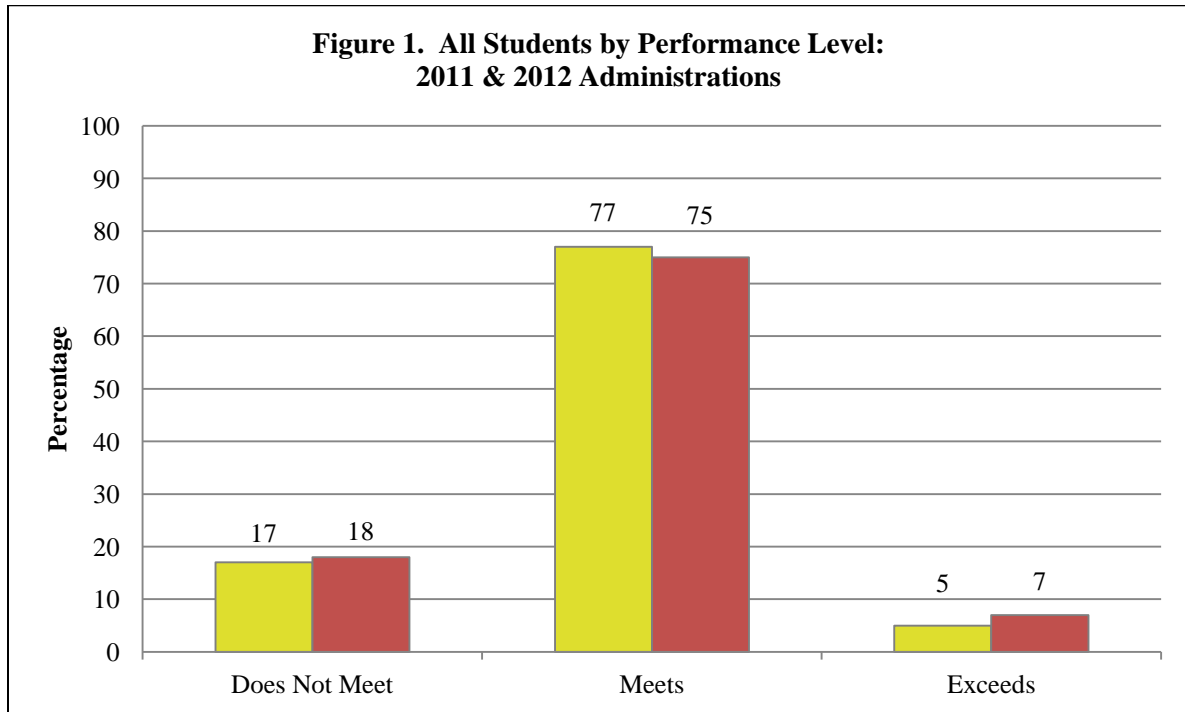
- Fifty-two (52) percent of English Language Learners (ELL) achieved the Meets or Exceeds standard for writing, a two (2) percentage point increase over 2011.
- Since the inception of the Grade 8 Writing Assessment as a GPS-based test in 2007, the percent of English Language Learner students meeting or exceeding the standard has increased by twenty-seven (27) percentage points.
- The mean scale score for this group was 193, a two (2) scale score point increase from the 2011 administration, and a nineteen (19) scale score point increase over the 2007 administration.

KEY FINDINGS: CLOSING THE GAP

- Since the inception of the Grade 8 Writing Assessment as a GPS-based test in 2007, accelerated growth has occurred in the achievement levels of minority and special population students. When comparing the 2012 results to 2007:
 - The achievement gap between Black and White students has narrowed from eighteen (18) percentage points in 2007 to twelve (12) percentage points in 2012, 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 Black students (+17) exceeded those made by White students (+11).
 - The achievement gap between Hispanic and White students has narrowed from twenty (20) percentage points in 2007 to five (5) percentage points in 2012, in terms of the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the standard. This trend can also be categorized as Very Positive Narrowing, wherein gains were made by both groups, but gains made by Hispanic students (+26) exceeded those made by White students (+11).
 - The achievement gap between English Language Learners and All Students has narrowed from forty-two (42) percentage points in 2007 to thirty (30) percentage points in 2012, in terms of the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the standard. Similarly, this trend can be categorized as Very Positive Narrowing, wherein gains were made by both groups, but gains made by English Language Learners (+27) exceeded those made by All Students (+15).
 - The achievement gap between Special Education students and All Students has narrowed from forty (40) percentage points in 2007 to thirty-five (35) percentage points in 2012, in terms of the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the standard. As with the highlights above, this trend can be categorized as Very Positive Narrowing, wherein gains were made by both groups, but gains made by Special Education students (+20) exceeded those made by All Students (+15).
- 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 2007 to twelve (12) scale score points in 2012.
 - Hispanic: White Students – The achievement gap between Hispanic and White students has decreased from seventeen (17) scale score points in 2007 to eight (8) scale score points in 2012.
 - English Language Learners: All Students – The achievement gap between English Language Learners and All Students has decreased from thirty-three (33) scale score points in 2007 to twenty-three (23) scale score points in 2012.
 - Special Education Students: All Students – The achievement gap between Special Education students and All Students has decreased from thirty (30) scale score points in 2007 to twenty-five (25) scale score points in 2012.

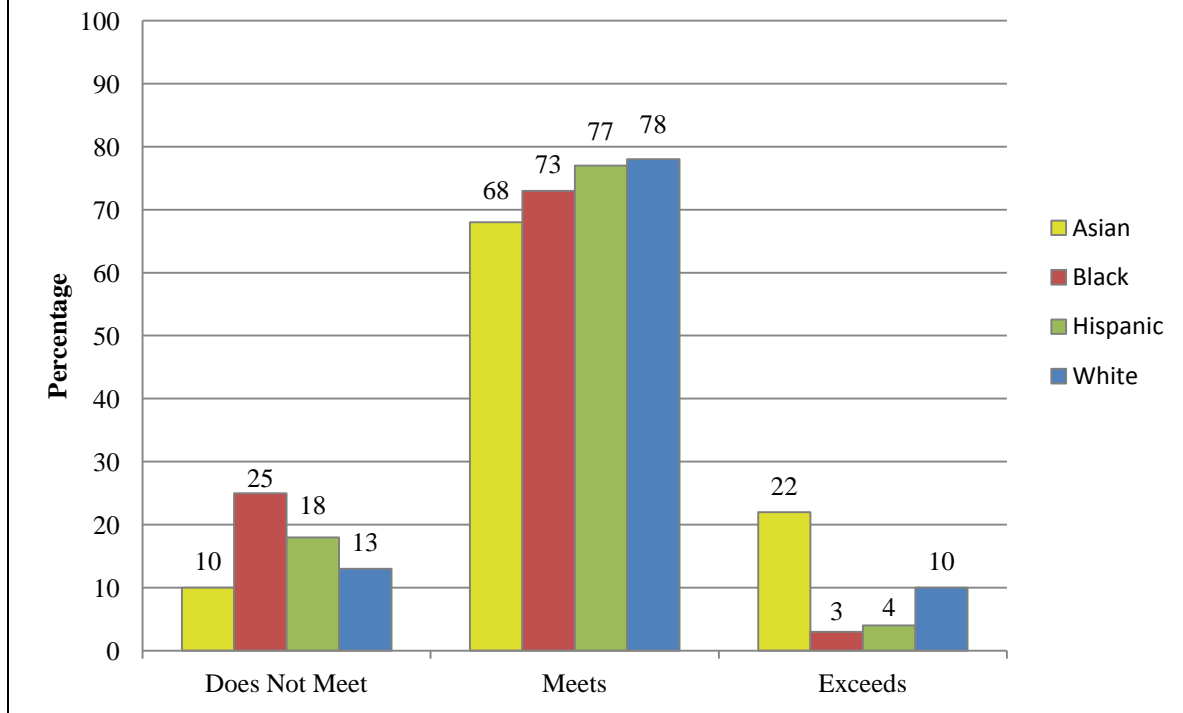
Table 1. Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding the Standard: 2007-2012

Student Groups	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Change from 2011 to 2012	Change from 2007 to 2012
All Students Tested	67	77	75	79	83	82	-1	+15
Regular Program	72	82	79	83	86	86	0	+14
Special Education	27	41	38	43	48	47	-1	+20
English Language Learner	25	40	40	49	50	52	+2	+27
Asian	81	89	89	89	90	90	0	+9
Black	58	69	66	71	77	75	-2	+17
Hispanic	56	71	70	75	80	82	+2	+26
Native American/Alaskan	63	76	77	77	80	82	+2	+19
White	76	85	82	85	87	87	0	+11
Multi Ethnic	74	83	79	84	86	86	0	+12
Female	76	84	83	86	89	89	0	+13
Male	58	72	67	72	77	76	-1	+18



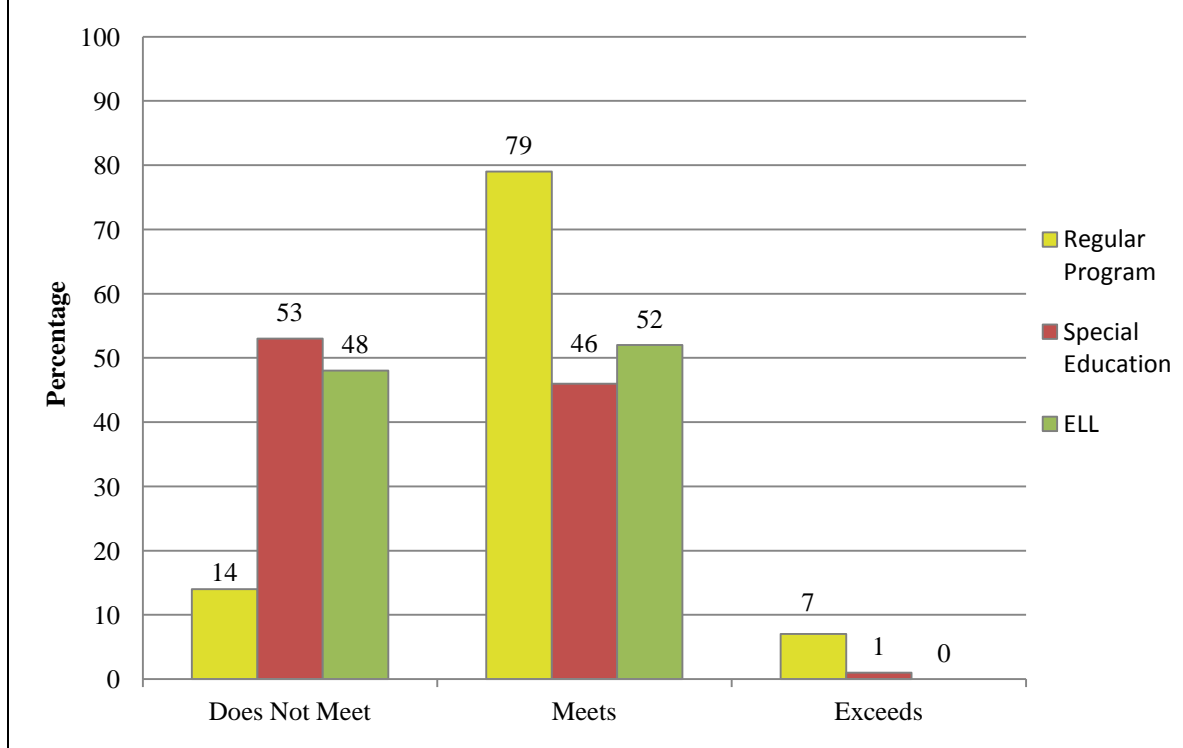
Note: Due to rounding, performance levels may not sum to 100%.

Figure 2. Percentage of Students in Each Performance Level by Race/Ethnicity: 2012 Administration



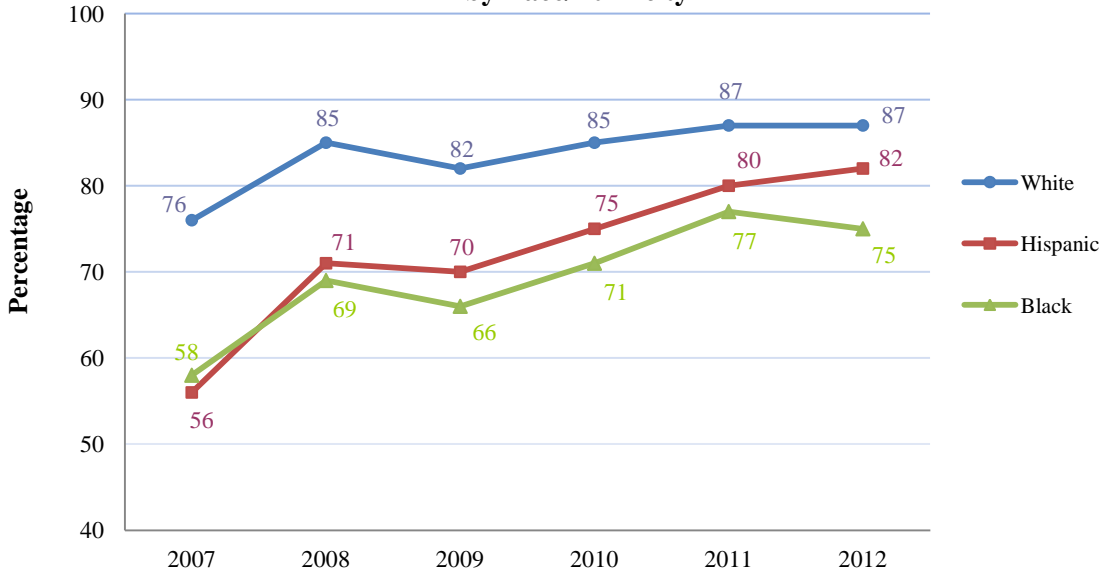
Note: Due to rounding, performance levels may not sum to 100%.

Figure 3. Percentage of Students in Each Performance Level by Student Group: 2012 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**

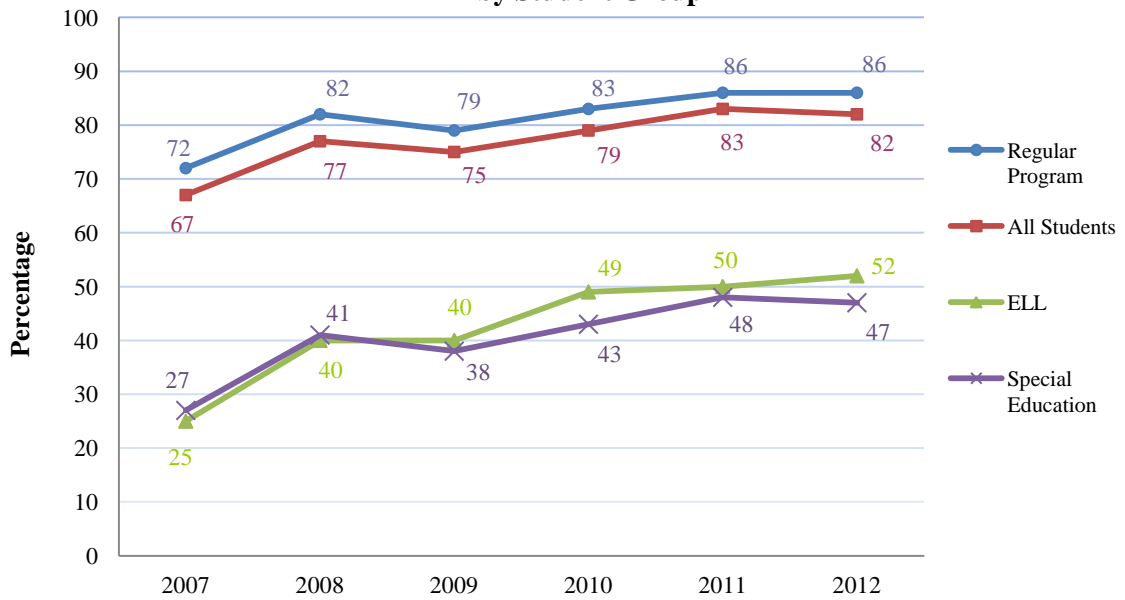
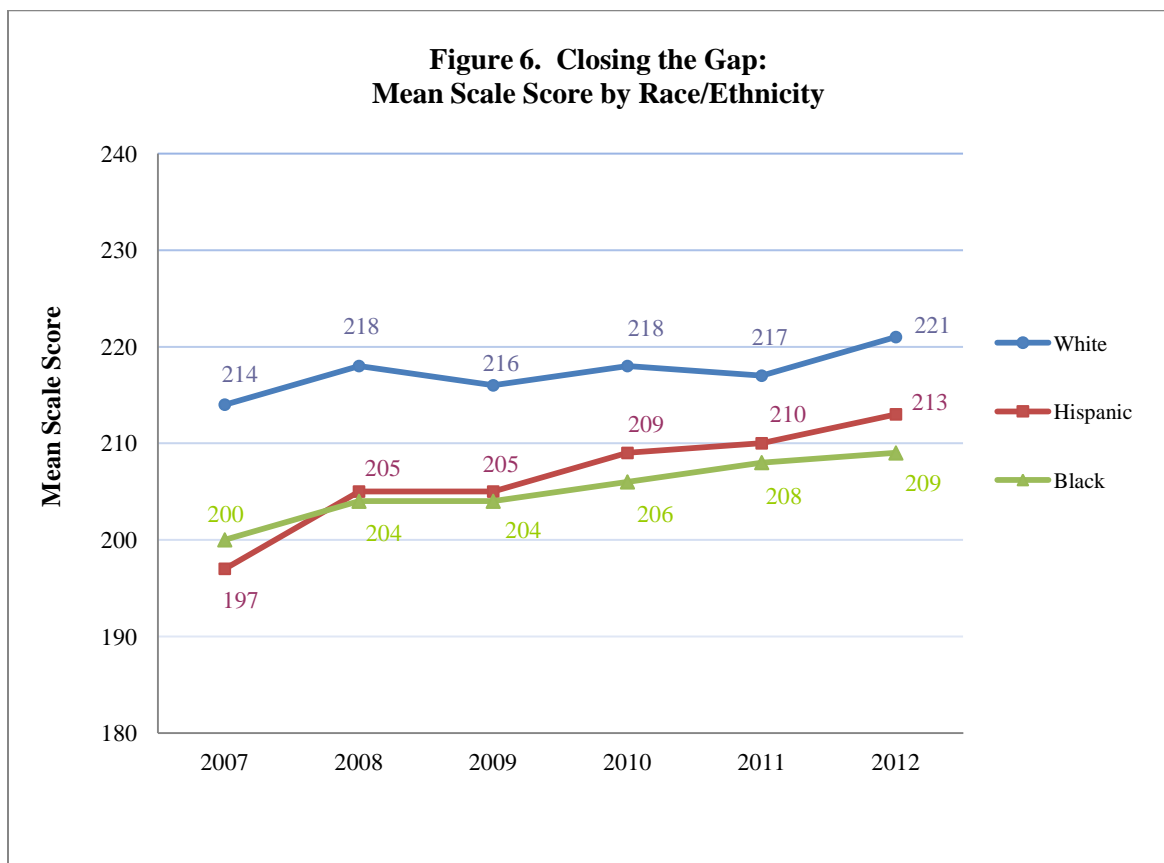


Table 2. Mean Scale Scores: 2007-2012

Student Groups	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Change from 2011 to 2012	Change from 2007 to 2012
All Students Tested	207	212	210	213	213	216	+3	+9
Regular Program	211	215	213	216	216	218	+2	+7
Special Education	177	185	184	188	191	191	0	+14
English Language Learner	174	184	187	193	191	193	+2	+19
Asian	221	227	227	228	228	231	+3	+10
Black	200	204	204	206	208	209	+1	+9
Hispanic	197	205	205	209	210	213	+3	+16
Native American/Alaskan	205	211	210	213	213	215	+2	+10
White	214	218	216	218	217	221	+4	+7
Multi Ethnic	211	215	213	217	216	218	+2	+7
Female	213	217	216	218	218	221	+3	+8
Male	201	207	205	208	209	211	+2	+10



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

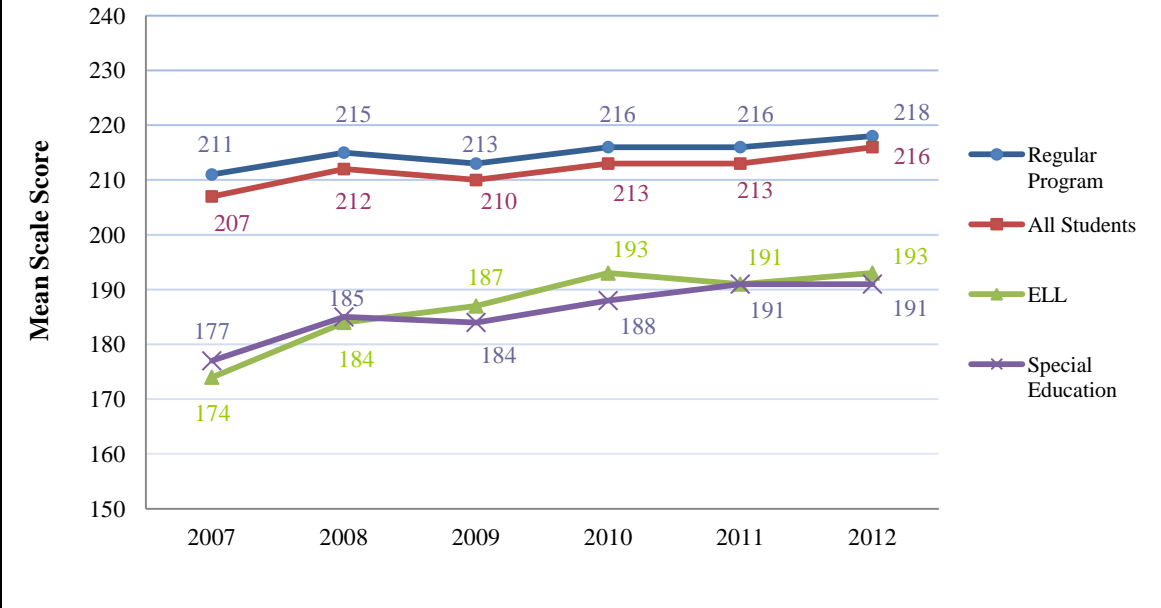


Table 3. Number of Students Tested by Program: 2007-2012

Year	All Students	Regular Program	Special Education	English Language Learner
2007	121,429	108,284	13,145	2,865
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

Table 4: Number of Students Tested by Race/Ethnicity: 2007-2012

Year	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Native American/ Alaskan	White	Multi-Ethnic
2007	3,336	48,530	9,698	176	56,681	2,744
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