



Testimony of John Simmons  
Strategic Learning Initiatives

Education and Labor Committee, U.S. House of Representatives  
Turnaround Schools

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## **Testimony of John Simmons**

### **Strategic Learning Initiatives**

#### **Education and Labor Committee, U.S. House of Representatives**

##### **Turnaround Schools**

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Kline, and members of the Committee: My name is John Simmons. I am President of Strategic Learning Initiatives (SLI); a Chicago based nonprofit organization that has enjoyed remarkable success in turning around low-performing public elementary schools in Chicago.

We have created a new model for turning around schools. In three years, eight schools in which our model was applied turned around their reading test scores and school culture. The taxpayers saved \$24 million compared to other turnaround models.

The leadership teams of the schools accomplished this without removing a principal, or a teacher at the beginning, without changing the curriculum or the textbooks, and without converting to a charter or contract school.

The reason for our success is simple. We apply what research has shown will work in schools. We avoid untested ideas as surely as any one of you would avoid a medicine that had not been proven safe and effective.

Our message today? Apply the best systemic research. Monitor and celebrate its application. Breakthrough results will happen.

I would like to focus on two themes. First, that reauthorization of ESEA should allow for a strategy like ours that emphasizes the importance of comprehensive school reform strategies that are grounded in rigorous research and shown to work, using existing staff. ESEA should add a fifth “intervention model” to the four in the Department of Education’s “Blueprint” (p 12). This would accelerate the rate of change among the lowest performing schools and save money.

The second theme is that there must be federal investment to demonstrate how to scale up successful models. We cannot continue to create schools that remain only islands of excellence in a sea of mediocrity. Again, the research on high performing organizations shows us how to rapidly diffuse innovation (Rogers, 1995). Specific actions include the decentralization of decision-making and expanding the work done in teams.

By applying the systemic research done over the past 20 years in Chicago, SLI has demonstrated that failing schools can jump start their turnaround and transformation in two years.

Let me tell you about a specific project we carried out in eight public elementary schools in very low income and minority neighborhoods in Chicago. When we began, these schools had shown virtually no improvement for the previous ten years. Here are the results. Over three years:

- The eight improved four times faster than their annual progress over the ten years before starting what we call the Focused Instruction Process (FIP).
- In the first year three schools turned around and all eight turned around by the end of the third year,
- Two of the eight were the most improved public schools in Chicago in 2007 and another was most improved in 2008. This in a city with 473 public elementary schools.

We define turnaround as improving at least three times faster than their rate of improvement before the Focused Instruction Process and having a major change in school culture—teachers, parents, and principal working together in an atmosphere of trust.

The two charts on the next two pages provide the turnaround results.

How were these remarkable results achieved? Strategic Learning took the results of research on high performance organizations in the private sector and combined it with education research done over the past 20 years in Chicago. Together, those research results clearly show what a school needs in order for it to succeed—not just public schools, any school.

From the research, the School Leadership teams then focused on providing what we call the Five Essential Supports (Sebring, 2006). They include:

- developing shared leadership,
- offering high quality professional development for the teachers and administrators,
- ensuring instruction is rigorous and focused,
- engaging parents in learning the Illinois Standards so they can better help their children with their homework, and
- creating a culture of trust and collaboration among the teachers, administrators, parents and students.

Systematically ensuring that these Five Essential Supports were in place and an effective partnership with the CPS leadership led to the rapidly improving gains in student learning.

An independent analysis of our data by the American Institutes of Research reports that this model works, should be supported by the federal government, and scaled up.

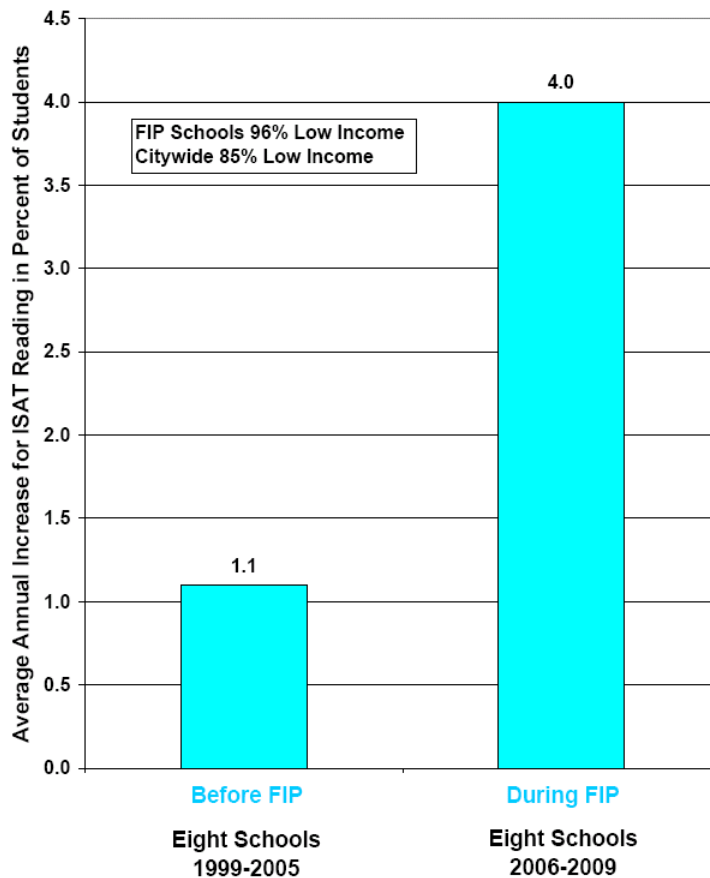
Applying the research unlocked the success that had eluded these schools for so many years.

The heart of my message is this. For too many years the debate about school reform has focused on the type of school—charter versus traditional public. I believe, and SLI's experience proves, that there is a better, and less costly, way.

The research shows that providing these Five Essential Supports will open the pathway to successful reform on a scale that matters.

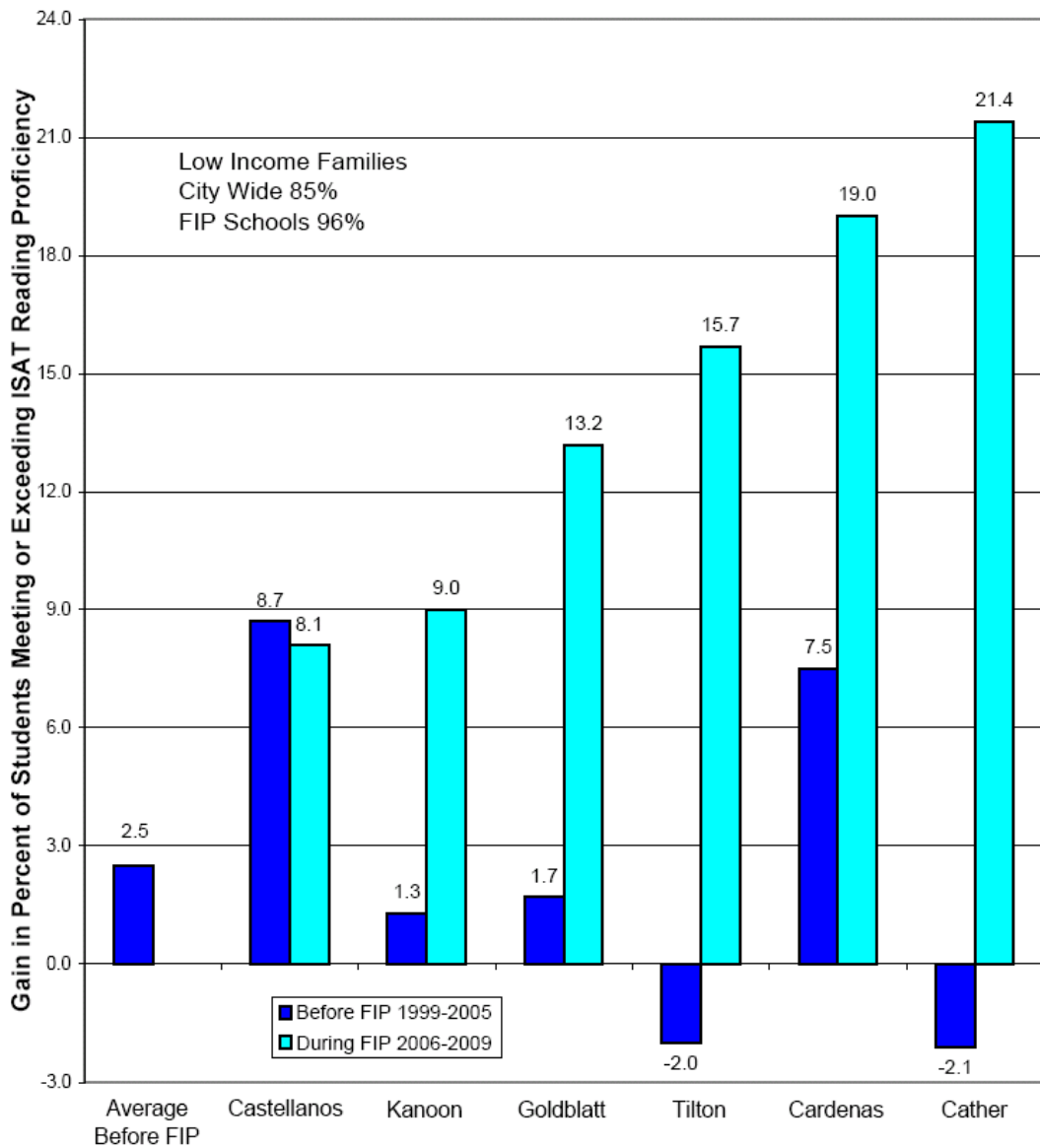
Mr. Chairman, thank you.

**Chart 1**  
**Focused Instruction Process (FIP) with Eight Elementary Schools**  
**ISAT Reading Results Before and During FIP, 1999-2009**  
**(Average Annual Increase in Percent of Students Meeting or Exceeding ISAT Reading Proficiency)**



Source: CPS/REA  
public\_isat\_by\_schools\_2001\_to\_2009\_mexc\_yracross\_allunits\_Without\_ELL20090702,

**Chart 2**  
**Six Schools Sustain Their Turnaround Gains**  
**in ISAT Reading 2006-2009**  
**Scores Up from 3 to 8.5 Times the**  
**Average 3 Year Gain for the 6 Schools (2.5 percent) Prior to FIP**  
 (Percent of Students at or above Proficiency)



Notes: Castellanos made significant improvement before FIP as they were part of an earlier SLI network.

Cardenas made significant improvement in one year before FIP but did not sustain it.

Two of the eight schools did not sustain their maximum gain in year 3.

## **Background**

President Obama, Secretary Duncan, Chairman Miller and the members of this Committee want to close the international achievement gap and are focusing on the bottom five percent of American schools as a highly leveraged starting point. To close the achievement gap quickly, schools must jumpstart their turnaround efforts by tripling, at a minimum, their snail's pace of change in both state test scores and graduation rates, and then continuously improve significantly their annual results.

At SLI, our mission is to turn around failing schools at low cost so the success can be replicated, scaled up and sustained. Our schools adapt research-based improvement strategies used by other successful, high-performing schools and businesses.

### **Results of the New Turnaround Model**

The leadership of the Chicago Public Schools asked SLI to work with ten schools that had made little progress the previous decade. Their other option was to reconstitute or close them, a costly and disruptive approach. These ten schools were no different from many schools across the country. Virtually all of the students came from low-income families and half of them came from non-English speaking backgrounds.

The approach SLI uses is called the Focused Instruction Process. The results in these ten schools were dramatic. After two years and an improvement in their scores, two schools left the network. Over three years:

- The remaining eight elementary schools improved at a rate that was four times faster than their annual progress during the ten years before starting FIP.
- All eight turned around their scores and school culture.
- Six of the eight that turned around had both sustained and improved their results at the end of the three-year period (2006-2009).
- Two of the eight -- Cather in 2007 and Cardenas in 2008 -- were the most improved public elementary schools out of 473 schools on the ISAT composite (reading, math and science). Over three years, Cather's score in ISAT Reading went from 35 to 57 points on a 100 point scale and Cardenas went from 33 points to 61.

At SLI, we define turnaround based on three factors: Test scores must improve at least three times faster than their rate of improvement before the Focused Instruction Process; there must be a major improvement in the school culture, and teachers, parents, and principal must be working together in a climate of mutual trust.

The turnaround at these eight schools took place using essentially the same teachers, the same leadership, the same classrooms and the same curriculum.

An independent analysis of our data by the American Institutes of Research reports that our school improvement model works, should be supported by the federal government, and scaled up (See report in Appendix 3, p 1).

### **How Results Are Achieved**

To achieve these results we focused on the five Essential Supports for high performing schools identified by research in both the education and business sectors. It is not the type of school that makes a difference. It is what goes on inside the school that makes the difference.

The Essential Supports for School Improvement, identified by Chicago practitioners and the Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) at the University of Chicago has guided the Chicago model. For some principals, teachers and parents, the research provides a roadmap for leading change. For others, it provides the confidence that they are on the right track. The supports are:

- *Shared Leadership* among the school's stakeholders: teachers, administrators, parents and students.
- *Professional Capacity* to assure that teachers, administrators and parent leaders have the skills for learning, teaching and sharing that are essential for both creating and diffusing promising practices.
- *Rigorous Instruction* for teaching, including the Eight Step Process (Appendix 1) with mini, formative assessments based on State Standards and administered every six to seven days to measure whether each student has mastered the Illinois Standards.
- *Parent Engagement* in helping their children learn at home, plus Community Support for the school and security for the neighborhoods.
- *Developing a School Culture* that nurtures trust and collaboration among administrators, teachers, parents and students.

The Consortium research indicates that when all five of the supports are present in a school, the students perform at a level on the Iowa and Illinois Achievement tests that is 10 times higher than schools that are not effectively using any of the supports (Sebring et al 2006, p 3).

While the Essential Supports for School Improvement may sound like common sense, they are rarely implemented in a focused way. What's not obvious is that these supports do not stand on their own, but rather are the five ingredients of a basic cake. Leave out one ingredient and the cake fails.

To improve the impact of the Essential Supports, Strategic Learning added two more supports based on its experience:

- Networking among close-by schools. By participating in a network, schools share and learn together while reducing professional isolation.
- Problem-identification and problem-solving across district levels. School leadership teams need an effective way to resolve problems that they can't solve themselves through regular meetings with central and area office staff that focus on removing barriers to innovative programs.

Here is how the strategy works in Chicago under our approach, which we call the Focused Instruction Process: SLI teams of retired principals, mid-career teachers and parent leaders work with parents, teachers, and administrators in each school and across networks of schools. Key daily activities include:

- Using data from the weekly assessments as well as classroom observation to enable teachers to quickly focus on students who need additional instruction and address problems before they become crises.
- Motivating students to succeed by recognizing frequently their success, while providing small group, in class tutoring to students who need additional support.
- Creating learning teams and networks so that teachers are less isolated, able to share strategies, and discuss what works and what doesn't. A shared curriculum calendar and input into shared assessment tools give both teachers and principals a new, and empowering, common ground.
- Engaging parents in workshops to develop the skills they need to more effectively help their children learn at home. The workshops also allow parents to develop relationships with other parents, teachers and administrators that facilitate trust and communication.

#### **Four Decades of Research and Practice Shape the FIP Strategy**

The Focused Instruction Process succeeds because it is grounded in more than four decades of research on high-performing schools and private-sector organizations plus Strategic Learning's experience (Sebring, et al, 2006; Simmons, 2006). When Mike Strembitsky became the Superintendent of Edmonton, Canada, schools in 1973, he introduced Edwards Deming's principles of continuous quality improvement. This included decentralizing budget decisions to the schools and transforming the District's quality of education. The Illinois Legislature adopted this best practice when it passed the Chicago School Reform Law of 1988.

In 1991, Brazosport, Texas, developed and then integrated the Eight Step Process with continuous quality improvement strategy (See Appendix 1). It turned around the district; the first time any school district in the nation had closed the achievement gap. This year's Broad Prize for Urban Education went to Aldine, Texas, a low-income suburb of Houston, which has used some of these components since 1993.

The Brazosport model has been applied to high schools as well as elementary schools in the lowest income neighborhoods around the country. High schools using the model in Fontana, California; Pensacola, Florida; Gwinnett County, Georgia; (Atlanta) and other places have reported impressive annual test score gains.

We call our turnaround work the Focused Instruction Process (FIP) because, as the name implies, it is a process, not a program. That is, principals, teachers, and parents working together can continuously improve and adapt the process to meet the unique needs and changing circumstances of each school. It emphasizes the importance of a laser-like focus on the core process of learning, the instruction process.

### **Launching FIP**

Strategic Learning's FIP process integrates the best research from education and other high performance organizations and streamlines the key factors to keep the costs down. Here is how we carried out the FIP process at our eight schools.

To ensure this would not be another district-imposed mandate, the principal and teachers had to choose to participate in our school improvement approach. Voting by secret ballot, eighty percent of the teachers had to agree to participate. Only then would Strategic Learning Initiatives and the Chicago Public Schools agree to partner with and fund them for four years.

Because this was a school-based decision, not a Central Office mandate, teachers and administrators were empowered and motivated to get involved, take responsibility for a quality result and work together in ways that had seldom happened before.

While each Essential Support is vital, we also brought principles of high performance organizations including total quality management to bear on classroom teaching. In the Focused Instruction Process, teachers teach and reteach until a student learns. We don't wait for high stakes, once-a-year standardized tests to reveal whether a child has learned a skill.

If this sounds like common sense, much of it is. But research proves that this common sense approach to student learning works. And it works regardless of whether that learning is happening in a charter, contract or traditional public school. It is focused on the teacher-student interaction in the classroom.

These are some of the reasons that our focus on research based strategies achieved breakthrough results. No other group of low performing schools in Chicago has achieved such results so quickly and at such a low cost. The same could be done in most any school in the nation.

### **Changing the School Culture**

Any successful turnaround strategy must empower stakeholders at all levels to set high expectations and then work together to identify and remove the barriers to continuous improvement.

Working with the school leadership team, SLI helps to change the culture of the building. The fundamental team of the principal, the SLI teacher coordinator, the lead parent facilitator and the teacher leaders of each grade level team at each school work to increase mutual trust, build better relationships, and continue the lessons they learn from SLI. Taking the shared model further, SLI also gathers each school's leadership team in the network for a process check, where they share goals and objectives, evaluate activities and results, and guide planning for each school and the whole network.

It is currently popular to turn around failing schools by replacing the principal and much of the staff. But the data suggest that it is an expensive approach, both in terms of taxpayer dollars and community upheaval. SLI's experience demonstrates that principals and staff in even the lowest performing schools can usually be trained and supported to become agents of turnaround and transformation.

While it is clear that some principals and teachers are not up to the task and must be replaced, SLI's experience over 15 years of working to improve Chicago school performance indicates that many Chicago principals at the head of failing schools lacked two things:

- An understanding of how to implement a valid improvement strategy, and
- The quality support needed to implement change in their school.

When they got both the knowledge and support, they began to quickly turn around student achievement, as measured by weekly assessments and the standardized state test given at the end of the year.

Student learning often improves in as little as six weeks because the results on the assessments given every six to seven days offer immediate feedback telling teachers which student has mastered a skill and who needs additional instruction. This data give principals much of what they need to lead the turn around. The FIP model and the on-site support team provide teachers and principals an opportunity they had not had before to be the best they could be.

It is not that the teachers and principals don't want to do the job, and can do the job, but that the system fails them. By improving the system through the Focused Instruction Process, there is no need to replace the people.

In short, this strategy works so well to accelerate the pace of student and adult learning because it takes advantage of the untapped knowledge, energy and commitment of the existing staff.

### **Neuroscience and FIP**

The FIP model applies key learning from neuroscience to create an atmosphere where innovation and creativity are present. According to Dr. David Rock, author of *Your Brain at Work*,

when people experience a threat such as closing down a school or replacing staff, the creative innovative part of the brain shuts down.

The FIP process incorporates five factors which according to Dr. Rock light up the innovative, collaborative parts of the brain.

The first is status. Because teachers and students are part of the improvement process they feel important.

The second is certainty, because there is a road map for the FIP process students and teachers know how the process is going to work and what is going to happen.

The third is autonomy. Both students and teacher feel in charge. They know what is happening, they have the data to understand where they are and where they need to go. They jointly develop improvement plans.

The fourth factor is relationships. Relationships are built among teachers as they figure out better ways to provide instruction and among student peer learning groups.

The last factor is fairness. The whole process is built around the idea of data and results. Students move at their own pace. Students who are high achievers get assistance in becoming even better and those who need special attention get it.

FIP increases Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relationships, and Fairness which in turn increases collaboration and innovation among students and teachers. All this combines to accelerate the pace of learning and achievement.

### **Cost Effective Results**

As you can see from the data above in Charts 1 and 2, the schools in the Focused Instruction Process network have improved their test scores four times faster with FIP than before it. The schools have achieved notable results as the attached independent evaluation demonstrates (Appendix 3).

When compared with other approaches to school reform, particularly those that require replacing the principal and much of the school staff, our turnaround model is less disruptive to the community, and substantially less expensive. The cost of a high school project in one city with 1,200 students is \$1.2 million per year over five years (Dillon, 2009). Recruiting, training and supporting people to become a principal and teachers in a low-income community is a high cost proposition.

The Strategic Learning solution costs less than \$200,000 per school in a network of 10 schools. The Department of Education's guidelines estimate that the turnaround cost, including replacing the staff of a school of 500 students "can range from \$250,000 to \$1,000,000 per school per year for at least three years. Larger schools will cost more."

The Strategic Learning model gets strong results at a fraction of the cost of other turnaround models.

## Site-Based Management

In Chicago, school reform in 1988 included the creation of site-based management at each school in the form of Local School Councils comprised of the principal, teachers, parents, and, at the high school level, students. Local School Councils function is similar to the board of directors at decentralized independent and charter schools.

Site-based decision-making allowed those closest to the situation to quickly identify problems and begin to resolve them. The new Local School Councils chose the principals and gave them the authority for the first time to spend Title 1 funds in ways most beneficial to their individual schools (Ryan, et. al., 1997). Successful schools spent the money first on high quality, on-site professional development for their teachers. (For a more extensive discussion of the history of school reform in Chicago, see Simmons, Breaking Through: Transforming Urban School Districts, 2006, p 11-23)

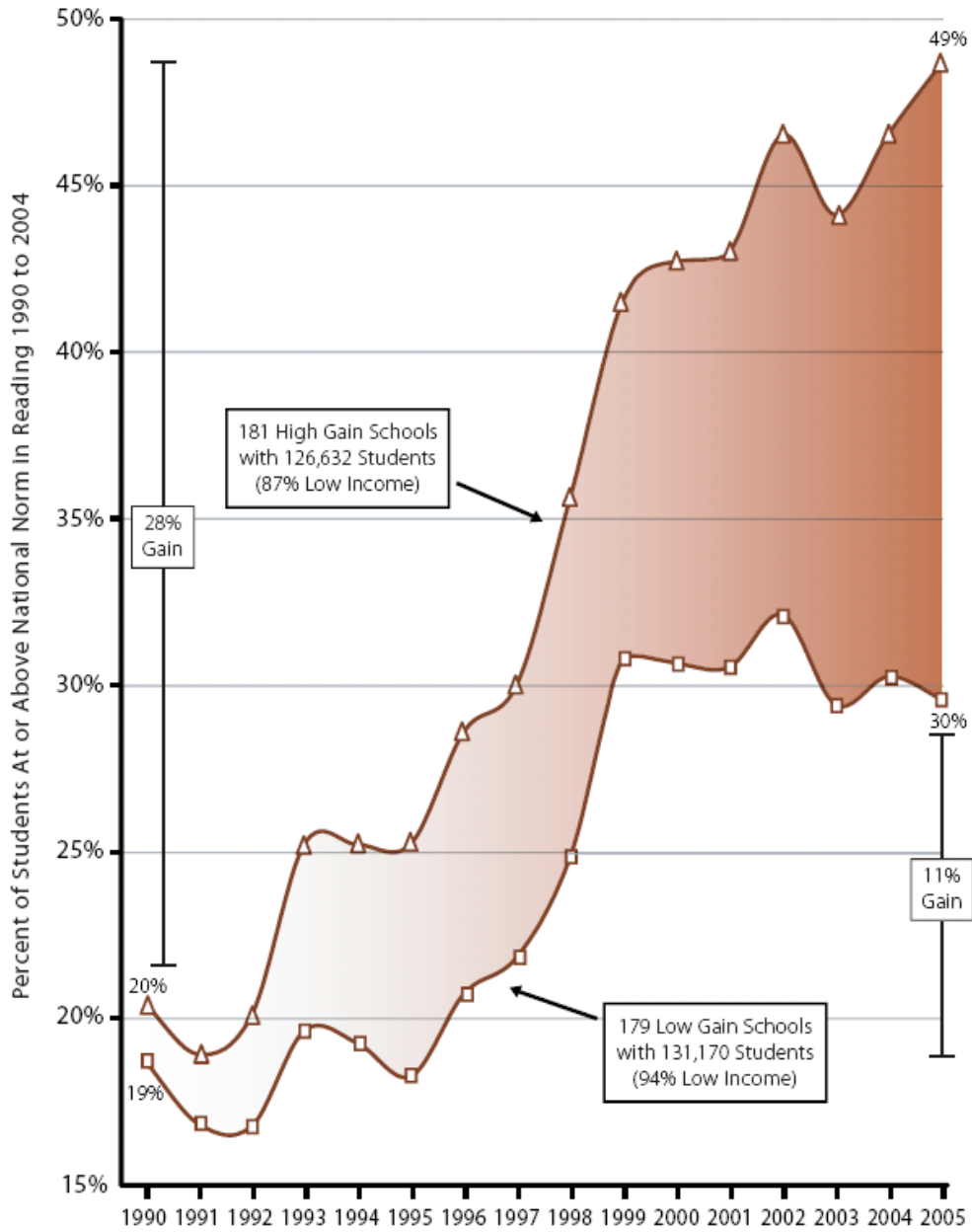
Site-based management is a high performance strategy of decentralized decision-making that enabled 360 Chicago Public Schools to close the achievement gap and raise test scores for their students from low-income families in just three years 1990-1993. That is remarkable success considering many of those schools had reported virtually no improvement for the previous twenty years. (See Chart 3 on the next page featuring the 360 schools in the lowest income neighborhoods in the City, 1990 – 2005, and their 150 percent rate of growth compared to their base years in the 1980s.)

The last year of the Iowa test was 2005. The current Illinois test started in 1999. Its results virtually parallel the Iowa scores for the 360 schools in the chart.

# Chicago's Elementary Schools

## Almost Reach the National Average in Reading

(Iowa Reading Test Results for Grades 3-8 Combined Percent of Students At or Above National Norms)



Source: Analysis by Strategic Learning Initiatives 2005 of data provided by Chicago Public Schools (2005) and Designs for Change (May, 2005)

Source: John Simmons, *Breaking Through: Transforming urban school districts*, Teachers College Press, 2006, p. 12.

For struggling Chicago schools, the SBM strategy for high performance management empowers the people closest to the students -- the teachers, principals and parents -- to take ownership of and full responsibility for improving results.

In the best examples of site-based management schools, authority exists at the school level to jointly identify problems and design and execute solutions. Those school-level leaders control the budget for staffing, professional development, curriculum, instruction, and parental and community involvement (Wohlstetter and Briggs, 2001).

The site-based management strategy helps create trust among the stakeholders, which the Chicago data show is a powerful driver of student achievement (Bryk and Schneider, 2002). The strategy allows the stakeholders to take ownership of new concepts that are essential for accelerating the rate of student and adult learning. It also contributed to the FIP schools success.

Having demonstrated that there are successful, low cost approaches to school turnaround, the next step is scaling up what works. We have submitted our comments on ESEA reauthorization to the Committee, including a proposal on how to scale up the FIP/SBM model.

### **Summing Up, Policy Implications and Lessons Learned**

To sum up, here are several general points:

- Our school turnaround strategy does not close the building, turn a traditional public school into a charter school, or require wholesale dismissal of the leadership and teachers.
- In order to replicate and scale up school turnaround and transformation, the approach must be affordable. Our Focused Instruction Process costs less than 20 percent of what some turnaround models are costing that replace school staff before beginning the turnaround.
- Site-based management accelerates achievement by allowing those closest to the problem to make decisions and implement solutions. It supports a culture of empowerment and accountability that improves the quality of the professional development, shared leadership, and parent engagement (Axelrod, 2010).
- Site-based management helps create the trust among school stakeholders -- administrators, teachers, and parents -- that is the glue for deep and rapid turnaround and transformation.
- The SLI Turnaround results show clearly that it is the system that needs to be changed rather than the individuals in the trenches. The redesign of the system is the responsibility of the leadership at every level in the system.
- When you offer failing schools the strategy and the tools, they can surprise even the most skeptical of reform advocates.

Some policy implications of the FIP/Site-Based Management Strategy include:

- Closing the achievement gap. The new turnaround model is an opportunity for replicating and scaling up significant improvement in student learning.
- Lower cost. We could turn around about five schools using the FIP/Site-Based Management Strategy for the same amount we would spend to fix just one school by replacing staff and school leaders.
- Taxpayer Savings. Considering the cost differential between replacing school staff and supporting existing staff to achieve better results, the savings for the taxpayers and donors in Chicago FIP schools was \$3 million per school over four years, or \$24 million for the eight schools (Dillon, 2009).
- Improving existing human resources. They already represent a substantial investment. SLI's new turnaround model coaches, trains, and supports the existing teachers and principals to enhance that investment.
- Strategy is replicable, scalable and sustainable. An independent analysis of our data by the American Institutes of Research reports that this model works, should be supported by the federal government, and scaled up. (See report in Appendix 3)

Some lessons learned. The work is not easy and change does not come overnight. We have learned several lessons from our experience in some of Chicago's most challenged and challenging schools:

- The stakeholders, with our assistance, often exceeded our expectations and theirs.
- Offering school leaders some flexibility in how they improve and with whom they want to work instead of mandating yet another "silver bullet" handed down from the District, empowers school leaders and communities.
- The Focused Instruction Process (FIP) is shaping the next generation of Comprehensive School Reform models.<sup>1</sup>
- Decades of research and Strategic Learning's results over the past fifteen years show that the principals, teachers, students, and parents are not the biggest problem and they can be the solution. Larger school districts can operate like immune systems that resist innovation.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about FIP and SLI, please visit our website at [www.strategiclearning.org](http://www.strategiclearning.org)

- A key challenge for the leadership is redesigning the school system at the local and state level.
- The leadership needs to redesign the systems that are reluctant to embrace and properly implement what the research shows us needs to be done.

In conclusion even among the lowest performing schools in Chicago, there is a large reservoir of principals, teachers, and parents with untapped energy, creativity, and the commitment to succeed. For many observers, this is an unexpected finding. It has important implications for accelerating the rate of turning around the 5,000 lowest performing schools in the nation.

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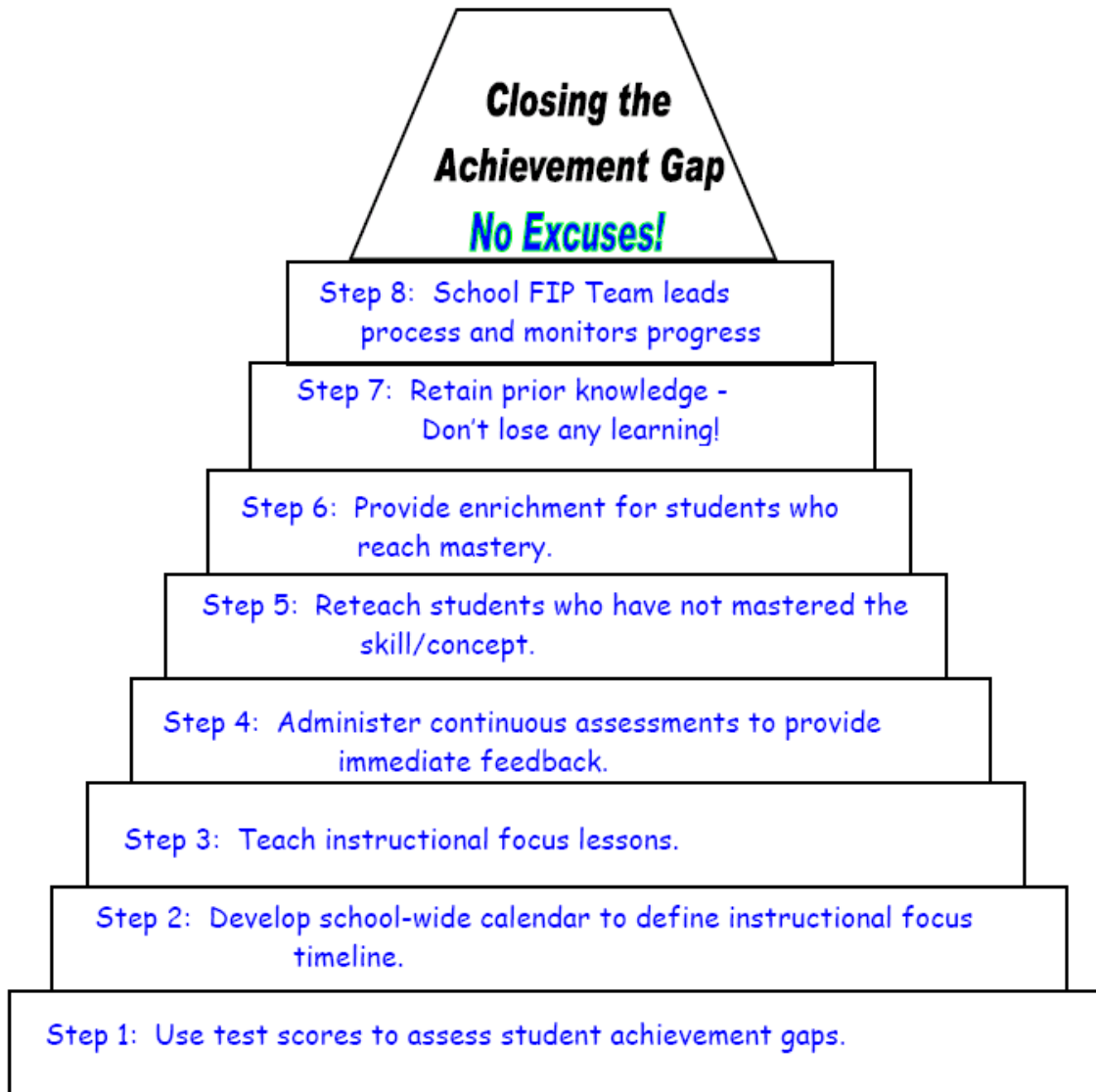
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## Appendix 1

### Eight Steps for Mastery Learning



**Everyone Working Together Closes the Gap!**

Source: Patricia Davenport and Gerald Anderson, Closing the Achievement Gap, 2002, p. 47.

## Appendix 2

### **Bio**

John Simmons, Ph.D.

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John Simmons is the President of Strategic Learning Initiatives, which is a nonprofit serving public schools.

His current focus includes scaling up a new model for turning around low performing schools. It is based on systemic research and over fifteen years of experience using networks of neighborhood schools. The model accelerates student and adult learning within and across school districts by using on-site support for applying strategies and tools from education and high performance organizations. His latest book is *Breaking Through: Transforming Urban School Districts*, Teachers College Press.

For the past 35 years, Simmons has worked in the field of education in the United States and abroad. In Chicago, he worked with more than 40 public schools and consulted with the CEO of the Chicago Public Schools. He also worked in the Policy Planning Division for the World Bank, revising investment policies in education and designing loans to finance improvements in education in African and Asian countries.

Simmons has written or edited six books and more than 75 articles on education, management and economic development. He holds a bachelor's degree in history from Harvard and a doctorate in economics from Oxford University.



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# Validating the Impact of Strategic Learning Initiatives' Focused Instruction Process (FIP) Model

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## Introduction

This report arises from discussions between John Simmons, President of Strategic Learning Initiatives (SLI) and the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to provide an external validation of the impact data in ten Chicago Public Schools elementary schools that participated in SLI's Focused Instruction Process between 2006 and 2008.

AIR agreed to complete two tasks:

- Rerun and validate the ISAT-Reading data for the 10 FIP schools; and
- Compare the ISAT scores between the 10 FIP schools and a matching set of 10 non-FIP schools.

The results that SLI has achieved, and that AIR has validated, are very impressive and suggest that well before decisions are made to reconstitute schools under the mandates of NCLB, school districts would be wise to consider far less drastic, but clearly powerful, interventions such as the Focused Instruction Process.

## Findings

### 1. How well did the 10 FIP schools do during the first two years of intervention when compared with the Chicago city average?

Figure 1 shows that for the two-year period from 2006 to 2008 all but two of the 10 FIP schools had ISAT Reading gains in the percent of students at or above proficient that exceeded the Chicago city average and that as a group, the gains in the FIP schools were nearly twice the city average (11.4 percentage points vs. 6.3 percentage points).

**Figure 1**  
**Two-Year Gains in Percent of Students Meeting/Exceeding Reading Proficiency for 10 FIP Schools During FIP (2006-08)**

School	Gains
Cather	16.1
Faraday	14.2
Goldblatt	10.8
Morton	2.1
Tilton	14.2
Cardenas	18.7
Castellanos	6.0
Finkl	15.3
Gary	8.3
Kanoon	8.5

10 FIP Schools	11.4
Chicago City Average	6.3

Figure 2 shows the annual average gains in the FIP schools during the two-year period (2006-2008) during which the intervention was in place when compared with the annual average gains for the four-year period (2001-2005) prior to the intervention. Once again, the gains made during the period of the intervention are impressive relative to the gains prior to the invention and relative to non-FIP schools.

**Figure 2**  
**Annual Average Gains in Percent of Students Meeting/Exceeding Reading Proficiency Before (2001-2005) and During (2006-2008) the Intervention**

	Before FIP (2001-2005)	During FIP (2006-2008)
5 Area 7 FIP schools	0.8	5.7
5 Area 10 FIP schools	3.6	5.7
10 FIP schools	2.2	5.7
Non-FIP schools	2.1	3.2

**2. How well did the 10 FIP schools do when compared with a set of matching schools?**

AIR asked SLI to identify a set of ten matching schools to the ten FIP schools. SLI used the following process to make these matches:

1. Data from publicly available data bases from Chicago Public Schools and Illinois State Department of Education was extracted for the 10 FIP schools and all other elementary schools in Chicago, Illinois. This data included:
  - a. Percent low income as indicated by participation in free or reduced price lunch program.
  - b. Percent of enrolled students who were identified as being in any of six specific racial/ethnic groups: White, Black, American Indian, Asian, Hispanic, Multi-Racial.
  - c. ISAT Percent Meeting or Exceeding Proficiency in Reading for grade level in the years 2001-2008. It should be noted that standards of proficiency were altered between academic years ending in 2005 and 2006.
  - d. From the ISAT data, Average Annual Gains/Losses in Percent Proficient were calculated for the 2001 to 2005 (4 year) difference and separately for the 2006-2008 (2 year) period.

2. A computer program was written to initially screen for matches to the 10 FIP schools. The program ignored a criterion that was originally considered: No consideration was given to whether the schools matched were in the same city neighborhood (“Area”).
3. The program initially searched for schools that had a Low Income Percent within 1.0 percent of the Low Income Percent of the FIP school to which they were to be matched. In some cases, this resulted in short list of schools which would be difficult to match to the FIP school using the additional criteria to be applied. Accordingly, a second run of the program was performed to select schools that would match within 2.0 percent of the Low Income Percent of the FIP schools. This resulted in a longer list. In subsequent matching, preference was given to schools that appeared on the “within 1.0 percent” match list.
4. Using the schools that matched on the Low Income criteria, a statistic designated as “stress” was calculated consisting of the sum of squared differences in racial/ethnic percentages between the FIP school and each potential matching school.
5. The list of matching schools for each of FIP schools was sorted low to high on this statistic. The lower the “stress” statistic, the closer the match on racial/ethnic composition.
6. Further matching was performed manually with the following criteria:
  - a. Percent Meeting or Exceeding Proficiency in 2005 was roughly equal in FIP school and matched school. This criterion was applied because improvement due to interventions will depend upon starting point prior to the intervention.
  - b. Average Annual Percent Gain/Loss for the period 2001 to 2005, prior to FIP intervention, was roughly equal.
7. Finally, some schools which would otherwise be considered as possible matches were excluded because they had participated in other Strategic Learning Initiatives programs.

Figure 3 shows the results of this matched pair analysis of FIP vs. non-FIP schools prior to and during the intervention. As would be expected given the selection process, before the intervention there is a very small difference in the average annual increase in the percent of students meeting or exceeding reading proficiency between the FIP and non-FIP schools (2.24 percentage points vs. 2.45 percentage points respectively for the period 2001-2005). However, during the intervention there is a significant difference in the average annual increase – 5.71 percentage points for the FIP schools vs. 1.14 percentage points for the non-FIP schools – for the period 2006-2008. (See Appendix, Tables 1, 2, and 3 for summary statistics and p-values for the t tests.) Before the intervention, the mean difference in the average annual increase of percent of students meeting or exceeding reading proficiency between matched FIP and non-FIP schools was -0.21. The mean difference in average annual increase between matched FIP and non-FIP schools during

the intervention (4.57) was significantly greater. (See Appendix, Tables 4 and 5 for summary statistics and p-value for the t-test.)

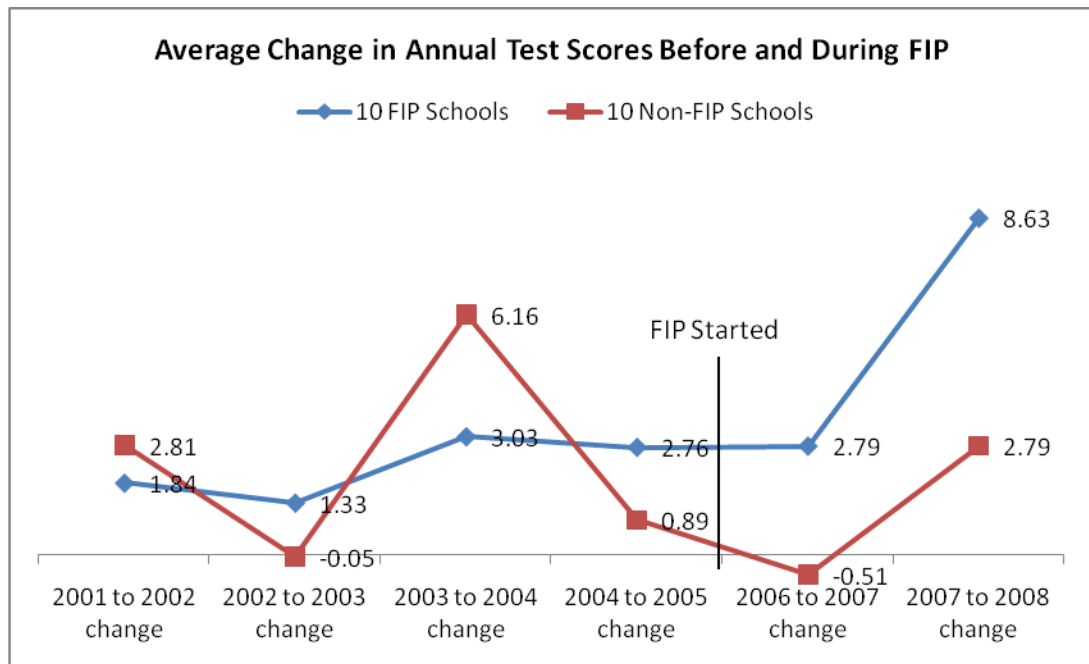
**Figure 3**

**Average Annual Increases and Differences in Test Scores  
for Matched Pair FIP and Non-FIP Schools Before and During FIP**

Pair	FIP School	Non-FIP School	FIP School: Average Annual Increase Before FIP (2001-2005)	Non-FIP School: Average Annual Increase Before FIP (2001-2005)	FIP School: Average Annual Increase During FIP (2006-2008)	Non-FIP School: Average Annual Increase During FIP (2006-2008)	Difference in Average Annual Increase in Matched FIP and Non-FIP School Before FIP	Difference in Average Annual Increase in Matched FIP and Non-FIP School During FIP
1	CATHER	DEPRIEST	2.78	2.90	8.05	2.40	-0.13	5.65
2	FARADAY	O'TOOLE	1.25	2.23	7.10	-1.40	-0.98	8.50
3	GOLDBLATT	HERZL	-0.13	0.45	5.40	3.70	-0.58	1.70
4	MORTON	O'KEEFFE	0.10	0.05	1.05	0.25	0.05	0.80
5	TILTON	OWENS	0.20	-0.93	7.10	1.65	1.13	5.45
6	CARDENAS	LARA	2.78	2.45	9.35	2.50	0.33	6.85
7	CASTELLANOS	COOPER	7.30	3.65	3.00	-0.55	3.65	3.55
8	FINKL	STOWE	3.15	4.33	7.65	2.10	-1.18	5.55
9	GARY	MCCORMICK	2.90	4.55	4.15	-2.15	-1.65	6.30
10	KANOON	WHITNEY	2.08	4.85	4.25	2.90	-2.78	1.35
	<b>All FIP schools</b>	<b>Matched non-FIP schools</b>	2.24	2.45	5.71	1.14	-0.21	<b>4.57</b>

Figure 4 shows the average change in the percent of students meeting or exceeding reading proficiency between each year in the 10 FIP schools and the 10 matched non-FIP schools for the entire 2001-2008 period and reveals graphically the apparent impact of the FIP intervention.

**Figure 4**



Note: The test format changed significantly from 2005 to 2006 so the 2005 to 2006 test score change is not included

### Conclusion

It is clear, on the basis of the ISAT Reading scores for the percent of students meeting or exceeding proficiency in ten Chicago elementary schools for the period 2001-2008, that the Focused Instruction Process intervention has had a positive and significant impact on student achievement in the cohort of ten schools that participated in the FIP model from 2006 to 2008. Whether compared to pre-intervention achievement, or to the entire set of Chicago elementary schools, or to a carefully selected set of matched schools, the data suggest that FIP has resulted in gains that are very unlikely to have occurred without the intervention.

### APPENDIX

**Table 1: Mean Average Annual Increase in Scores Before and During FIP for 10 FIP Schools**

Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Minimum	Maximum
Average annual increase before FIP (2001-2005)	10	2.24	2.18	-0.13	7.30

Average annual increase during FIP (2006-2008)	10	5.71	2.58	1.05	9.35
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**Table 2: Mean Average Annual Increase in Scores Before and During FIP for 10 Matched Non-FIP Schools**

Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Minimum	Maximum
Average annual increase before FIP (2001-2005)	10	2.45	2.01	-0.93	4.85
Average annual increase during FIP (2006-2008)	10	1.14	1.98	-2.15	3.70

**Table 3: t-test for Mean Average Annual Increase in Scores Before and During FIP for 10 FIP Schools and 10 Matched Non-FIP Schools**

Statistics											
Variable	FIP	N	Lower CL Mean	Mean	Upper CL Mean	Lower CL Std Dev	Std Dev	Upper CL Std Dev	Std Err	Minimum	Maximum
beforeave	0	10	1.01	2.45	3.89	1.39	2.01	3.68	0.64	-0.93	4.85
beforeave	1	10	0.68	2.24	3.80	1.50	2.18	3.98	0.69	-0.13	7.30
beforeave	Diff (1-2)		-1.76	0.21	2.18	1.59	2.10	3.10	0.94		
afterave	0	10	-0.28	1.14	2.55	1.36	1.98	3.61	0.63	-2.15	3.70
afterave	1	10	3.86	5.71	7.56	1.78	2.58	4.72	0.82	1.05	9.35
afterave	Diff (1-2)		-6.73	-4.57	-2.41	1.74	2.30	3.40	1.03		

T-Tests					
Variable	Method	VariANCES	DF	t Value	Pr >  t
beforeave	Pooled	Equal	18	0.23	0.8235

afterave	Pooled	Equal	18	-4.44	0.0003
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**Table 4: Mean Difference in Average Annual Increase  
in Matched Pair FIP and Non-FIP Schools Before and During FIP**

Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Minimum	Maximum
Difference in Average Annual Increase in Matched FIP and Non-FIP School Before FIP	10	-0.21	1.74	-2.78	3.65
Difference in Average Annual Increase in Matched FIP and Non-FIP School During FIP	10	4.57	2.59	0.80	8.50

**Table 5: Paired t-test for Mean Difference in Average Annual Increase  
in Matched Pair FIP and Non-FIP Schools Before and During FIP**

Statistics										
Difference	N	Lower CL	Mean	Upper CL	Lower CL	Std Dev	Upper CL	Std Err	Minimum	Maximum
		Mean	Mean	Mean	Std Dev	Std Dev				
afterdiff - befordiff	10	2.56	4.78	7.01	2.14	3.11	5.67	0.98	-0.10	9.48

T-Tests			
Difference	DF	t Value	Pr >  t
afterdiff - befordiff	9	4.87	0.0009

